

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST JAMES THE GREAT RC PRIMARY AND NURSERY
SCHOOL**

Thornton Heath, Surrey

LEA area: Croydon

Unique reference number: 101816

Headteacher: Stephen Beck

Lead inspector: Pauline Lyseight-jones

Dates of inspection: 10th - 13th November 2003

Inspection number: 257691

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	3 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	472
School address:	Windsor Road Thornton Heath Surrey
Postcode:	CR7 8HJ
Telephone number:	(0208) 771 3424
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Rev Fr Michael Jones
Date of previous inspection:	2 nd March 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St James the Great RC Primary School is in the London Borough of Croydon. The school has strong community links through the two parishes it serves, St Andrew's, Thornton Heath, and St Bartholomew's, Norbury. It is a larger than average-sized school with 472 pupils on roll and broadly similar numbers of boys and girls. Most pupils come from settled White UK, African, Caribbean or Asian backgrounds. There are 80 pupils who speak English as an additional language, of whom only one pupil is at the early stages of learning English. About 11 per cent of pupils are on the register of special educational needs and eight pupils have statements of special educational needs. The percentage of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is below the national average. Pupils' attainment on entry is in line with expectations, except in personal, social and emotional development, where they are above expectations.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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31758	E Tipper	Lay inspector	
22480	J Cooper	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Geography History Physical education
22577	M Hart	Team inspector	Special educational needs Art and design
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

St James the Great is a highly effective school which has many excellent features. It is a lively, vibrant and very high quality place to learn which is held in very high regard by pupils, parents and other partners. Its standards are very high. Teaching and learning are very good and its out-of-school activities programme is outstanding. The school is very well led and managed. Pupils' attendance rates are excellent. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The ethos of the school is excellent; it reaches out to its families, other schools and communities in humane and generous partnership. It provides an excellent example of inclusive practice, concerned with securing high standards for pupils, excellent support for staff, and a safe and secure environment for all.
- Attendance is excellent. Pupils have very good attitudes to school. They behave very well, work very hard indeed and learn very well.
- Pupils' personal development is very good, their involvement in school decision-making is of a very high quality and their willingness to take personal responsibility for their learning and for other people is excellent.
- There is high quality teaching, particularly in Year 6. Support staff provide very good assistance to pupils, particularly in the nursery and reception classes, where their work is excellent.
- Standards in national tests in English and mathematics are well above average. In science, they are above average. There is very good provision in information and communication technology, leading to pupils making good progress.
- Assessment is very good in English, mathematics and science and it is broadly satisfactory in other subjects.
- The very good resources and accommodation contribute to the good quality of the curriculum. However, the lesson timetable needs some improvement now that the school is working to develop foundation subjects further.
- Pupils have many excellent opportunities to benefit from the comprehensive range of out-of-class activities.

The school has continued to develop well since the last inspection. There are very effective strategies for checking that the school improvement plan is working properly and parents get a very wide range of timely information about their child's progress. The school checks the work of teachers very well in English, mathematics and science, and is starting to extend this good practice to other subjects. The school is very good at improving its own work through regular, thorough and systematic evaluations.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Pupils achieve well throughout the school. Overall standards are very high in English, information and communication technology and music. Standards are high in art and design, mathematics, science and physical education. In other subjects, standards are as expected and pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. In the 2003 national tests, Year 6 maintained its very high standards in English and mathematics, the school was in the top five per cent of schools nationally in reading and mathematics, and standards were very high in writing. Standards in science are good. However, science test results are below average when compared to similar schools. The school recognises this and has put into place changes which are intended to improve science higher level attainment. In national tests in 2003, Year 2 pupils made very good progress. Children join the school with good standards in personal, social and emotional development. In other areas of learning, standards are as expected. Children make good progress throughout the nursery and reception years and are well prepared to join Year 1.

Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in relation to their previous attainment. Pupils who speak English an additional language also achieve well as do pupils who are particularly gifted or talented.

Pupils are rarely absent, they get to school on time and many attend before-school activities. They are very good learners and behave very well in class and around the school. The development of pupils' personal qualities, including spiritual, moral social and cultural development, is very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Pupils receive a very good quality of education. Teaching is very good with some examples of first class teaching. All pupils learn very well. There is a vibrant learning atmosphere in school as a result of the excellent range of out-of-class clubs and the good range of what is taught in lessons. Even so, the time given to each subject needs to be reviewed so that mathematics lessons are not too long and so that foundation subjects can be given more attention. Pupils are very well cared for and get good support and guidance. The school has very good links with parents, with its partner schools and with its local community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is very well managed and led by the governors, headteacher and the senior management team. The headteacher gives an excellent lead to the school due to his clear vision of effective education, his high expectations for all pupils and his personal knowledge, skills and understanding about effective education. Leadership in foundation subjects needs further development. Financial management is excellent and governors are fully involved in the development of the school.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents hold the school in very high regard and they take a very significant role in its work. Pupils hold the same highly favourable view of the school. The inspection team agrees with the views of parents.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Review the timetable to establish distinct and suitable opportunities for all subjects to be taught, particularly geography and history.
- Ensure that leadership in all subjects, including checking teaching in lessons, develops in line with the good practice in place in core subjects.
- Continue to develop assessment practice in foundation subjects so that pupils' next steps in learning meet their particular needs even better.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Standards throughout the school in English are very high and they are very high in music and information technology in Key Stage 2. Across the school, standards are high in science, art and design, and physical education, and they are high in information and communication technology in Years 1 and 2. Standards are as expected in design and technology, geography and history in all year groups and mathematics in Years 1 and 2. All groups of pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment, including those who have special educational needs, come from ethnic minority backgrounds, are academically gifted or talented or who speak English as an additional language. They all make good progress overall and leave the school having exceeded expectations, especially in English, mathematics and information and communication technology. This also applies to science; however, progress is less marked when test results are compared to those of similar schools. The school ensures that pupils are taught well. This means that by the time that they take their national tests, pupils are well prepared, do their best and achieve to very high levels.

No judgements on standards and learning in music in Years 1 and 2 and in geography can be made as too few lessons were seen.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children make good progress and achieve well in all areas of learning throughout reception and nursery. They are very well prepared to deal with the challenges of the full National Curriculum in Year 1.
- The school continues to maintain its high standards in national tests.
- Pupils' imaginative and creative writing and their use and knowledge of information and communication technology are particular strengths.
- Pupils make better than expected progress in English, mathematics, science, art and design, information and communication technology, music and physical education.
- Throughout the school, pupils' achievements are good in relation to their prior attainment.
- Pupils with particular needs are given good, well-focused support and their achievement is good.
- Assessment is not well enough established in all subjects across the school.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	19.0 (18.8)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	17.6 (16.5)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	18.5 (19.4)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 60 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	30.2 (31.1)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	28.8 (29.0)	26.8 (26.7)
science	29.7 (29.3)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 63 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

1. The school has a long history of very high achievement in national tests in Years 2 and 6. Pupils start school with broadly expected standards. Through a well planned and taught programme in the nursery and reception classes, they make gains and join Year 1 doing better than expected. They continue to make progress at a good rate in English, mathematics and science throughout their time in school. The result is that pupils in Year 6 in 2003, when compared to pupils who had achieved to similar levels in Year 2, score in the top five per cent in English, their results are well above average in mathematics and they are above average in science.

Targets and outcomes – Key Stage 2 - 2003

	Target	Outcome
English % L4+	94	97
English % L5+	29	57
Mathematics % L4+	91	87
Mathematics % L5+	44	43
Science % L4+		94
Science % L5+		51

2. Pupils did very well in their test performance at the higher levels of attainment. In Year 2 in 2003, they were in the top five per cent in reading and writing, and results were very high in mathematics. In Year 6, pupils' results in English at higher-levels were in the top five per cent of schools, in mathematics they were very high and in science they were high. The school has set itself ambitious targets to improve its higher-level science results.
3. The school achieves these very pleasing results against a backdrop of considerable out-of-school hours learning. Many pupils not only achieve well in English, mathematics and science but they make great gains in music, information and communication technology and in swimming outside, as well as within, usual school lessons.
4. In English, pupils are particularly skilled in their imaginative and creative writing. The high quality teaching, encouragement and stimulus to write contribute to the store of possibilities on which pupils can draw when they settle to write their own pieces. The quality of teaching and the skilled use of information and communication technology contribute to the very high standards in mathematics. Pupils' standards in information and communication technology are continuing to improve at a good rate because of the thorough way in which the school has embedded the subject in other subjects. In addition, pupils get frequent opportunities to practise what they have learned, either in the school's computer suite or in their classrooms.
5. In Years 5 and 6, pupils get regular swimming lessons. This is a key element to their having higher than expected levels in this aspect of physical education. Pupils' standards in music are very high. This is due not only to the systematic and thorough teaching which pupils receive but to the high volume of musical activities in which many pupils take part, both within the school day and out-of-school hours. The school takes a pride in showing the art work of pupils in classrooms, in corridors and in shared areas. Pupils become skilled at working not

only as individuals but also taking part in creating pieces of art together. They become aware of design as part of their day-to-day lives and demonstrate this by the high quality of their designs of the stained glass windows in the Oratory.

6. Children start the school in line with expectations, except in personal, social and emotional development, where they exceed expectations. The skilled staff in the nursery and reception classes ensure that work is well matched to children's needs and that the wide range of resources are used well. As a result, children make good progress and leave the Foundation Stage having made gains in all areas of learning while maintaining their strength in personal, social and emotional development.
7. In addition to the flying start to children's school careers and then particularly good results in national tests and significantly high standards in information and communication technology, music, art and design and swimming within physical education, standards of work in other subjects are satisfactory and pupils' attainment is sound. The school deliberately sets out to develop the areas in which it now excels or does very well. It is now turning its attention to improving the satisfactory standards without losing the quality of achievement which is already in place.
8. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well due to the skilled teaching and support provided by the school, and the very efficient way that resources are secured and used. The excellent relationships that pupils have with staff and with other pupils, and the way they are included in everything, boosts their confidence and helps them achieve. Pupils are always willing to help each other and work together.
9. Whilst a good number of pupils speak English as an additional language, virtually all of them are at a competent or fluent level. Their progress, attainment and standards are on a par with other pupils. Overall, all groups of pupils, including gifted and talented pupils, achieve well.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' overall behaviour and their attitudes to their work and towards others in the school are **very good**. Their overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also **very good**. Attendance is **excellent** and punctuality is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school gives its pupils some excellent opportunities to undertake responsibilities, which they readily accept.
- Pupils are extremely enthusiastic in their approach to lessons and to the range of activities provided for them outside the school day.
- The school actively encourages pupils to show a very high respect for the feelings of others, instils in them a strong moral code and helps them develop very good relationships with each other and with adults working in the school.
- The school sets very high expectations for pupils' behaviour and works hard to meet these.
- Pupils, who come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, work and play in a completely harmonious atmosphere.

Commentary

10. Pupils have many opportunities to accept responsibility. The Student Council's elected representatives, one boy and one girl in each class, from Years 3 to 6, see their role very clearly as 'giving pupils a voice' in the running of the school. They help to identify areas for improvement and suggest what action needs to be taken. The Council helped to introduce two other positions of responsibility: 'squabblebusters' and 'playleaders'. The 'squabblebusters', some 25 Year 6 pupils, are volunteers whose role is to help pupils to resolve any differences

that pupils might have with each other. As they wear yellow bibs in the playground, they are highly visible. They have a useful handbook which they helped to devise. Although still in its early days, it is clear from the log kept by 'squabblebusters' that they are having a positive impact on playground behaviour. Some Year 6 pupils operate on a rota basis as 'playleaders'. They organise and supervise activities such as football, netball and giant chess and help all pupils to be involved in one activity or another. Older pupils also take responsibility for their younger colleagues through a well-established buddy system. Other pupils throughout the school work responsibly as class monitors.

11. Pupils are very keen and enthusiastic to come to school. The same can be said of the way in which they support the many clubs and other activities that are available to them, before and after school and during lunchtimes. During inspection week, about 60 fully-involved pupils attended a drama workshop starting at 8.30 in the morning. As a result of these activities, pupils show how committed they are to learning.
12. The strong bond that exists between the school, the communities of its two parishes and the families of the pupils creates an atmosphere where pupils develop caring and sensitive relationships with others in the school. Meanwhile, their daily involvement with fellow pupils from different backgrounds enables them to appreciate that others may have values and beliefs which differ from their own. An assembly held on Remembrance Day gave very powerful messages about the futility of war and the importance of peace-making. These messages were made relevant to school life through the involvement of some squabblebusters. Pupils are continuously taught the principles of right and wrong through the reinforcement of rules by adults and each other. In this way, pupils learn to treat everyone with courtesy and respect.
13. The school has a very clear system for maintaining good behaviour within the school. It has the full support of pupils and parents. Whilst behaviour in school is usually very good, the school recognises that bullying does exist. It has responded very positively by setting up an anti-bullying working party consisting of a number of parents and led by the deputy headteacher. A meeting which took place during the inspection had a high level of informed and reasoned debate as to how to identify and deal with bullying. It stressed the importance of promoting reconciliation between pupils involved and of helping rather than punishing those found to be doing the bullying.
14. Despite the very varied ethnic backgrounds of the school's pupils, there is a general absence of any racial tension or discrimination. All pupils are treated equally by adults and each other, and there is a very harmonious atmosphere in classrooms and around the school.

Attendance

15. Attendance is very high in comparison with other schools across the country. The school is diligent in following up reasons for absence and it discourages parents from taking their children on holiday during term time. Parents support the school's approach and there is no unauthorised absence.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	3.5
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.0
National data	0.4

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

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	214	0	0
White – Irish	18	0	0
White – any other White background	9	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	17	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	39	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	28	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	9	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	40	0	0
Black or Black British – African	8	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	68	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	6	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	2	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

16. The quality of education provided by the school is very good. This is due to very good teaching and learning and to the significant emphasis which the school places on its being a place where pupils, staff and parents learn well and, often, together. The school opens its doors to learners before school, in lunchtimes and after school. Pupils see adults (their parents and school staff) learning as well. This sets a really good example for pupils as learners and also contributes to a climate in which all enjoy learning and no-one is afraid to ask for help.

Teaching and learning

17. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. This represents an improvement since the previous inspection, when it was good. While there is good and very good teaching across the school, some excellent teaching was seen and there is particular strength in Year 6. Assessment of pupils' work is very good in English, mathematics and science. Its quality varies in other subjects but is mostly sound.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' subject knowledge, especially in English, mathematics, science, and information and communication technology, is good.
- Teaching skills across the school, but especially in Year 6, are very good.
- Teachers have very high expectations of pupils and insist on very high standards of behaviour.
- Classroom support staff are very good and make significant contributions to pupils' learning.

- Teachers' planning is very good and ensures that pupils across the ability range are given suitable work.
- Pupils learn very well, they understand what they learn and can use what they learn in other settings.
- Pupils are self-disciplined and work very well either on their own or with others.
- Assessment is not as good in all subjects as it is in English, mathematics and science.
- Checking the quality of teaching rigorously does not happen in all subjects.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 59 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
3 (5%)	15 (25%)	28 (48%)	11 (19%)	2 (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.

18. Three excellent lessons were seen during the inspection. Teachers plan well and use the time in lessons to teach. No time is wasted. Teachers ensure that they are well prepared, they use the school's varied and up-to-date resources well, especially those available to support learning in information and communication technology. Teachers are also fully involved in leading out-of-school activities. This not only offers further teaching opportunities in a different setting but allows pupils to see that their teachers are highly skilled and versatile. The school has three advanced skills teachers and two leading mathematics teachers.
19. There is a very open attitude amongst staff and they talk readily about their teaching and how they can do better. This means that the school is very well placed to ensure that teaching continues at this high level or gets better. To do this, the school needs to put into place more opportunities for teachers to check each other's teaching in subjects other than English and mathematics.
20. Assessment is very well developed in English and mathematics due to good monitoring and target setting linked to good, ambitious planning of pupils' next steps. It is good in science, art, physical education, and information and communication technology. Assessment is unsatisfactory in design and technology and in history. The strengths of assessment in English and in mathematics are due to the skill of teachers and to the thorough implementation of suitable features of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. In other subjects, teachers know their pupils well and therefore can meet their learning needs. However, the school agrees that there is room for improvement in assessment practice so that it contributes even more to the standards which pupils achieve.
21. Teachers, especially in Year 6, plan very well and pupils learn very thoroughly. They have thorough knowledge of what they are to teach and their good, respectful relationships with pupils leads to pupils wanting to learn and then, working hard. The high standards in English are attributable, in part, to the sensitive and well-planned introduction of the National Literacy Strategy. This allowed the school to assess which aspects of the strategy would add to the school's established strengths in English teaching and learning. All staff receive thorough training on language and literacy development. The staff are themselves very literate and articulate. In their day-to-day work, they provide powerful examples of the effective use of English.
22. Some mathematics lessons in Years 1 and 2 are too long and in these lessons pupils tend to lose some of their concentration. Otherwise, pupils come to school expecting to learn and ready for the day. They work very hard indeed and their teachers expect this of them. The

atmosphere in which the learning takes place is purposeful, positive and relaxed. Staff and pupils get on extremely well with each other.

23. Classroom assistants are very skilled. They are very well used to leading small groups and to working with individual pupils. They know what they are to do because they are well trained and are involved in planning. They know the pupils very well indeed. Classroom assistants make a difference to the quality and rate of pupils' learning, especially pupils who have specific needs.
24. Teachers and classroom assistants are well aware of the learning needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The school recognises that even fluent second language speakers of English may need support with aspects of understanding of jargon or idiom, with the structure of sentences or of aspects of grammar. Suitable help is given. Good, sensitive English language support is given to pupils and as a result they learn well.
25. Teachers plan very well for pupils with special educational needs; most of the time, these pupils are supported within the classroom by very good, well-briefed support staff. Occasionally, pupils are withdrawn for individual or small group work and care is taken to ensure that they do not miss vital class work. This is done sensitively and effectively so that pupils enjoy the experience and make good use of their support. The special needs co-ordinator, teachers and support staff all work hard to ensure that their knowledge is up-to-date. They use appropriate methods and continually develop their own expertise, for example, using music to improve co-ordination and social skills. They are very good at assessing the needs and progress of pupils with special needs. This ensures that pupils are identified and helped early.

The curriculum

26. Overall the school provides a broad curriculum that is enhanced by a wide range of visits, visitors and out-of-school hours clubs. However, the way in which subjects are timetabled leads to some foundation subjects having insufficient time to be covered in depth. Learning resources and accommodation are very good. Learning support staff provide effective support.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- An inclusive school committed to ensuring individuals and groups have equality of access and opportunity.
- An excellent range of out-of-school hours activities.
- Very good accommodation and resources and excellent accommodation and resources for information and communication technology.
- Pupils with special educational needs are well provided for.
- There is insufficient time allocated to teach the foundation subjects in depth and some mathematics lessons are too long.

Commentary

27. The curriculum is broad but some subjects like history and geography receive less time and are not always taught in sufficient depth. The school plans for all National Curriculum subjects to be taught but has decided to give a lot of time to English and mathematics. The result of tight scheduling is that some subjects are taught every day, some taught weekly and some are taught only in one or two half terms. Lengthy mathematics lessons, especially in Years 1 and 2, lead to a few pupils finding it difficult to maintain their concentration and interest.
28. A wide range of visits and visitors and the addition of ice-skating to the curriculum for Years 5 and 6 add to the quality of the curriculum.

29. The National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy are well used by teachers. The school has identified areas where it needs to extend the strategies further. All subjects are planned in line with national guidance. Information and communication technology is being well used across the curriculum.
30. Personal, social and health education is well planned and effective. However, much is taught through other subjects or fitted in where possible at different times of the day. There is no monitoring of the teaching of this subject which makes it difficult to check what has been covered.
31. There is a very broad range of activities, catering for all ages, which take place before, after school and at lunchtimes. The activities include football, netball, dance, gymnastics, self-defence, steel drums, recorder, French, chess, drama, computers and history. Outsiders have been brought in to run some of the clubs. The out-of-school hours activities are a strength of the school. They are very well attended and the school ensures that no pupil is unable to take part due to lack of funds. There are also competitive sporting fixtures with local schools. A range of visits by each year group and residential visits by Years 4, 5 and 6 enrich and extend learning in a variety of curriculum areas.
32. The school's strong commitment to ensuring equality of access and opportunity for all its pupils is achieved by active intervention through catch up programmes, setting in mathematics and English, opportunities for gifted and talented pupils and the good support given to pupils by teachers and learning support staff.
33. Pupils who have special educational needs have full access to the school's good curriculum and to the opportunities available outside lessons. Teachers have high expectations for all pupils and, through giving support, providing appropriate materials and adjusting the task to the needs of the pupils, they make lessons accessible and enjoyable. Where pupils come out of class for small group work, sensitive planning ensures that they do not miss other important experiences.
34. The system of half day visits to new classes ensures that transfers from nursery to reception and between all subsequent years are successful. Links with secondary schools and visits by secondary teachers to take lessons in Year 6 classes help to ease the transfer from Year 6 to 7.
35. Accommodation is very good. There is an excellent computer suite with interactive whiteboard, large enough for whole class teaching. The computer suite is well used for both teaching and out of hours clubs. Parents, non-teaching staff and the priests also use it to receive information and communication technology training. There is a large, well-equipped purpose-built music room and a good outside area with a large field. The present, rather small, playground is to be enlarged and an environmental area is to be developed. The nursery area is good and has recently improved by the addition of a kitchen. The classrooms for Years 1 and 2 are open plan. This provides a good central working and resource area. It also results in pupils sometimes being distracted from their work due to the sounds from the other class.
36. Very good resources are in place to meet the needs of the curriculum in all subjects. The library is an attractive, well-stocked and accessible area. There are well-used interactive whiteboards and multimedia projectors in all classes from Year 2 up to Year 6. Classrooms are wired to allow a bank of 30 laptops to be used in classrooms by pupils. The 53 seat coach and the minibus are clear assets, because they make it very easy for pupils to be taken out of school.

Care, guidance and support

The school makes **very good** provision for the care, welfare, health and safety of pupils and it provides them with **good** support, advice and guidance. The school actively seeks the views of pupils and acts on those views in a **very effective** manner.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are very well cared for in a safe and healthy environment.
- The school is very successful in involving its pupils in the daily life of the school and in helping to influence their own education.
- The school provides very good arrangements for pupils joining the school which allow them to settle in quickly.

Commentary

37. There is a clear commitment to ensuring pupils' health and safety. An appointed governor and an elected staff representative, along with the headteacher, carry out full health and safety inspections of the school each term. In addition, using a standard checklist, teachers review their classrooms each term for any safety issues. Their findings are then brought to the governors and remedial action is agreed. While there is a potential danger to children outside the school because of the high volume of traffic, within the school grounds pupils are well separated from vehicles by secure fencing.
38. Pupils are encouraged to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Some pupils enjoy free fruit, others bring water bottles to the classroom and the good school caterers offer salads and vegetarian options for school lunches. The award of the School Activemark recognises the encouragement the school gives to its pupils to take part in sporting activities.
39. The school carries out an annual survey of pupils' views. The results are analysed and reported back. Pupils then become involved in finding solutions to any issues which come up. For example, some pupils became concerned about behaviour in the junior playground during lunchtime and this process led to the recent introduction of the playleaders and squabblebusters. Pupils are also involved in setting their own learning targets.
40. The school has a very good system for helping reception class pupils to become active and productive participants quickly in the life of the school. Parents whose children are due to start at the school are invited to visit. Teachers visit the homes of all nursery pupils before pupils start school. Staff talk to parents and children together and start building profiles of the children to enable them to settle in as soon as possible. At the same time, a very informative booklet is given to parents. It is intended to help parents to prepare themselves and their children for school. During their first year, booklets and regular newsletters go home, covering what the pupils will be learning and how parents can help their children at home. Parents appreciate very much the support which the school gives to help pupils to settle in well and complement this by the work which they do with their children at home.
41. An outstanding aspect of the care offered to pupils with special educational needs is the active involvement of all support staff. For example, school meals staff take the trouble to learn about pupils' special needs so that they can respond appropriately to each pupil and not take an unusual piece of behaviour as naughtiness. The very good access of all staff to professional development opportunities helps support this seamless, whole-school approach to special educational needs.
42. A very good initiative is the writing of children's versions of Individual Education Plans. These plans are monitored regularly, through discussion between the special needs co-ordinator and the pupils. The discussions are open enough to give pupils the opportunity to raise new concerns.

43. Gifted and talented pupils are well supported by the school's early recognition of their strengths and by the opportunities given to extend their talents through the curriculum, for example, a specific programme for accelerating learning in mathematics, through giving pupils the chance to go on special summer activities and through providing training for staff to help them to meet the needs of the most capable pupils.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has developed **very good** relationships with parents, carers and the wider community. It has also developed **very good** links with other schools and colleges.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are provided with a very high standard of information about the progress made by their children.
- The school has very good links with its parents, which enable parents to make significant contributions to their children's learning.
- There are very strong links with the community, which results in enriched learning for pupils.
- The school has developed strong and beneficial relationships with other schools.

Commentary

44. Parents are welcome to discuss any concerns about their children's progress with teachers at any time. However, there are two formal occasions, in the spring and summer terms, when they are able to see their children's work and discuss their children's academic and personal development fully. Pupils' annual reports are particularly informative, setting out clearly how well pupils are doing in English, mathematics, science, and information and communication technology. This leaves parents with a very clear understanding about what their children have learned and what they need to do to improve. The reports also include very valuable sections which discuss pupils' attitudes to learning and personal development. Parents appreciate the way in which the school keeps them informed of their children's progress. This leads to parents being more confident about helping children at home, especially with project work.
45. At the beginning of each year, parents meetings take place and parents get good information about what their children will be studying, any visits which are planned, homework and so on. Parents who do not attend receive a clearly written summary. The school runs well-received curriculum workshops for parents. Parents are welcome to help in school with various activities such as hearing readers and taking part in school trips, and several do so. The Friends Association, run by a group of dedicated volunteers, runs a number of very successful fund-raising activities which raise a considerable sum of money each year. In recent years, their support has enabled the school to acquire a minibus, a 53-seated coach, an activity playground and the Oratory. These all give great benefit to pupils' educational and social development.
46. The school has such extensive links with the local community that the local education authority has awarded it a Community Use Kitemark for the last five years. It is an integral part of the communities of its two parish churches and works very closely with its priests. Pupils regularly take an active part in parish celebrations and the school choir sings at a range of parish services. Pupils are eager participants in projects and competitions organised by local organisations and businesses. The school generously supports a range of charities which are both Catholic and secular in nature, and the local community makes extensive use of the school's facilities for activities such as Irish dancing, keep fit and football.
47. The school has developed very effective links with other primary schools in its role as a beacon school and through the activities of its advanced skills teachers. The headteacher is a primary representative on several local and national committees. With Year 6 pupils

transferring to a large number of secondary schools, it is difficult to build strong links with each one. However, very good working relationships have been developed with four secondary schools. As a result, secondary teachers actively participate in school science, mathematics, information and communication technology, and physical education. The school has also hosted major training events, a recent one being for primary school staff concerned with developing gifted and talented pupils. The school makes every effort to welcome health professionals, for example, the school hosted a conference on how to promote the best possible relationships with therapists in order to get the maximum benefit for pupils.

48. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are fully involved in planning for their child and are kept well informed of their progress.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The headteacher is an exceptional leader. The deputy headteacher and the senior leadership team support him very well. The very effective governing body very ably fulfils its responsibilities and makes a major contribution. All involved with school leadership are committed to ensuring that a very high quality of education and consistently high standards are achieved and maintained. Effective use is made of careful analysis of information from tests, the monitoring of pupils' work and teachers' planning. There is a strong and purposeful link between the performance management of teachers and the school's key targets in the School Improvement Plan. Monitoring of the quality of teaching is not sufficiently systematic to include all subjects on a regular cycle.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher is very clear about how the school should develop and the quality of education that should be given to pupils.
- The deputy headteacher and those with leadership responsibilities complement the headteacher very well and together give a very positive sense of direction to the daily life of the school.
- There is a well organised and very effective governing body which fulfils its strategic role very well. Governors give very good support to the school through their understanding of what the school does well.
- Key members of the leadership team provide very good examples to staff and pupils in their day-to-day work.
- Excellent financial management enables the school to meet its objectives in sustaining a high quality education and in seeking to continue to improve.
- The monitoring of the quality of teaching in all subjects through a systematic programme of observation of lessons is not well established.

Commentary

49. The headteacher has a very clear view of what it is the school should provide for the children in its care and of how this can be best achieved. This commitment to creating a good place for pupils to learn and achieve high standards permeates all the school's activities. This approach is reflected well in the School Improvement Plan where the key targets aim to continue to improve the standards achieved by pupils by providing a broad range of opportunities in well-maintained premises.
50. The unity of purpose shared by all who work in the school is very apparent in the way in which those with leadership responsibilities support the headteacher and effectively carry out their roles. The collegiate approach which the headteacher successfully encourages results in teams of teachers and support staff working confidently together to teach children, develop the curriculum and provide a wide range of activities, both in school time and out of school time. Key members of the leadership team, such as the deputy headteacher, also show effective leadership by their example as good teachers and effective managers. As a result, the overall leadership of the school is very good; that of the headteacher is exemplary.

51. The school strives very successfully to ensure every child is included in the life of the school and has the opportunity to take part in everything the school has to offer. This is a particularly strong feature of the school. It also applies to the adults who work at the school. A very effective professional development programme helps to improve staff performance. These opportunities for development extend to all who work in school. Non-teaching staff attend meetings, courses or join with teaching and class-based staff in order to further their own understanding of how children learn. This work has been recognised by the school's Investors in People Award.
52. The very successful governing body supports the work of the school very well and helps the headteacher shape the school's strategy for long-term development. The committees, particularly the finance committee, are very effective in helping the governors fulfil their responsibilities. They are actively involved in the development of the School Improvement Plan, taking particular responsibility for the development of the premises. They regularly discuss progress in achieving targets and use a range of information, including visits to school, committee reviews, performance data and reports from the headteacher and key staff, to help ask pertinent questions. As a result, they have a good understanding of what the school does well.
53. Procedures for monitoring how well the school is doing are very good. Analysis of information from the annual tests gives a clear view of what the school does well and what could be improved. For example, the school identified raising the percentage of children who achieve Level 5 in science as a priority for this year. To support this, further analysis has been done and a strategy put in place to bring about the expected improvement. By looking at information on pupils' progress and samples of children's work, the leadership team ensure standards remain high and any areas of concern are identified and addressed. Subject leaders review teachers' planning to ensure that suitable work is provided. Observation of teaching is linked closely to the school's performance management programme. As this is linked closely to the key targets in the improvement plan, it gives a good view of how successful the current focus for development is. The school uses observation of teaching and learning to good effect in English and mathematics. Extending this to foundation subjects would help provide good quality information about foundation subjects.
54. Financial management is excellent. The finance committee meets frequently to monitor how the budget is being spent and evaluate effectiveness of spending. It uses priorities in the School Improvement Plan well to decide the priorities for expenditure each year. As a result, it ensures the school is well resourced and enabled improvements such as additions to the premises and establishing a very high level of support staff. The finance committee uses principles for ensuring best value very well. Together, high standards achieved by pupils, very effective leadership and the unit cost per pupil mean that the school provides good value for money.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1,321,71
Total expenditure	1,345,528
Expenditure per pupil	2,977

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	23,898
Balance carried forward to the next	88

55. The school has improved the quality of its leadership since the last inspection. Management is now very good. The very good level of resources, the effective use of accommodation, people and time continue to benefit the pupils and the wider community which the school serves. The

school has improved strategies for checking on the effectiveness of priorities in the School Improvement Plan and in ensuring value for money. Through the implementation of performance management for teachers, there is an improvement on checking the quality of teaching. The high standard of financial management ensures that the allocation of resources will continue to meet the school's identified needs.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

56. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is **good**. Children are prepared well for transfer to Year 1.
57. Children join the nursery class after their third birthday, attending either in the morning or the afternoon. When they start in the nursery class, children's attainments are about those expected of children of their age, although personal development is good. During their time in the nursery and reception classes, children make good progress so that by the end of the reception year their overall attainments are better than expected for children of their age. In their personal and social education, children have developed very good skills. There is no noticeable difference in the achievements of boys and girls or children from different ethnic groups. Children with special educational needs achieve well as do those who speak English as an additional language.
58. A series of visits to children's homes, useful meetings and a good range of written information mean that children and their parents and carers are given a good introduction to the school. Teaching throughout the nursery and reception classes is consistently good, and in some lessons it is very good. Activities are well planned to provide children with a good balance between adult led activities and those at which children work independently. Organised classrooms and a caring atmosphere provide a place where children feel comfortable and secure. By working together well, adults set a very good example to children. The team in the nursery, where there is a very good level of staffing, is particularly effective. Staff make sure that good use is made of the very good resources. The accommodation is good and has been improved by covering some of the outdoor areas. Access to the reception outdoor area is through one of the teaching areas and the need to use the area between the two reception areas to gain access to other rooms is not ideal. Teachers manage this inconvenience well. The quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage has been well maintained since the last inspection.

AREA OF LEARNING	Judgements	Children's achievement in relation to prior attainment	Comments
Personal, Social and Emotional Development	Well above average. Children's skills are generally good on starting nursery but children develop independence in learning and good awareness of others.	Achievement is good. Children build well on a confident start so that by the end of the reception year they have developed very good social skills and attitudes towards learning.	Good teaching in nursery and reception classes helps children to make good progress.
Communication Language and Literacy	When children join the nursery class, their skills are generally about those expected at this age. By the end of the reception year, standards are better than expected of five-year-olds.	Achievement is good. Children build well on their early skills and learn to speak clearly, understand the layout of books, use letter sounds and begin to develop the ability to write independently.	Children are interested in all aspects of language development. Well-planned activities enable children to develop their skills well.
Mathematical Development	When children start school, their attainment is about that expected for their age. By end of the reception year, their skills and understanding are above average.	Achievement is good. Children build steadily on their early skills and develop a good understanding of numbers to ten and beyond.	Activities are usually well organised to help children learn through a range of activities.
Knowledge and Understanding of the World	When children start school, their attainment is about that expected. By the end of the reception year, their understanding of the world around them is above average.	Achievement is good. Children build effectively on their early experiences.	A strong emphasis on exploring the world around them helps children extend their knowledge and understanding of the world.
Creative Development	Children use a variety of ways to colour and illuminate their drawings, play sensibly with constructional toys and sing with enjoyment so that by the end of the reception year their skills are above average.	Achievement is good. Children develop appropriate skills well and use them effectively.	Teaching assistants make an important contribution to this area of children's development.

Physical Development	On entry to school, children have a range of skills that are about those expected for their age. By the end of the reception year, these have been improved and children's abilities are better than expected for their age.	Achievement is good. Children develop skills in using large apparatus and toys as well as gaining good control in using small tools.	A broad range of activities helps children learn new skills and improve existing abilities.
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PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and helps children to achieve well.
- There is a good balance between adult-led activities and opportunities for children to choose activities for themselves.
- Adults in the nursery provide a very good example to children of how to work well together.

Commentary

59. Children enter school with a wide range of social skills that, overall, are better than those expected of children of their age. By the end of their time in the nursery and reception classes, their skills are well developed and are much better than expected of children of their age. Children come into school confidently, with even the youngest children taking responsibility for hanging coats and hats, although many need help with this. They listen attentively to teachers and most children join confidently in activities, such as singing and reciting rhymes. When moving to activities, children walk quietly and sensibly, soon settling quickly to their tasks. Most children work independently on tasks they have chosen themselves, although in some activities, particularly in reception classes, children show an awareness of others as they play or work together. Children show interest in what they are doing, concentrate well even when not directly supervised, and are eager to learn.
60. All the adults provide children with good examples of working together and enthusiasm for learning. They work well as teams within each teaching area. The nursery team is a particularly effective team and the staff in the two reception classes support each other very well, particularly when some resources, such as the outdoor area, are shared. Teachers use every opportunity to develop children's confidence or to reinforce expected standards of behaviour. For example, in the nursery, children were reminded about putting hands up if they want to comment in a class discussion. Planning is good and ensures that the range of activities provided is well balanced between those led by an adult, the teacher or allowing children to work independently. Adults lead group activities well by asking pertinent questions and encouraging children's participation.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching ensures that children develop their communication skills well.
- Letter formation is well taught and children write letters clearly.
- Children write independently and more able children begin to write in sentences using appropriate punctuation.
- Children know initial letter sounds and are beginning to link letter sounds together.

Commentary

61. By the end of the reception year, children have developed good skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing. Good direct teaching is supported by well-chosen activities so that children enjoy a good range experiences. Children take pleasure from class stories and skilful questioning by teachers ensures that they gain full understanding of what has been read. Progress in written work is good. Children progress through the year from copying over the teacher's writing to writing independently with well-formed letters ready for starting joined

writing. Many common words are spelled correctly and more able children use some sophisticated connectives to join their sentences. Careful records are kept and children make good progress.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers plan a wide range of activities which helps children to learn well.
- Children achieve standards that are better than those expected for children of their age.

Commentary

62. Children cover an extensive range of work so that by the end of the reception year their attainments are above those expected of their age. Teaching is good and carefully structured. All children cover the full range of work and those children who find learning more difficult usually have work adapted and receive an appropriate level of support so that they are able to make suitable progress. In a few lessons, the independent activities provided do not show enough variation to extend the more able children or allow those who are less confident to work on their own.
63. Children develop a good understanding of number and most children identify numbers larger than ten. By the end of the reception year, children confidently add and subtract numbers to ten, put numbers up to 50 in order and begin to identify halves and quarters. Activities in the nursery provide a good grounding for this development as children learn to match objects to numbers and ensure that, for example, they have placed the correct number of objects at a table setting. Children in the nursery know the names of regular shapes such as triangle, rectangle and square and this information is used to further develop understanding of three-dimensional shapes in the reception classes. By comparing ideas about mathematical terms such as *heavier, lighter, longer, shorter and taller*, children begin to develop an understanding of weight and length. The adults in the class co-operate well to keep records of how well children respond to activities. These help teachers monitor children's progress and plan further work.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

The school makes **good** provision for developing children's knowledge and understanding of the world.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good with a range of interesting activities provided to help children learn.
- Children have knowledge and understanding of the world around them that is better than that expected for children of their age.
- Staff observation and investigation make an important contribution to the development of children's understanding.

Commentary

64. Most children enter school with a level of general knowledge appropriate for their age. As a result of good teaching, children learn well and they achieve well so that by the end of the reception year children's overall attainments are above average. Teachers use a good balance of explanations and questions to help improve children's understanding, which is checked to ensure that children have clearly understood what has been taught. A good variety

of appropriate interesting activities are planned to stimulate children's curiosity and to enhance their understanding. As a result of these activities, children learn about different types of materials, such as shiny and dull, understand the sequence of time, investigate features of living things, know the functions of different parts of the body and construct models using simple materials. Children use computers confidently in both the nursery and reception classes.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The well-constructed outdoor area is used well.
- A well-planned range of activities helps children practise and improve their skills.

Commentary

65. Children enter school with physical skills that are typical of children of their age. Through a well-planned range of activities, children improve their skills, achieve well and reach standards that are better than average by the end of the reception year. In the nursery, children learn to hold a pencil and brush confidently. By the end of the reception year, most children can control a pencil and other colouring tools, use scissors competently and manipulate small construction toys effectively. Nursery children develop hand strength through squeezing, rolling, pressing and playing with play dough. The older children show good control when making mathematical shapes from play dough.
66. Children benefit from good outdoor play areas. The reception area has suitable covered space but access to it is at the end of one teaching area. This has to be carefully managed to ensure that lessons run smoothly. The nursery area is well set out and provides children with a range of experiences from a large climbing frame to seats for quiet working. Children enjoy the activities, learning not only to control climbing, running and jumping activities but also more delicate and controlled movements. Nursery-aged children had great fun controlling remote controlled cars, steering them past obstacles and manoeuvring around obstructions. In the reception class, children attempted to control a football and improved balance through games of hopscotch. This also helped children improve their mathematical understanding as they counted as they played.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children benefit from a wide range of varied activities.
- Teaching is good and helps children to achieve well.
- Opportunities for improving learning in other areas are used well.

Commentary

67. In both the nursery and reception classes, children benefit from a wide range of activities which help them learn new skills and develop their imagination. Activities support learning in different areas. For example, a group of nursery children worked on an activity to decorate a duck, exploring different shades of yellow and learning how to use glue to create their picture. This activity also helped improve children's physical skills by improving control of tools and their mathematical understanding when discussing the shapes to be used. Reception-aged

children further develop these skills, colouring a parrot as they carefully select colours and improve the basic picture with brightly coloured feathers. Children develop their imagination through activities in the role-play corner and by using dressing up clothes, which children in the reception class particularly enjoy.

68. Children have opportunities to sing songs and rhymes on different occasions. Nursery children enjoyed shaking instruments to accompany songs such as *Twinkle, twinkle little star* and *One finger, one thumb*. An enthusiastic nursery nurse led this activity and provided a good range of songs for children to join in with. On other occasions, children enjoy number songs and rhymes in class sessions and join in the singing in assemblies and in hymn practices.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision for English is **very good** and offers an unusual breadth of learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are very high.
- Pupils enjoy their work and work very hard.
- The quality of pupils' imaginative and creative writing is exceptionally high.
- Teaching is very good.
- The assessment of pupils' spoken English is not fully developed.
- The use of information and communication technology occasionally slows up a lesson rather than improving it.

Commentary

69. Pupils reach very high standards in reading and writing by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Creative writing is particularly good because of the high quality teaching, the receptiveness of pupils and the opportunities which the school provides for pupils to broaden their knowledge about many things, leading to pupils having a good pool of ideas to draw on when they write. The school has maintained the extremely high standards reached in national tests in 2002 and has achieved a steady upward trend since the last inspection. It continues to strive to improve the already very high percentage of pupils who reach higher than expected levels. The standards achieved in national tests are fully reflected in the work seen during the inspection. The school educates pupils to love English, not just to perform well in tests. Pupils enjoy reading and writing and see themselves as readers, authors and poets. By the age of seven, they have virtually all reached a stage at which they can use reading and writing effectively in all their lessons. Eleven-year-old pupils have not only reached a very high level of competence in reading and writing, but have also developed a real love of language. A Year 6 class was able to produce, during one lesson observed, many pieces of outstanding poetic writing.
70. While pupils throughout the school have good standards of speaking and listening, this aspect of their attainment is not quite so well developed as their reading and writing. The school is developing ways of raising standards in this area, for example, by using assemblies to get pupils to talk about their work and experiences.
71. Achievement in English is very good. The very good teaching, the skilled and caring support staff, and the very good provision for special educational needs, help pupils of all abilities achieve as well as they should. Pupils who have special educational needs achieve well; those who are learning English as an additional language benefit from the very good assessment and good support available, and make good progress. Pupils who are adjusting

to a different social setting benefit from the caring and inclusive ethos of the school and also achieve well.

72. The quality of teaching is very good across the school. Teachers plan lessons carefully and devise special activities for pupils who might find the main task difficult. For example, while most of a Year 1 class read aloud from a Big Book, a small group of pupils, wearing masks and led by a classroom assistant, acted out the story. This gave them access to the lesson but also gave them a sense of pride in having done something special and interesting. Occasionally, opportunities are missed to extend work to meet the needs of the most able members of the group. There are very good relationships throughout the school. This makes pupils feel secure and confident in their learning. Teachers have a very good grasp of how to teach this subject and they use the structures and routines of the National Literacy Strategy flexibly and well. They develop pupils' note-taking skills and their use of libraries, dictionaries and the Internet. Teachers insist on good presentation and handwriting. They expect very high standards of work and behaviour, and pupils absorb these standards readily and work very hard, often doing more than they have been asked to. Classroom assistants make a very good contribution to lessons and their teamwork with teachers is an important factor in pupils' very good learning. Assessment, including the assessment of pupils' special needs, is very good, careful and thorough; it shows teachers clearly which pupils need more support or a different approach. Assessment for speaking and listening skills is not yet developed.
73. Information and communication technology is often well used to support English lessons, but occasionally the use of computers adds little to the lesson, or even slows the pace because of small problems with the technology or with skills.
74. English is well resourced. The recently appointed co-ordinator has been able to take over a very well established and well-run subject, and is now beginning to make her own enthusiastic contribution. The school monitors the performance of different groups of pupils and does its best to ensure that there are appropriate books and materials to interest and enthuse boys, girls and different cultural groups.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

75. The high standards of reading and writing attained by pupils, from the youngest to the oldest, are used to good effect in all the subjects of the curriculum. Pupils do not have to rely on printed worksheets and their work is therefore more original and more secure. Many very good displays around the school combine text and graphics and attract the interest of the pupils. Pupils are able to do personal research and follow their own interests, and this enhances the quality and quantity of work produced. Note-taking and reference skills are well taught.

MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Continued high performance in national tests.
- Very good Year 6 teaching.
- Good support from learning support staff.
- Pupils' high level of interest and willingness to learn.
- The use of information and communication technology for whole class teaching.
- In Years 1 and 2, some lessons are too long.

Commentary

76. Standards in mathematics in Year 2 are good and by Year 6 are very good. This is better than at the time of the last inspection. The pattern of the school's test results at the end of Key Stage 2 where mathematics is well above average is in line with what was observed. The test results at the end of Key Stage 1 were very high. Work seen during the inspection was good overall. Pupils' learning is planned and paced throughout the years, along with good preparation for the tests, to enable the very high test results to be maintained.
77. Since the last inspection the proportion of pupils achieving the expected levels has continued to rise. The school continues to perform well above the national expectations. The school just failed to meet its challenging target for the percentage of Year 6 pupils reaching the expected standard in 2003. Achievement at the higher level at the end of Year 6 in 2003 was sustained and the school exceeded its target. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and achieve as well as their classmates. Pupils from minority ethnic groups also do well.
78. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 1 is good overall and very good at Key Stage 2. Very good teaching in Year 6 challenges pupils' thinking, resulting in very good achievement by all pupils. Teachers' subject knowledge and the methods they use develop the understanding of co-ordinates in all four quadrants and extend the high achieving pupils so that they can plot points expressed algebraically. Teachers encourage pupils to feel secure and allow them to contribute fully and freely in the lessons. Relationships are excellent. In Year 1, very good teaching of subtraction at a high level allowed all pupils to make good progress. In a few lessons, the teachers' explanations and demonstration did not match the activities the pupils were given to do. This resulted in insufficient progress being made, as the pupils did not fully understand what they were being asked to do. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Pupils' competence in number is good. They progressively develop a range of appropriate mental and written methods to add, subtract, multiply and divide, and they can explain clearly their methods and understanding.

Example of outstanding practice

A Year 6 mixed ability mathematics lesson. An investigative approach to finding the relationship between co-ordinates of reflected points.

The well-paced introduction to rehearse the conventions of co-ordinates led swiftly into the challenging activity. An enthusiastic and very effective demonstration using an interactive whiteboard built up quickly the idea of reflecting points in a vertical line of reflection at $x = 5$. All pupils were fully attentive, involved and motivated throughout, working with carefully chosen partners. Excellent questioning and command of the subject extended pupils' thinking and reasoning skills. "How do you know what the new x co-ordinate will be when it is reflected without having to plot it?" "How can I tell immediately when you give me the new x co-ordinate whether or not you are right?" A buzz of discussion followed as they started looking for connections and patterns. Most pupils quickly started on the next stage of the exploration, allowing the teacher to work on even higher levels of algebra and investigation with the most able mathematicians.

79. The subject leader provides very good leadership. Staff are well supported. The use of information and communication technology to support teaching and learning is being used effectively to demonstrate properties of shape and co-ordinates. Using and applying mathematics is identified as an area for development. This is already being dealt with in Year 6, where pupils are using a specific programme of work to develop problem solving and thinking skills.
80. Suitable assessment procedures are in place and individual pupils' progress is tracked across the school. Pupils who need extra support are readily identified and suitable support is given. Some lessons, especially in Years 1 and 2, are long and, therefore, do not always help pupils to maintain concentration and interest or improve their learning rates.

Mathematics across the curriculum

81. Pupils use mathematics as part of their work in other subjects and have suitable opportunities to develop their understanding and use of mathematical skills in other contexts. For example, in science, pupils organise and analyse data. In a geography lesson, block graphs were used to analyse survey information and in a Year 1 registration session, pupils successfully subtracted the number of absentees and those having packed lunch to find out how many would be having school dinner.

SCIENCE

Provision for science is **very good**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Pupils achieve well as a result of the generally good teaching.
- Investigative work is a significant and successful feature of pupils' learning.
- Science teaching with the oldest children is outstanding.
- The subject leader provides very good leadership based on a good understanding of what needs to be done to improve standards even further.

COMMENTARY

82. Throughout the school, children make good progress and achieve well. Their understanding builds securely on their previous knowledge. In Years 1 and 2, children work consistently at and above the level expected for children at Key Stage 1. Similarly, throughout Key Stage 2, children work regularly above the level expected for children of their age so that by the end of Year 6 standards are above average. National test results are consistently above the national average, but are below average when compared to similar schools. Pupils' investigative work is a particular strength. The school is not complacent with these results and has challenged itself to do even better this year. Boys and girls achieve equally well as do children with special educational needs and those children from different ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language. Classroom assistants are well used to support pupils, making sure that all children have the opportunity to achieve well.
83. Overall, teaching and learning are good. In Years 1 and 2, teaching was consistently good and sometimes very good. In Years 3 to 6, teaching was more variable but overall it was good, with the teaching of the oldest pupils being excellent. A good knowledge of the subject ensures lessons are planned well with an emphasis given to an investigative approach to learning. Questions are used effectively to help pupils explore what they have discovered and improve their understanding. For example, following a class investigation to find different plants and creatures in the school grounds, a teacher very successfully used enlarged photographs taken on a digital camera to question pupils about where objects were found and why creatures might like to live there. Explanations are given very clearly so that pupils know what they have to do and learn effectively from the investigation. This was seen in a lesson investigating how teeth are used in eating, where the insistence of the teacher on accurate observation and correct terminology significantly improved pupils' learning. Pupils know how well they have succeeded and give hesitant explanations about what they think they need to do to improve further.

Example of outstanding practice

An outstanding science lesson was seen in Year 6. Through an imaginative and stimulating approach, the teacher inspired pupils to work enthusiastically at their investigations. Prior to setting up experiments, pupils joined with the other Year 6 class to role-play how solids dissolve in liquids. Clear questioning gave pupils the chance to explain their knowledge of the structure of molecules in solids and liquids. This was followed by a practical enactment of how the tightly packed solid molecules were absorbed by the looser structured liquid molecules. This gave pupils a much clearer understanding of the process. Enthused by this demonstration, pupils returned to their classroom to set up their own investigations. Each group decided independently what they would investigate and which of the range of salts and sugars they would use. They established the key question they wanted to answer and organised their experiment to find the answer. They took particular care to make their investigation a fair test. The teacher intervened with well-focused questions to help children clarify their thinking and help them refine their experiment. As a result of this excellent teaching, combining role-play, demonstration and good questioning, pupils independently conducted purposeful investigations and considerably improved their understanding of dissolving substances to a saturation point.

84. The subject co-ordinator provides very good leadership by exemplary teaching and through a thoughtful and analytical approach to improvement. Disappointed that results have not risen even higher, an analysis of test results was undertaken to identify what needed to be improved. Having identified a target for the number of pupils achieving the above average Level 5, a further analysis was conducted. This identified which pupils needed particular support. Strategies are in place to support these groups to ensure that the school meets its ambitious targets. Recent initiatives in science are carefully monitored for their success. This includes some monitoring of lessons, although science teaching is not monitored by a regular cycle of systematic observations, to gain a broad view on the quality of science teaching. Resources for teaching science are very good and are enhanced by opportunities for pupils to visit a local secondary school, where teaching expertise and resources are used to extend pupils' learning in their current topics. Year 5 children particularly enjoyed explaining what they had learned from watching a dissection on their last visit.
85. Since the last inspection, standards in science have risen and remained consistently high with improvements year on year in line with national improvements.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision for information and communication technology is **excellent** and a strength of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent resources and accommodation.
- Knowledgeable subject leader.
- Whole-school involvement and eagerness to learn, including parents and non-teaching staff.
- Good training opportunities for staff.

Commentary

86. Standards are above national expectations. In Year 6, they are well above expectations and achievement is high. For example, Year 6 can use a specific computer program, add sound and different effects on their writing and then project the resulting work onto a screen, for joint viewing. They can use a spreadsheet to create graphs and use a digital camera. In Year 2, standards and achievement are above expectations. Pupils can log on, change font size and style, and insert line breaks. Many can also save their work. Since the last inspection, the school has continued to improve, achieving high standards and, as a whole school, moving forward very effectively, using the new technology to enhance teaching and learning.
87. The quality of teaching and learning overall is very good. Teachers' knowledge and confidence in the use of information and communication technology are very good, enabling pupils to

make good progress. Lessons are well planned and prepared. Clear demonstrations on an interactive whiteboard help pupils to develop skills through useful activities which are often linked to other areas of the curriculum. Where teaching is very good, pupils are motivated and confident in creating a worthwhile computer-based presentation. The teacher is very effective in giving teaching points throughout the lesson to clarify understanding and move the lesson on, while keeping a good pace of learning. All pupils are well supported, whilst high-attaining pupils are challenged and their learning is extended. Learning support staff are knowledgeable and contribute very effectively to the lessons, and all pupils make good progress.

88. The resources for the subject are excellent. There is a dedicated computer suite large enough for whole-class teaching. The computer suite and all classrooms from Year 2 to Year 6 have interactive whiteboards. There is a set of 30 laptops that are regularly used in class to support other subject areas and banks of computers in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 classrooms. There are also digital cameras, a scanner, programmable floor turtles and a microscope. All of these are well and regularly used and contribute to the quality of pupils' work and their confidence in using the technology.
89. The management of the subject is very good. The subject leader is knowledgeable and hardworking. The subject is well organised and staff, including non-teaching staff, are well trained. The computer suite is well used in and out of school hours. There are clubs before school for Years 3, 5 and 6. These clubs are very well attended. The pupils are working through a programme that is helping to increase their computer skills, resulting in a certificate after two years work. Parents take part in a similar programme once a week. The priests and lunchtime supervisors also have training sessions.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

90. The school has welcomed the new technology and it is being well used in other areas of the curriculum. During the inspection, in history lessons, the set of laptops were used to research Victorian toys; in mathematics, the interactive whiteboards used to demonstrate shape, place value and co-ordinates; and, in science, to record findings graphically. Information and communication technology is used in art to gain access to examples of artists' work.

HUMANITIES

Geography and History

Provision and standards in history are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is good quality lesson planning.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Good use is made of resources.
- There is good support for pupils with special educational needs and pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- There is insufficient time allocated to history and geography to ensure that the subjects are studied in depth.
- Monitoring of teaching is partially in place.
- Assessment procedures are not fully in place.

Commentary

91. Pupils make satisfactory progress and reach expected standards by the end of Year 6. The majority of pupils achieve satisfactorily and those with special educational needs and pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress.
92. Teaching is good. In Year 4, there was good teaching of a lesson looking at the consequences of our actions, particularly focusing on litter and the understanding of the need to protect the environment. The quality of planning and the teachers' knowledge brought out good discussion and led to appropriate tasks being set. In Year 5, the use of a variety of resources improved the discussion and helped pupils to develop their understanding of leisure pursuits and toys in Victorian times. Coverage of the subjects is limited. It fulfils statutory requirements but does not allow for in depth coverage throughout the year. This is in line with the school's previous priorities for development. However, the school's most recent improvement plans identify development of history and geography, along with other areas, as now in line for greater attention. This includes building on assessment and, in history, introducing some element of classroom observation.
93. The subjects are well resourced and resources used effectively in lessons. A class set of laptops was used in Year 5 to access the Internet to allow pupils to investigate Victorian games and pastimes such as the magic lantern. Photographs are used as a stimulus for discussion about children playing in Victorian times. In Year 6, books were well used to research aspects of Tudor times.
94. In both subjects, it is clear that a wide range of visits improve the curriculum. For example, Year 1 classes visit Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood, Year 2 visit Westerham and Thornton Heath for geography and Year 5 go to Horton Kirby for a Victorian experience.
95. The subject leader uses nationally advised schemes to guide overall planning. She is enthusiastic and knowledgeable, and checks planning and samples of pupils' work.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design

96. Provision for art and design is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department has been very well led by the subject leader, who is currently on leave, and is enthusiastically supported by the teacher now leading the subject.
- Pupils very much enjoy art in lessons, clubs and educational visits.
- Pupils' work is of a high standard and has been displayed in local theatres and civic buildings.
- Displays of work make the school a more beautiful and interesting place.

Commentary

97. The standard of the numerous pieces of work on display exceeds what is expected of pupils nationally. Years 1 and 2 use paints to make portraits, paying careful attention to skin tones; they develop the portrait theme in charcoal and computer-generated pictures; they can write about the content of pictures and about their response to them; and they know the work of Georgia O'Keefe and William Morris and can adapt the work of these artists in their own paintings. They speak with great enthusiasm about their recent trip to the National Gallery. Year 6 pupils can describe how they develop work from looking at examples. They skilfully discuss, evaluate and create their own work. They know about proportions in portrait drawing and use a wide range of artists' work as a stimulus for writing. Art supports the other subjects

of the curriculum well through illustration and decoration of work. Pupils express pride in their work and appreciation of the school environment. Boys as well as girls are fully involved in art activities in and out of school, and this is the result of careful planning by teachers. Good resources and commitment by the school to maintaining a strong focus on art promote good achievement.

98. Art has been very well co-ordinated. A scheme of work and extension materials are in place and all teachers have been offered appropriate materials to support each unit of work. In the absence of the permanent subject leader, there is a clear commitment to maintaining and developing art and design. The school has taken well-targeted action to boost the participation of boys in art-related activities, following the award of a silver "Artsmark", and is now aiming for a gold award.

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is **satisfactory**. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, standards are in line with national expectations. Teaching and learning are sound overall but systematic assessment is not fully in place.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' attitudes to design and technology are good.
- Teachers insist on very high standards of behaviour.
- Teaching and learning are good overall in Years 1 and 2.
- Pupils work well on their own or with other pupils.
- Systematic assessment in design and technology is not yet firmly in place.

Commentary

99. Overall standards are in line with expectations. Pupils enjoy working on design and technology activities, but they are not yet building sufficiently on the skills which they learn.
100. In Year 6, pupils were working on a unit which looked at different shelters. They were shown photographs of shelters from different cultures and they had some discussion about what materials were used and why. By the end of the lesson, they had fashioned some end frames out of paper straws and masking tape, fixing some with triangular joins. They were clear what their next steps would be and they talked confidently about the beginning of this unit of work, where they had gone out onto the school field and put up a gazebo.
101. In two good lessons in Year 2, pupils were making moving vehicles, using kit pieces to construct a vehicle with an axle, chassis and wheels which was capable of transporting light loads. Pupils were good at designing their own versions of a moving vehicle from similar materials. Teachers were good at encouraging pupils to think about the design brief and were insistent that pupils labelled their drawings of their models clearly. There was a particularly good example of a pupil with special educational needs being given very good support and guidance by a classroom assistant. This helped him to make good progress and to have a really good product at the end of the lesson. In these and in other lessons across the school, and in the work seen, standards are satisfactory.
102. Design and technology is developing in the school and the next steps for the subject are set out in the school's improvement plan. This includes the development of the current assessment procedures which is currently being put into place. The school uses a nationally advised scheme of work and this means that there is a suitable range of activities for pupils. The attitude of pupils, their willingness to learn and the capability of their teachers means that it is likely that standards will rise in design and technology.

Music

Provision for music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are excellent opportunities for pupils to extend their musical skill and knowledge through a variety of clubs.
- Resources for music are excellent.
- Accommodation available, particularly the dedicated music room, for the teaching of music is very good.

Commentary

103. Pupils clearly receive good teaching as Year 6 pupils are confident and expert as they perform. In assembly, the choir sang to a high standard in a performance that was moving in its quality. Some of the extensive range of music clubs were watched and note was made of the classes taken by visiting teachers. It was clear that from this excellent provision pupils achieve high standards in their musical performance. Younger pupils learn about rhythm, use percussion instruments to beat time and make good efforts at singing two-part rounds. As pupils move through the school, they systematically learn more about music. In a good year 5 lesson, the focus was on pitch, dynamics and texture in activities which included singing and keeping to a beat using a percussion instrument. Pupils are very enthusiastic about music, with many children happily arriving at school early to take part in recorder groups. This enjoyment is also obvious in the lunchtime rehearsals of the steel pans group, which takes place in the well stocked, spacious and purpose-built music room. Pupils also enjoy participation in the local music and dance festivals. One of the factors that enabled the school to gain the award of the Artsmark was the successful encouragement of boys to take part in music groups. Nearly two-thirds of the pupils attending the school take part in a music club.
104. Music lessons are taught with the support of a specialist teacher who teaches most Key Stage 2 classes. Pupils in Year 3 benefit from the expertise of a visiting teacher, the subject leader and another specialist teacher within the school when they take part in the Sound Start project. The teaching seen in these sessions was good. In order to provide more support for teachers, the school has very recently adopted a new scheme of work. This is supported by a programme of professional development that is giving teachers more confidence in planning and teaching music. This is still at an early stage of development and has yet to be fully evaluated for its success. The subject is ably led by an experienced subject leader who has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject. The excellent range of resources and specialised accommodation make a very significant contribution to the high standards achieved.

Physical education

Provision for physical education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The expertise and enthusiasm of the subject leader.
- Standards in swimming exceed expectations.
- The school seeks to give physical education a higher profile and has been awarded the Activemark.
- A wide range of extra-curricular sporting activities improve the curriculum.
- There is good support for pupils with special educational needs and for pupils for whom English is an additional language.

Commentary

105. Pupils across the school make satisfactory progress and reach standards which are in line with expectations. The standards in swimming are good and exceed the national expectations.
106. The enthusiastic and knowledgeable subject leader has made a very positive impact on the subject. Very good progress is being made in raising the profile of physical education. The school has recently been awarded the Sport England Activemark and hopes soon to be awarded the gold standard. Outside providers work with the school to improve provision. For example, a dance specialist recently worked with Year 4 on Indian dance. The school is linked with four primary and one secondary school, meeting weekly and holding rounders and athletics tournaments. A wide range of out-of-school activities, such as football, a running club, gymnastics and Irish dancing, are very popular and improve the curriculum. As part of the curriculum, Years 5 and 6 also have the opportunity to ice skate.
107. Overall, the teaching is good, although it was variable. While one unsatisfactory lesson was seen, an excellent lesson was also seen, and there is every indication that the school is continuing to improve its work in physical education.

Example of outstanding practice

An excellent dance lesson in which Year 6 pupils developed a character of smooth criminals and gangsters.

The rhythmic beat of the music started as pupils entered the hall. Immediately both teacher and pupils began moving to the beat, walking, striding and skulking as gangsters and smooth criminals. The pace never dropped as they picked up new aspects of the dance. The teacher expertly stopped them at intervals, demonstrating and developing new ideas. In pairs and groups they assumed the characteristics of the criminals being waylaid by the gangsters, focusing on expressive movements. Exploring actions and reactions, and combining aspects of the dance, their props of hats, gloves and sunglasses helped develop their improvisation and mannerisms. By the end of the lesson, pupils had combined dance and narrative theme, evaluated their work and made it better, and then performed their high energy dances to others. The teacher had very effectively grasped the imagination of both boys and girls, allowing them all to achieve highly.

108. Good teaching allowed pupils in Year 2 to improve skills of throwing and catching, in Year 1 to move imaginatively to develop the story of Sleeping Beauty, and in Year 3 to understand what they were learning, and how to improve their actions and expression to create a dance.
109. Resources are very good and further improvements to enlarge the playground are planned. Planning is very effective and support staff are very well used in lessons to support pupils with special educational needs, allowing them to take a full part in the activities and make good progress. However, there is not a systematic programme of monitoring to improve teaching in place. Such a programme would help to move all lessons towards the very high standards achieved in some.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Commentary

110. Provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship is good but with some unsatisfactory aspects. There is a very clear policy and a good scheme of work. It is taught mainly through other subjects, including science and religious education, and is integral to planning in all subjects. In science in Year 5, pupils looked at the use of substances that may be harmful to health.
111. During the inspection, it was clear from the mood of the school, and from the way in which people talked to one another and treated each other, that pupils were being well supported and that there was a climate in school which was in line with the best principles of personal

development and good citizenship. However, the clarity with which the school sets out its taught programme for this subject could be improved to present its evident quality more readily.

112. The subject is a very effective component in the school's programme for helping pupils to develop a safe and healthy lifestyle, gain confidence and interact with others. Pupils learn about playing an active role as citizens, developing good relationships and respecting differences between people. In Years 1 and 2, teachers use stories to introduce and discuss emotions, such as sadness and shyness.
113. Visitors and visits suitably supplement pupils' learning. Involvement in a performance of 'Holy Boy' with other schools gives opportunities to develop social skills, boosting pupils' self-esteem and confidence, and enriching their experiences.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3

Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	3

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	1
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	1
Accommodation and resources	2
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
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	2

The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

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