

INSPECTION REPORT

BATCHLEY FIRST AND NURSERY SCHOOL

Batchley, Redditch

LEA area: Worcestershire

Unique reference number: 116721

Headteacher: Mrs Teresa Jordan

Lead inspector: Mr Peter Sandall

Dates of inspection: 4th to 6th May 2004

Inspection number: 257290

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First School
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	2 - 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll;	240
School address:	Cherry Tree Walk Batchley Redditch Worcestershire
Postcode:	B97 6PD
Telephone number:	01527 62926
Fax number:	01527 61621
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs M Muckle
Date of previous inspection:	9 th March 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This is a relatively large first and nursery school serving the Batchley area of Redditch. It also includes a specialist nursery unit, Nursery Plus, currently catering for 12 children with special educational needs. Virtually all the pupils in the school come from the surrounding area, and parents and governors regard the school as being a key provision at the heart of the local community. Both the chair of governors and the headteacher are members of the Batchley Alliance, a very active community organisation. There are slightly more boys than girls on the school's roll of 240 pupils, the great majority of whom are of white, British descent. There are currently two pupils who are at an early stage of learning to speak English. The area served by the school experiences considerable social disadvantage and the percentage of pupils entitled to a free school meal is double the national average. Children's attainment on entry to the reception class is well below the standard expected for their age, and many children have poorly developed social and language skills. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is well above average, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational need. Most pupils joining the school remain in it until it is time to transfer to another school. There is a *Kids Community Nursery* on the school site. The *Play Council* funds an after school club for pupils at the school, and *Batchley Support Group* have adopted the running of a breakfast club. The school is part of the *Sure Start* initiative and has a 'drop-in' office on site to offer support to parents.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
25771	Peter Sandall	Lead inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology History Geography English as an additional language
14214	Jill Smith	Lay inspector	
27369	Carolyn Sandall	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Art and design Design and technology Music Physical education Special educational needs
2818	Graham Warner	Team inspector	English Religious education
22805	Jo Greer	Team inspector	Science
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Batchley is an effective school which offers its pupils a **good** education and gives good value for money. There is a strong collective ethos and the school works hard to ensure all pupils are valued. Teaching and learning are good. The very good leadership of the headteacher is supported by an effective group of governors and a committed staff. Pupils achieve well from a low starting point and reach national standards in English and mathematics by the age of seven.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher leads the school very well.
- Pupils' achievement is good.
- Teaching is good overall and particularly good in Years 3 and 4.
- Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is not as strong as for older pupils in the rest of the school.
- There are very good links with the community and with other schools.
- Behaviour and attitudes are good, having improved considerably in the last two years.
- Standards in reading are relatively weak.
- The governing body are both well informed and supportive.

The school has maintained overall standards since the previous inspection and has improved the proportion of pupils attaining above average levels. The key issues from the previous inspection have been addressed, particularly successfully in relation to pupils' behaviour. The school's current priorities for improvement are appropriate and progress is carefully evaluated. The school has made good improvement overall.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
reading	E	E	D	B
writing	C	E	B	A
mathematics	C	D	C	A

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

Pupils' achievement is **good**. In the Foundation stage, children achieve soundly, although very few are in line to meet the goals they are expected to reach by the end of reception in the six areas of learning. Pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2, reaching expected standards in writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2, although not in reading or science. This good achievement is maintained in Years 3 and 4, with pupils attaining expected levels in all areas apart from reading by the end of Year 4. In the 2003 tests standards compare very favourably with those in similar schools. The school is aware of the relative weakness in reading standards and is taking action to try to raise them.

Pupils display **good** personal qualities, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. They have good attitudes to each other and good relationships with adults in the school. This, together with good behaviour by the great majority, contributes to a positive ethos and a successful environment for learning. Both attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory, and the school's very good efforts to improve this are not responded to by a minority of parents.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a **good** quality of education, and teaching is **good** overall. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory, but not strong enough to accelerate children's learning sufficiently from their low level on entry. Continuity in learning and the building of systematic skills and knowledge has also been affected by recent frequent changes of staff outside the school's control. Teaching is good overall in Years 1 and 2, and pupils achieve well, and sometimes very well. In Years 3 and 4 teaching is always good, and sometimes very good, and pupils' achievement is maintained and, in science in particular, accelerated. Teaching in the key subjects of English and mathematics is consistently good from Year 1 to Year 4, and the effective use of ability groups supports learning well. Teachers have high expectations of pupils of all abilities and challenge them appropriately. Good use is made of teaching assistants, particularly to support pupils with special educational needs. Targets in lessons are carefully reviewed at the end and pupils are encouraged to judge their own understanding. Individual targets in English and mathematics are less effective, and few pupils are able to say what they need to do specifically in order to improve. The teaching of reading is not having sufficient impact to raise standards in English overall.

Pupils are offered a broad curriculum and all pupils are fully included in all aspects of primary education. Links with the middle school are very good and ensure a seamless transfer for Year 4 pupils. Pupils are well supported, with particularly good attention paid to their care and welfare. Class discussion and the school council are effective in seeking pupils' views, which the school acts on where appropriate. The school works hard to involve parents in their children's education but not all respond. There are very good links with the community which contribute in various ways to the school's provision for its pupils and their education in its widest sense.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management is **good** overall. The headteacher has a very clear vision of how the school can improve and provides very good leadership. She is knowledgeable and has developed a united and supportive staff team who work hard in the pupils' interests, with a real commitment to valuing all pupils whatever their needs. The school is soundly run. The governing body has a good understanding of the school's needs, its strengths and weaknesses and the direction it needs to take. The chair and headteacher work well together. Statutory requirements are met. Financial management is very good and effectively supports the school's educational priorities.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very positive about the school, particularly Nursery Plus*. They recognise improvements in attitudes and behaviour. There was some concern about bullying and harassment, but inspectors found no evidence to support this. Pupils too like their school and think it a good one, although they were less positive about behaviour. While this has been an issue for the school, the behaviour of the great majority is now good, and occasional problems are handled well.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Further develop the quality of educational provision for children in the Foundation Stage.
- Provide a more effective structure to support and improve pupils' reading skills.
- Improve resources in art and music.
- Persevere in its attempts to improve the attendance and punctuality of a significant minority of pupils.

* Nursery Plus is designated nursery provision for pupils with special educational needs.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

The achievement of children in the Foundation Stage is **satisfactory**, although very few reach the expected goals for children by the end of reception. In Years 1 and 2 achievement is **good**, and for some pupils very good. Pupils attain national averages in all aspects of English and mathematics with the exception of reading. Good progress continues in Years 3 and 4, and pupils reach appropriate standards in all core subjects apart from reading. Girls and boys do equally well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in writing and mathematics are in line with national averages by the end of Year 2, and well above those attained by pupils in similar schools.
- Pupils generally achieve well, and sometimes very well, from a very low base.
- Standards in reading are relatively weak throughout the school, although still above those in similar schools.
- Children in the Foundation Stage do not progress at the same good rate as older pupils.
- More able pupils are catered for effectively and most reach their potential.
- Pupils with special educational needs, and the few who speak English as an additional language, achieve well due to the good level and quality of support they receive.

Commentary

1. Children in the Foundation Stage enter school with levels of attainment which are overall well below average. They make sound progress in all six areas of learning, but very few are in line to reach the expected goals by the end of reception. Their achievement is limited by a lack of assessment, which in turn means that activities are not always purposeful and appropriately planned to sustain children's progress. Despite the support of a conscientious team of teachers and teaching assistants, the frequent changes of staff during the past year have affected the consistency and continuity of provision.
2. By the end of Year 2, pupils reach national standards in writing and mathematics, which represents good and, at times, very good progress. They maintain this level of achievement as they move through Years 3 and 4. Apart from good teaching and the effective support of teaching assistants, the strongest factor contributing to this progress is the setting of pupils from Year 1 in ability groups for these subjects. Teachers make good use of this to ensure that planned work challenges pupils appropriately.
3. Pupils do not make as much progress in reading, although the standards attained are still better than those usually found in schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. The underlying structure of the reading process in school is not well enough defined and lacks consistency in its application, particularly in the teaching of reading skills and the regularity of reading practice. More could be done to encourage the involvement of parents in the development of this key aspect of education.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	15.3 (13.9)	15.7 (15.8)
Writing	15.6 (13.0)	14.6 (14.4)
Mathematics	16.4 (15.9)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 35 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. Trends over time indicate that the school's improvement is better than that found nationally. The previous inspection judged standards to be broadly in line with the national average in most subjects, but that a significant number of pupils failed to reach expected levels and that few exceeded them. This is no longer true and, in the 2003 tests at the end of Year 2, the proportion of pupils attaining the higher level 3 in mathematics was above, and in writing well above, national figures.
5. Pupils do not achieve as well in science as in English and mathematics through Years 1 and 2, a judgement confirmed by teachers' own assessments in Year 2. Despite this they make good progress as they enter the school with very limited knowledge and understanding of science. This is effectively developed in Years 3 and 4, by which time pupils reach average standards, with more able pupils achieving higher levels.
6. Standards in religious education, and in information and communication technology (ICT), are in line with national expectations by both Year 2 and Year 4. Again this represents good progress from a low starting point. High teacher expectations and, in the case of ICT, the effective use of greatly improved resources, are reasons for this success. Also fundamental to pupils' achievement in these and other areas is the school's focus on improved behaviour and the consequent improvement in the ethos for learning. This is acknowledged by both parents and pupils as central to the good achievement taking place.
7. The high proportion of pupils with special educational needs is well supported by both teachers and teaching assistants, and generally they make good progress towards their individual learning targets. The ability groups for English and mathematics ensure that work is carefully matched to pupils' capabilities and teaching assistants are involved in planning this and assessing pupils' achievement. The attainment of the few pupils with English as an additional language is carefully monitored and they too make good progress. Good expectations of more able pupils are confirmed by the good proportion attaining the higher level 3 in writing and mathematics in the national tests at Year 2.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to school and to learning are **good**. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **satisfactory** overall. Attendance and punctuality are **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good, due to the consistent application of good strategies by teachers and teaching assistants.
- A significant number of pupils lack confidence and self-esteem despite the very good efforts of all adults to encourage them.
- Pupils' social and moral awareness is developed effectively.
- Almost all pupils enjoy coming to school and most have good attendance records.
- A small number of pupils are not encouraged by their parents to attend regularly or punctually, despite the very good work of the school.

Commentary

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	5.6
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	1.0
National data	0.4

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

8. Most pupils attend regularly and arrive at school in good time. A small number, however, consistently have unsatisfactory attendance records and often arrive late. The school works very hard to encourage better attendance but has been unable to improve things significantly. There have been 11 exclusions, two of which were permanent. While this is a high figure for a first school, these were made as a last resort following extensive efforts by the school and support services and were fully justified.

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	216	9	2
White – any other White background	6		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	3		
Mixed – any other mixed background	5		
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	5		
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	2		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	3		

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

9. The majority of pupils enjoy coming to school and look forward to taking part in the range of opportunities provided, although some lack confidence and self-esteem. All adults work hard to encourage pupils and praise them frequently for their successes. Lessons are interesting and stimulating so pupils are motivated to learn. However, because of their lack of confidence and self-esteem some pupils are reluctant to put up their hands to answer questions. There is no significant difference in either the attitude or effort of boys and girls. Pupils generally work together sensibly and co-operate well in group tasks.
10. Teachers and other adults provide very good role models. Relationships between pupils and adults are good and mutually supportive. The school has a calm and friendly atmosphere. Pupils are generally helpful towards each other and polite and friendly towards adults and visitors. There are good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility in classes and around the school, including becoming house captain and acting as a representative on the school council.
11. No incidents of bullying, harassment or significant misbehaviour were observed during the inspection. Instances of minor unkindness were swiftly and appropriately dealt with. Behaviour in lessons and around the school was good. A small number of pupils display the potential for serious disruptive behaviour. All adults consistently use the very effective behaviour management strategy adopted by the school and supported by the local advisory staff. As a result no pupils disrupted lessons during the inspection, nor did they prevent other pupils from learning. The very effective management of potentially difficult pupils is a strength of the school.
12. Development of pupils’ social and moral awareness is good. The pupils understand the difference between right and wrong and the effect of their actions on others’ feelings. They learn to respect other people’s values and beliefs which may be different from their own. There are satisfactory opportunities to develop pupils’ spiritual awareness. Statutory requirements for a daily act of worship are met. Through these assemblies and class discussions, for example in personal, social and health education lessons, the pupils learn how to reflect on their own actions and those of others, show consideration, listen to and

respect different views and other world cultures. Pupils have sound opportunities to learn about both their own heritage and other world cultures through visits out and visitors to the school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a **good** education for its pupils. The school's ethos supports learning well, as does a shared commitment to improvement and very good leadership.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good** overall. They are satisfactory in the Foundation Stage and good in Years 1 to 4. Assessment is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good overall in Years 1 and 2, and consistently good and very good in Years 3 and 4.
- Day-to-day assessment in the Foundation Stage does not give an accurate picture of the attainment and progress of individual children.
- While teaching is sound in the Foundation Stage, it is not strong enough to consistently lift children's achievement.
- The school's leadership is aware of teaching issues and is actively working to improve the quality of teaching and learning where necessary.
- Teaching assistants contribute effectively to pupils' learning and help those with special educational needs to achieve well.
- High expectations and appropriate challenges in Years 1 to 4 lead to pupils making good progress in their learning.
- Setting by ability in Years 1 to 4 for English and mathematics is used effectively to help pupils of all abilities to make good gains in learning.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 38 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0 (0%)	6 (16%)	23 (61%)	8 (21%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

13. The school has worked hard in recent years to create an ethos in which learning is encouraged and seen as important by pupils. As a result, lessons are generally well ordered and purposeful and teachers and pupils are able to focus on the learning intentions. These are emphasised at the start of each lesson, and at the end pupils are encouraged to decide for themselves how well they have understood. This is effective on-going assessment which involves the pupils in a meaningful way. Teachers expect high standards of behaviour and pupils respond positively. On the odd occasion where individual pupils refuse to follow instructions, teachers and teaching assistants work well together to defuse the situation and bring the pupil back on line. Other pupils remain unaffected, indicating that these strategies are familiar and consistently applied.
14. Teaching in the Foundation Stage, while satisfactory overall, is not as strong as it is in the rest of the school. The recent changes in staffing, and the number of different teachers the children have encountered as a result, make continuity and consistency harder to achieve. The lack of regular and accurate assessment of individual children makes it more difficult to ensure they

are being taught at a level appropriate to their needs. While regular staff know the children well, new teachers have little information on which to base their planning. Where teaching was unsatisfactory, in a lesson on number, it was directly linked to activities which were too complicated for the majority of the children. As a result, children lost interest and behaviour deteriorated, leading to little learning taking place.

15. In Years 1 to 4 pupils are organised by ability for their English and mathematics lessons, and there is an appropriate focus on the skills of literacy and numeracy. Tasks within each lesson are also carefully targeted to ensure pupils are working at a challenging yet appropriate level. Pupils with special educational needs are usually well supported, by both teachers and teaching assistants. As a result, pupils of all abilities achieve well and feel confident in their learning. After careful assessment of social as well as academic capability, a Year 2 pupil is working with a Year 3/4 class very successfully, and the school is keen to ensure that higher attaining pupils are encouraged to tackle more demanding work. The positive effects of this are evident in the good proportion of pupils attaining the higher level 3 in national tests at Year 2.
16. There are several pupils in the school who speak English as an additional language and who are at different stages of language acquisition. Their progress is regularly assessed and support provided where there is a specific need. Evidence suggests that because of this they achieve as well as their peers.
17. Teaching in the Year 1/2 classes is almost always good, and in the Year 3/4 classes is consistently good with a solid proportion of very good teaching. Clear expectations and relevant tasks lead to pupils making good and very good progress. Planning and preparation are thorough and carefully thought out, with plenty of meaningful activities to support learning. Teachers make good use of opportunities to link different subjects, as when pupils learning about Ancient Egypt make working models of a 'shaduf' to better understand the importance of the Nile to the population. This also involved pupils in working co-operatively in pairs, which they did very successfully. Attempts to encourage pupils to pair up as 'discussion partners' are less successful, as many pupils lack the confidence and language skills to put across their understanding. They work better in personal and social education lessons, where pupils act out emotions through role play.
18. Both the headteacher and subject leaders monitor the quality of teaching through lesson observation, sampling work and evaluating planning, although opportunities to see actual teaching have been limited by budget considerations. Development planning indicates that teaching and learning are seen as central to pupils achieving to their capabilities and thereby raising attainment, and there is a separate action plan to develop the provision for children in the Foundation Stage.
19. Teachers build assessment opportunities into their planning and through this ensure that future work is carefully matched to pupils' understanding. There is a strong and commendable focus on involving pupils in their own learning. This is effective when used in lessons, but the setting of written personal targets in English and mathematics is in its early stages. Most subjects have assessment sheets to record progress over time, and the school tracks how well pupils are achieving in English and mathematics, giving a sound overview of both individual and cohort progress.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **good** and is effectively tailored to the needs of the pupils. There are **satisfactory** opportunities for enrichment. Accommodation is **good** and resources are **satisfactory** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is broad and balanced with good links between subjects.

- Provision for personal development is good.
- Older pupils are very well prepared for transition to middle school.
- Foundation Stage children are not well prepared for transfer to infant classes.
- Resources are barely adequate to meet curriculum needs in some subjects.

Commentary

20. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall, although there are issues to be addressed. The frequent changes of staff, while beyond the school's control, have had an impact on the continuity of children's learning. Gaps in the day-to-day assessment process lead to some aspects of the curriculum failing to match the needs of individual children. There are no clear arrangements to ensure that when the children transfer to Year 1 the curriculum is relevant to the current level of attainment. This is an area which is currently being addressed by the school.
21. The curriculum for pupils in Years 1 to 4 meets statutory requirements, including those for religious education and collective worship. The schemes of work for all subjects have recently been reviewed and in most cases have undergone major revision. They have been rewritten by teachers to meet the specific needs of pupils in this school, which is good practice. Care has been taken to make as many links as possible between subjects so that lessons are coherent and relevant to pupils. More opportunities to use and develop literacy and numeracy skills could be included in some subjects, for instance in science. Information and communication technology is planned into different subjects in both the long and short term so that pupils have opportunities to practise the skills they learn.
22. The school's approach to developing pupils' personal qualities is good. The school sees this as a very important aspect of its work because of the very challenging attitudes of a significant minority of pupils. It is particularly successful in supporting these pupils so that they are fully included. There are good opportunities in classes and around the school for pupils to take responsibility. The school council and house system make a valuable contribution to pupils' self esteem and confidence.
23. There is a good range of sports activities and clubs for pupils to participate in and a number of other clubs such as cookery, sewing, engineering and French, as well as opportunities to engage in music and art activities. There are regular visits to places of interest and the theatre to enrich pupils' cultural awareness. Year 4 pupils enjoy a three-day residential experience.
24. There is good curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs, particularly for developing their skills in literacy and numeracy. They are well supported in lessons so that they learn successfully alongside their classmates. Good liaison with outside support agencies ensures that pupils receive extra help as and when it is needed. Good resources include a well equipped multi-sensory room.
25. There is a good match of teachers to the curriculum for pupils in Years 1 to 4. In the Foundation Stage, while there are sufficient teachers, a lack of stable staffing has an effect on the quality of curriculum delivery. The match of support staff is unsatisfactory in Foundation Stage but often good in the main school. Teachers in Years 1 to 4 work well together to ensure continuity and progression. Teachers of pupils in parallel classes plan lessons together to ensure that all pupils enjoy the same experiences.
26. The accommodation has undergone considerable refurbishment and alteration recently and is good. The new Foundation Stage area, Year 4 room and sensory room are all useful and attractive areas. Classrooms are spacious and pleasant. The new computer suite is well equipped, although teething troubles have restricted its use. The library is an attractive and welcoming area but is not well stocked or made frequent use of. The hall is not big enough for whole-class physical education lessons. It is an awkward shape and the acoustics make it difficult to hear teacher's instructions. There is good outdoor provision with several hard play

areas, an attractive garden and grassed areas. The surface of some hard areas is undulating, causing problems with puddles at playtimes. There is some shade and plans are in place to develop these areas further.

27. Resources are adequate to meet curriculum needs overall, although in some subjects, for example art and music, they are currently unsatisfactory. There has been very little development recently because of financial difficulties. However, these have now been resolved, and each subject leader has a budget to begin developing resources.

Care, guidance and support

Arrangements to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are **very good**. The school provides **good** support, advice and guidance and there is **good** involvement of pupils in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school works very closely with a wide range of community agencies in order to ensure that pupils benefit from their specialist help and support.
- Pupils trust the adults in the school and say they would confide in them, should any difficulties arise.
- Teachers monitor pupils' personal development closely and this helps them to identify and address any emerging problems at an early stage.
- Induction procedures are good and help new arrivals to settle in quickly.
- The school is very interested in pupils' views and acts upon them whenever it can.

Commentary

28. The strengths in care, support and guidance noted in the previous report have been maintained and improved further during the intervening six years.
29. This school regards the welfare of its pupils as a top priority. It is very keen to work with a wide range of community organisations and health agencies in order to ensure that pupils enjoy full access to their various areas of expertise. For example, *Surestart* sponsored the installation of a well-equipped multi-sensory room and the school recently supported a local application to open a neighbourhood nursery for pre-school children. During discussions, pupils say that they feel really well looked after during the school day and that they would not hesitate to seek help or advice, if they needed it. Parents are equally confident and almost everyone who returned their pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that they find members of staff to be very approachable.
30. Procedures for assessing pupils' personal development are thorough and teachers make constructive use of the information obtained. For example, all class teachers maintain confidential folders that include details about their pupils' personal and educational needs. Extra curricular clubs are also very popular and they provide regular, informal opportunities for adults and pupils to get to know each other. This close contact helps to ensure that teachers are in a very good position to be able to spot emerging difficulties and address them at an early stage.
31. Parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting spoke highly of the school's induction procedures. They particularly appreciate the way in which teachers offer home visits and liaise closely with local pre-school groups. Inspectors support these positive views and agree that links with the new neighbourhood nursery, *Kids Co*, are especially close. Parents say this liaison really helps their children to make friends and to settle down quickly once they actually enrol. Children transferring into the nursery and reception classes are able to attend several

sessions prior to their admission and this helps everyone to get to know each other at an early stage.

32. This school places a high value on pupils' opinions and there are plenty of opportunities for pupils to make their views known. The school acts upon their views whenever it can. For example, representatives of the school council have recently helped to choose the wet break time play equipment and they have suggested improvements to lunch time procedures.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are **good**. Links with the community and other schools are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Close links with the community and other schools enrich the curriculum and promote pupils' personal development very well.
- Constructive links with receiving middle schools ensure a smooth transition at the end of Year 4.
- The school actively seeks parents' views and acts upon their preferences whenever possible.
- Parents receive detailed information about day-to-day school life and the progress their children are making.

Commentary

33. This school is a focal point for its community and it provides very good support for many local organisations and initiatives. For example, it is currently working closely with *Batchley Alliance*, the local community improvement organisation, and *Surestart* on several joint ventures on the school site. These include the development of the *Oak Centre*, which provides adult education, and *Kids Co*, a newly-established community nursery. The recent opening of the latter enables the school to offer full day childcare and this is a tremendous help to working parents. Sponsorship by *Surestart* has also enabled the school to equip a multi-sensory room for pupils with special educational needs.
34. Links with Pitcheroak Special School are also close and mutually supportive. The schools share specialist facilities such as the ball pool and multi-sensory room and these benefit the pupils of both schools. There are good sporting and musical links with other first schools and these help pupils to make friends before the transition to middle school at the end of Year 4. Links with the receiving middle school are very good, involving both teachers and pupils in helpful exchanges which support curricular liaison very effectively.
35. The school is keen to involve parents with their children's education and it actively seeks their opinions on many aspects of school life. Parents are particularly pleased with the way in which the school listens and responds to their suggestions or concerns and the willingness with which teachers make themselves available at the start and end of each day. Whenever possible, parents' suggestions are acted upon and incorporated into the school improvement plan.
36. As well as encouraging direct, informal contact with parents, newsletters help to keep them up to date with everyday school life and the work their children are undertaking. The school also provides useful information sessions that help parents to support their children's learning at home; these are popular with parents and are well attended. Links with parents of pupils with special educational needs are especially close and their attendance at review meetings is very good. Parents receive a copy of their child's individual education plan and are kept fully informed of the targets being set for their children and of the progress being made towards them. Pupils' annual reports provide parents with a clear indication as to how their children's

progress compares with national expectations but do not always provide sufficiently clear guidance on how pupils can improve.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the headteacher is **very good**. Management is **satisfactory** and governance is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a clear vision of what needs to be done to raise standards further.
- The school is highly inclusive, giving all its pupils good opportunities to learn effectively.
- Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Good use is made of the school's finances.

Commentary

37. The main barrier to learning in the school is the fact that many pupils have well below average levels of attainment on admission. Because of this, the impact of the difficulties of some of their backgrounds, and the recent unsettled nature of the staffing in the Foundation Stage classes, the school has to have clear compensatory strategies. The rigorous leadership of the headteacher, the hard work and commitment of all staff and the whole-hearted support of the governing body provide this. The whole team approach to developing the pupils' skilful learning is a strong focus that is purposefully pursued in the school's work.
38. The headteacher's sense of purpose and drive towards pupils' higher achievements underpins the whole of the school's work. The highly inclusive nature of the school's policies effectively enables the needs of a variety of pupils to be well met. An acting deputy headteacher and a committed, hard working group of teachers and support staff ably support the headteacher. Together with the apt support and involvement of a knowledgeable governing body they are instrumental in developing an improving school.
39. The very good leadership of the headteacher has led to the creation of a team who take their responsibilities very seriously. This has been achieved against a background of budget difficulties and the need to change some practice in order to better support pupils' achievements. The headteacher has a realistic understanding of the work that still needs to be done in order to improve the work in the Foundation Stage classes.
40. The leadership of subjects is good overall as a result of the team approach initiated by the headteacher. There is a clear sense of purpose in the development of the curriculum in order to promote higher levels of achievement. The headteacher and senior staff have good data analysis skills. This helpfully supports the school's aspirations in the shared commitment from staff towards improvement in pupils' achievement. However, the application of target setting in all English and mathematics is at an early stage and is not yet fully embedded in the school's practice.
41. Monitoring is also in the initial stages of development but is clearly linked to the fully established target setting for staff's performance management. Both teachers and support staff are involved in appraising their work so that pupils benefit from the input given by all staff. This positive ethos is a powerful tool to support the school's ambitions. The very effective systems created by the headteacher ably support staff in reaching the goals that they have set for themselves.
42. The provision for special educational needs is an important facet of the school's response to raising standards because it involves such a high proportion of pupils. Individual needs are identified clearly at an early stage. Support is targeted to good effect. Targets set for this group

of pupils are based on secure evidence and are shared appropriately and reviewed regularly. This gives pupils good levels of support and helps the special needs pupils to achieve as well as all pupils.

43. The governing body are fully committed to the school. They are capably led and completely in tune with the headteacher in knowing what needs to be done in order to raise standards in the school. They have a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. As they have links to subjects and aspects of school life between them the governors have an extensive overall picture of the school. They are as ambitious for the school as are the headteacher and staff, and have an important partnership role that all staff appreciate.
44. The school's priorities are clearly established in the school improvement plan. The development of this plan is another good example of the team approach that has been built in the school. Senior staff, teachers and governors have a joint responsibility for arriving at a realistic plan for school improvement. Appropriate review strategies are securely in place. Good levels of consultation take place. As a result, strategic planning is well-focused because it is based on a whole team self-evaluation. The focus of the plan is thoughtfully placed on raising pupils' standards through enhancing their self-esteem and promoting their achievement effectively.
45. Day-to-day management and administration ensure that the school works smoothly. The school's administrative staff play a pivotal role in the school's daily routines. They give very good support to the headteacher, staff and governors. They are clear about the roles that they play in the school's development and work flexibly with one another.
46. The school's financial position has only recently been stabilised appropriately. Some difficult decisions had to be made but these were tackled with care and skill by the headteacher and governors. Finance has been used effectively so that the school is now in a position to begin making better resource provision throughout the school. Due care has been taken to plan with foresight, and the school is now able to set a balanced budget. Governors have a strong commitment to keeping an effective oversight of the finances and budget. Members of the Finance Committee of the governing body are well informed. The school's administrative staff, together with the headteacher, play a helpful day-to-day role in keeping the finances of the school well managed. Decisions about spending are efficiently linked to the school improvement plan. The principles of best value are responded to satisfactorily through the careful monitoring of spending on supplies and services.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	666,258	Balance from previous year	23,104
Total expenditure	707,501	Balance carried forward to the next	(18,139)
Expenditure per pupil	2,660		

The school hosts designated nursery provision for children with special needs, known as Nursery Plus. Eight children attend part-time in the mornings and four in the afternoons. They are all designated as 'Early Years action plus' on the Code of Practice and the range of their special needs includes learning, communication and language difficulties. Overall, the quality of this provision is **good**.

47. Children in Nursery Plus all have very clear and well-written individual education plans that set achievable yet challenging targets, especially in language development. The staff team keeps meticulous and detailed observations of progress towards these objectives on a daily basis. The teacher uses a focus sheet to record progress across a session, and the teaching assistants make ongoing observations of children's responses. Overall, their progress is good.

Detailed records of children's achievements include photographic evidence, which is carefully annotated with foundation curriculum statements.

48. The teaching observed in Nursery Plus was good. The teacher and teaching assistants work closely together, using carefully structured teaching and play activities that build success in small steps, for instance by modelling good articulation. Purposeful activities encouraged creative and sensory experiences using pictures of animals with different textures of skin. Signing was used to good effect to stimulate language. Children with autistic spectrum difficulties were helped by providing carefully structured routines, and by handling inappropriate responses sensitively. The learning environment is carefully laid out to provide stimulating experiences for children without excessive 'clutter' or distraction. The adjoining sensory room offers a very good range of controlled light and sound stimuli, and its use is shared with the neighbouring special school.
49. Children benefiting from this provision share some activities with those in the main nursery, supported by an inclusion assistant. They follow the same topics, which are carefully planned to cover the areas of early years' experience. The shared planning is intended to maximise these opportunities but its effectiveness has been reduced by the high turnover of staff in the main nursery over the last few months. The teacher's plans to extend opportunities by offering children dual placement with their own local nursery class show imagination and forethought.
50. Teamwork within Nursery Plus is very strong, and each member of staff has a clear understanding of their different roles. This good teamwork extends to regular and committed support from visiting professionals such as the educational psychologist and speech therapist. The leadership and management of the provision are very good, with clear objectives and systematic routines. The teacher benefits from formal and informal training opportunities offered by the special school next door. The headteacher rightly feels that the quality and effectiveness of this specialist provision adds value to the school as a whole, and the wholehearted support of parents confirms this view, which is shared by the inspection team.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

51. Provision for the children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall but improvement is required to key aspects. Although there have been many recent changes in staffing, there is a welcoming and very caring ethos throughout the nursery and reception classes. However, the many staff changes have had a negative effect on the rate at which the children learn. Despite this, the team is conscientious and strives to provide a sound education for the children. There have been significant improvements to the curriculum in recent months, and also to the accommodation, which is now very good. While standards are not as good as those found by the previous inspection, expectations are now very different and it is difficult to compare current attainment with that six years ago.
52. Children enter the nursery with levels of attainment that are well below those found nationally. They make satisfactory progress overall, but by the time they transfer to Year 1 their attainment is still well below average. Children enter the nursery at the age of 3 years, some having already experienced 'mother and toddler' groups and the nearby community nursery. There are very good links for children with special educational needs in the Nursery Plus unit within the school. Children with specific needs are identified early and make sound progress in relation to their targets.
53. Children's learning is affected by a number of factors, the main one being the constant movement of teachers in and out of the Foundation Stage. This staff movement has an impact on the curriculum in terms of consistency and continuity of provision. During the inspection two teachers had only been in for three or four half days. The school endeavours to manage this difficult situation with consideration and concern. Because the assessment process does not reflect day-to-day achievements of children there are inevitably gaps in their learning and an inappropriateness of curriculum delivery.
54. While the accommodation is very good, resources require improvement. At the present time the small number of children in the nursery does not have sufficient opportunity to interact with each other or with the staff. The large nursery area, and the way in which children are encouraged to use activities freely, means that often most children are playing outdoors, or in isolation indoors. Because of the mobility of staff, essential training in order to update and unify practice is very difficult to plan and put into practice.
55. The headteacher is responsible for the Foundation Stage during the absence of the co-ordinator. There is a very comprehensive action plan prepared by the school, which identifies many aspects of the Foundation Stage requiring improvement and identifies the processes necessary to achieve them. It is not possible to comment on improvement since the previous inspection, as the Foundation Stage curriculum has changed considerably, as has the school's staffing and accommodation.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children feel safe and secure.
- Children have good attitudes and behaviour overall is satisfactory.
- Children are encouraged to select their own resources and think for themselves, but there are too few nursery children to interact in their play.
- Reception children have insufficient planned time to benefit from activities.

Commentary

56. Children in the Foundation Stage come to school happily, secure in the knowledge that they are well cared for. Although there are many changes of staff throughout the week, children's personal, social and emotional needs receive good attention. Despite this, children are not on target to reach the expected levels by the end of the reception year.
57. As levels of attainment on entry to the nursery are well below average many children do not have an aptitude for enquiry. However, they enjoy their activities, with many preferring to use the resources outdoors. Teaching is satisfactory overall and staff generally understand the needs of the children in this area of learning. However, where teaching is not pitched at the right level, children do not concentrate and become restless. This is particularly true of the children in the reception class.
58. Staff encourage children to think for themselves and provide opportunities for them to make choices in their activity time. Younger children in the nursery prefer to use the outdoor area and have to be encouraged to use the range of resources available indoors. The reception children choose from a selection of planned activities but the time allocated for this is too short and children spend too long sitting on the carpet with their teachers.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children make satisfactory progress but achieve standards that are well below average by the end of the reception year.
- Opportunities for language development are not fully developed, especially in the nursery.
- The teaching of reading lacks a structured approach.

Commentary

59. Most children do not achieve the early learning goals in this area of learning by the end of the reception year, with standards remaining well below average. Teaching is satisfactory overall but some staff are not sufficiently aware of the requirements of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Day-to-day assessments are insufficient to ensure that all work is pitched at the right level. For example, the 'writing' of one child was considered of a 'high' standard when in national terms the sample was well below average.
60. Children's language is not developed in a systematic way. While children's listening skills develop well in the nursery their speaking is not given the same emphasis, particularly in group teaching situations.
61. The teaching of reading lacks the structure necessary to recognise through observation and assessments children's 'next steps'. For example, a more able reception child read with confidence and accuracy but the middle ability and lower achieving children had no strategies to guide their reading, such as using the pictures to provide clues. The attainment level of the children was clearly illustrated in their interest in books. Reception children sit enthralled when listening to a simple story but no Foundation Stage children visited the book corners for pure enjoyment.
62. Children's writing is well below the expected level in the reception class. Most children are unable to write their full name and many form their letters inaccurately. Both the nursery and reception rooms have writing areas and children in the reception classes use these frequently.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in Mathematical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well below average.
- While teaching is satisfactory overall, at times there is a lack of knowledge and expertise of the Foundation Stage curriculum.
- Although some teachers know children well, changes in staff and the lack of ongoing assessment results in many children being taught at inappropriate level.
- There is a good range of activities available for children to use independently.

Commentary

63. Children's achievement is satisfactory overall, although by the end of the reception year children reach levels well below those expected nationally. The curriculum, although taught by a conscientious team, is not planned on a daily basis to reflect the necessary 'stepping stones' and ensure children's understanding is built on methodically.
64. Teaching overall is satisfactory, but on the one occasion where it was unsatisfactory children were not taught according to their individual needs. As a result they lost attention and became restless. The changing staff have no way of identifying the needs of the children on a day-to-day basis. Because there are no ongoing individual assessments some children are taught at a level that is too hard for them. Consequently they struggle to cope, particularly on the occasions when all the reception children work together with one teacher. Some reception children recognise numbers to five and count the total number of items in two groups by counting all of them. Nursery children use number names in their play in the 'Vets'.
65. The play opportunities for children in the Foundation Stage are good. Children can select from a good range of planned activities in both the nursery and the reception rooms. However, in the nursery many children prefer to make their choices outdoors, and in the reception rooms the time allocated for these activities is too short, and children spend too much time listening to their teachers while sitting on the carpet.
66. In **knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and physical development** insufficient teaching was seen to reach a judgement on standards. In these areas children were learning about the world, through animals in the nursery and through people who help us, such as the postman, in the reception classes. Activities were clearly linked to each theme and children were encouraged to develop their language through these experiences.
67. In their creative development children have sound opportunities to use their imagination and be creative both in role play and in a range of planned activities, including painting and collage. Resources for these activities, however, are insufficient, particularly in the reception class where inferior paper resulted in the finished painting falling apart!
68. Children's physical development is well provided for in the outdoor areas and in the hall, where they are able to practise climbing, balancing and jumping. The development of skills such as cutting, holding paint and glue brushes and pouring liquids are planned for in children's independent and focused activities.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

The provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are average at the end of Years 2 and 4.
- All pupils are achieving well.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school.
- The subject is well led and managed.
- Reading standards are below average overall, despite some recent improvement.
- Good assessment procedures support pupils' achievement effectively.

Commentary

69. Standards in English are average overall at the end of both Year 2 and Year 4. In the separate aspects of English, pupils' standards are average in writing, and in speaking and listening. They are below average in reading. The pupils make good progress overall in English when their attainment on leaving the Foundation Stage is taken into account. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils achieve well throughout Years 1 to 4. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls in English. The pupils who have special needs are thoughtfully considered in the different levels of work prepared by teachers. They are well supported by teaching assistants in their classroom work. As a result, they achieve as well as all other pupils during their time at school.
70. The pupils' skills in reading are just beginning to be developed appropriately at the end of Year 4. There is not enough consistency in the approach to developing reading skills throughout the school. Pupils are not taught the basic skills of reading effectively. Not enough attention is given to teaching pupils the skill of building words from letter sounds. Pupils do not make use of aids, such as picture clues, that would help them to become more competent and confident readers. The school has encouraged more parental support through the use of reading records that go home with the pupils and their reading books. The co-ordinator has produced a useful booklet to help parents in supporting their children's reading. However, this has not had sufficient impact on improving standards. Regular reading practice throughout the school has not been targeted clearly enough to consistently develop the necessary skills and techniques. As a result, while more able pupils read confidently and expressively, the majority struggle.
71. The pupils in all classes benefit greatly from the opportunities given to them to join in class discussions. These often take place at the beginning and end of lessons. At the start, learning objectives are clearly shared with the pupils. They are then returned to consistently at the end of lessons. The pupils are gently encouraged to make verbal contributions, and teachers show good awareness in giving all pupils a chance to speak. Pupils learn from one another, as they are active participants. The teachers make good use of open-ended questions so that pupils have to think before they make a response and justify their answers. As their confidence increases pupils grasp these opportunities, becoming interested and eager to contribute.
72. The school has given a good deal of attention to developing the pupils' writing skills. This is bearing fruit and standards continually improve as pupils move through the school. The pupils use these skills throughout their written work and are able to write in a good variety of forms. Love of poetry and enjoyment of creative stories are regular features that underpin the good levels of achievement. The pupils generally write with care and attention to detail. They are well supported by different levels of imaginative tasks that initiate perceptive responses. More able pupils are well challenged by their tasks and respond very positively.

73. An appropriate amount of attention is paid to the basic skills of handwriting and spelling which effectively support the development of pupils' writing. The pupils follow a consistent scheme in handwriting that is completed on a regular basis in all classes. Regular spelling tests are closely linked to other English work so that pupils understand the need to spell correctly. They make use of dictionaries to help them because they realise that they are helpful tools to improve their work.
74. The quality of teaching is good overall. There are examples of very good teaching where teachers plan imaginatively. Where teaching is at its best there is good variety in the way that tasks are introduced to the pupils. Pupils are given plenty of opportunities to contribute to their own learning. Resources are used well. Different levels of work are prepared as a result of the careful assessments that are made of pupils' abilities. Teaching assistants are well deployed to help the pupils who need the most support. The National Literacy Strategy has been well implemented and is also used imaginatively to extend pupils learning. Teachers teach with confidence because they are well supported by an effective co-ordinator. A good scheme of work and adequate resources help to provide a stimulating range of learning experiences. However, the library is not adequately supporting teachers or pupils and this has some impact on the reading opportunities for pupils.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

75. Pupils make good use of their literacy skills in other subjects. Effective links are made between the subjects through the focus on pupils' writing skills. Subjects such as religious education and science confirm that pupils are encouraged to use appropriate technical language when recording their thoughts and observations.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils attain average standards by Year 2 and Year 4.
- Achievement is good from Year 1 to Year 4.
- Teaching is consistently good.
- Mathematics is well led and managed.
- Grouping pupils by ability ensures that all are appropriately challenged.
- Pupils with special educational needs are well supported.

Commentary

76. Pupils attain average standards by the end of Year 2. This is confirmed by the results of the most recent national tests. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher level 3 in these tests is particularly encouraging, as is the attainment of many pupils with special educational needs. As most pupils enter the infants with attainment which remains well below that expected at this age, their achievement is good, and in some cases very good. Pupils continue to achieve well in Years 3 and 4 and their attainment remains in line with expectations. Boys and girls learn equally well.
77. Improvement since the previous inspection six years ago is satisfactory overall, in that standards were average then and remain so now. However, within this, more able pupils are effectively challenged and, as a result, make very good progress in their knowledge and understanding. Improvements in behaviour also mean that teachers are able to focus on encouraging learning, and little time is wasted on managing some pupils at the expense of others. The few pupils who have specific problems in responding appropriately are very well

managed by both teachers and teaching assistants and, as a result, lessons are purposeful learning experiences.

78. The school has taken the decision to teach pupils in ability groups from Year 1 to Year 4. This is working well. It allows teachers to plan work at appropriately challenging levels, and to introduce topics so that all pupils have sound understanding. It also means that teaching assistants work with groups of similar ability and are able to support them effectively. Planning is carefully structured and within each teaching group activities are prepared with different demands, so that most of the time pupils are given tasks which are well suited to both the concept being taught and their understanding.
79. Teachers make good use of the national strategy for teaching mathematics, and cover all aspects of the subject effectively. There is an appropriate focus on solving problems through the teaching of skills and methods, but little chance for the pupils to investigate for themselves, looking for the interesting links and patterns which help to support mathematical understanding. This is a missed opportunity, especially for more able pupils. Similarly, there is little evidence of features such as interactive mathematical displays, or 'problem of the week' to encourage pupils to apply their existing knowledge and think creatively.
80. Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to the learning of pupils with special educational needs, working with both individuals and groups with patience and thought. At times however, particularly when teachers are introducing a topic to the class, they have less input. Teachers and teaching assistants plan together well, and could usefully focus on the best use of this valuable support at all stages of the lesson.
81. The quality of teaching seen during the inspection was consistently good, and occasionally very good. Looking at pupils' books indicates that these standards are maintained, and as a result pupils learn well. Teachers have high expectations and maintain a good pace, resulting in a good quantity of accurate and finished work. Marking is encouraging and supportive, although it rarely attempts to move learning forward by asking leading questions or setting further challenges. Pupils are clearly encouraged to set their work out neatly which in itself makes a positive contribution to the level of accuracy achieved.
82. Mathematics is well led by a well informed and aware co-ordinator. She has a good understanding of the quality of teaching and learning. Analysis of pupils' test results is used effectively to target areas which need further development. Day-to-day assessment is effective, both in reviewing pupils' understanding with them at the end of each lesson and in teachers' evaluation as part of the planning process. The setting of individual targets for pupils, giving them short term achievements to aim at, has been started but is not yet sufficiently established to be making a contribution to learning.

Mathematics across the curriculum

83. Although the use of mathematical skills is not consistently planned for in other subjects, there are examples of graphs and tables supporting learning, for example in ICT. However, in subjects such as science and geography, which offer good opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge in a meaningful context, there is little evidence that this is happening.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good in Years 1 to 4.
- Wherever possible, learning is through practical investigation, so pupils have a good understanding of the topic being studied.
- Pupils co-operate well and pay good attention to the safe and proper handling of equipment in practical lessons.
- The co-ordinator has developed the subject very well since the previous inspection.
- There is not enough use of graphs to present information.

Commentary

84. Standards in science are below average in Year 2 and average in Year 4. This is satisfactory and represents good achievement. Pupils enter the nursery class with very limited experiences and understanding of the world around them. They make good progress to reach this level in Year 2. They continue to make good progress in Years 3 and 4 so that they are at the expected level when they leave the school. More able pupils achieve higher levels due to teachers' positive expectations.
85. Recent changes to the planned curriculum in science have resulted in much more practical work. Some good investigations were seen in Years 3 and 4. It is through this hands-on approach that pupils understand the concepts and knowledge being taught. Less able pupils are supported very effectively by teachers and teaching assistants so that they also understand what is being taught, although they often have difficulty in expressing what they are learning and in writing it down. Whilst more able pupils are expected to produce more detailed explanations, they are not always challenged as much as they might be, or given opportunities to design their own experiments. In some lessons pupils are encouraged to draw conclusions from their results, but this aspect is at an early stage of development. There are few examples of tables of results being translated into graphs to make comparisons easy.
86. Lessons are brisk and interesting. Equipment is properly prepared beforehand so no time is wasted. More able pupils are expected to write up their work independently, whereas younger and less able pupils are given appropriate worksheets and grids to record their work. Pupils undertake their investigations sensibly, co-operating well in pairs or small groups. There is adequate equipment to support this, although recent budget constraints have limited opportunities to provide more stimulating resources. This also limits the use of information and communication technology. The improving budget means that resources can now be supplemented.
87. The enthusiastic and knowledgeable co-ordinator has worked hard to develop science so that there has been significant improvement in the curriculum, assessment, teaching, learning and standards since the previous inspection. This is especially true of the much more investigative approach to learning now taking place. In discussion, pupils described how much more experimentation they now do and how much they like this approach. They also like the assessment arrangements because they know how well they are doing.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are in line with expectations and pupils achieve well.
- Teaching is good.
- Improving resources support learning effectively.

Commentary

88. Standards in ICT are appropriate for pupils in Year 2 and Year 4. This represents good achievement given the low attainment in relevant skills of many pupils when starting school. The recently created computer suite is used effectively. Although pupils have to share computers this is often a positive feature, as teachers make sure that pupils have the opportunity to discuss what they are doing and, in many cases, they learn from each other. Planning is securely based on what pupils have previously learnt, and the level of challenge is well matched to pupils of different abilities. Teachers and teaching assistants have sufficient expertise to offer support and advice where necessary.
89. The quality of teaching is good overall. Of the three lessons observed, teaching was judged to be good in two. The better teaching related mainly to teacher confidence, which allowed pupils to make better progress in the time available. Pupils in Year 1 and 2 were able to *log on* without help, and most were confident in the use of keys such as *backspace* and *delete* and in changing the font and size of text. They know how to print their work. The tasks build effectively on prior experience and, because they are relevant to the pupils, sustain interest.
90. The best teaching occurred in a Year 3/4 lesson where pupils were learning to input instructions to create shapes and follow routes using *logo*. The previous lesson programming a *floor robot* led naturally into this. Different tasks were set so that all pupils were effectively challenged. The teacher made very good use of the *class link* program to demonstrate techniques and commands, giving sufficient help but still encouraging pupils to discover for themselves. There was a strong emphasis on both discovery and enjoyment. This lesson also revised pupils' mathematical understanding of amounts of turn, degrees and estimating distances.
91. The headteacher is leading the subject at present. The school has clear plans for the development of ICT, both in terms of resources and staff training. The one *interactive whiteboard* which has been installed is not yet being used to its full potential due to technical problems which the school is doing its best to solve.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

92. The use of ICT skills and knowledge in other areas of the curriculum is planned over the long term to fit in with different topics, so that there is an over-view of where it is happening. It is then part of a teacher's medium term planning in different subjects. While this is an effective method of ensuring that pupils' understanding is put to practical use and thereby reinforced, the scrutiny of work in some subjects, such as science, suggested some missed opportunities. An evaluation of actual practice would help to pinpoint where improvements could usefully be made.

HUMANITIES

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well and make good progress in attaining average standards by Year 4.

- Teaching is good throughout the school.
- Monitoring of pupils' achievement is insufficient to support accurate assessment.

Commentary

93. Standards of attainment at Year 2 and Year 4 are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. All pupils achieve well, including pupils with special educational needs, who are identified at an early stage and then given sensitive support. Class teachers give support through the carefully structured planning of tasks. Teaching assistants are mainly well deployed and work thoughtfully with the pupils in lessons. The religious education curriculum is firmly based on the locally agreed syllabus and gradually increases the pupils' knowledge and understanding of a range of world religions. Religious education lessons make a good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
94. In Years 1 and 2 good levels of attention are given to developing the pupils' knowledge of Christianity. In a Year 1/2 lesson the focus on the Bible story of the 'Prodigal Son' was made meaningful for pupils. They dramatised the story that had been expressively read to them by the class teacher. The teaching assistant shared understanding with a group of pupils in order to support their learning effectively. The small sample of written work confirmed that more able pupils were being encouraged to record in their own words.
95. In Years 3 and 4 the pupils extend their knowledge and understanding. Hinduism is the current focus of their learning. The pupils are mainly recording work carefully. Whilst also studying a wider range of religions, pupils in Year 3/4 continue to develop clear understanding of the Christian religion. In a lesson observed on the meaning of Pentecost pupils used space in the hall to re-enact the events. They froze their actions in order to discuss what was happening purposefully with their teacher. This supported their understanding as they begin to learn from religion as well as about religion.
96. Teaching is good throughout the school. Lessons are carefully planned so that all pupils are well involved in developing their knowledge and understanding. Pupils listen with interest because teachers are enthusiastically presenting tasks to them. Teachers ask open-ended questions that are well distributed and carefully considered so that pupils can answer them successfully.
97. The co-ordinator for religious education is on maternity leave but came into the school to discuss provision during the inspection. She has provided adequate resources to support colleagues in developing pupils' knowledge and understanding of a range of religions. There is a clear grasp of the need to monitor learning more closely so that a more formal assessment of the pupils' achievements can be made. However, this has not yet taken place.
98. **History and geography** were not a focus for the inspection, and only one lesson was seen in either subject. No definitive judgements can, therefore, be made about provision. However, pupils' work was sampled and co-ordinators provided information about how the school manages these subjects. From this evidence standards are judged to be satisfactory.
99. A very good history lesson in Year 3/4 effectively linked design and technology skills to support historical knowledge about the importance of water in Ancient Egypt. Pupils worked very successfully in pairs to construct a 'shaduf' and were able to explain when and how it was used to extract water from the Nile. Well organised resources and clear expectations meant all pupils completed the task. The teacher made good use of technical language such as 'tripod', 'lever' and 'fertile', linking learning to other subjects such as science and geography.
100. Pupils' books indicate an appropriate level of work to support curriculum intentions. However, the quality of presentation is variable, with some pupils appearing to take little pride in their work. While factual knowledge is covered, there is limited evidence of older pupils writing in different styles or for different audiences, a missed opportunity to develop writing skills through

relevant tasks. History is a focus for development in this term, and there is a detailed action plan to support this.

101. A good geography lesson in a Year 1/2 class focused on pupils recognising the physical features characteristic of the seaside. Careful planning and appropriate activities built effectively on pupils' existing knowledge. Tasks were well matched to pupils' differing abilities and as a result all pupils achieved well.
102. Analysing pupils' work and looking at teachers' files, as well as the response from the subject co-ordinator, indicates that there is satisfactory teaching and learning, with suitable opportunities for assessment built in. However, while pupils' work covers appropriate topics too much of the writing is copied. There is little evidence of originality, and marking refers to the quality of handwriting, rather than commenting on geographical knowledge and understanding. There is some evidence of links with other subjects, for example to studies of the Hindu religion in religious education, but there are missed opportunities to make use of pupils' mathematical and writing skills, nor is there evidence of pupils' undertaking personal research.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design, design and technology and music

103. There was not enough evidence to make judgements on provision in art and design, design and technology or music, because not enough teaching was seen. However, pupils' work was examined, and there were discussions with teachers.
104. In **art and design** pupils experience a range of media as evidenced by the various displays. Examples of pictures produced in pastel, paint, print and collage attractively line the corridors around the school. There are examples of younger pupils using 'shades' of blue in varying degrees and older pupils producing 'still life' and 'portraits' in their compositions. There are sound links with other subjects such as science, depicting the plant cycle, and illustrating 'spring poems' in literacy. The subject is being managed by the headteacher in the absence of a co-ordinator and she is aware of the need to replenish and reorganise resources.
105. In **design and technology** skills are learnt effectively because the subject is taught in 'blocks' of time, allowing projects to be completed and skills well established. In addition, design and technology skills are also incorporated into other lessons. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and supports the subject well. However, she is aware of the need to improve and reorganise resources.
106. In **music** pupils are developing their singing skills well, having a deserved reputation as good and enthusiastic singers. Pupils throughout the school sing tunefully, with good volume and obvious enjoyment, in the assemblies attended during the inspection. Musical instruments, either tuned or percussion, were not used here, although successfully employed in a lesson in a Year 1/2 class. Pupils sang as classes arrived in and left the hall for assembly during the inspection, giving a tremendous feeling of joy and community. At other times music from various traditions is played and discussed with the pupils. Musical tuition is not a regular feature but a mid-day school club provides keyboard tuition for a small number of pupils. The co-ordinator achieves well during her one day in school and is organising the end of term production of the 'Wizard of Oz'. She is aware that insufficient emphasis is placed on pupils' knowledge of different composers and styles of music. Further resources require purchasing as currently they are insufficient both in quantity and variety.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are average by the end of Year 2 and Year 4.
- The good teaching includes links with literacy and the use of exemplars.
- Learning support staff make an effective contribution.
- Warm up and cool down sessions require more attention.

Commentary

107. Three lessons were seen during the inspection, two in Year 1/2 classes focusing on dance and one in a Year 3/4 class covering athletics. Standards are average by the end of Year 2 and Year 4. Pupils reproduce and explore simple actions with basic control and co-ordination as they interpret the story of the 'Rainbow Fish'. Older pupils practise the skills of throwing and are clear about the techniques and the stance necessary for each throw.
108. The teaching is good overall. Good features are the way in which literal and technical language are linked, and the use of pupils to demonstrate interesting aspects of their individual interpretations, for example in dance. This encourages others to think more deeply about their own compositions.
109. Learning support staff and those supporting pupils with special educational needs make effective contributions and help to keep pupils on task, particularly when outside and it is playtime for pupils from other classes! The essential warm up and on occasions the cool down sessions are too brief and are not always used to warm the body sufficiently before exercise and prior to stretching the muscles.
110. The leadership of the co-ordinator is good. The subject is well organised and planned for in each area of physical education. Resources are satisfactory for basic coverage but the need to purchase more athletics and skills equipment, such as balls and beanbags, has been identified by the school.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION (PSHE)

111. Two PSHE lessons were seen in Year 3/4 classes. The teaching was very good in both lessons, with the pupils being actively involved and participating with interest. Teachers and teaching assistants worked very well together to demonstrate how we show emotions through our body language. The school sees pupils' personal development as a very important part of its work, and inspection evidence indicates that it is tackling this key area with increasing success. The programme for personal, social and health education is good and includes work on diet, health, relationships, drugs and personal safety. This helps pupils develop an understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle.
112. Through 'Circle Time' and personal and social education lessons, pupils gain confidence, self-esteem and learn how to interact well with others. The school council and house system provides all pupils with opportunities to take responsibility for themselves in and around the school.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3

Value for money provided by the school	3
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Overall standards achieved	4
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	4

The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	4
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2

The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	4

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