

INSPECTION REPORT

NORTH MOLTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

North Molton

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113163

Headteacher: Mr David Grant

Lead inspector: Peter Kerr

Dates of inspection: 26th – 29th April 2004

Inspection number: 257043

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	133
School address:	Fore Street North Molton South Molton Devon
Postcode:	EX36 3HL
Telephone number:	01598 740343
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Terry Wallis
Date of previous inspection:	15/6/1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is smaller than the average primary school, with 126 pupils on roll aged four to 11 from a wide rural area. Five of the pupils are Swedish and speak English as an additional language, which is a slightly above average proportion; no other ethnic minority groups are represented. The pupils come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds, with an above average profile overall. Just under ten per cent of the pupils claim free school meals, which is an average proportion. The number of pupils on roll is unpredictable and an above average number of pupils join or leave the school over the course of the school year. Currently, there are more boys than girls in the school; the reverse had been the case in the past, and the gender balance varies considerably from year to year. The school has placed 39 pupils on its register of special educational needs (SEN), which is an above average proportion of 31 per cent. Many of the pupils with the most severe needs have specific learning difficulties and an increasing number have behavioural needs. The school also provides for visually impaired pupils. Currently, four pupils have statements of need, which is a well above average proportion. The initiatives the school is involved in include: the School Sports Programme; the Small Schools Fund; the local area Workforce Remodelling Initiative and a Family Learning Programme. The school promise is 'be the best you can be'.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
23583	Peter Kerr	Lead inspector	English as an additional language Mathematics Science Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology Music Physical education
1311	Barry Wood	Lay inspector	
17693	Esther Digby	Team inspector	Special educational needs Foundation Stage English Geography History Religious education

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	8
Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	12
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	18
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS	21
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	34

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school's many strengths outweigh its few weaknesses. Achievement is satisfactory overall. It is good in reception and Year 2 and in English throughout but is unsatisfactory in mathematics and science. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Leadership, management and governance are sound and the school gives satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Good teaching enables pupils to achieve well in reception and Years 1 and 2 and in English, history, religious education and art and design throughout the school.
- Achievement in mathematics and science is too low in Years 3 to 6, especially for more able pupils.
- The ethos of the school is good; an excellent team spirit, greatly improved décor of the site and building and high quality displays encourage good attitudes and personal development among the pupils.
- The well qualified and skilled teaching assistants make a very good contribution to the pupils' progress.
- Provision for special educational needs is good and all pupils are fully included in all aspects of the school's work.
- The headteacher plays a leading role in sustaining the positive ethos of the school.
- Planning for school improvement is not linked clearly enough to achievement and the monitoring of standards, teaching and learning is not evaluative enough.
- Assessments are not used sufficiently to guide planning in some lessons.

The school has made satisfactory improvements since the last inspection. Excellent improvements have been made to the décor of the site and building, and provision for the Foundation Stage and for information and communication technology (ICT) is much improved. Some key issues from the last inspection remain. Chief among these are making monitoring effective, linking improvement planning to standards and catering for pupils of all abilities in each subject.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Achievement is satisfactory overall. It is good in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and satisfactory in Key Stage 2¹. Achievement is good in English where standards are well above average but unsatisfactory in mathematics and science. The school's results in the national tests at the end of Year 6 are very good in English, but too low in mathematics and science compared to similar schools.

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

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

The main reason for the gap in standards between English and mathematics and science in 2003 was that the more able pupils did much better in English than they did in mathematics and science. The more able pupils underachieve in these subjects because of a lack of sustained challenge, especially for the older pupils in the mixed-age classes. The weaknesses are most evident in using

¹ The Foundation stage caters for children of reception age, Key Stage 1 for pupils in Years 1 and 2 and Key Stage 2 for pupils in Years 3 to 6.

and applying mathematics and in experimental skills in science. Children enter reception with above average attainment overall. They achieve well in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world and satisfactorily in physical and creative development to maintain good standards into Year 1. The momentum is maintained in Years 1 and 2, where pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics. This is reflected in the school's results in the national tests at the end of Year 2, which are generally above average.

Standards in ICT are broadly average overall, though gaps remain in the pupils' skills in Years 3 to 6. Standards in religious education and history are above average and pupils use their literacy skills well in these subjects throughout the school. Standards are very good in art and design and high quality displays of pupils' work add significantly to the ambience of the school. Pupils with special educational needs and with English as an additional language achieve well because of the individual support they receive.

Pupils' personal qualities are good. They like school, generally behave well and have good relationships. Their **spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good** in all respects except for preparation for life in a culturally diverse society, which is satisfactory. Attendance is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. Teaching is satisfactory overall. It is good in reception and Years 1 and 2 and satisfactory in Years 3 to 6. There are examples of very good teaching in all three key stages, with some outstanding teaching in art and design in Key Stage 2. English, religious education and history are taught well in Years 1 to 6. The teaching of mathematics and science is a relative weakness in Years 3 to 6 where assessments are not used effectively enough to ensure that lessons build successfully on key skills for pupils of all abilities. A good curriculum is provided, with good provision for the humanities, art and design, personal social and health education (PSHE) and SEN, and good enrichment through visits and after school clubs. The school cares for its pupils well and has very good relationships with other local schools and pre-school providers. Very good provision for families eases the induction of children into reception and transfer arrangements with the secondary school are good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory. The headteacher, supported by the governors, has done a tremendous amount since his appointment to improve the quality of the school site and building, making it a much more attractive learning environment. He has also sustained an excellent team spirit among the staff. Monitoring of teaching, learning and standards takes place, but it is not evaluative enough to provide a basis for improvements where there are weaknesses. The governors ensure that all statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Most parents are satisfied with the school. They trust the headteacher and staff and are keen to be partners in providing for their children's education. A small minority are dissatisfied with some aspects of leadership and management and with the information they receive about their children's progress. The pupils enjoy coming to school. They like their teachers and know that there is always an adult they can talk to if they have any problems. They appreciate their views being taken into account.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- Raise standards in mathematics and science, especially for the more able.
- Improve the quality and use of assessment.
- Improve the focus of monitoring of standards and teaching and learning so that it is evaluative and points the way towards specific improvements.
- Sharpen the focus on achievement in the school improvement plan.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Achievement is good in reception and Years 1 and 2 and satisfactory in Years 3 to 6. Standards are well above average in English throughout the school and pupils achieve well. Achievement is also good and standards above expectations in history, religious education and art and design. Achievement is unsatisfactory in mathematics and science in Years 3 to 6 though standards are average.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well to reach high standards in English; they use their skills well in other subjects.
- Standards in mathematics and science are not high enough, especially for the more able pupils.
- High standards in art and design add enormously to the ambience of the school.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because of the good support they receive.

Commentary

1. The overall attainment profile of children entering the reception class is above average, but some children have low attainment and some have special educational needs. The children achieve well in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world because of good teaching. Many of them achieve the early learning goals in these areas well before the end of reception. Their learning is based on a range of well thought out activities and they are supported expertly as they work and play by the teacher and teaching assistant. Their achievement in physical development and creative development is satisfactory, with good achievement in imaginative role play. They begin Year 1 with above average attainment overall.
2. The momentum built up in reception is maintained throughout Key Stage 1 so that by the end of Year 2, the pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics. The results of the national tests vary from year to year because of the small numbers of pupils taking the tests and the effect that the performance of one or two pupils has on the overall scores.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	17.2 (18.1)	15.7 (15.8)
Writing	15.7 (16.3)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	17.0 (18.6)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 18 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

3. The table shows that the 2003 results were lower than in the preceding year in each subject, but this reflects the relative ability of the pupils in the two cohorts rather than what the school did. The results dipped considerably in 2001 from the very high level they were at in 2000. Since then, there has been a positive trend that the current Year 2 pupils are on course to continue. Their achievements in reading and writing are better than in mathematics, because of better teacher expertise, but the gap is not as great as in Year 6. The pupils achieve well in science, ICT, RE, history and art and design at this stage to reach above average standards.

4. Standards are well above average in English at Year 6, representing good achievement and reflecting good levels of confidence and skill among the staff. The pupils' good literacy skills contribute to high standards and good achievement in history and religious education because the teachers provide good opportunities for writing in these subjects and give skilled support. Standards are too low in mathematics and science, mainly because the more able pupils do not attain the high standards they are capable of and which they achieve in English. The average points scores in the table below reflect this discrepancy.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	29.6 (28.3)	26.8 (27)
mathematics	27.4 (27.8)	26.8 (26.7)
science	28.9 (29.2)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 16 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

5. Because so few pupils take the tests each year it is necessary to take into account a three or four-year trend before including this evidence in judgements about achievement. The picture is a consistent one over time, with a considerable gap between performance in English and the other two core subjects. Pupil mobility has some effect because the school finds it easier to fill the gaps in knowledge and skills in English than in mathematics and science for the pupils joining the school during Years 3 to 6. The gender balance in some cohorts is also a possible contributory factor. For example, in 2001, the poor results achieved by the girls in mathematics compared with their very high results in English could have accounted for some of the disparity between the two subjects that year. Taking all this evidence into account, it is clear that the difference in achievement between English and mathematics is not as great as the test results would appear to suggest, but it is still significant. Teachers have much greater confidence in teaching English and humanities than mathematics and science. Assessments of key skills are not used effectively enough to guide the planning of lessons in mathematics and science. This affects the achievement of more able pupils more than other groups because lessons are often pitched at too low a level for them. Recent training and improvements to leadership and management and the effective use of teaching assistants have begun to address this problem, but there is still a long way to go to reach parity of achievement.
6. Standards in ICT are in line with expectations at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Progress is good now because of recent improvements to resources, but gaps remain in the pupils' knowledge and skills in Year 6 because of previous shortcomings in provision. For example, the pupils do not yet use email in school and have not yet used computers to monitor variables in the environment such as temperature. Pupils make good use of the skills they do have in a range of subjects, from word-processing in English to producing keys in science to identify animals and plants.
7. Standards are well above average in art and design in Year 6 and achievement is good because of consistently good teaching and very effective leadership and management. The high quality of display of pupils' art and design work around the school rewards the pupils for their achievements and inspires them to greater efforts. The co-ordinator successfully maintains a high level of enthusiasm for the subject throughout the school that is reflected in the quality of the pupils' designs and the creative flair that they bring to their work. Very good foundations for the pupils' success are laid in Key Stage 1, where the teaching of basic skills such as observational drawing and colour mixing are taught very well. Standards are already above average by the end of Year 2.
8. Pupils with SEN are achieving well as a result of very good, focused support, both in the classroom and in groups withdrawn from lessons. In particular, pupils with challenging behaviour are making good progress in their social development. Their improved attitudes to

school are enabling them to have better access to the curriculum and they are beginning to make sound progress in their learning. Pupils with very individual needs arising from physical or medical factors, such as Downs Syndrome and visual impairment are very well provided for and make good progress because all the staff dealing with them are fully aware of their needs and trained and supported to meet them. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress under the guidance of a skilled teaching assistant who has undertaken training for this task.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. The pupils' good personal development is supported by the school's effective spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Attendance is good and punctuality is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils are happy at school and most have good attendance.
- The children in the reception class settle well and develop very good attitudes and behaviour.
- Pupils maintain very good attitudes and behaviour in Years 1 and 2 and show an enthusiasm for learning.
- In Years 3 to 6, pupils have good attitudes and behaviour, and cope well with the challenging behaviour of a minority of pupils.
- The pupils build good relationships with adults and each other, and they work and play together with confidence.
- The school's good spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is effective in shaping pupils' mature personal development, but more could be done encourage an understanding and appreciation of the cultural diversity of modern Britain.

Commentary

9. Since the last inspection, the school has improved attendance levels to above the national average. The pupils' attendance is high in three out of the five classes and average in the other two. Through sustained reminders, the administrative staff succeed in keeping unauthorised absences and holidays taken during the school terms to a minimum, but despite this, one in ten pupils has poor attendance. Punctuality at the start of the school day is satisfactory.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2002/2003 (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.6	School data	0.1
National data	5.2	National data	0.2

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

10. Children in the reception class respond very well to the good teaching and quickly show enthusiasm and confidence. They understand the classroom routines and want to be involved in the many activities. They build very good relationships with their teacher and each other and co-operate and work well together. Pupils develop very good attitudes and behaviour, so that their progress in achieving their early learning goals in personal, social and emotional development is good.
11. From their flying start in the reception class, pupils in Years 1 and 2 maintain their very good attitudes and behaviour. They are determined to try hard in all activities and want to please their teachers. There are very few incidents of immature behaviour, and lessons proceed without interruption. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 have good attitudes and behaviour; they want to

contribute their ideas, and are interested in learning. In the mixed Years 3 and 4 class, a few boys with very challenging behaviour tend to disrupt teaching in some lessons. Other pupils in the class display tolerance and cope well with these distractions, which minimises the effect on their learning. In some lessons in Years 5 and 6, the pupils are passive because teaching strategies do not engage their interest, but the pupils were also observed enthusiastically continuing their work after the end of more stimulating lessons.

12. The school works hard and with increasing success to develop the attitudes and personal qualities of those pupils with challenging behaviour so that they can be fully included in lessons. Consideration of those with disabilities within the class or school has a positive impact on the pupils' personal development. For example, in a religious education lesson in which pupils were discussing what was special to them, they brought their favourite object to the visually impaired pupil in the group for her to feel enabling her to participate fully in the lesson.
13. The pupils behave well around the school and are polite to adults. There is a calm and relaxed atmosphere in the school in which the pupils play safely together without fear of bullying or harassment. They value each other's differences and contributions either in the classroom or in the clubs and activities. The pupils show obvious respect for their school and environment. A minority of pupils, most of whom have emotional and behaviour problems, behave badly on occasions, requiring adult involvement, but these incidents are reducing in number. There has only been one temporary exclusion in the past year.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	82	1	0
White – any other White background	5	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	39	0	0

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

14. The pupils' personal development is good and they show maturity at least in line with their years. The school continues to prioritise the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; this makes a good contribution to their enjoyment of the school and the quality of their education. Their spiritual, moral and social education is good, whilst their cultural education is satisfactory. Collective worship meets statutory requirements and pupils learn about and have respect for the celebrations and beliefs of other faiths through religious education lessons. The pupils know the difference between right and wrong and are fully involved in developing classroom codes of conduct. They work well together, sharing ideas and resources. From the reception class onwards, the family groups enable the pupils to think about issues affecting their lives, such as friendships and bullying. Relationships between the pupils and adults within the school are very good and the pupils show high levels of trust and respect for their teachers and support staff. They willingly accept meaningful responsibilities in the running of the school, and older pupils are keen to help younger pupils or those new to the school. The school is energetic in the local community and pupils learn to take pride in their own cultural roots and traditions as well as to appreciate art and sport, although the appreciation of music is less well developed. None of the pupils on roll is from the main ethnic minorities within the wider population. The school takes basic steps to compensate for this, for example through the good teaching about various faiths in religious education, but is not yet very successful in providing its pupils with effective practical experiences to develop their appreciation of the cultural diversity of modern Britain.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and the curriculum is good. A good standard of care is provided and the school has good links with the local community and very good links with other local schools and pre-school providers.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is good in reception and in Years 1 and 2 and in English, art and design, history and religious education across the school. It is satisfactory overall in Key Stage 2 with weaknesses in the teaching of mathematics and science.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is of a consistently good quality in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.
- Teachers use their enthusiasm and skills in the teaching of English and the humanities to stimulate good learning in these subjects throughout the school.
- A lack of confidence and expertise in the teaching of mathematics and science has led to teaching and learning being less effective in these subjects than in others.
- A very good partnership between teachers and teaching assistants helps pupils to learn, especially those with SEN and those for whom English is an additional language.
- Learning is good in art and design in Years 1 to 6 because it is organised and taught so well.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in [number] lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	4	12	8	2	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

15. Fewer than 30 lessons were seen during the inspection, so percentages are not given. Inspectors looked at teachers' planning and samples of the pupils' work to arrive at judgements on the effectiveness of teaching and learning over time. The grades in the table above do not reflect the quality of teaching in each key stage and in each subject. All of the lessons seen in the Foundation Stage were at least good, with some very good teaching. The children learn well because they are provided with a wide range of interesting activities to choose from that stimulate their interest and develop specific skills in each area of learning. The teacher and teaching assistant interact with the children skilfully as they work and play, assessing their understanding and bringing on their development. Learning is especially good in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world. This prepares the children well for learning in all the core subjects of the National Curriculum.
16. The quality of learning is good in Years 1 and 2. The lessons seen during the inspection were of at least satisfactory quality, with some good and very good teaching. In a very good art and design lesson, for example, the teacher and teaching assistants skilfully guided the pupils in observational drawings and paintings of sectioned fruits and vegetables, resulting in good achievement and high standards. Some of the methods and activities in the lessons seen were not entirely suited to the pupils' needs. For example, in a history lesson, the pupils had too few resources to aid their understanding, and in a mathematics lesson, the teacher did not move round enough to ensure that all the pupils fully understood the tasks they were engaged in. However, the work in the pupils' books reflects good learning over time in each subject.

17. Teaching is satisfactory overall in Years 3 to 6. It is good in English, the humanities and art and design. A good range of methods is used and a good level of challenge offered in the teaching of these subjects. The teachers give well-informed stimulating introductions to lessons and provide a wide range of activities to improve the pupils' writing skills both in English and in the humanities. They encourage the pupils to express themselves creatively as well as ensuring that they learn good spelling, grammar and punctuation. This shows in the work produced. More able pupils extend and apply their skills widely because of the competence with which the teachers challenge and support them. Assessments are used effectively in these subjects. The samples of work that are collected are not annotated to show the age of the pupils and the level of achievement the work reflects. Despite this shortcoming, the system works in these subjects because the teachers have a good informal understanding of the levels that have been achieved and use this to plan further work to build on the pupils' skills. In mathematics and science, the weaknesses in assessment have a greater impact on learning and achievement because teachers are less confident about the levels of skills the pupils have and what needs to be taught next.
18. Although teaching is satisfactory overall in mathematics and science, the limited range of methods used contributes to unsatisfactory learning in some lessons in Key Stage 2. In the least effective lessons seen, the teachers spent too much time at the front of the class talking to the pupils, whose contributions were limited to short answers to the teachers' questions. Assessments were not used effectively in these lessons to ascertain the level of knowledge, skills and understanding that the pupils already had in order to build on them. This resulted in some pupils becoming bored because they already knew what was being taught and were not being challenged to think and to engage actively in their learning. The pupils' work confirms that the tasks given to pupils of different attainment levels are too similar in these subjects. Those pupils who appear to find the work easy are not being sufficiently challenged to develop more advanced skills and apply their knowledge to difficult problems.
19. The teachers' secure subject knowledge contributes to the relatively effective learning in Years 1 and 2 in mathematics and science. Relatively insecure subject knowledge has contributed significantly to the slowing down of learning in Years 3 to 6. Leadership and management have not been effective enough in addressing this problem since the last inspection, though steps have been taken recently to improve learning. For example, in mathematics, teachers have had some training, the school has adopted a scheme of work and teaching assistants have been assigned to oversee practical group activities. In science, a potentially useful system is being introduced to help teachers track and support the development of key skills. Currently, insufficient monitoring is taking place to ensure that the staff take full advantage of such initiatives. For example, in an unsatisfactory lesson in mathematics, the scheme of work was being used inappropriately, keeping all the pupils at one level, which was too low for the older and more able pupils in the class.
20. The well qualified and experienced teaching assistants make a very good contribution to the pupils' learning. Their involvement ranges from general support within the class to the teaching of individuals and small groups outside the classroom. The contribution they make to the progress made by pupils with special educational needs is particularly good as the range of needs is so wide for such a small school. Some have trained specifically, along with a teacher, in Braille so that they can offer optimum support to visually impaired pupils. The impact of this input is greatly enhanced by the close working partnership between the staff and the support agency for visual impairment. The school is also having to cater for an increasing degree of behavioural needs. The behaviour of some pupils disrupts learning for others in some lessons. A group of the most needy of these pupils is currently being taught outside the classroom in some lessons by a teaching assistant with a planned programme of activities provided and supervised by a behaviour support teacher from the local education authority. These sessions are beginning to have an impact on the pupils' attitudes and behaviour and are enabling them to be effectively reintegrated into the class. Their behaviour still has a detrimental influence in some lessons, however, because they are not sufficiently engaged by the teacher. A teaching assistant has also taken the lead in becoming trained to support pupils with EAL, who were seen to be making good progress in lessons. In Year 1, a small group of

more able pupils are making good progress in mathematics because of a well-structured programme of support from a teaching assistant. The good work being done by teaching assistants to support practical learning in mathematics in Years 3 to 6 is raising the level of the pupils' interest and enthusiasm as well as encouraging them to explore different ways of solving practical problems.

21. Very effective leadership and management contribute to good teaching and learning in art and design throughout Years 1 to 6. The co-ordinator gives a clear, strong practical lead in teaching throughout Key Stage 2, while her predecessor oversees progress in Key Stage 1. An outstanding example was seen of the impact of leadership and management on the pupils' achievement during the inspection, when all the staff and pupils in Years 3 to 6 were inspired and supported in the design and making of masks by the co-ordinator's concise introduction, which used very good use of computer technology to extend the pupils' horizons, and the detailed preparation that ensured every pupil had access to the materials and tools they needed to implement their ideas.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good. It prepares the pupils well for secondary education. The school's good accommodation supports learning well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good provision for English, history, religious education and art and design contributes to high standards in these subjects; provision for mathematics and science is improving but is less effective in raising standards.
- Well-trained and effective teaching assistants provide good support for pupils with SEN.
- The good standard of the accommodation provides a stimulating learning environment.
- There are good cross-curricular links between subjects and good enrichment through visits.
- Developments to the outdoor learning environment have improved the learning opportunities for children in the Foundation Stage.

Commentary

22. The school provides a broad and stimulating curriculum, which fulfils all statutory requirements and places considerable emphasis on links between subjects. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage is well planned to meet the needs of the reception children who are in a mixed-age class with Year 1 pupils. The school provides a range of stimulating activities for art and writing. Provision for mathematics and science meets statutory requirements but lacks the impact of provision in English, the humanities and art, though some recent improvements have been made to make lessons more interesting and effective. The provision for personal, social and health education is good and helps to promote the good ethos of the school.
23. The school provides a regular programme of enrichment activities, including residential visits, and makes good use of its immediate locality to enliven the pupils' learning. There is a reasonable range of after school clubs and opportunities for sport and pupils have access to an independent French language club. Links with the secondary school are strong, with opportunities for enrichment activities in various subjects, including sport and mathematics. As a result, pupils are well prepared to move to the next stage of their education.
24. The inclusion of pupils with a wide range of special educational needs and the support for their learning is a particularly strong feature of the curriculum. There is very good access and support for pupils with specific disabilities. The skilled teaching assistants are deployed well, both within class and in targeted support work with small groups outside the classroom. The school makes good use of specialist expertise from outside agencies when assessing and

supporting the needs of pupils with specific difficulties and disabilities. The pupils' detailed individual education plans are reviewed regularly with teachers, pupils and parents and carers in accordance with the SEN code of practice.

25. The curriculum is delivered through a two-year rolling programme, to take account of the mixed year groups in most classes. Although long-term planning is generally effective in identifying the requirements for pupils of different ages in the same class, not all teachers plan well enough in the short term to ensure that there is sufficient challenge and support for pupils of differing age and ability in individual lessons. This is particularly evident in mathematics and science lessons where not enough attention is given to planning open-ended investigational work to challenge older, more able pupils. The school's developing strategies to tackle this problem have met with some success in mathematics, but insufficient attention has been paid to training and regular, focused monitoring to support staff and evaluate the effectiveness of the initiatives.
26. Learning resources for the school are adequate, with recent improvements to resources for ICT that have led to an increased pace of learning. The school library does not have sufficient non-fiction books; this has already been identified by the school as an area for development. The accommodation provides a good learning environment, being of a good size and very well presented with examples of pupils' work on display, including an excellent range of art work. Resources and outdoor accommodation for the Foundation Stage have improved significantly since the last inspection. This has enabled the teacher to include a wide range of outdoor activities in the range of options available to the reception children to choose from on a daily basis.

Care, guidance and support

The school's care, welfare and health and safety procedures are good. The school provides pupils with sound support and advice, and it effectively listens to pupils and involves them in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher and staff are vigilant in protecting pupils from dangers inside and outside the school, but staff training in child protection procedures is not up to date.
- Procedures to promote attendance and improve behaviour are good.
- Pastoral care is very good and pupils are effectively involved in the life of the school.
- The informal tracking of pupil's personal development is effective, but individual target-setting is underdeveloped.
- Children starting reception and pupils new to the school are quickly made to feel welcome.

Commentary

27. The school has improved many aspects of its support, guidance and welfare provision since the last inspection. Policies and procedures are well defined and thoroughly implemented by the committed and caring staff. The headteacher has a strong determination to include pupils in the life of the school irrespective of their backgrounds or problems. He is skilled in negotiating external resources into the school for the benefit of the pupils, especially those with specific needs. The school is welcoming to external professional agencies and receives very good and well-focused support. The school nurse is very helpful in assisting with good quality sex education and the development of healthy lifestyles.
28. Child protection procedures conform to statutory guidelines. Although the school is vigilant about risks to children, the headteacher acknowledges that staff training needs updating. The school's very good relationships with the education welfare officer and the school nurse ensure good care for those pupils whose home circumstances cause concern. The school is a safe place, with well-established health and safety procedures. Regular audits of the school

premises are undertaken, including disability access. Risk assessment procedures are in place and all accidents are recorded. An area for improvement is in bringing relevant health and safety issues to the pupils' attention at the beginning of any lessons that include some risks, such as physical education and science. Two minor health and safety matters have been brought to the governors' attention.

29. All members of staff implement the good behaviour procedures fairly so that the pupils quickly understand and accept them. The school promotes good attitudes well. The whole school promise of 'be the best you can be' is well displayed, and the pupils take pride in winning praise, awards and certificates for their efforts. Self-discipline is a consistent expectation and from the reception class onwards the pupils' positive response contributes to the good teaching and learning environment in the classroom. The school successfully combats any threatening behaviour, and has very good links with the Devon behaviour support unit, who are helping in the classroom with a small number of boys with challenging behaviour. Attendance procedures are firm but fair and are understood and accepted by parents and pupils. Attendance is very good for most pupils, which contributes to their progress and enjoyment of school life.
30. The headteacher and staff give a very high priority to pastoral care. The weekly 'Family Groups' support this endeavour well and are appreciated by parents and pupils alike. The staff successfully encourage and support the children and pupils to work together sensitively to discuss and manage personal issues. They are especially understanding of pupils' needs in cases of bereavement or a parental separation. Older pupils, in particular, feel totally secure that they can trust the headteacher and staff to listen with a sympathetic ear to their problems and anxieties. Many pupils say that they are happy at school, think learning is fun and that they feel safe and have firm friends.
31. The tracking of pupils' personal development is informal but sound. It relies on the experienced teachers' accumulated very good knowledge of individual pupils in this village school. Teachers identify pupils with special educational needs and they develop good individual educational plans with pupils and parents. Good regular discussions between the teachers and the headteacher, who is the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO), ensure that support strategies are tailored to the pupils' individual needs. The tracking and supporting of the pupils' educational progress has improved, but is still not effective enough to ensure that they achieve as well as they can in all subjects. Teachers identify one maths and English target with each pupil, but these are insufficiently precise and challenging to either influence performance or give pupils a real understanding of how to improve.
32. The induction of pupils new to the school is good. Children and parents in the reception class are quickly integrated into the school and children make a flying start to their school lives. The new initiative for integrating pre-school parents and children through family learning workshops is having a very beneficial effect. It introduces parents and toddlers to the school prior to the children's admission to the reception class, and allows them to meet people who will be able to help them in the future. Parents are very appreciative of the school's efforts to give them high quality advice on giving their children a successful start.
33. The school listens to pupils' opinions and concerns on wider school issues. Pupil representatives from the six family groups sit on the school council and have been able to see their ideas realised in initiatives in the playground and in games activities.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Parents have a good level of satisfaction with the school and the education it provides. The links between the school and parents are satisfactory. The programme of support for new parents is very effective. The school's links with the community are good. The school's links with other schools are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most parents are satisfied with the school.
- Despite the headteacher's and staff's willingness to understand parents' problems, a minority of parents are dissatisfied with some aspect of the school.
- The majority of parents help and support the school well and want to be partners in developing the potential of their children.
- All pupils benefit greatly from the school's good relationship with the local community.
- The school has a very good relationship with pre-school providers and primary and secondary schools, which assist induction and transfer arrangements.
- The very high quality family-learning programmes enable new parents in the reception class to make an effective contribution to their children's learning and happiness.

Commentary

34. Since the last inspection, overall parents' satisfaction levels have remained at a good level. Both homework and the range of activities are areas of the school's performance that show large increases in parents' approval. The headteacher realises the importance of the school's relationships with parents, who feel that the school respects and values their role and wants them as partners in their children's education. A significant number of parents at the school gate were fulsome in their praise of the school and expressed the view that the school was 'fantastic', 'brilliant' or 'excellent'.
35. A minority of parents show some dissatisfaction with aspects of the school, mainly with the information they receive about their children's progress. The inspection team considers that their concerns are justified as the weaknesses in information for parents observed at the last inspection are still present. Other areas of parental concern are: the behaviour of a minority of pupils; how closely the school works with parents; the approachability of the school and the leadership and management. Despite their best efforts, the headteacher and staff have not always been able to engage some parents in a dialogue about their problems without them being disgruntled by the outcome. Areas that have caused strains in the relationship have been the challenging behaviour of some pupils, the turnover of teachers and mixed-age classes. These issues have often had no apparent conclusion for some parents and have caused them to question the headteacher's effectiveness. The inspection team judged that the dissatisfaction of these parents was unfounded.
36. The quality of information for parents is satisfactory. The prospectus lacks some statutory information, but the good governors' annual report to parents is informative and interesting. The school gives some help to parents in discussing how they might help their children and explaining new education strategies and initiatives. Annual reports to parents are satisfactory, but have been little developed since the last inspection. They are insufficiently focused on pupil's levels of attainment and progress, and they lack feedback on past or future targets. Pupils give a review of the present year but it is not obvious whether parents' feedback is welcomed. The school wants to listen to parents and makes occasional use of parent questionnaires, but does not systematically consult parents formally on school initiatives. It is too reliant on informal conversations with easily accessible parents. This may help to explain the present level of dissatisfaction felt by some parents, which has surprised the school. The governors do not have a sufficient view of parents' dissatisfactions or complaints and are only occasionally involved. These shortcomings could contribute to some parents feeling ill informed about the school.
37. This being said, most parents feel comfortable with the opportunities they have for engaging with school to discuss progress. Parents enjoy an informative weekly newsletter, and are given a good view of homework and topics. Most parents have signed the home-school agreement. They fulfil their pledge through their children's good attendance and punctuality, and the majority of parents assist their children with homework. This close partnership successfully supports the progress of all the pupils, including those with SEN and the few

Swedish speaking pupils. A small core of parents is energetic in helping the school and most parents attend school functions. The North Molton Friends Association involves parents in a variety of useful fund-raising activities.

38. The Family Learning Programme, under the direction of Devon County Council, is very good. The school has enthusiastically embraced the project for toddlers who will be entering the reception class in September and their parents. They meet the education welfare officer, school nurse and visiting speakers who encourage their greater involvement in their children's play and raise their level of skills in helping their children. A parent stated that 'it is a lovely way of meeting school staff and children gain confidence'.
39. The school enjoys good relationships with the local community, and pupils benefit greatly from the close ties. Relationships with the local churches thrive, and the ministers are regular visitors to the school. The village, sports hall, churches, and adjacent countryside are important resources for the practical teaching of some subjects of the National Curriculum. People from the local community are welcomed into the school and it is used by village organisations as a community asset. Although local businesses are few in number, they have been generous in their support of the school and the Friends' Association.
40. The school has very good relationships with other schools and pre-school providers. The very good relationship with the local play groups enables reception children to make a flying start at the school. The school has developed a mutually beneficial relationship with a similar local village school and they have developed a wide range of joint initiatives in staff training, co-ordinating subjects of the National Curriculum, drama and sport. The school maintains very good contacts with secondary schools through the headteacher's leadership of the academic council. Parents receive knowledgeable and informative advice as the time for transfer to secondary school approaches. Pupils make a good transition to their new secondary schools, but are always keen to maintain contact with their former school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership, management and governance of the school are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher, supported by the governors, has greatly improved the working environment.
- The team spirit in the school is excellent.
- School improvement planning and the monitoring of standards, teaching and learning do not have a sharp enough focus on raising achievement.
- The school office is run very efficiently.

Commentary

41. Since his appointment shortly after the last inspection, the headteacher has led his staff and governors in presenting the school to its best effect through extensive improvements to the site and interior of the building. This, together with the excellent relationships and team spirit between staff, governors and voluntary helpers, ensures a very good working atmosphere for staff and pupils. The head also sets an excellent example in providing a high standard of pastoral care so that every individual pupil feels that there is an adult to confide in when needed. The school is having to learn to deal with a far wider range of special needs than it was used to, and provision for this is also well led and managed by the headteacher so that all the pupils are fully included in all activities.
42. In such a small school, all teachers have some managerial responsibility, and all of them carry out their duties conscientiously. The deputy head gives a strong lead in co-ordinating the good provision for literacy, and works closely with the headteacher in setting the educational agenda for the school. This partnership is effective in sustaining the cohesion of the staff

team, but has not been effective enough in providing clear direction and a strong drive to raise standards in those subjects where they are too low and in raising the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. Help has sensibly been sought from outside and training provided for the co-ordinators in mathematics and science and for other staff. This has led to improvements in provision and more practical and purposeful learning in these subjects in some lessons. However, the subjects still lack the level of incisive direction given in English, the humanities and art and design that has resulted in high standards throughout the school. The headteacher and governors have recently acted decisively on this issue in ensuring that their next teaching appointment is experienced in managing mathematics or science.

43. The monitoring of standards, teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection, but is still not evaluative enough. A vast amount of data is gathered on the pupils' performance in tests and this is used to identify weaknesses, leading to adjustments in the focus of lessons. The recent emphasis on writing is an example of how this process has succeeded in raising standards, and the current extra support with problem-solving in mathematics is intended to have a similar effect.
44. The headteacher carries out some monitoring of teaching, but this is not focused sharply enough on improving the quality of learning for all pupils and their levels of achievement. It has not fully remedied weaknesses in teaching methods that some parents have commented on and which the inspection found were restricting the progress of some of the more able pupils. Subject co-ordinators have a very limited amount of time to undertake monitoring, but they also lack direction in making the monitoring that they do purposeful enough in terms of raising levels of achievement, especially in key study skills. Performance management is securely in place, but these weaknesses in monitoring and evaluation limit its effectiveness.
45. School improvement planning is of a higher quality than it was at the time of the last inspection. It is more detailed, covers more than the current year and is based on subject action plans. These are of improving quality and are beginning to focus clearly on standards and achievement. Some still need to be more explicit about how success in their objectives are to be measured, particularly in the development of key skills, but the co-ordinators are beginning to tackle this well. The overall improvement plan still lacks some clarity of purpose and conciseness of layout, with much detail and data that could usefully be appended rather than included in the main text. The quest to raise standards is there to be found, but not easy enough to see. This limits the usefulness of the document as an aid to tracking progress with improvements.
46. The governing body play an active role in the running of the school and fulfil their statutory duties well. The experienced chair of governors works very closely with the headteacher and spends a lot of time in the school. He has a very good overview of the working of the governing body and a good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, including the need to tighten up some management procedures. The governors are somewhat limited in the extent to which they can support the school in addressing key weaknesses because the information they have to inform their judgements is limited in its usefulness by the shortcomings in monitoring. All statutory policies are in place, including for racial equality, and are reviewed regularly, and the governors ensure that the school is accessible to any pupil regardless of race, background or disability. The procedures for the induction of new staff are sound, but there is a need to provide more support for teachers to acquire the experience and skills they need to effectively fulfil subject management roles.

Financial information

47. The school runs a very tight budget and spends every available penny in what it judges to be the best interests of the pupils. The extra money spent on teaching assistants is a good example of how their judgements have helped to improve provision and support the pupils' progress. They strive to ensure best value by comparing the school's performance with other similar schools, but need more detailed and accurate information about the pupils' achievements and staff performance to be able to do so optimally.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	332814
Total expenditure	324753
Expenditure per pupil	2577

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	1400
Balance carried forward to the next	8061

48. The actual carry forward into 2003 is £4061 because the figure in the table includes £4000 earmarked in 2002 for spending on strengthening provision for visually impaired pupils that had not been spent at the time of this statement. The school is continually at risk of having to consider cutting down on staff because of possible decreases in pupil numbers from year to year, which often do not materialise. The governors manage the budget very well in these circumstances. The school secretary and her assistant run the office very efficiently, ensuring that the headteacher and governors have access to all available up-to-date information on finances, pupils and school stock. They also add to the welcoming feel of the school by the friendly but efficient way they operate the reception area. Taking into account its below average running costs, the quality of education provided and the achievement of the pupils, the school gives sound value for money.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation Stage is **good**. Many improvements have been made since the last inspection. There is now effective planning for all aspects of the curriculum. Improvements in resources and the development of an outdoor learning environment have resulted in better opportunities for structured play and independent investigation through first-hand experiences.

Children have a good start to school. Induction procedures and partnerships with parents are particularly effective and have been enhanced by an initiative in which parents and their children come into school once a week prior to starting school to experience the range of opportunities for learning through play. These very useful sessions are well led by one of the school's experienced teaching assistants, with support from the local organiser, and are funded jointly by national bodies and the county council. Also links with the local pre-school providers are being further developed to support children's transition to school.

Children start school with above average attainment for their age. They make good progress as a result of effective teaching and the well-planned curriculum, which meets the needs of these younger children well in a mixed class of reception and Year 1 pupils. Children with special educational needs are supported well in class and through small group sessions, which are led by very well trained and capable teaching assistants. There is one slightly older pupil in the class who is making very good progress as a result of the structured programme and support provided by the teacher and support assistant and the way in which he is fully integrated and involved in all class activities.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teacher's high expectations ensure good behaviour.
- The caring and supportive learning environment promotes the children's confidence and positive attitudes to school.
- The children are given good opportunities to take responsibility and make choices.
- The children show good levels of concentration when working independently and also when co-operating with others.

Commentary

49. The clear boundaries and consistent role models set by staff ensure that the children know what is expected of them and they behave very sensibly. They operate confidently in a group, sharing, taking turns and putting up their hands when asking or answering a question. Class rules are made explicit and the children know the routines well. They are eager to learn and settle to tasks without fuss, concentrating well on their work even when not directly supervised. For example, they work independently on the computer, share sand and construction equipment and engage happily together in role play. Specific personal, social and health education lessons contribute effectively to the children's personal development and the staff take every opportunity to reinforce the children's learning in this area throughout the school day. The Family Group sessions enable the youngest children to engage with pupils of different ages and to develop self-confidence and responsibility. The children's good progress in this area of learning puts them on course to exceed the relevant early learning goals by the end of the reception year and provides a sound base for good achievement in other areas of learning.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The children learn well because of the clear structure of the planning and delivery in this area of learning.
- The teacher and support staff provide good opportunities for the children to develop their language skills.

Commentary

50. The children start school with good standards of language and literacy. The teacher's high expectations and effective teaching strategies result in good progress with many of the children achieving the early learning goals well before the end of their reception year. Most of the children can form letters correctly and write their name. They make good attempts at spelling words by using the sounds of the letters and the more able can write simple sentences. A good range of books is available to the children and many are beginning to read simple texts. They enjoy well-known stories, such as 'The Three Little Pigs', and are given good opportunities to act out stories as well as recalling them through writing and drawing. This greatly enhances their social confidence as well as their communication, language and literacy skills. Some of the more able children are very articulate. The teacher and class assistants use whole-class sessions and informal chats in group work very effectively to provide challenging opportunities for these children as well as encouraging the less confident to develop their vocabulary. Children are encouraged to give reasons for their choices and to explain answers. Working with the Year 1 pupils in class and with pupils from all the year groups in the weekly Family Group sessions also provides the children with good role models and language stimulation.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children have a good knowledge of number for their age.
- Good teaching ensures that children achieve well.

Commentary

51. Teaching and learning are good. Well-planned lessons include a wide range of interesting activities. As a result, the children achieve well, with many exceeding the outcomes expected for the end of the reception year in mathematical development. Most of the children count confidently and recognise written numbers to 10. They work out one more or less than a given number and are beginning to recognise patterns in number. Some understand the tens and units in a two-digit number. The teacher gives the children good opportunities to practise using their knowledge of number in their play, for example in games using dice. The children are developing a good understanding of how time is measured through sequencing events and recognising the days of the week. They recognise the coins that are in everyday use and some are beginning to solve simple money problems. A key strength of the teaching is the teacher's focused questioning and clear expectations for the reception children within the mixed-age class and the provision of appropriate practical activities and tasks to continually promote learning through purposeful play.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teacher's high expectations and the provision of stimulating learning experiences result in children achieving well.
- Children have good access to computers.

Commentary

52. Although the class timetable is planned on the basis of National Curriculum subjects, the teacher plans activities very effectively to meet the demands of this area of learning of the foundation stage curriculum, as well as the National Curriculum for the Year 1 pupils in her class. Much of the work is based on a well-planned topic that effectively links different aspects of learning under a common theme. In a recent topic, 'On the Move', children showed that they could give and follow directions, both written and using a programmable robot. They identified objects that would float or sink and sorted vehicles that travelled by land, air or sea. The children demonstrated their awareness of chronology by sequencing pictures of cars from different eras and showed good geographical skills in simple sketch maps showing roads, houses and other local features. One able child designed and planned a vehicle which included, 'flames to make you go faster, an umbrella to keep you dry and extra wheels in case the others break.'
53. In the current topic, linked to houses and materials, a very good lesson was seen in which children worked in groups together to construct houses, (for the bears from the story they had been reading), made of different materials. These were then tested for durability, by being drenched in water and being blown on. In this activity, the children investigated different materials and learnt about their properties; they developed first-hand experience of selecting tools and techniques for joining different materials and developed their language in predicting the outcomes of the test and giving their reasons. There was a buzz of excitement and total involvement as each construction was put to the test and children checked whether their predictions were accurate. The children listened to the Christian parable of the houses built on rock and sand, as part of this topic. Again, the teacher used a practical activity very effectively to develop their understanding of the story, before encouraging the children to consider the abstract concept of 'trust'. The outdoor learning environment provides good opportunities for children to explore and investigate objects and features of the world around them. The children are confident about using the computers in the classroom. They access programs, handle the mouse to control the cursor and use the delete and return keys to amend their work. Many children will have achieved the expected goals for this area of learning before the end of the reception year to achieve above average standards.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The outdoor area provides a good range of opportunities for the children's physical development.
- The children handle tools, materials and equipment well.

Commentary

54. By the end of the reception year, the children's attainment overall is in line with expectations. Many of them have good manipulative skills. They hold pencils, crayons and paintbrushes correctly, write and draw in a controlled way and use scissors and glue sticks effectively when cutting and making. In the hall and outside they show good hand/eye co-ordination when playing with balls, hoops and other PE equipment. The much-improved outdoor area now contains a very good range of large fixed equipment for physical and creative activities, such as a wooden train with carriages, a pirate ship and a fort. Playing in this setting enables the children to develop a wide range of physical skills. The children also enjoy using large wheeled toys and balancing equipment which extend their skills further.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The children express themselves well in role play and in art work.
- Some creative activities are over-directed and prescribed by adults.

Commentary

55. Children are on course to attain the expected outcomes for the end of the reception year. They show appropriate skills in drawing and painting and can make reasonable attempts at depicting familiar objects. They are particularly good at mixing paint to achieve a desired colour shade and talk about the colours that they have used. A variety of materials has been used to create three-dimensional art and craft work. However, their opportunities for independence and choice are too limited in some activities because their ideas are too closely directed by the adults working with them.
56. The children sing a range of songs from memory and keep time when clapping a rhythm. They play untuned percussion instruments and can make an informed decision when choosing an instrument to recreate a particular sound. Many children responded very positively when listening to taped music, showing their pleasure in the rhythm and moving in time to it.
57. Role play is used well to develop the children's creative expression. They engage enthusiastically, both inside and outside the classroom, in acting out well-known stories, such as 'The Three Little Pigs' and in making up their own versions of stories. This makes a good contribution to both their speaking skills and their social development as well as to their creative development.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils of all abilities achieve well and standards are high.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Pupils write imaginatively, with poetry being a particularly strong feature.
- The presentation of work is good.
- Pupils apply their good writing skills well in other subjects.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- Marking does not always give pupils a clear picture of how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve.
- The library is under-resourced.

Commentary

58. The pupils' attainment in literacy on entry to the school in Year 1 is above average, although an increasing number of pupils are joining the school in other years with lower attainment. Pupils achieve well at the end of Year 2, where test results show that standards are above the national average and better than similar schools. Good achievement is maintained through to the end of Year 6, where attainment is well above that of all and similar schools. Standards in reading have been better than in writing in the past, but the school's efforts to improve writing have succeeded in bringing standards into line with reading. Overall, standards are higher than at the time of the last inspection. Pupils of all abilities achieve well, including the more able, who reach the above average level, and pupils with special educational needs in English, for whom provision has improved.
59. Most pupils are very articulate and have a good vocabulary. They listen attentively to each other and to the teacher. The teachers generally encourage pupils to contribute orally in lessons and engage in discussion; as a result the quality of speaking is good. There are limited opportunities for drama and debate, so the pupils do not develop the full range of speaking skills as well as they could. Pupils achieve well in reading. They enjoy books and read regularly at home and school. Older pupils keep a record of the books they have read and identify different genres of writing, but are not encouraged to write evaluative comments. This is a missed opportunity to develop their critical faculties. Some pupils use the local library and many have a good range of books by their favourite authors at home that they enjoy talking about and bring into school. The school library does not have sufficient information books and the co-ordinator is working with the county library service to improve the stock. The pupils write well in a variety of different styles. Their writing is often imaginative and shows a good knowledge of grammar, punctuation and spelling. A very good range of work was seen in the pupils' workbooks, class books and in displays around the school. Standards of handwriting are high and pupils take pride in the presentation of their work. The poetry the pupils produce is particularly good, reflecting the enthusiasm and skill with which the teachers promote this aspect of their writing.
60. The teachers' confidence in and enthusiasm for literacy is reflected in the good or better quality in most of the teaching that was seen during the inspection. The lessons include clear instruction in the development of spelling, grammar and punctuation. The teachers often plan open-ended tasks with explicitly high expectations that encourage the older and more able pupils to rise to the challenge of being creative in their written expression. In a very good lesson that was seen, the teacher of the oldest pupils in the school set them the task of writing an information leaflet about their local area. A good range of resources was provided to inform and stimulate the class and the pupils had plenty of opportunities to discuss ideas with

each other. Besides giving individual advice and support, the teacher brought the class together on several occasions to share a particularly good idea or piece of writing. This also gave her the opportunity to review timings and expectations. The pupils were so enthusiastic and involved in the task that an audible groan was heard when the lesson came to an end!

61. Each pupil has individual general targets to improve their writing but the teachers' marking does not often relate to these. Marking is generally positive but is not very helpful to the pupils because it does not indicate how they can make specific improvements to their writing. Assessment is used effectively to track the pupils' progress and demonstrate what they have achieved, but samples are not annotated to show the age and achievement of the pupils, so some of the potential to guide further improvements through this process is lost.
62. Pupils with special educational needs are given good focused support, both within the class and in groups that are withdrawn from lessons to address specific skills. The specialist support that is given to a visually impaired pupil is very effective, and pupils for whom English is an additional language receive good support, enabling them to achieve well. The teachers and very well qualified support assistants work very effectively together to ensure that all pupils are fully included in all learning opportunities. Sign language is used very effectively with an older pupil in the reception class to support oral communication.
63. Subject management and leadership is good overall with systematic monitoring and evaluation procedures. However, the effectiveness of the monitoring is limited because there are insufficient opportunities for evaluating specific initiatives in detail and following up identified issues for improvement.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

64. Pupils apply their good literacy skills well in other subjects of the curriculum. Their reading skills enable them to carry out detailed research from books and the Internet and a good range of writing styles is evident in most subjects, such as note-taking, factual accounts and narratives. A particular feature is pupils' use of poetry to record aspects of their work in humanities, enabling them to write about events and issues from a different perspective. Pupils' oral communication skills enable them to discuss ideas and facts with sensitivity and maturity when given the opportunity. However, a few teachers talk too much to the class, limiting the pupils' opportunities to contribute.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in Key Stage 1, where teaching and learning are good.
- Standards are not high enough at the end of Year 6, especially in using and applying mathematics.
- Recent improvements in provision have led to more rapid progress in lessons.
- Assessments are not used effectively enough in lesson planning.

Commentary

65. Standards are improving at both key stages, but are still not high enough at the end of Year 6. The pupils achieve well in Key Stage 1. Standards at the end of Year 2 have been broadly the same as in reading and writing over recent years. The test results were above average in 2003, but are likely to be nearer average in 2004 because of the lower spread of ability in the cohort. Standards at the end of Year 6 were very low in 2000 and 2001 compared to the high standards achieved in English. The school has recognised this problem and sought help to remedy it. As a result, the management of mathematics has been considerably strengthened,

leading to improved teaching and learning and steadily increasing results in national tests. The results dipped in 2003 because so few pupils achieved the above average Level 5 compared with good results at this level for English. This indicates that more able pupils are not achieving as well as they should, which the inspection confirms is the case.

66. In Years 1 and 2, the pupils build on the good foundation laid in reception to maintain above average standards. The teaching is methodical, but also interesting, so the pupils learn well. They are enthusiastic and know what they are doing and why. They are given a good range of practical tasks to re-enforce good teaching at the beginning of lessons, with a good range of resources used to make the lessons interesting and easier to understand. For example, model figures and sets of plastic cubes were used well in Year 2 to help the pupils to grasp how to do division. The pupils showed a good understanding of how division is linked to multiplication because of good explanations and practical illustrations by the teacher. The pupils' achievements in using this knowledge to solve problems are less secure. Some of them need more support to make progress in this area. They are being moved on to thinking things through in their head a little too quickly as many of them need more time doing things practically and talking about how they do it. Year 1 pupils make good progress in this area because of the way the lessons are organised, with the teacher moving round giving appropriate support to groups as they work. In Year 2, the work set for the pupils is adjusted to suit their prior attainment; for example lower attaining pupils are given prepared sheets to help them with recording their work. However, in the lesson seen, there was insufficient monitoring of the pupils as they worked to identify problem areas as they arose so that they could be dealt with on the spot. A general weakness in the teaching of mathematics in the school is that too much reliance is placed on the teacher teaching the whole class a similar level of work and not enough attention paid to setting challenging tasks and then supporting the pupils appropriately as they work. The teachers lack the confidence to let the pupils try out their own solutions to problems and discussing why they did or did not work.
67. The pupils cover a good range of mathematics in both key stages and teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In Years 3 to 6, progress is steady in number, shape and measure and handling data. The pupils finish most of the work they are set and present it neatly. The more able pupils cover more ground and get most of their work right first time. The teachers' marking in the books is encouraging. It does not, however, indicate what could be done to improve the work, or offer extra challenge to those pupils who appear to be finding the work relatively easy. In some lessons, unsatisfactory learning occurs because the more able pupils are expected to sit through lessons when they can evidently do what is being taught. They are sometimes given slightly more difficult work in the tasks, but are not often challenged to apply the knowledge they have to solve problems and carry out investigations. More of this kind of work has been introduced over the past year, and the pupils have responded well, with interest and enthusiasm. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are now making good progress in using their skills to solve a range of practical problems, such as managing a budget for a sports day. Their attainment is below average, however, because of the previous shortcomings, and their achievement therefore unsatisfactory in this area of mathematics at this stage.
68. The co-ordinator has managed the subject well since she took over responsibility for it a year ago. She has identified where the weaknesses are and has put some measures in place to remedy them. For example, all the teachers now use a scheme of work that is designed to ensure systematic coverage of the National Numeracy Strategy, including practical investigations and problem solving. In addition, time has been allocated for teaching assistants to work with groups of pupils outside the classroom to bring them on in specific areas. Some aspects of these initiatives have been very successful. For example, a few more able pupils in Year 1 are making good progress because the sessions they have with the teaching assistant are clearly building on what they already know and challenging them to do more. In the session that was seen, they were adding and subtracting nine and 11 from any number (less than one hundred) by using their knowledge of how to add and subtract ten. Their understanding was at a similar level to that shown by Year 2 pupils working on the same idea on the same day. In Years 3 to 6, the effect of the improvements is restricted because some of the activities the pupils do are not based on secure assessments of their existing

knowledge and skills. For example, some more able pupils in Years 3 and 4 got very little from a lesson on 'place value' because all the pupils were working from the same page of the workbook despite the fact that some of the Year 4 pupils had done this level of work before and could clearly cope with more challenge.

Mathematics across the curriculum

69. The use and development of mathematics through other subjects is satisfactory. The pupils use their mathematical knowledge and skills to some extent, for example in taking a range of measurements during science experiments and representing their results using graphs and tables. Insufficient thought is given, however, to the levels of mathematical skills that ought to be expected from pupils of different ages and abilities in these tasks. Some opportunities are taken to exploit the mathematical ideas inherent in other subjects, for example in the mathematical nature of Islamic designs in an art and design investigation. However, the potential for exploiting the mathematics in the displays around the school has not been fully exploited.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons cover the full curriculum in science but standards are not high enough at the end of Year 6.
- Improvements to teaching have been made recently but lessons in Key Stage 2 do not cater well enough for pupils of different abilities, particularly the more able.

Commentary

70. Standards in science are broadly average at both key stages. Most pupils achieve satisfactorily, but more able pupils do not achieve well enough in Key Stage 2. Test results at the end of Year 6 have improved steadily over the past three years, but are still too low compared to the pupils' performance in English because not enough pupils achieve the above average Level 5. The overall results were well below those of similar schools in 2003. The main shortcoming is in experimental and investigative science because assessments and planning are not sufficiently geared towards developing these skills. This adversely affects the pupils' understanding in the other areas of science.
71. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The work in the pupils' books and on display shows that the pupils acquire sufficient knowledge in the three main areas of science – the living world, materials and their properties and forces. They also learn the basic skills of scientific investigation. In Years 1 and 2, their achievements in this aspect are satisfactory. The teachers give individual pupils support in writing up their experiments depending on their prior attainment, with more able pupils being expected to be more independent in the way they record their findings. During Key Stage 2, insufficient attention has been paid to maintaining progress in this area of the subject. The pupils learn how to carry out a fair test early on, but do not develop advanced skills because teachers over-direct the lessons. Unsatisfactory learning occurred in two of the three lessons observed in Key Stage 2. In both lessons, the pace was too slow because the teacher kept talking with the whole class for too long. Expectations for Years 3 and 4 pupils to record their ideas and for Years 5 and 6 pupils to explore their own ideas and make accurate measurements were not high enough. The work in the pupils' books confirms that the development of key study skills is not sufficiently encouraged. The pupils are not challenged enough to explain their observations in increasingly scientific terms, for example as they progress through the school, or to undertake

research to confirm their findings. The more able pupils are most affected by this trend because they are capable of a higher level of scientific thought and investigation than they are challenged to achieve.

72. The co-ordinator for science has attended courses to boost her subject knowledge and has recently put in place a useful system to track and support key skills. It is too early to judge the effect of this initiative. The displays around the school include good examples of pupils' work in science, including accounts of a very useful science workshop during which the pupils demonstrated their experiments to parents and other visitors. Discussions with some of the pupils involved showed that they remembered the activities well and could explain some of them in scientific terms. However, further questioning showed that some of the pupils had not been challenged to explore the science behind the projects to the extent they were capable of. A lack of monitoring of teaching and learning and accurate tracking of standards in the past has led to pupils in Years 5 and 6 not being equipped to undertake the level of independent research necessary to reach appropriately high standards.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision is much improved and the pupils are making good progress in lessons.
- Standards are still below expectations overall at the end of Year 6.
- The pupils use ICT regularly to support their learning across the curriculum.

Commentary

73. Very good improvements have been made to provision for ICT since the last inspection. The school now boasts a bright and airy computer suite that is readily accessible to all the pupils. The pupils use the computers in the suite and the classrooms on a regular basis. Their achievements are satisfactory overall. Key Stage 1 pupils achieve well and attain expected standards by the end of Year 2. Progress is now good in Key Stage 2, but the pupils have some lost ground to make up. There is a very wide range of skills, depending on the extent of experience individual pupils have had at home. Overall, their attainment is below average. Their word-processing and data-handling skills still lag behind current expectations and they have no experience of using ICT to measure and record things such as the temperature of a given location. They use computers to explore patterns made by a robot implementing a series of instructions on the screen and use the Internet confidently to access information, but do not yet use email as a regular channel of communication. They have produced graphs using computer programs, but do not use spreadsheets and other data-handling devices to the extent that is currently expected by the end of Key Stage 2. The current rate of progress in lessons is sound, and standards are rising steadily.
74. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory throughout the school, with examples of good learning when pupils are supported by competent and enthusiastic teaching assistants and voluntary helpers. Pupils with special educational needs receive especially good support from teaching assistants to make good progress relative to their prior attainment. Good use is made of teaching assistants, parents and other helpers to support pupils as they learn a wide range of skills on computers. Computers are used well to support pupils with special educational needs, who make good progress. A good example was seen of a teaching assistant using her initiative to take a pupil away from the screen during an exercise to review progress and plan the next steps using a printout of the work so far. The pupil concerned clearly benefited from the change of visual focus and made good gains in his understanding of the scientific classification he was learning about. The teachers have taken good advantage of government-funded training to increase their competence and confidence in the use of computers to aid them in planning and delivering lessons. Some very good use of

downloaded images in an art and design lesson and websites in an ICT lesson was observed, reflecting a good level of confidence and competence on the part of the teacher concerned. Not all teachers exploit the new technology to this extent. The teachers and teaching assistants involved in supporting the visually impaired pupil make very good use of new technology to produce a wide range of tactile Braille sheets that enable the pupil to be fully included in many activities. The co-ordinator is new to subject management responsibilities. She has some good ideas for continuing to develop the subject, but lacks guidance in how to fulfil the monitoring and evaluation tasks inherent in the role.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

75. Pupils use ICT in a wide variety of ways to support their learning in other subjects. This is a very good improvement since the last inspection. They word process their writing in English and other subjects and use computers to produce graphs in mathematics and charts in science, such as the decision trees Years 4 and 5 pupils used to identify Exmoor animals and plants in a science lesson.

HUMANITIES

Lessons were observed in religious education and history and these, together with evaluations of pupils' work and teachers' planning, enable judgements to be made in these subjects. No judgements are reported in geography because no lessons were seen, but examination of pupils' work and teachers' planning indicate that national requirements are met and pupils attain satisfactory standards.

Religious education

Provision for religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils achieve well throughout the school and have good knowledge of world religions.
- Religious education makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Commentary

76. Standards exceed the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, which is a good improvement since the last inspection. The pupils have a good knowledge of the major events from the Old Testament and the life and parables of Jesus, and understand how the moral issues raised apply to their own lives.
77. Year 6 pupils have a good grasp of the major world religions. They can discuss and compare the beliefs, symbols and artefacts of different religions in depth. A very good lesson was seen in Years 5 and 6, in which the pupils used their knowledge of world religions to discuss how the arts can reflect beliefs. In this lesson, the teacher's own good knowledge, and her encouraging and enthusiastic approach, enabled the pupils to have confidence in talking about quite abstract and complex issues. All the religious education lessons observed featured good relationships within the class, pupils' appreciation of each other's opinions and empathy and understanding of other cultures and beliefs.
78. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons are planned well to cover the two year groups in each class. Questioning is used effectively to help pupils recall facts from previous lessons and make comparisons. Good use is made of the local churches and community but there are limited opportunities for visits and visitors from non-Christian faiths. However, the co-ordinator, who provides good leadership of the subject, has tried to compensate for this by developing a good range of resources and artefacts in school.

79. There are good links with other subjects. The pupils have good opportunities to apply their literacy skills in religious education lessons through speaking and listening and in writing. However, the high standard of knowledge and understanding that is evident in oral work in class is not always recorded in written work. The art and music of different religions often form part of a topic focus and some interesting art work has resulted from studying religions such as Islam and Hinduism.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils have good knowledge and understanding of people and events in the past.
- The pupils' good writing skills are applied well in recording work in a range of writing styles.
- The pupils have good research skills, which they apply well.

Commentary

80. Standards in Year 2 and Year 6 are above those expected nationally. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Year 2 pupils have good knowledge of famous people in history and important events. They identify differences in the way we live now and life in the past, for example in Victorian times, and sequence events and artefacts according to their historical age. They use the Internet as well as books for research, and record their findings competently.
81. Older pupils have good research skills and can compare evidence available from the past with that available from more recent times. They apply their high standards of writing well to record work on historical characters and events in a variety of ways, such as notes, factual accounts, stories and poems. Much of this work shows a good understanding of times past and empathy with the people that lived then. More able pupils often bring a high level of general knowledge to lessons when discussing historical events, resulting in better learning throughout the class. The pupils take a pride in their work, which is well presented.
82. The quality of teaching is good. It was satisfactory in the two lessons observed during the inspection, but evidence from pupils' work shows that they learn well over time. Much of the work is planned imaginatively, with the pupils being given good opportunities for research and interpretation. Effective links are often made between history and other subjects. For example, during the term that the pupils studied the Indus Valley civilisation in history, they looked at Hinduism in religious education and used map skills to identify the area. In the mixed-age classes, teachers do not plan sufficiently clearly for meeting the needs of pupils in each year group and of differing ability. As a result, there is not always enough challenge for the oldest and most able in the class to develop higher skills of enquiry and interpretation, although many follow up topics independently at home. Good support is given to pupils with special educational needs to ensure that they are fully integrated and involved in lessons.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

83. Few lessons were seen in this area of the curriculum, but sufficient evidence was gathered to judge provision in art and design, which is of the highest order. Indications are that provision in design and technology, music and physical education fulfils requirements.
84. Too few lessons or samples of pupils' work were seen in **design and technology, music and physical education** to make judgements about standards or the quality of provision. All the subjects are located sufficient time on the timetable, and samples of work in design and technology were seen on display. Year 6 pupils were observed playing a team game in the hall designed to improve their netball and basketball skills. It was impossible to judge their

levels of achievement because they were being taken for the first time by a new teacher who did not know them well enough to ensure that they all had appropriate challenge. The quality of singing heard in assemblies and hymn practices was reasonably tuneful and enthusiastic. The school accepts that provision for music is not as strong as it used to be when the subject was led by a particularly enthusiastic teacher.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils throughout the school achieve well over the full range of studies.
- The high quality of art and design on display in the school adds enormously to the overall ethos of the school and its sense of community.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school.
- The subject is very well led and managed.

Commentary

85. Any visitor could not fail to be impressed by the quality of art and design permeating the displays that brighten and enliven the whole school. From the astonishingly accomplished and extremely well presented landscape paintings by Year 2 pupils to the wide variety of murals and other works of art bequeathed to the school by departing Year 6 cohorts, the work of the pupils reflects the expertise, enthusiasm and commitment of the co-ordinator and staff. Art is seen as a worthwhile endeavour by the school as a whole, and it shows in the quality of work that is produced.
86. Standards are well above those seen in most schools these days in both key stages. The pupils are confident expressing their ideas and feelings in a range of two and three-dimensional media, including paints, pastels, collage and clay. By the time they reach Year 6, the pupils have a rich well of diverse experience and skills to draw on when presented with a particular challenge. The portfolios of work that the school has collected contain examples of very good quality work across the range of media used, with very good examples of research that the pupils had done into the artists that they had studied. The range of colours and textures in both the two and three-dimensional work on show is impressive. However, the work that is saved is not annotated to indicate the pupils' age and is not evaluated for quality. This limits the usefulness of the portfolios in planning for future skills improvement.
87. The quality of teaching seen during the inspection was very good in both key stages. Pupils in Year 2 made very good progress in observational drawing and painting in a very well organised lesson in which the teacher employed voluntary and paid helpers to great effect. Some of the paintings of sections of fruit and vegetables created in this lesson were of the highest quality, and pupils of all abilities produced of their best. They observe closely the patterns and shapes in the samples that they draw and paint from, but are uninhibited in their interpretations of what they see. The resultant pictures are exceptionally mature, therefore, in the range and complexity of colour and form that are represented.
88. The excellent quality of provision in art and design is exemplified by the following exhilarating lesson involving the whole of Key Stage 2.

Example of outstanding practice

The high standards seen throughout the school reflect inspired leadership and excellent teamwork among the staff that enable the pupils to express their creative artistic tendencies to the full.

In an uplifting session seen during the inspection, the co-ordinator for art and design inspired staff and pupils throughout Key Stage 2 to strive towards excellence in the next stage of the design and production of masks that all the pupils had embarked upon. The co-ordinator led the session in a business-like but stimulating way, using a computer to project images of a range of masks from around the world onto the classroom wall to stimulate the pupil's imagination. They gasped in admiration at many of the illustrations shown, and left the introduction brimming with ideas and enthusiasm for their task. In all three classrooms in which they worked for the rest of the afternoon there was a constant buzz of industry and application as staff and pupils worked together to convert the pupils' designs into finished products. The emerging masks clearly reflected the pupils' original ideas, enriched by the wide range of visual stimuli to which they had been introduced.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal, social and health education and citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a well-planned curriculum for personal, social and health education.
- Family Group sessions support and promote the ethos of the school well.

Commentary

89. The caring and supportive school ethos promotes pupils' personal and social development very well. Class rules and expectations of behaviour are made explicit to pupils and are clearly understood. Health education is addressed systematically through other subjects, such as science, as well as in dedicated PSHE lessons. Pupils are encouraged to think about keeping fit and healthy eating and this has been identified as a focus for further development.
90. The curriculum is well planned and led by the co-ordinator. The 'Family Group' sessions enhance the positive ethos of this small friendly school, with pupils from all age groups working together on tasks to develop initiative and teamwork. The representatives from each group, who form the school council, are given further opportunities to show responsibility and leadership and this prepares them well for the next stage of education and for beginning to play a full and responsible role in society.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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