

INSPECTION REPORT

PIPER'S VALE COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Ipswich

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 132836

Headteacher: Mrs Susan Lines

Lead inspector: Mr Andrew Matthews

Dates of inspection: 1 – 4 December 2003

Inspection number: 257199

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	283
School address:	Raeburn Road Ipswich
Postcode:	IP3 0EW
Telephone number:	01473 320413
Fax number:	01473 320414
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Andy Fell
Date of previous inspection:	No previous inspection

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This is a brand new school which opened in September 2002 with the amalgamation of an infant and a junior school which had existed on separate sites. With 305 pupils (145 boys and 160 girls) the school is bigger than other primary schools. Pupils are taught in 12 classes. The great majority of pupils live in the local Gainsborough ward which is one of the most deprived in Suffolk. Free school meals eligibility is well above the national average as is the proportion of pupils with special educational needs. The school has a local education authority area support class of 12 pupils, 10 of whom have statements of special educational needs. The school also has a Star Group which comprises a small group of pupils from some junior classes who are taught separately in the afternoons because of their emotional and behavioural problems. There are seven children in public care. Forty-six pupils are of minority ethnic heritage and seven are at an early stage of English language acquisition. Attainment on entry to the school is very low. The school has a breakfast club and has recently won funding to establish an after-school club. The school is forging close links with the community and has a parents' drop-in facility. The withdrawal of the school's Sure Start funding is threatening some of its community work, which includes family learning programmes and support services. The school has recently won a healthy schools award.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
19410	Andrew Matthews	Lead inspector	Mathematics, information and communication technology, design and technology, physical education, personal, social and health education
19743	Ann Taylor	Lay inspector	
32293	Ian Elkington	Team inspector	English, science, art, music
14842	Stephanie Cook	Team inspector	Foundation stage, geography, history, religious education
2746	Roy Lund	Team inspector	Special educational needs

The inspection contractor was:

Altecq Education Ltd
102 Bath Road
Cheltenham
GL53 7JX

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school, with many significant strengths. It is well regarded by both pupils and parents. Very good leadership and management underpin the developments since the school opened a year ago. Although pupils of all backgrounds and abilities are achieving well and the quality of education is good, standards by the end of Year 6 are well below average in English, mathematics and science. The school gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide very good leadership and management and have built a strong staff team, with a shared commitment to continue the school improvement.
- Although standards in English, mathematics and science are well below average, the quality of teaching is good and this leads directly to pupils working hard and achieving well.
- The school's provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is very good and has a very positive impact on their good behaviour and strong relationships.
- Well-qualified and committed teaching assistants provide very good support in lessons and help to ensure that all pupils are fully included in the range of activities the school offers.
- Teachers assess pupils' attainment well in English and mathematics but do not use the information effectively to set National Curriculum targets and to track pupils' progress towards these targets.
- Teachers mark work conscientiously but in Years 4 to 6 the quality of marking is unsatisfactory because it does not consistently inform pupils how they can improve.
- Not all subjects are given enough time.

The school has only been open for just over a year and this is the first inspection of the new school.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Throughout the school, pupils of all abilities and backgrounds are working hard and achieving well, especially in the acquisition of the skills of literacy and numeracy. In the Foundation Stage, children are making good progress but few will achieve the expected standards by the end of the Reception class except in their personal and social development and their physical development. Standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science are well below average in Year 2 but pupils are achieving well. These pupils achieve very well in religious education and information and communication technology where standards are in line with expectations.

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

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

In the 2003 National Curriculum tests, the results for Year 6 pupils were very low in mathematics and science, being in the lowest 5 per cent in the country. However, this group contained a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and a very high proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs. The present pupils in Years 3 to 6 are achieving well and inspection findings are that, by the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations in information and communication technology, below average in religious education and

well below average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are well supported and also achieve well.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils have positive attitudes to their work, behave well and have good relationships with each other. Pupils arrive punctually for school but their attendance is below average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teachers provide carefully planned lessons that interest the pupils and are well matched to the different abilities in each class. The additional support provided by the teaching assistants is extremely effective in enhancing the learning of pupils of all abilities. The teaching is good throughout the school and consistently good in Years 2 and 3. However, the marking of the older pupils' work does not indicate clearly what they should do to improve.

The school's curriculum is satisfactory and enhanced by a good range of activities in the arts and sport. However, too little time is given to history, geography, art and design. There have been recent improvements in the provision for information and communication technology but these opportunities have not yet been extended across all subjects. The school's links with parents are very good, with parents benefiting from the school's wide range of support and educational opportunities. However, the school is unable to rely on consistent parental support for the pupils' learning at home or at school. There are good links with local schools. The school is very committed to the inclusion of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities, into every aspect of its life. The school's provision for the pupils' personal, social and health education is very good and has a positive impact on its ethos and the way pupils interact.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. The governors are supportive and help to provide the strategic direction for the school. The headteacher leads very effectively and, with the help of the staff team, is managing the ongoing improvement of the school very well.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Both **parents** and **pupils** are happy with the work of the school. The school keeps parents well informed but there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to contribute to the school's development.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- raise pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 2 and Year 6;
- make greater use of the accurate assessment information to set annual targets for individual pupils and track their progress towards these targets;
- improve the quality of marking and the presentation of older pupils' work;
- allocate more time for art and design, history and geography and develop closer links between subjects.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Throughout the school, pupils of all abilities work hard and achieve well, particularly in the acquisition of the skills of literacy and numeracy. Children in the Nursery have settled quickly into the routine of the school and achieve well against their prior attainment. Attainment in English, mathematics and science is well below average through the school. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In the 2003 National Curriculum tests, Year 6 pupils' attainment was well below average in English and very low in mathematics and science.
- Although pupils, including those for whom English is not their first language, are presently achieving well through the school, standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in English, mathematics and science are still well below average.
- Pupils achieve well overall in information and communication technology, although pupils in Year 5 are achieving very well with their standards of work above expectations.
- Foundation Stage pupils are achieving well across all the areas of learning.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those in the area support unit make good progress and achieve well against their prior attainment.
- Year 2 pupils make very good progress in religious education with their attainment in line with expectations.

Commentary

Foundation Stage

1. Although children enter the Foundation Stage with very low standards, they achieve well in all of the areas of learning because of the consistently good teaching and well focused support of the nursery nurse and teaching assistants. Children in the present Nursery group have entered the school with standards that are well below average. Overall the teaching is good and particularly good in their personal, social and emotional development. By the end of the Reception year, the children will meet the expected standards in their physical development and in their personal, social and emotional development. In the other areas of learning children's attainment will be below expectations.

Key Stage 1

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	13.8 (n/a)	15.7 (15.8)
Writing	12.3 (n/a)	14.6 (14.4)
Mathematics	14.0 (n/a)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 31 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. In the 2003 National Curriculum tests, standards at the end of Year 2 were well below average in reading, writing and mathematics, compared to all schools and average in reading and writing and below average in mathematics when compared to similar schools. However, this group of pupils did have a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs, with a significant proportion of these not reaching the expected standards. There is no significant

difference between the attainment of boys and girls, with girls performing better than boys in reading and writing but boys outperforming girls in mathematics.

- Standards for the present Year 2 pupils are still well below the national average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. However, pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and those from different ethnic backgrounds, achieve consistently well because of the challenging teaching and good support. In religious education and information and communication technology, pupils are making good and sometimes very good progress and overall are working at the expected levels.

Key Stage 2

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	24.1 (n/a)	26.8 (27.0)
Mathematics	23.3 (n/a)	26.8 (26.7)
Science	25.0 (n/a)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 49 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

- At the end of Year 6, results in the 2003 National Curriculum tests were well below average in English and very low in mathematics and science, being in the lowest 5 per cent nationally. When compared to similar schools these pupils' attainment was below average in English and well below average in mathematics and science. However, this group of pupils had a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and a very high proportion of pupils with a Statement of Special Educational need. Statistics show that, since Year 2, these pupils made satisfactory progress overall, with good progress in English. Despite the overall well below average attainment, there was no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls or of pupils from different backgrounds.
- Standards for the present Year 6 pupils remain well below average in English, mathematics and science, although there is a higher proportion of pupils now working at the higher levels. The proportions of pupils with special educational needs and statements are similar to last year. Reading and writing skills are well developed through teachers' careful planning, well focused teaching and effective use of the experienced and knowledgeable teaching assistants. Similarly, pupils achieve well in mathematics because teachers plan carefully to ensure lessons build systematically on pupils' previous learning. In religious education, standards are below expectations but in information and communication technology standards are in line with national expectations. Pupils in Year 5 are achieving particularly well in their computer work, with standards that are above expectations for pupils of their age.
- The achievement of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities is good overall, and in line with other groups of pupils within the school. The achievement of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties is very good. Most pupils with special educational needs and disabilities make good progress against the targets in their individual education plans.
- Pupils who do not have English as their first language are well supported and achieve well. Some of these pupils are part of the school's higher achieving groups and are hardworking and confident learners.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils have **good** attitudes and behaviour. Relationships between pupils and staff are **strong**. The school's provision for pupils' moral and social development is **very good**. Attendance is **below average** and punctuality is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy learning and want to do well. There are good relationships between staff and pupils.
- The school promotes very strong moral values which impact positively on pupils' behaviour.
- The school manages the extremely challenging behaviour of a small minority of pupils very well.
- The school encourages very good social development, especially through its high quality personal, social and health education programme.

Commentary

8. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and most enjoy school. They co-operate well and learn to work together. Pupils appreciate the strong and supportive relationships staff offer them.
9. Behaviour is good. The school has worked incredibly hard in this area, especially as there is a significant minority of pupils with very challenging behaviour. The use of exclusions last year was justifiably high, because of the very large variations in behaviour expectations of the two merging schools. The school works extremely hard to keep pupils at school and exclusions have significantly fallen this term. Pupils with challenging behaviour make good progress in the school, because the quality of behaviour management is very good.
10. There were concerns expressed by parents about bullying and poor behaviour. Since the school's opening, successful strategies implemented by the school have led to significant improvements. This was confirmed by several groups of pupils who were interviewed by inspectors during the inspection. Pupils also confirmed that incidences of bullying have fallen noticeably and it is no longer perceived as a problem. Pupils are confident that if problems do arise in the playground, they are quickly dealt with by the vigilant staff. This tallies with inspectors' observations.
11. The school promotes very strong moral and social values. Much of this comes through its very good personal, social and health education programme, which is carefully tailored to the needs of the children. One noticeable aspect of the good behaviour in school is the ordered way children move around the corridors, in almost silence. They know what is expected of them, and are keen and eager to please. The school has a very calm ethos, built on high expectations of behaviour and consideration for each other.
12. The school's strong emphasis on developing pupils' social awareness is continually reinforced during all times that the pupils are in school. It is re-emphasised in the special weekly assemblies through the use of awards, when the headteacher personally congratulates each child nominated. All staff provide exceptionally good role models and take every opportunity to highlight and praise good exemplars amongst the pupils. The development of the pupils' understanding of the importance of education is also regularly fostered. For example, children's parents who had completed some adult learning courses that the school had organised were presented with their certificates in an assembly, where the headteacher praised the parents for their hard work and reinforced the notion that learning continues throughout life.

13. Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, including those in the Star Group¹, feel valued and supported. The pupils with special educational needs and disabilities are involved and motivated in lessons. Some pupils in the Star Group are restless and attention seeking but skilled teaching and good teaching assistant support involves them for most of each lesson. The mainstream class teachers report that the Star Group pupils are already more settled in the mornings, when they join their mainstream classes, than they were at the beginning of term.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	5.9	School data:	1.3
National data:	5.4	National data:	0.4

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

14. Pupils' attendance is below the national average. This is mainly because there is a small minority of families who do not ensure their children attend school regularly.

Commentary

15. Attendance rates are unsatisfactory. Overall, pupils want to come to school because they enjoy it. However, some parents do not understand the importance of regular school attendance despite the school's best endeavours. Unauthorised absence is high because some parents do not always have access to a telephone and do not feel it is important to let the school know why their child is away. The school and the Educational Welfare Officer work well together to support families with significant attendance problems. The school's involvement in a new initiative next term, involving quicker court action, will also bring with it a range of new approaches designed to help improve its attendance figures.

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	258	48	1
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	8	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	11	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0

¹ The Star Group comprises a small group of pupils from some junior classes who are taught separately in the afternoons because of their emotional and behavioural problems

Black or Black British – Caribbean	4	0	0
Black or Black British – African	2	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	11	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	6	3	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	0	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching and learning are **good** overall. There is a **satisfactory** curriculum that provides a broad range of worthwhile and enjoyable experiences. There is a **good** range of additional activities that enrich the curriculum. The provision for pupils who have special educational needs is **good** and meets their needs successfully. Assessment is **good** and helps to ensure teachers' planning challenges pupils of all abilities. The accommodation is **very good** and resources are **satisfactory**.

Teaching and learning

The teaching is **good** and pupils are learning effectively. The quality of assessment of the pupils' work is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good overall and consistently good in Years 2 and 3.
- The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught effectively and enable pupils to achieve well in these subjects.
- Teachers' high expectations for good behaviour and hard work ensure a brisk pace to learning.
- The teaching fully meets the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, and has a positive impact on their learning.
- The effective deployment of teaching assistants makes a significant contribution to the teaching and learning and helps to ensure all pupils are fully included in lessons.
- Teachers plan insufficient opportunities for pupils to use their information and communication technology skills in other subjects.
- Although work is regularly marked, some teachers do not give pupils enough information about how to improve their work.

Commentary

- When the school opened, the local education authority audit showed clearly that there were significant weaknesses in teaching in the junior classes. Changes in staffing, effective monitoring and carefully focused in-service training have led to significant improvements in the overall quality of teaching. The great majority of lessons observed during the inspection were successful in challenging the pupils, stimulating their interest and helping them to make good gains in their learning.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 55 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	10 (18%)	28 (51%)	16 (29%)	1 (2%)	0	0

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

17. In the Nursery and Reception classes, the teachers have a strong appreciation of how young children learn and have created a secure and welcoming classroom atmosphere into which all the children are happily settled and achieving well. The teachers work particularly well with the nursery nurse and the teaching assistants, know their children well and build effectively on the children's previous knowledge and understanding. Teaching is particularly good in personal, social and emotional development, where teachers build very good relationships with the children and make them feel valued and secure.
18. The teaching in Year 1 is good overall, although in one of the classes the teacher does not always successfully challenge the full range of ability in the class. The school has deliberately grouped pupils in Years 2 and 3 into three parallel classes. This works particularly well because the three teachers plan very carefully together and are very skilled at challenging the full range of ability in their classes and ensuring that pupils consistently perform to their best ability. Higher-achieving Year 2 pupils benefit from working with Year 3 pupils and this is resulting in these younger pupils achieving particularly well, such as was seen in a very successful numeracy lesson.
19. The staff represent a strong team, with a consistent approach and high expectations for hard work and good behaviour. The children appreciate the security that this gives them, with some of the older pupils commenting on the great improvement that has taken place in behaviour in lessons, since the school opened. Good quality in-service training and a close working partnership with a local pyramid of schools have given staff good confidence in their teaching of numeracy and literacy. Planning for both these subjects is consistently good, with teachers using questioning most effectively to assess and develop pupils' understanding. Staff have good subject knowledge in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. There have also been good improvements in teachers' subject knowledge in information and communication technology where, with the help of the new co-ordinator, teachers have developed new confidence to teach the increasing range of programs. The teaching of information and communication technology in Year 5 is particularly effective and leading to these pupils achieving above average standards. However, although computers are used effectively to support pupils' work in some lessons, they are not used consistently to support learning across the curriculum and this remains an important area for development. Although teachers plan for the systematic development of pupils' literacy skills in other subjects, their planning for numeracy to be used in other subjects is unsatisfactory.
20. Homework was an issue that was highlighted by parents. Discussions with pupils indicate that they have a clear understanding of when homework is set and its positive impact on their learning. However, not all parents encourage their children to complete this work at home. Class work and homework are carefully marked by teachers, but pupils do not receive consistent information when their books are marked as to how they can improve their work or move towards their individual targets.
21. The effective deployment of the numerous well-trained and experienced teaching assistants adds considerably to the quality of education provided. In some of the classes, work in literacy and numeracy is frequently shared between the teachers and teaching assistants to ensure that pupils of different abilities are appropriately challenged. On other occasions these additional adults are used most effectively to support pupils with special educational needs, most notably in providing additional practice and guidance in the development of their literacy and numeracy skills.
22. Teachers make overall good use of their regular assessments to ensure the work they set builds systematically on the pupils' previous learning. As a result, pupils of all abilities and backgrounds are appropriately challenged by the good teaching, fully included in the lessons and achieve well.

23. Teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities are good overall, in mainstream classes and in the Star Group. The teachers plan effectively with the teaching assistants to include all these pupils, and make good use of the targets in their individual education plans. Most teachers use a wide range of approaches in order to include pupils with special educational needs and as a result of these varied approaches, the pupils are engaged and motivated and most behave well. Whilst teachers are fully aware of their pupils' individual education plan targets, most teachers do not yet systematically monitor the progress of these pupils towards these targets. Teachers and teaching assistants regularly assess these pupils' work, but their marking does not inform pupils how they should move towards their individual targets. The teaching assistants enable these pupils to access the same learning experiences as the other pupils in their classes. They explain, clarify and use modified materials well, and play a significant role in the pupils' good achievement. The assessment of the needs of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities is good overall and the assessment of the needs of the pupils in the Star Group is very good. Teachers use the results of assessments effectively to plan for the individual needs of these pupils and help to ensure all feel confident about their learning.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **satisfactory** overall. It is **good** in the Foundation Stage. The opportunities for enrichment are **good**. The accommodation is **very good** and resources are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The indoor curriculum in the Foundation Stage is rich and varied.
- The curriculum is broad, provides very well for pupils' personal and social development, but not enough time is given to some subjects.
- There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs and pupils with English as an additional language.
- The school promotes pupils' speaking and listening skills and writing well, but does not provide enough opportunities for junior pupils to read, or pupils to solve real-life problems in mathematics.
- A wide range of activities outside lessons, visits and visitors enrich the curriculum effectively.
- The accommodation is spacious and well designed and supports the curriculum well, except for the outdoor area for the nursery which is of a minimal size.
- There is a very generous number of experienced support staff.

Commentary

24. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage is good. There is a good balance between activities chosen by the children and those directed by adults. Children have good opportunities to explore and experiment with a variety of materials and equipment. Many of the activities are based on first-hand practical experiences which are motivating and stimulating for the children. The curriculum provided outside in the nursery is satisfactory but is not as good as the rich curriculum provided indoors.
25. A broad curriculum has been established in Years 1 to 6 through careful planning by subject co-ordinators who have produced the plans and policies for their subjects since the school opened. All co-ordinators plan each year group's half-termly plans and this enables a consistent approach to planning across the school so that pupils build more successfully on the knowledge and understanding gained each year. The curriculum for English and mathematics is satisfactory. There is a strong emphasis on pupils gaining proficiency in literacy and numeracy, particularly in developing their speaking and listening skills, which is leading to improvements in standards. The extra lessons in writing for pupils to write at length are helping pupils achieve better standards but not enough time is devoted to reading in the

juniors. The mathematics curriculum is well organised but there is insufficient emphasis on pupils' investigating mathematical problems or solving real-life problems. Although the school fulfils statutory requirements, the balance between subjects is uneven and not enough time is devoted to cover the programmes of work in art and design, history and geography. To overcome these known weaknesses, the school is rightly looking at developing cross-curricular links when the curriculum is reviewed at the beginning of next term. The school uses literacy well in some subjects, such as history and science, but has not yet established how links can be made between other subjects or how information and communication technology and pupils' numeracy skills can be used more effectively across the curriculum.

26. The personal and social development of pupils is very good and integral to the ethos of the school. Staff know the pupils well and act as very good role models. Pupils are taught good social skills and are, consequently, polite and helpful. Considerable efforts are made to foster pupils' personal development and the school provides carefully considered lessons several times a week. These are having a significant impact on pupils' attitudes and behaviour. The school provides a relevant and well-balanced curriculum for the teaching of health, sex education and drugs awareness.
27. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities is good. Most pupils with special educational needs in the mainstream classes experience a carefully planned curriculum that is not significantly different from other groups of pupils because the whole staff is committed to their inclusion. However, the pupils in the Star Group, whilst joining in the activities with other pupils in their mainstream classes in the mornings, experience a curriculum that is different during the afternoons, when they come together as a separate group. The school has identified these pupils as causing concern because of behavioural difficulties and potential for exclusion from school, or because they have severe attendance problems. Since the group has been established, it has already enabled the pupils to settle more to their mainstream class activities and attendance has improved. It is clear that some of these pupils would have been excluded from school had the school not introduced this proactive intervention from its own resources. This is a very good example of the school's total commitment to inclusion by modifying the curriculum according to the pupils' needs and giving pupils access to an independent counsellor. However, a priority for the school now is to ensure that each pupil in the Star Group has an integration plan to help them re-join mainstream activities when they are ready.
28. A good range of after-hour clubs and activities enriches the school's curriculum. In these groups, pupils develop their skills in team games, music, cooking, reading, art and religious education. Lessons are made more interesting by visitors such as the police and representatives from the RSPCA and by visits to a wide range of places including theatres and museums. The Breakfast Club provides a good opportunity for pupils to socialise and start the day with a healthy meal.
29. Pupils are prepared well for later stages of education. Induction procedures for nursery children are very good and children are well prepared for their move to the Reception class and then to Year 1. Arrangements for transfer to secondary education are good. Accommodation is brand new and well designed, except for the outdoor nursery area which is of a minimal size. Resources are good for the Foundation Stage and satisfactory for other areas of the curriculum. The only exception is in information and communication technology where the school is generously resourced in terms of computers but does not yet have a sufficiently broad range of programs to support the pupils' learning across the curriculum.
30. The accommodation, as befits a new school only a year old, is very good quality. Wise decisions were taken to build spare classrooms to accommodate an expanding role. The siting of a community room was a top priority. The school has further enhanced the building by investing in attractive landscaping, seating and playground facilities. The condition of the field remains a health and safety concern, as there are still many sharp flints present, making it unsafe to use the whole area. Staffing arrangements are very well matched to the needs of

the school. The school has invested in a good number of high quality skilled support staff who make a significant contribution to the quality of education.

31. The staffing for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities is very good: the special educational needs co-ordinator and teaching assistants are well qualified and experienced. The accommodation for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities is very good. There are spacious rooms for the Star Group and for individual support and small group support. The resources for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities are good overall, but the school does not have enough relevant computer programs to support these pupils' learning.

Care, guidance and support

The provision for pupils' care, welfare and safety is **very good**. They are provided with **very good** support, advice and guidance and the very strong caring ethos in the school ensures they are very well looked after. The school involves pupils **satisfactorily** through seeking, valuing and acting on their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are very good procedures to help ensure pupils' safety.
- Pupils receive very good quality support and guidance.
- The school is a calm and peaceful learning environment.
- Staff establish trusting and caring relationships with the pupils.
- There is limited consultation with pupils at present.

Commentary

32. The quality of care, support and guidance is very high. The school is a haven for its pupils, many of whom come from challenging home circumstances. Staff build very strong relationships with pupils, who know there is always someone to take an interest in their lives and concerns. The school does its very best to make sure pupils are able to put external disruptions to one side and concentrate on their learning.
33. The school has built good relationships with a range of health professionals, in order to help pupils understand how best to look after themselves. This is another strong aspect of the personal, social and health education programme. The school recognises and responds positively to particular needs. For example, a breakfast club operates, so pupils whose parents are not around in the morning can get a nourishing breakfast at an extremely reasonable cost.
34. Child protection procedures are very secure and staff very well trained. There is a much higher than average proportion of pupils for whom the school has welfare and care concerns and much of the headteacher's time is taken up in this work. Two other senior members of staff are specially trained to deal with child protection issues. The school has raised serious concerns about the way external authorities respond when it needs help.
35. The school has satisfactory procedures for seeking pupils' views. Only Year 6 pupils are currently involved in a school council and, in a recent meeting, most felt they should widen the base of the council by involving other years. Further debate is destined to take place on the issue before a final decision is made by the pupils themselves.
36. The care, guidance and support offered by the school to the pupils with special educational needs and disabilities are good overall. As a result, the pupils feel safe and valued. They know that, if they feel they have a problem, the teachers and teaching assistants will help and support them, not only in learning but in any personal difficulties which they might have. They

are not treated differently by other pupils and feel part of the whole school community. However, not all pupils with special educational needs and disabilities know their individual education plan targets and those that do are not sure what they have to do next in order to achieve them. Pupils are also insufficiently involved in setting and monitoring their individual education plan targets.

37. All pupils are regularly assessed in literacy and numeracy as they move from the Foundation Stage. Some pupils, whose behaviour is causing concern, are assessed regularly. These assessment processes are successfully identifying pupils who are likely to need help with learning or with their personal and social development. Ongoing assessment is already identifying good progress for the majority of the pupils with special educational needs. The school has done well to introduce these procedures but it is, however, too early to judge their impact on improving these pupils' achievement.
38. The school has identified a number of pupils who are likely to become disaffected or disrupt the learning of others or who might have attendance problems. In response, they have set up the Star Group for pupils in Years 4 and 5 who attend mainstream classes in the mornings and the Star Group in the afternoon. This very worthwhile initiative, which started in September this year, has already enabled most of the pupils to engage in learning in their mainstream groups more effectively. The school has also identified seven pupils who have emotional difficulties and has appointed an independent counsellor for one morning a week to offer them one-to-one counselling. This is another worthwhile initiative which clearly demonstrates the school's commitment to inclusion and to proactive intervention in order to head off disaffection and exclusions.
39. The school liaises effectively with its partner secondary school in order to ensure that pupils with special educational needs and disabilities are well supported when they transfer. The school makes good use of external support agencies and the educational psychology service.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The way the school works to support parents is **very good**. The school has **very good** links with the community and has developed **very good** educational and support programmes for parents, families and the wider community. The school has **good** links with its local pyramid of schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school works very well to help parents develop their skills and engage in additional learning.
- Information in pupils' annual reports is usually good, although some contain too much detail and use of educational jargon.

Commentary

40. Since it opened just over a year ago, one of the school's priorities has been to provide courses to give parents more skills to support their children at home. The work the school does in this respect is very good quality and is a clear sign of its commitment to the community it serves. To aid this work, very good use is made of the community room which the school was determined to have included in the architect's final plans. This community meeting room is a catalyst for strong community links and provides the school with a useful insight into parents' and the communities' needs. The new school, standing as it does in the Orwell Valley, is seen by many locals as a key to reinvigorating the local community. It is becoming a major meeting point for parents and their younger children.
41. As well as organising ongoing courses, 'one off' workshops for parents have proved successful, too. A summer numeracy workshop for parents and children was well attended

and this is a successful formula the school intends to repeat. The partnership between Piper's Vale and Family Learning, funded through the Learning and Skills Council, is working very well. The resulting impact upon parents and children is clear and this work is crucial in the school's drive to raise standards.

42. Last year, the school was very well supported by the 'Sure Start' initiative but, since September, much of the funding has been withdrawn and refocused on community projects elsewhere. The school is determined to carry on many of its projects out of its own budget as it believes they have a noticeable impact on both the parents and children's attitudes to the school. However, 'Sure Start' continues to support the school, albeit at a reduced level.
43. Whilst the school is successfully reaching out to a significant minority of parents through the initiatives described above, there still remain a significant number of parents who, for a range of reasons, will not come in to school, and have little or no contact with teachers. For example, less than half of the parents attended recent parent/teacher interviews which were held over two evenings.
44. Pupils' annual reports are good quality, overall. Teachers generally use clear, every day language, although some educational jargon exists. The layout is quite difficult to read as the print is small because some teachers include a large amount of detail. Links with other schools in the locality are strong and much beneficial development work is carried out with this local support group.
45. Parents and carers of pupils with special educational needs are satisfied with the education their children are receiving. The annual reviews of statements of special educational needs are thorough and give good feedback to parents and carers. However, an important area for development is to ensure that parents and carers are systematically involved in the identification and monitoring of their children's individual education plan targets.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. The governors are effective. The headteacher leads the school very effectively and, with the help of the staff team, manages the ongoing development of the school very well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides very good leadership and management and has a fierce determination to make this a fully inclusive school.
- Governors are well informed and work closely with the school.
- The closely-knit staff team works effectively in the day-to-day management of the school.
- Subject co-ordinators lead their subjects well and monitor pupils' attainment carefully.
- The arrangements for supporting new teachers and developing the skills of other school staff are good.
- Although staff know the pupils well, the systems for tracking their progress through each year are not sufficiently robust.

Commentary

45. The governors have a range of experience and expertise and provide good support for the work of the school. They are ably led by an experienced chair of governors. Governors receive very detailed information from the headteacher and have a secure appreciation of the strengths of the developing school and the areas that need to be improved. Many are in regular contact with the school, with some carrying out more formal monitoring visits. All statutory duties are carried out diligently.

46. The headteacher has provided very good leadership and management since the school opened. She has a very strong and effective partnership with her deputy headteacher and together they have brought about developments which have significantly improved the school during its first four terms. The team work of the staff is very good and all are determined to work together for continued improvements. This is a very reflective school, unafraid to take difficult decisions but always putting the interests of pupils first by ensuring all are fully included in its activities. Initiatives such as 'Club 15' and the afternoon 'nurture group' for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties clearly demonstrate the school's commitment to inclusion. Money is carefully targeted to initiatives and the school has made very good use of 'Sure Start' funding, particularly in the development of its links with the community.
47. The management of the school is good. All members of staff have a secure understanding of how the school is expected to run from day to day and all carry out school policy in a consistent fashion. For example, the agreed strategies for pupils' behaviour management are leading to an ethos of respect for the individual and for the rules of the school. The individual talents and expertise of subject co-ordinators are leading to a consistency in planning and monitoring, which feed in to a clearly focused school improvement plan.
48. There is strength in the school's arrangements for performance management. All teachers and non-teaching staff have a good understanding of their individual targets and the way in which these relate to the school improvement plan. The regular monitoring of lessons by senior members of staff identifies areas that need to be developed. There is effective support for the two newly qualified teachers and for the ongoing development of the skills of more experienced staff.
49. The leadership and management of the special educational needs co-ordinator are good. She demonstrates very good leadership and has a clear vision for development, based on sound, inclusive principles. She gives good support to teachers through focused advice and guidance and an ongoing programme of training. The identification, assessment and support of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, particularly those with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, are well managed by the special educational needs co-ordinator. Since she started in school in May this year, she has made remarkable progress in developing her department, which was clearly unsatisfactory before her arrival.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	956,012	Balance from previous year	0
Total expenditure	931,415	Balance carried forward to the next	105,897
Expenditure per pupil	3,291		

50. Over £80,000 of the above carry-forward were surpluses from Orwell Junior School and Raeburn Infant School which were closed at the end of the summer term 2002, and amalgamated into the new Piper's Vale Community School. The school has an above average budget because of its new school status. This money has been used very effectively to resource the school. The school successfully links spending to the school improvement plan in providing financial support for the school's key priorities. The school is making very good use of its above average carry forward in keeping class sizes low and providing a high level of teaching assistant support.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURE

The area support unit

51. The school has a local education authority area support unit for 12 junior-aged pupils with statements of special educational needs. The school is very committed to the unit as part of the school's overall provision for pupils with special educational needs and gives good support to its work.
52. Since the arrival in post of the current special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) in May this year, progress made in the organisation of special educational needs in the school has been very good. There are still areas which need further development, but the SENCO has identified most of these already, in her development plan. In order to improve the provision for pupils in the unit the school should now:
 - produce inclusion plans for these pupils;
 - systematically monitor the teaching of these pupils;
 - use information and communication technology systematically in order to enable these pupils to have greater access to the curriculum.
53. The pupils in the support unit achieve well and make good progress against the targets in their individual education plans. The pupils are developing their speaking and listening skills well and their progress in developing their reading and writing is good. In personal, social and health education and physical education, which they undertake in mainstream classes, their achievement matches that of other low-attaining pupils in the groups. One Year 6 pupil attends mainstream mathematics classes and is making good progress.
54. Relationships are very good and the pupils feel valued and supported. Most pupils are interested and involved in their lessons and most behave well. This is because of good group management by the class teacher and teaching assistant and because of well-chosen, practically-based activities. Most pupils co-operate well with each other and the staff. They understand the system of rewards and sanctions and believe it to be fair and supportive.
55. The teaching in the support class is very good. The pupils' work is well planned, with good links to the pupils' targets in their individual education plans. However, not all pupils are aware of their targets and what they have to do in order to meet them. The activities in lessons are well chosen with a range of activities that stimulate and involve the pupils. There is a good emphasis on basic literacy and numeracy skills. However, the use of information and communication technology to support pupils' learning is insufficiently developed.
56. The assessment of learning and personal and social development in the support unit is good. Marking is regular and consistent and also gives feedback on what has been learned. Work is continually and effectively assessed against the pupils' National Curriculum levels and the pupils' targets in their individual education plans.
57. The curriculum undertaken by the pupils in the support unit is good overall. The class teacher makes every effort to link the pupils' work with what is going on in mainstream classes, and pupils attend mainstream lessons in personal, social and health education, information and communication technology and physical education. Further integration would be assisted if each pupil had an 'integration plan', so that they could join their peers in mainstream classes when they were able to cope with specific subject areas. The special educational needs co-ordinator oversees the work of the support group and provides good leadership and management.

An example of very effective practice: The school's work with the local community

One of the major influences on parents is the well established and flourishing Family Learning Group. Here, parents meet in a relaxed and supportive atmosphere whilst pre-school children are looked after in a crèche. Parents are assured of a friendly welcome and quickly gain in confidence as they learn about the school's new approaches to literacy and numeracy. Work is carefully linked to what the children are doing in class through close communication between the course tutors and teachers. Both organisers and parents can see the clear gains in progress made for everyone involved. Parents speak positively about the difference these courses have made to their lives and in the way they can support their child's learning at home.

Many mothers have gained qualifications in numeracy, literacy and information and communication technology. Numbers attending courses, some of which demand a considerable commitment in terms of time, are growing. Future plans involve visiting the local college to gain information about further courses available for some parents who wish to further their own education. As a result of these learning groups, some parents have found employment in school and some have put themselves forward as parent governors. Many agree it has helped their confidence and given the area an improving sense of community.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good and children achieve well. The children enter the Reception class at the start of the term they are five, and at the time of the inspection there were 15 children in this class. The nursery caters for 44 children on a part-time basis. Attainment on entry to the nursery is very low according to the local education authority's (LEA) baseline assessment. All the children achieve well because the teaching is consistently good and the curriculum is mostly rich and varied. Children with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language are well provided for, well integrated into the activities and achieve well. The provision is managed effectively, and the children's progress is carefully monitored and assessed. There is a good ratio of adults to children and all staff work very well in teams. There are very good arrangements for induction to the nursery and for children to transfer to the next class. The accommodation is mostly very good but the outside areas for both classes are not large. The outside curriculum for nursery children is satisfactory but more use could be made of this area.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weakness

- The teaching is very good and the children achieve very well.
- Children have very good attitudes to their tasks and activities, and behave very well by the time they reach the age of five.
- A warm, secure atmosphere is generated in which the children feel valued.
- Teachers do not encourage children enough to take turns to answer questions and listen to the ideas of others.

Commentary

60. By the end of the Reception year, children achieve the Early Learning Goals² because of the high quality experiences they receive. The teachers and the assistants have very good relationships with the children and make them feel valued. The staff ensure that children quickly learn the correct way to behave and the routines of the classes. There are very good opportunities for children to develop self-confidence and extend their relationships. Children with speech difficulties, special educational needs and those with English as an additional language receive sensitive and effective support. Staff take every opportunity to promote good manners, politeness and consideration for others and children in the nursery try hard to please. Nursery staff deal sensitively but firmly with those children who display immature behaviour. Staff encourage children to be independent in the choices they make and children concentrate and work unsupervised for extended periods, behave very sensibly and share resources in the Reception class. They fully understand and respond positively to the need to take turns with games and equipment. The Reception class children try very hard to do their best in everything they do. However, staff do not consistently ensure that children put up their hands to answer questions when they are together in large groups. As a result, teachers miss valuable assessment opportunities when more than one child answers at a time.

² Early learning goals - these are expectations for most children to reach by the end of the Foundation Stage. They refer mainly to achievements children make in connection with communication language and literacy; mathematical development; and personal, social and emotional development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical and creative development. There are many goals for each area of learning, for example, in language and literacy pupils should be able to write their own name and other things such as labels and begin to write simple sentences.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good with teachers and support staff taking every opportunity to develop the children's language skills.
- Children achieve well.

Commentary

61. Children start school with poor speaking skills. By the end of the Reception year, they do not reach the expected standards, despite their good achievement. The teachers provide a good range of stimulating and varied activities for children to enjoy. The organisation of the adults ensures that children often receive individual attention in developing their language skills. Staff in the nursery are quick to step in when they see a need to extend children's vocabulary and writing skills. Activities are carefully planned to provide the next step in learning. Staff develop children's language through very good questioning, extending children's answers and by encouraging their ideas and opinions. Teachers provide good opportunities for children to learn to read and write, and are skilled in promoting children's language through all the other areas of learning. Children respond well to the good teaching and are attentive listeners. Children are particularly enthusiastic about writing and in the Reception class try very hard to make sentences and form their letters correctly. Staff use a wide and exciting variety of resources to make learning fun for children.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff take every opportunity to promote children's knowledge of numbers.
- The teaching of mathematical development is good.

Commentary

62. Teachers organise a careful range of opportunities for children to gain confidence in mathematics. Staff are skilled in identifying opportunities for children to count when children are engaged in their activities. Staff in both classes are good at extending children's understanding of numbers by asking questions in different ways when working with small groups. This means that children have to think deeply and are helped to achieve more. Staff make particularly good use of the role-play areas, such as the 'The Three Bears' Cottage' and the 'Post Office', to promote children's understanding of the relative size of items and their knowledge of money. Children's knowledge and understanding of mathematics are built systematically through the year and they achieve well. However, despite the good teaching, the majority of children are not expected to reach the expected standard by the end of the Reception class.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching is good.

- Children are developing confidence in using computers.
- Teachers provide a good range of opportunities for children to develop their skills.

Commentary

63. It was not possible to observe all aspects of this wide area of learning in both classes during the inspection. However, the work seen indicates that, by the end of the Reception year, children will be unlikely to reach the expected standard, despite their good achievement. Children have free access to computers in the nursery and good access to them in the Reception class. This means that children are competent users of the mouse, and master the skills of 'clicking' and 'dragging' from an early age. Computers are used well to reinforce key number concepts and letter sounds. There is a well-planned and balanced programme of work over each week to tackle the different aspects of this area of learning. Often the work planned is linked well to work in other areas of learning. For example, children in the nursery made porridge which they enjoyed eating and this experience helped to improve their dialogue when playing in the role-play area. Teaching is good and staff in both classes support children very effectively in understanding their new learning. There are good opportunities for children to explore scientific concepts, for instance the properties of magnets, and to observe the natural world. Staff use this area of learning well to promote children's language and numeracy.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good** overall.

- The teaching is good in the Reception class.
- Nursery children do not spend enough time outside and need access to a wider range of resources.

Commentary

64. Children move confidently, with good control and co-ordination in the Reception class because they are taught well. In their movement lessons in the hall, children listen carefully and respond quickly to the teacher's commands to stop and start and to find a space. They hop, skip, and run fast with enthusiasm and vigour. Both classes have regular access to outdoor areas and children in the nursery use their wheeled toys confidently. However, children in the Nursery only make satisfactory progress because they do not spend enough time outdoors and the range of resources, although satisfactory, is not as extensive as it could be. Staff in both classes support children effectively and promote their learning in the outside sessions. Children manipulate tools and small equipment reasonably competently for their age because they are taught the requisite skills. Children are on track to achieve the expected standards in physical development by the end of the Reception year.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

The provision for creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Role-play areas are used well to encourage imaginative activities and language development.
- Teachers provide good opportunities for children to explore and experiment with a variety of materials.
- The teaching is good.

Commentary

65. The teaching of creative elements of the curriculum is good and children achieve well. Children in both classes have plenty of opportunities to engage in role-play in, for example, 'The Three Bears' Cottage' and in the 'Post Office'. Their learning and language are extended very well when adults interact with them in these areas. These areas are popular with the children, especially in the nursery, where children show by their talk that they know the story of 'The Three Bears' and how to make porridge. Children often choose to create their own artwork or models using a variety of materials available to them. They enjoy singing and their voices are clear and bright. Children use a variety of small percussion instruments satisfactorily and the teacher makes the learning fun. However, the majority of children will not achieve the expected standard by the end of their Reception year.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

English

Provision in English is **good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well below national averages in Year 2 and Year 6.
- The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is good overall.
- Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is not their first language, are well challenged and achieve well.
- Assessment procedures and the tracking of pupils' progress in English are being well developed, and the school is well placed to use these effectively for targeting additional individual support.
- The subject is well led and managed.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to speak and listen.
- Presentation and marking, particularly in Years 4, 5 and 6, are not good enough.
- There are not enough opportunities for older pupils to read in school.

Commentary

66. Although standards in Year 2 and Year 6 are well below national expectations, pupils make good progress in the Years 3 to 6 because the teaching is good. Standards are well below average at the end of Years 2 and 6 because of the very low attainment when the pupils start in school and the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. However, the school makes good provision for the wide range of ability and all pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. Pupils for whom English is not their first language are well supported and challenged, and achieve well.
67. The school has worked hard to improve pupils' speaking and listening skills, which are poor on entry to the school. Areas have been created throughout the school with themes such as 'Jungle' and 'Space', where pupils listen to stories, talk and write, in order to develop their language skills further. Regular additional lessons for speaking and listening are having a positive impact on pupils' progress in this area. Good questioning techniques are used by all teachers in these sessions. Guest speakers enhance the school's provision. For example, during the inspection week, a speaker from a national charity made a presentation to a Year 6 class. Increased use of drama is an area to develop to enhance pupils' skills further. There are good opportunities for pupils to work in pairs or groups, and this gives them the opportunities to listen to each other's points of view and test out new ideas. As a result, pupils who speak English as an additional language are given good opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills. Information and communication technology is used effectively to develop the English skills of these pupils. Resources in Years 1 and 2/3 are used particularly

well. For example, pupils use classroom word displays and word mats to help them work independently.

68. Standards in reading are well below average through the school. A significant proportion of younger pupils find reading difficult and do not have the appropriate skills to decode unfamiliar words. Progress is also hindered by some of these pupils having poor knowledge of initial sounds or letter blends. The school has recognised this fact and is paying greater attention to phonics work. The school is working hard in a number of other ways to improve pupils' reading skills. Teachers set clear expectations that reading books are taken home and read regularly. However, opportunities for reading at home with parents or carers are not always taken and individual progress in reading is, as a result, not always as good as it could be. A significant proportion of pupils who were interviewed in the older classes felt frustrated at the shortage of time they have for personal reading and the school may wish to re-evaluate its provision in this area when the subject is reviewed next term. Guided reading takes place in classes throughout the school. Good use of teaching assistants in these sessions helps pupils to develop their reading skills and discuss and analyse the texts. Pupils use the school library, which is well stocked. In interviews with inspectors, older pupils commented that they would like more 'quality time' within school to read, and this would be a useful area for the school to explore with the school council.
69. Standards in writing are well below the national average in both Years 2 and 6. Lower attaining pupils do not have the necessary basic skills in order to move forward. As a result, writing has been correctly identified by the school as a key area for development. It correctly recognises that some opportunities have been missed to develop pupils' writing in other subjects and this is impacting on pupils' achievement. Extended writing sessions have begun to address identified weaknesses in this area. For example, there has been a positive impact in report writing in science. Writing skills have been further developed by a writer in residence who has worked in the school. Recently, he has been working with the pupils on developing poetry skills.
70. A number of pupils throughout the school have significant gaps in their knowledge of basic punctuation, grammar and spelling. Teaching assistants give good support to these pupils in their carefully planned work and this enables them to achieve well. More able pupils are satisfactorily challenged, although this could be developed within lessons by allowing further opportunities for developing skills using relevant computer programs. Pupils' progress in English is assessed using a graded criteria system. Teachers use the assessment criteria to set individual learning targets for pupils and allow them to think about their future learning. However, pupils are not always sure of their individual targets or how they can move towards them.
71. The quality of marking in Years 1, 2 and 3 is good. Written comments move the pupils on in their learning by making them think about ways in which they can improve their work. However, the quality of marking in Years 4, 5 and 6, whilst conscientiously carried out, does not consistently inform pupils how they can improve their work. The quality of presentation of work in these years is also untidy, with pupils showing little regard for the school's handwriting scheme. Homework is set regularly, but not all pupils complete the tasks and opportunities to consolidate some pupils' learning are lost.
72. The subject leader is a good role model for all staff. Her subject knowledge is good, and she fully understands what the current issues are within the school, and what is needed to bring about further improvement. She is a quality practitioner, offering clear leadership and effective management of the subject area. The literacy governor has a good overview of the strengths and weaknesses of English within the school, and has monitored the subject closely. A principal area for the school to develop is to build on its good assessment in the subject and to use this information to track pupils' progress through each year to ensure all pupils achieve appropriately.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

Opportunities to develop pupils' basic literacy skills across the curriculum are being developed and are satisfactory. There are good opportunities for group work and speaking and listening in subjects such as science and mathematics. Opportunities for using computers to support the pupils' work in English are developing, in areas such as report writing, stories and poetry. The impact of extended writing sessions is being seen in improvements in other subject areas.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good quality teaching and effective use of teaching assistants help pupils achieve well.
- Pupils make good progress in their number work but standards in the subject are well below average at the end of Years 2 and 6.
- The subject is well led and managed.
- Assessment is good but tracking of pupils' progress lacks rigour.
- Teachers' marking does not inform pupils sufficiently how to improve.
- Opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills are limited.

Commentary

73. Standards are improving in mathematics because the planning for numeracy is now well established and teachers are using assessment effectively to plan work for the pupils. In the national tests in 2003, standards were very low by the end of Year 6, being in the lowest 5 per cent in the country. Evidence from the inspection shows that attainment is improving and is now well below average, but an increasing proportion of pupils in the present Year 6 are achieving the expected standards, with a higher proportion working at the higher levels. The school's determination to improve standards at the end of Year 6 is clearly shown in the extra teaching support pupils receive. The setting by ability of Year 6 pupils is resulting in smaller groups of pupils whose teachers are able to target more accurately. This is particularly the case for the higher achieving pupils who work with a teacher and those with special educational needs, who work with a very experienced teaching assistant.
74. Pupils are achieving well in other year groups because lessons are planned carefully and the great majority of pupils are engaged and enthused by the activities. This was particularly evident in one of the Years 2/3 classes where pupils were particularly excited about their increasing confidence in manipulating numbers. Whilst the school has rightly concentrated on the development of pupils' number skills, pupils' ability to use and apply number in different situations is not as well developed. The co-ordinators are aware of this and it is being addressed in the present school development plan. The current Year 5 pupils are making very noticeable progress in all aspects of their number work. In the two Year 5 classes and the Years 2/3 classes, the teachers make good use of information and communication technology to further develop pupils' mathematical skills. The use of computers in other mathematics lessons is unsatisfactory because the school does not yet have a sufficient range of relevant programs. Teachers mark pupils' work conscientiously, but teachers of the older pupils do not consistently inform pupils what they need to do to improve their work further or move towards their personal targets.
75. The subject is well led and managed by two co-ordinators. Resources are used effectively. Assessments are carried out regularly by teachers, but the process for recording these assessments needs refining to make it more manageable. The results of assessments give teachers a clear indication of individual pupils' attainment and of the class's strengths and

weaknesses. However, the information is not used rigorously enough to track pupils' progress through a year to ensure that all of them are achieving appropriately.

Mathematics across the curriculum

There is appropriate use of mathematical skills in subjects such as science and design and technology. However, the school has not yet addressed the planned development of pupils' mathematical skills in other subjects. As a result, the present provision is unsatisfactory as pupils are missing opportunities to practise and consolidate the use of some basic mathematical processes.

SCIENCE

Provision for science is **good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well below national expectations in Year 2 and Year 6.
- Teaching, learning and achievement is good throughout the school.
- The subject is well led and managed and teaching assistants are effectively used in lessons.
- Assessment is not used effectively to track pupils' progress through the school.

Commentary

76. Standards are currently well below average at the end of Year 2, as they were in last summer's assessments. However, due to good teaching, pupils achieve well in the infants because of the good emphasis on oral and investigative work. Pupils carry out a range of investigations which clearly interest and motivate them. For example, the pupils were given the challenge of finding out which toy car would travel the furthest distance after moving down a ramp. Pupils made predictions, carried out fair tests and recognised and explained patterns. Opportunities for group work, well assisted by input from knowledgeable teaching assistants, extend pupils' speaking and listening skills and help to develop their scientific thinking and learning further.
77. By Year 6, pupils' attainment is well below average and has improved since last year when attainment of the oldest pupils was very low. However, due to the good quality of teaching, pupils of all abilities and backgrounds are achieving well. The coverage of the subject is broad and balanced and teachers' planning across the school makes good provision for pupils of all needs and backgrounds. For example, less able pupils sometimes record their investigations in a picture format.
78. Teaching is good through the school because pupils' previous learning is effectively built upon, and a variety of teaching methods is used to sustain the pupils' interest and motivation. The less able pupils are supported well by the teaching assistants throughout the school. In a good Year 5 science lesson, pupils used torches to simulate sunlight, and were challenged to work out whether it was daytime or night time in particular countries, with the more able pupils being further challenged to work out the time differences between the countries. Pupils enjoy practical activities and work well together in groups. However, pupils do not always make predictions before starting their investigations and, when this occurs, valuable assessment opportunities are missed by the teachers.
79. Weak literacy and oracy skills mean that some pupils are not always able to explain or write down their ideas or findings clearly. However, the work on extended writing is developing the written skills of pupils, whilst opportunities for working with adults and in small groups are

enabling speaking and listening skills to be developed. Satisfactory use of literacy skills is made, although the presentation of work in Years 4, 5 and 6 is often untidy.

80. Computers are used satisfactorily in science to present information, as part of investigations and to research information from the Internet. Although individual output of work varies, work in Years 1, 2 and 3 is marked helpfully, with teachers' comments assisting individual pupils to move on in their learning and extend their thinking. Marking is not as good in Years 4, 5 and 6 where pupils are not consistently informed how to improve their work.
81. The subject is led and managed well by the three subject leaders, who support one another effectively. The development plan for science is suitably detailed and work is currently underway to refine medium term planning. The school is now beginning to work towards developing an improved recording system for science that will allow teachers to track pupils' progress on an individual basis.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well and standards are above average in Year 5.
- The computer suite is used well to teach skills.
- Teaching assistants are knowledgeable and give good support to the development of skills in lessons.
- The co-ordinator is knowledgeable and leads the subject well.

Commentary

82. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds achieve well and, at the end of Year 2 and Year 6, their attainment is in line with national expectations. Standards in Year 5 are above expectations due to the particularly good skills of the co-ordinator who is also a Year 5 teacher. Pupils cover all aspects of the curriculum, although they do not make enough use of computers to support their learning in other subjects.
83. The quality of teaching is good overall, with some very good teaching in the whole class sessions in the computer suite. Teachers show good confidence in teaching the subject and have a good working knowledge of the programs they use. Much of this is due to the knowledge and support of the co-ordinator who ensures that teachers have the requisite skills and knowledge to teach the lessons in the medium term planning which he personally produces. This system works particularly well and was the principal reason for the good quality teaching observed during the inspection. Lessons are also successful because pupils have a clear idea of what they are going to learn and are well supported by the knowledgeable teaching assistants who give good support to individuals. Teachers use questioning effectively to assess pupils' understanding and extend their learning. As a result, pupils learn quickly in lessons and are confident with the programs they use.
84. Pupils enjoy computer lessons because of the good quality teaching and the generous provision of computers in the suite. Pupils in Year 2 are developing good data handling skills and use their knowledge of control competently to control the floor turtle. There are particularly good links with numeracy when higher-achieving pupils in Year 2 use their knowledge of degrees to program the movements of the turtle. High quality work on data handling and design were observed in Year 5. For example, the sailing boat pictures where pupils had combined and overlaid shapes and used colours sensitively were of stunning quality. Pupils from the area support class regularly join their peer groups for lessons and

achieve well because of the careful planning, good teacher assessment and good quality support.

85. The co-ordinator leads the subject well. His expertise is well used to support his colleagues in planning and training. He does not at present have sufficient time to monitor teaching and learning in computer lessons and, as such, there are missed opportunities for him to share his teaching expertise across all the classes.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

The school has an appropriate curriculum for all years, but recognises that its main priority now is to develop the use of computers to support pupils' learning across all subjects. Some good use of computers was seen in literacy and numeracy. However, until the school acquires a wider range of programs that are directly related to pupils' learning, this aspect of computer work will remain unsatisfactory.

HUMANITIES

86. In humanities, work was sampled in history and geography, with only two lessons seen in history in the infants. It is therefore not possible to form an overall judgement about provision in these subjects. Evidence from pupils' work indicates that standards are broadly average in Years 1 and 2 in history. The teaching was good or better in lessons observed and, as a result, pupils' understanding and knowledge of the Great Fire of London was good. Little work was in evidence this term in either history or geography but in discussions with Year 6 pupils their understanding of the use of historical enquiry was sound, though their recollection of key concepts learned in previous work was limited. In geography, Year 6 pupils had little knowledge of how to use an atlas or an understanding of the use of scale and co-ordinates, and their knowledge of places was limited. The school does not have suitable atlases for older pupils to use.
87. Work in both subjects is planned appropriately by the subject managers into units of work which are taught in blocked periods of time. However, not enough time is devoted to the subjects. As a result, work is not covered in sufficient depth, which explains why pupils' recall of their work is hazy. There are missed opportunities for teachers to make links between subjects. For example, scale and co-ordinates could be taught in mathematics. Marking does not consistently provide pupils with enough information about how to improve their work and work of the older pupils is often poorly presented. Subject managers are active in their monitoring of teachers' planning of lessons and pupils' work, but this is yet to have an impact on standards.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils do not reach the expected standards of the agreed syllabus at the end of Year 6, but standards are improving.
- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' personal and social development.
- The subject manager has a good understanding of what needs to be improved.

Commentary

88. Standards are broadly in line with the expectations of the Suffolk Agreed Syllabus at the end of Year 2 where pupils are achieving well. Standards are below average at the end of Year 6 where pupils have too much ground to make up to attain the expected standards. Pupils who

have special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language achieve similarly to their classmates. There is evidence that standards are improving, and currently pupils are achieving satisfactorily. In some lessons pupils achieve well.

89. Teaching is satisfactory overall but was good or better in the lessons observed during the inspection. By Year 2, pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the natural world and how it affects people's lives. They know about different festivals and why Christians celebrate Christmas. Pupils in Year 6 know how people with different faiths worship and have some factual knowledge of Christianity and other major faiths, but this knowledge is superficial. They do not have enough knowledge to understand other people's beliefs and values. This is partly because they have gaps in their knowledge and partly because not all lessons planned from the agreed syllabus in every year group include sufficient religious education content for them to make connections. In the best lessons teachers are resourceful in building on pupils' own experiences and relating these to other people's religious beliefs. Teachers present lessons in a lively and interesting way and provide motivating activities for the pupils, who have good attitudes to the subject. Pupils are given plenty of opportunities to discuss their ideas and opinions and the subject makes a good contribution to English and to pupils' personal and social development. Many of the discussions and the activities pupils undertake are significant in promoting their moral and social development. Pupils enjoy their lessons and mostly have good attitudes to their work. The marking of work by teachers does not usually show pupils how they could improve their work and learning. Pupils visit churches but opportunities are missed to visit other places of worship where people of different faiths gather.
90. The subject manager is relatively new to the school and gives satisfactory leadership and management to the subject. She has written a policy, planned the units of work carefully and monitored teachers' lesson planning and pupils' books. She is evaluating how successful the plans are and is aware that standards by Year 6 could be higher and that the presentation of pupils' work needs to be improved.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Not enough lessons were seen in art and design, design and technology and music to make an overall judgement about provision for these subjects. However, samples of pupils' work were examined in art and design and design and technology.

91. Although **art and design** does not have a high profile throughout the school due to other recent priorities, pupils enjoy the practical nature of the subject and participate well. The art and design curriculum is appropriately planned using national guidance. However, the co-ordinators are aware that the review of the planning next term will highlight a shortage of time to teach all aspects of the subject in depth. Training has taken place for staff to help them teach the units of work effectively, resulting in sound staff knowledge of the subject.
92. The portfolio of pupils' work indicates that pupils are achieving satisfactorily. A present weakness is a lack of individual pupil sketchbooks which denies pupils opportunities to plan their work which makes it difficult for the co-ordinators to track the pupils' progress. Of particular value, has been the work of an artist in residence, who has worked with the more able pupils. The impact of this has been a display of tile work in the school's entrance hall. The school provides an art club, where pupils have the opportunity to further develop their skills in the subject. Computers have been successfully used to produce artwork about such subjects as sunsets and fish tanks. The two subject leaders are enthusiastic and are rightly keen to develop the subject further, particularly for the older pupils. Their monitoring is good. They check teachers' planning as well as the outcomes of art lessons, and look closely at the coverage of artwork within the school, with regard to progression and continuity.
93. In **design and technology**, pupils from Year 2 onwards have a clear understanding of the importance of planning. This was clearly seen in pupils' work on making a fruit salad as part

of their healthy eating project. Much of the success of this project was due to the pupils spending a whole day in the making and evaluation processes. Teachers successfully developed pupils' technical vocabulary, such as 'peeling' and 'coring' and the evaluations ensured pupils reflected on the look and the taste of their finished products. Good use of a focused sewing task enabled Year 5 pupils to produce some good quality soft toys. Planning identified resources and techniques to be used, whilst evaluation showed pupils had a good understanding of the importance of the strength of a seam for their stuffed animals. The co-ordinator produces good quality medium term planning for the teachers and evaluates pupils' work at the end of each topic. Information from these evaluations is being used for the curriculum overview as part of the new school improvement planning. The co-ordinator is rightly planning the development of a skills record sheet which will follow pupils through the school.

94. In singing, pupils' standards meet national expectations. Pupils sing with enthusiasm and try hard to follow the melody and sing in tune. Pupils try to memorise the words to songs in singing assemblies. As a result, not all pupils are able to join in. Only one **music** lesson was observed. In this, Year 5 pupils were challenged to make a cyclic drum pattern. Good teachers' knowledge and active participation from pupils ensured that all pupils were challenged appropriately, and made good progress. Achievement was maximized by good support from the teaching assistant, who ensured that the less able pupils were fully involved.
95. The subject is satisfactorily enhanced by further opportunities. For example, the music leader runs a music club each week, and there are also opportunities to play the recorder and a number of other instruments. The leadership and management of music are satisfactory. An appropriate subject improvement plan has been drawn up. Opportunities to record pupils' work, ideas and subsequent progress in music are now a main priority. The co-ordinator's informal monitoring has correctly highlighted the underuse of computers to extend pupils' music experiences and the need to evaluate properly the effectiveness of the new music scheme.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well through the school.
 - There is a carefully developed curriculum that is enriched by additional activities.
 - The subject is well led by a knowledgeable co-ordinator.
96. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds achieve well through the school because teachers plan lessons carefully to build on pupils' previous skills. Standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 are in line with national expectations. The curriculum for Years 3 to 6 is newly developed and based upon the local authority scheme. Teaching is now good because staff expertise has been improved because of the effective use of an advisory teacher whose well-focused in-service training has successfully developed their skills. Lessons have good pace and good use is made of exemplars in most lessons to improve pupils' performance. This was particularly evident in a Year 4 lesson involving travelling and balancing skills, where pupils clearly improved the quality of their movements as a result of observing their peers. However, in a Year 6 class opportunities to watch their peers was left too late in a lesson for pupils to have time to benefit from the observed good practice. Pupils from the area support class regularly join in class lessons and achieve well because of the careful planning and good quality support that they receive.
97. Pupils enjoy physical education lessons because there is a good emphasis on activity and working collaboratively. Pupils' enjoyment is also enhanced through a good range of extra-

curricular sporting clubs and competitive matches for the older pupils. The school makes good use of outside coaching expertise in the teaching of tennis, netball and football. The school has a well-equipped hall for gymnastics and dance and a good sized playground for outside lessons. The playing field is in poor overall condition as there are too many sharp flints, particularly around the edges, for pupils to make good use of this space. Football games can take place on the pitch that is in better condition than the surrounding area. A priority for the school must be the improvement of the field's surface so that pupils can make better use of this area. The co-ordinator leads the subject well and has worked hard to put into place the new curriculum and develop staff expertise. At present she does not have opportunities to see teaching and learning in other classes and as such her expertise is not being used to the full.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher is very experienced in this aspect of the curriculum and contributes strongly to the development of her colleagues.
- Very good use is made of a number of visitors, including health professionals, to help pupils understand how to keep healthy and safe.
- The programme is very carefully tailored to meet the needs of the pupils and is helping them to address some of the challenges they face.
- There is particularly good use of work with parents and their children in the area of drug education.

Commentary

98. The school's work in providing personal, social and health education and citizenship, is very good and is very well led by the knowledgeable headteacher. It recognises how important this aspect is to pupils' well being and it is afforded appropriately high priority within the curriculum. It makes a very strong contribution to the pupils' personal development. As part of its Healthy School status, the school arranges a good range of visitors to talk to the pupils about issues designed to help them keep safe and healthy. Pupils appreciate the chances to discuss issues which affect them personally or are of topical importance. They respond well and are keen to ask questions and put their points of view across. The school's innovative work which involves parents and their children in workshops about drugs abuse is particularly well received by a growing numbers of parents.
99. All classes have regular personal, social and health education lessons which are carefully planned from a detailed scheme of work which has been drawn up by the headteacher. The school has rightly prioritised the development of pupils' personal and social skills, and pupils are confident to express opinions on the subjects being discussed. Pupils are helped to understand the importance of respecting one another's feelings and values and to appreciate the value of relationships. This was clearly seen in a Year 4 lesson when pupils were led, through discussion, to understand the difference between 'being a good friend' and 'friendliness'. Staff provide very good role models for pupils and the school's values are consistently reinforced at all times in the school day, such as walking down school corridors, entering assemblies silently and valuing each other's views. At present the school council is restricted to Year 6 pupils. The school's possible plan to widen its membership is a good initiative and will increase younger pupils' awareness of the responsibilities of living in a community and playing a part in its development.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	8
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	6
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	5
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	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3