

# INSPECTION REPORT

## STARCROSS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Starcross

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113219

Headteacher: Mr A Freer

Lead inspector: Mrs C Nuttall

Dates of inspection: 3<sup>rd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> November 2003

Inspection number: 258023

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	197
School address:	New Road Starcross Devon
Postcode:	EX6 8QD
Telephone number:	(01626) 890 454
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M McIlroy
Date of previous inspection:	6 <sup>th</sup> July 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is about the same size as most primary schools. Pupils come from a wide range of social, economic and academic backgrounds. About four per cent are from minor ethnic families. All pupils speak English as their first language. The percentage of pupils claiming free school meals is broadly the same as other schools. When children start school their skills, knowledge and understanding are wide ranging, but in most years are a little below average for their age, especially in communication, language and literacy. Just over 14 per cent of pupils have special educational needs, which is average. One of these pupils has a statement of special educational needs, which is low. The majority of pupils with special educational needs experience a range of learning, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The percentage of pupils joining or leaving the school other than at the normal time is higher than average. Each year from 1999 to the present, the school has achieved individual teaching awards including teacher of the year, outstanding new teacher and teaching assistant of the year. The headteacher was commended for school leadership this year and the caretaker gained the caretaker of the year award for Devon last year.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
31046	Christine Nuttall	Lead inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology
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21992	Jean Newing	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage English Geography History Religious education Special educational needs
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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

**Starcross is a very good school.** Excellent leadership by the headteacher and very good support from senior staff and governors help staff to work together very well in the best interests of the pupils. Teaching is very good and consequently all pupils achieve well. Standards are rising and are regularly above and well above average by the time pupils leave the school. The school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The highly effective staff team have a shared purpose and vision that centres around the needs of each individual pupil.
- The headteacher is an excellent leader; he is very well supported by talented staff and proactive governors.
- Standards are rising and this year are the highest ever recorded in national tests in Year 2 and in mathematics in Year 6.
- All pupils achieve well because of very good teaching and superb support from teaching assistants.
- Standards in science in Year 6, although improving quickly, still need further development.
- The school's links with parents and the community are excellent.
- The school ensures that all pupils, including those with special educational needs have equal opportunities.
- There is an excellent ethos and, as a result, pupils' behaviour and attitudes are very good.
- Excellent opportunities and after school activities enrich the curriculum.
- The school's care, guidance and provision for pupils' personal development are outstanding.

The school has moved forward very well since its last inspection in 1998, when it was found to be a good school. Standards have risen in both Year 2 and Year 6 national tests because staff are expecting more of pupils. The quality of teaching has improved significantly and the school has developed its overall provision for pupils' education. All points for improvement from the last inspection have been tackled very successfully and standards in written work are rising as a consequence of very good attention to this area. Provision for children in the Reception Year is now good and the use of assessment procedures has improved considerably.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

**Pupils achieve well throughout the school.** Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage and most reach the goals<sup>1</sup> children are expected to reach by the end of Reception in all areas of learning<sup>2</sup>. Currently pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2 and standards are above average in reading, writing, mathematics and science and broadly average in all other subjects.

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

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

<sup>1</sup> Early learning goals establish expectations for most children to reach by the end of the Foundation Stage.

<sup>2</sup> The areas of learning are: personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development; and creative development.

This table indicates that standards fluctuate from one year to the next. Standards in 2002 were the lowest ever recorded and this was because the cohort of Year 6 pupils last year had entered the school with well below average attainment, there were a larger proportion of pupils with special educational needs and several pupils had significant behavioural difficulties. This year pupils have achieved the highest ever results in mathematics. Results in English and science were both on the boundary between one grade and the next. The table does not show that English was actually above the national average and science was in line with national expectations. Both subjects missed the next grade up by a very small margin. There has been considerable pupil mobility in the school during the last two years, particularly in Year 6. Despite the school's best efforts, many older pupils have had much lost ground to make up before they could move forward. Currently pupils achieve well in Years 3 to 6 and standards are above average in English, mathematics, art and design and broadly average in all other subjects.

Throughout the school pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of the very good support they are given. Their success reflects the school's attention to equal opportunities. Pupils from minor ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as their peers.

**Pupils' personal development is very good. Their social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding is especially well developed.** Pupils are very positive about school and all behave very well. Attendance is broadly average.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The school provides a very good education for all pupils. The quality of teaching is very good overall.** Teaching is at least good in all subjects and very good overall. Consequently pupils achieve well in all year groups. This has resulted in above average standards by the time the pupils leave the school. Pupils learn effectively because they trust and like their teachers, teaching assistants support them very effectively and work is challenging and interesting. Pupils' learning is supported very well by effective planning in all subjects, very good personal and academic guidance, very good support from home and excellent involvement with the community.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Both the leadership and management of the school are very good.** The headteacher has a very clear educational vision for the direction and work of the school and his leadership is outstanding. Staff work together as a highly effective team with the same clarity of purpose and commitment to the individual needs of each pupil. Governors use their talents very well and are proactive in their support for the school. There are very good procedures underpinning the work of the school.

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

**Parents and pupils are very positive about the school.** Parents are happy with all areas of the school's work. A very small minority expressed concerns about homework and bullying. The inspection found no evidence to support these parents' worries. Staff do all they can to prevent bullying and deal with any incidents very carefully. All pupils enjoy school and are very positive about the support they are given from staff.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

There are very few areas for development and the school has in place a highly effective agenda for further improvement. This includes raising and developing further the standards pupils achieve in science in Year 6.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

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

Pupils achieve well throughout the school. Standards in English and mathematics are consistently high. Standards in science are above average in Years 1 and 2 and broadly average in Years 3 to 6.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- All pupils achieve well and make good progress.
- Standards are consistently high, reaching their highest ever recorded in the 2003 national tests in Year 2 and in mathematics in Year 6.
- Target setting has improved and is now a strength.
- Pupils of different capabilities achieve equally well.
- Girls and boys achieve equally well.
- Just below average standards in science in 2003 achieved by Year 6 are improving to match the high standards in Years 1 and 2.

#### Commentary

##### *Starting school*

1. When children start school in the Reception class assessment data shows that their knowledge, skills and understanding are wide-ranging. For the last few years the overall profile has been slightly below average, with some children having particular difficulties in the areas of communication, language and literacy, personal, social and emotional and mathematical development. This year the children in Reception have settled into school well, with most set to reach the levels expected for their age by the end of the year.

##### *School's results in national tests*

2. Overall standards have risen in Year 2 and Year 6 national tests since the last inspection. In Year 2 and Year 6 the improvement has been above the national trend, with the exception of 2002 test results for Year 6 pupils which dropped slightly below average in English and science and significantly below in mathematics. This was due to a higher than average proportion of pupils with special educational needs in that year group. Year 6 test results in English and mathematics have risen in 2003 and represent the highest results ever recorded in mathematics at the school.
3. The table below shows that 2003 standards in Year 2 were well above average in reading, writing and mathematics.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	17.3 (17.3)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	15.8 (15.1)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	17.2 (15.9)	16.3 (16.5)

*There were 29 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

4. The table below shows that standards in the 2003 national tests for Year 6 were above average for English and well above average for mathematics and broadly in line with the



national average in science. There is every indication that standards will rise in science this year to match those achieved in English and mathematics. What the table does not show is that there is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls in English, mathematics and science.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.3 (26.3)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	29.0 (24.1)	26.8 (26.7)
science	28.3 (27.7)	28.6 (28.3)

*There were 24 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

*Inspection findings*

*The Foundation Stage*

- At the time of the inspection children had been at school for just six weeks, some attending full time and some for selected mornings only. They have settled happily into school life and achieve well. There is every indication that most will reach the goals expected for their age by the end of their Reception Year in all areas of learning because of the good provision made for them.

*Years 1 and 2*

- Pupils achieve well because of the good provision made for their development. This includes pupils with special educational needs who are especially well supported by both teachers and learning support assistants. Higher attaining pupils also do very well and respond well to challenge. This was particularly evident in work seen. In science, for example, pupils' writing to record experiments is well above the average standard expected in Year 2. Standards were broadly average in all subjects and above average in English and mathematics and science, in lessons seen.

*Years 3 to 6*

- Pupils achieve well in Years 3 to 6. All pupils are suitably challenged, including pupils with special educational needs and higher attaining pupils. Setting arrangements in the two mixed Years 5 and 6 classes enable teachers to provide tasks at an appropriate level in mathematics by working in three groups. Standards are above average in English, mathematics, art and design and average in science and information and communication technology (ICT). Standards were also broadly average in the few lessons seen in other subjects.

*Whole school matters*

- The school's approach to target setting has improved to become a strength. The results of half termly tests, pieces of work that teachers have assessed and other information about pupils' performance are used very well to set realistic but challenging targets for improvement. The impact of this approach has helped, along with very good teaching, to raise standards.
- Pupils apply their literacy skills very well in all other areas of the curriculum, often as a result of imaginative teaching. For example, in a science lesson pupils read and responded very well to a written challenge in a carousel of experiments using cards that the teacher had secreted in envelopes to add a sense of mystery to the activity. Pupils' skills in ICT are well developed through a range of subjects, as well as specific ICT lessons.

10. The very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as their peers. Throughout the school pupils with special educational needs, including those with a statement of special educational need, achieve well because of the good provision made for them. They receive good support in class and a few pupils are given extra support in small, withdrawn groups. Higher attaining boys and girls do equally well and overall there is no difference in the achievement of boys and girls.

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

Very good provision ensures that pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is very good. Pupils are happy at school and have very good attitudes towards learning. Pupils behave well in lessons and in supervised and unsupervised situations. Attendance is slightly below average.

### **Main strengths and weakness**

- The excellent ethos of the school permeates all activities and promotes pupils' very good attitudes and personal development. Relationships at all levels are a strength of the school.
- All adults who work in the school are very good role models; mutual respect is the hallmark of this school.
- Pupils are given frequent opportunities to develop confidence and take responsibility which they accept and follow through conscientiously.
- Pupils are prepared well to live in a culturally diverse society.

### **Commentary**

11. Pupils' attitudes and personal development are very good. Pupils behave well in lessons and assemblies, are polite and courteous around the school and play in the playground amicably with each other. From the time children start school an understanding of right and wrong and of what is acceptable behaviour is strongly promoted. Pupils earn rewards such as stickers, team points for good behaviour as well as academic success. Classes also have their own personal reward systems. The headteacher gives out special stickers, bookmarks and pens, which are really valued by the pupils. For very special achievement there is a Governors' Commendation. Pupils enjoy the range of stimulating activities planned for them and are eager to learn. They concentrate well and work really hard. The take-up for the excellent range of activities after school is high. Parents are very supportive of the school and are very happy with the values the school promotes.

### *Relationships*

12. Relationships at all levels are a strength of the school. Teaching assistants make an important contribution. The respect with which they are treated by other professionals is an excellent example to the pupils. Pupils with special educational needs have the same very good attitudes as their peers. Pupils work independently, in pairs and in groups. They work well collaboratively, sharing and valuing ideas.
13. A small minority of parents expressed concern about bullying. The inspection team saw no aggressive or inappropriate behaviour. Discussions with pupils and the results of their questionnaires indicated that there was almost no bullying and the very few incidents that did occur were dealt with very well. The school is almost entirely mono-cultural and takes very sensible measures to ensure that pupils develop an understanding of a wide range of cultures. There have been no racial incidents. The table below shows that there was just one exclusion last year for inappropriate behaviour. Pupils who have identified emotional and behavioural difficulties are supported well by staff and this helps them to cope well in school.

## 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	167	1	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	23	0	0

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

### *Personal development*

14. The school puts the development of pupils' personal skills very high on the agenda. Activities are planned specifically to foster these skills. These are wide-ranging and emphasise pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These have a very positive impact on pupils' development.
15. Spirituality underpins the excellent ethos in this school which strongly embraces Christian teaching. It is also based on the premise that we are here to create something worthwhile and to leave a worthy legacy. Pupils have opportunities to evaluate their own work and sometimes, the work of others. They respond well to opportunities to take responsibility both in the classroom and in the whole school. Pupils perform at and contribute confidently to assemblies.
16. The pupils are provided with a relevant curriculum that promotes a good understanding of western culture and this is enriched by visits to theatres and museums. In this mainly white school, the responsibility to prepare pupils to live in a culturally diverse society is taken seriously and opportunities to learn about other cultures are highlighted within the curriculum, for example, Year 5/6 studying water this term looked at the work of Water Aid. In religious education lessons pupils learn about all the major faiths and displays around the school reinforce this learning. Visitors from other cultures, for example, an African drummer, enhance pupils understanding. Fund-raising for Tear Fund and Operation Christmas Child help pupils to understand that in some other countries people have a very different standard of living. Assemblies, religious education and personal, social, health education and citizenship all make a strong contribution to this aspect.
17. The oldest pupils hold very positive views of the school and show an understanding of what it means to respect the views and beliefs of others. Displays promote this theme for example, 'We are all different, we are glad to be ourselves, we are happy to be different'. Pupils' views are sought at least annually through a questionnaire and on-going through the year by the school council.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.2	School data	0.1
National data	5.4	National data	0.5

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

18. Attendance in 2001 to 2002 was below the national average but levels of unauthorised absence were in line with the national picture. Almost all pupils arrive punctually for the start of school. Registration is efficient and the school follows up any unexplained absences promptly. Parents support the school well and the great majority ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive punctually. Most absences arise through illness or medical visits. However, as the tourist trade is a major source of work in the area, a significant number of families take holidays during term time.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a very good quality of education. Teaching is very good overall and ensures that pupils move forward well. The curriculum is broad and enriched by excellent links with the community and after school activities. Very good assessment procedures have been introduced since the last inspection.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching is very good overall throughout the school. This marks a significant improvement since the last inspection. Procedures for using information about pupils' progress to plan more carefully for the needs of individuals have also improved. Expectations have been raised about what pupils can achieve in their written work.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is good planning of interesting and relevant activities.
- Teachers use questioning very well to help pupils think carefully and learn.
- Teachers use a widening range of innovative and thoughtful approaches to further motivate and stimulate pupils to learn.
- Teaching assistants work very well to include pupils and move them forward.
- Teachers have good subject expertise and knowledge of pupils' individual needs.
- Lessons have a very good level of challenge and high expectations.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- Pupils engage very well in learning.
- Some marking, while celebrating pupils' achievements and efforts well, does not help them know how to improve their work.

### Commentary

19. The table below indicates the quality of teaching seen across the school. Teaching is slightly stronger in Years 1 to 6 than it is in the Reception Year although this difference is not significant. Both parents and pupils are very positive about the teaching staff. Pupils especially feel that their teachers help them learn effectively.

#### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 29 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0 (0%)	14 (48%)	12 (41%)	3 (11%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

### Common strengths

20. There are common strengths in teaching that underpin the very good quality of pupils' learning. These include very good lesson planning that sets a clear focus for learning in each lesson, takes into account the needs of all pupils and provides interesting and relevant activities. Teachers have a very good grasp of the subjects they teach and are using a widening range of innovative methods and approaches to further motivate and inspire pupils.

Teaching assistants are very well deployed and help to include and support individuals and groups of pupils. Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good and make for a harmonious and purposeful atmosphere.

#### *Characteristics in good and very good lessons*

21. In the best lessons interesting activities and a lively approach grip pupils' interest and help them to move forward quickly. Role play, taking on the character of someone else, enables pupils to think carefully and develop their understanding.

#### **Example of outstanding practice**

**An excellent part of a very good geography lesson in which Years 5 and 6 pupils thought about the importance of water in some developing countries.**

"I'm sorry, I can't come to school today, even though I want to," said one of the girls at the front of the classroom.

"What! Why not?" asked the teacher, clearly perplexed.

"It's three miles from our village to the well", explained the girl, "and I have to walk all the way there and all the way back with this bucket and that is all our water for the day. If I don't go my family will have nothing to drink and nothing to wash in."

The lesson had started with music, a telling point made with a glass of filthy water and a discussion around information the children had found on a web-site, such as the fact that one in six people in the world have no access to clean water. After reading some more information carefully prepared by the teacher, the children had taken on the roles of children in a developing country in twos. Pair after pair really showed a very good understanding of what poor access to water means in the lives of many of the world's people, confidently taking on a different point of view and responding readily to very good questions from the teacher.

#### *Other strengths*

22. Pupils are seen as individuals, which means that all, including higher and lower attaining pupils are given the support they need. Teachers use questioning very well to include pupils of all abilities, challenging them to think and learn. Expectations are high and as a result pupils make good progress. A very good knowledge of pupils as individuals underpins all teaching and helps teachers match their very good subject expertise to the stage of learning for individuals in their class. As a result, pupils engage very well in lessons, joining in well with group activities and working with growing independence in individual tasks as they get older. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported. Teaching assistants work closely with these pupils to ensure that they make good progress. The use of ICT to support learning in other subjects is developing very well. ICT skills are used to support work in science, literacy, humanities and numeracy as for example Year 2 pupils' work on sequences in a mathematics lesson. ICT was very well used in a Year 5/6 session where pupils entered numerical results onto a spreadsheet and then discovered how to use the 'sum' facility to find the total.

#### *Assessing pupils' progress*

23. Assessment procedures have significantly improved since the last inspection, when they were judged to need improvement by using information about pupils' progress more effectively in planning lessons. In the Foundation Stage, teachers assess their children well in all activities. These assessments are then used to plan future activities. Pupils in the rest of the school are tested once every half term in English, mathematics and science. A highly effective tracking system is used to show the progress that pupils make and whether this is good enough. In addition, special tasks are completed in 'progress books' each term and teachers assess these in relation to the levels of the National Curriculum attainment targets. The statutory tests are carefully analysed so that staff have a clear picture of the patterns in pupil attainment. This data is then used to plan subsequent work and intervention on an individual basis if, for example, a pupil is judged to be underachieving.

24. In lessons, teachers give pupils good verbal feedback on their work. Pupils have good opportunities for self-assessment and commenting on their own work. For example, pupils use smiley and sad faces to indicate how well they have achieved the aim of some lessons in their written work. Marking is used well to celebrate pupils' achievements and efforts, but in some cases opportunities are missed to help pupils to understand how they can improve. It is timely that the school is considering a review of the present marking policy to extend and develop the use of the 'clouds and boxes' system, which is very effective and a new approach is currently being trialled to highlight good parts of pupils' work in Year 2.

#### *Homework*

25. Homework is regularly set throughout the school and pupils tackle it conscientiously. Some holiday homework projects, for example in design and technology and science, have enabled pupils to extend and apply ideas learned at school through enjoyable construction activities undertaken with their parents. At the time of the inspection there was an impressive collection of homemade sailing boats on display. Excellent curriculum newsletters are sent home termly and suggest a wide range of ways that parents can support and extend learning at school.

#### **The curriculum**

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that is enriched by an excellent range of clubs, practical activities, visits and visitors. There are sufficient teachers and teaching assistants to provide very effective support for pupils. The accommodation is very good and excellent use has been made of external areas of the school to enhance the curriculum. There are very good resources for all subjects and this is a good improvement since the last inspection.

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

- There is a very good breadth of curriculum opportunities.
- The school seeks to develop the curriculum with new ideas and innovative practice that motivate pupils to learn.
- The school provides excellent opportunities for enrichment, including through extra-curricular provision.
- The staff are well qualified, with a good range of experience and teaching assistants are especially well matched to support the curriculum.
- The school has very good accommodation and resources.
- The accommodation is enhanced by excellent displays.

#### **Commentary**

##### *Planning for work in the Reception Year*

26. Planning in the Reception Year is good and based on national guidelines. An interesting and engaging range of learning activities is planned to prepare children for the next stage of learning. The learning environment focuses on first hand, child-initiated experiences and very good use is made of the accommodation and resources.

##### *Planning for work in Years 1 to 6*

27. All statutory requirements are fully met and the curriculum provides a very good basis for pupils' learning. It is firmly anchored to the National Curriculum and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. An excellent programme of themed weeks and days, visits and visitors, clubs and events enriches pupils' experiences and helps to bring learning alive. The school promotes participation for all in sport, the arts and other interests. Dynamic language programmes for learning Russian and French and a thriving programme for gifted and talented pupils are good examples of the unusually high quality of the school's provision.

28. Suitable emphasis is placed on English and mathematics. The National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy have been used particularly well by teachers as their basis for planning in these subjects and have contributed to the improvement in standards. Literacy and numeracy skills are being developed and employed in other subjects as pupils read and record information. A good example was a physical education lesson focused on gymnastics, where pupils read activity cards to help them prepare and improve sequences of movements.
29. In all other subjects the school has successfully developed its own planning to suit the needs of its pupils. Teachers make very good use of these when preparing their lessons. There are good links between subjects and ICT is particularly well used to support learning in other subjects.

#### *An equal approach*

30. The curriculum ensures equality of access and opportunity for all pupils. A two year planning cycle ensures that the needs of different age groups in the mixed age classes are met and that pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are systematically developed. All pupils on the special needs register have individual action plans highlighting the pupils' individual needs, which are regularly reviewed. All pupils with special educational needs have access to the same curriculum as their peers.

#### *Innovative practice*

31. The school is actively seeking to develop the curriculum in ways that take into account the different learning styles of pupils, the promotion of thinking skills, the role of 'emotional intelligence' and the benefits of active approaches to learning. The headteacher and teaching staff are open to new ideas from within the school or from other sources. These developments are in the early stages and the school recognises the need to consider the likely effects of innovation before making changes, carefully evaluating the impact of new ideas. A good example of a successful approach being used in the school is the use made of role-play and 'hot seating' to encourage thinking and active participation in learning. This also enables teachers to readily assess pupils' understanding of new ideas.

#### *Staffing*

32. The school's experienced and dedicated teachers are deployed very well to make best use of their relevant areas of expertise and deliver the planned curriculum. Teaching assistants all have very good skills and experience and are particularly effective in their role as an integral part of the teaching team.

#### *Moving through the school and beyond*

33. The school prepares pupils very well for moving from the Foundation Stage to Year 1 and from Year 2 to Year 3. Very good assessment, clear records and excellent communication between staff ensure that there is a smooth transition. The school enjoys good partnerships with secondary schools in the next stage of education and ensures effective support when pupils transfer from Year 6 to Year 7.

#### *Accommodation and resources*

34. The accommodation and outdoor areas are safe, accessible and very well resourced. The external environment of the school is especially good with a beautiful millennium garden and a series of attractive and well-maintained spaces for play and learning. Learning resources are of high quality, they are well managed and organised to make them readily accessible to staff. Those for literacy, numeracy, science and ICT have improved significantly since the last inspection.

### *Display*

35. Outstanding use is made of display around the school. Two and three-dimensional displays demonstrate the full range of the curriculum and celebrate the high standards achieved by pupils in their work. Writing in response to 'Friend or Foe' exemplified very good standards of Year 6 writing by hand and using the computer. Often display will serve a practical purpose, such as the portraits of staff in an entrance area to communicate who's who. Teachers also use displays as valuable teaching aids, for example, an attractive and illustrative display of sorted materials to support teaching in science. Excellent use is made of photographs to capture practical work or activities, such as those in a physical education display in the school hall.

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

The attention paid by the school to the care, safety and well-being of pupils is outstanding. Pupils receive very good advice, guidance and support to help them with their work and to deal with any concerns they may have. The way the school involves pupils in shaping its life is excellent.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Arrangements to ensure pupils' health, safety and well-being are excellent.
- Teaching and non-teaching staff support pupils very well so that they are able to do their best.
- Pupils know their opinions matter because their ideas are incorporated when change is planned.

### **Commentary**

#### *Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety*

36. The school's procedures for ensuring the safety and well-being of pupils are outstanding. A very thorough review of health and safety has been carried out recently. Risk assessments are built into all lesson planning so that safe practice is consistently well promoted. Arrangements for first aid and medicines in school are extremely clear. Child protection procedures fully meet requirements. The school has been actively involved in health promotion for some time, with developments such as 'Huff and Puff' and the fitness trail helping pupils to achieve and maintain a good level of fitness.

#### *Support and advice*

37. Induction arrangements when children start at the school, whether they come into the Reception class or join the school at another time, are very good. Children have the opportunity to visit the school many times before they begin to attend, which helps to develop very good, trusting relationships between pupils and staff from the start. Pupils joining the school at other times have a 'buddy' to help them learn the routines and ensure that they have a friend. Parents new to the area are also befriended. The very strong, trusting and respectful relationships that exist between pupils and all staff mean that pupils know there is always an adult to turn to. Pupils are willing to seek support and guidance when they have concerns, whether about their work or a personal problem. They also enjoy sharing success or news of something special. Teachers and non-teaching staff know the pupils very well as individuals. They use this sensitively when monitoring pupils' personal and academic development and in providing well-informed support, advice and guidance. Pupils with special educational needs are supported very well.

#### *Involving pupils*

38. The school is outstandingly successful in the way it seeks and values pupils' views. Pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 are involved in the school council. This is a democratic body that seeks



suggestions and ideas from every class. Pupils are extremely confident to express their views because they know that it leads to positive changes in school life. For example, the beautiful Millennium Garden incorporates all the ideas that pupils came up with and makes a significant contribution to pupils' enjoyment of playtimes. Pupils are also asked to complete questionnaires about aspects of school life, such as their satisfaction with the activities on offer in PE. The fitness trail was developed through this process. Pupils take a real pride in their school because their views are so well valued and implemented.

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

Parents have extremely positive views of the school and all that it does. The school enjoys an excellent partnership with parents and involves them in all aspects of its life. The partnership plays a very positive role in supporting pupils' learning at school and home. The school has outstanding links with the local community. It works very well with other local schools to support its pupils.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents are extremely happy with everything the school provides for their children.
- The school's partnership with parents makes a very positive contribution to pupils' learning.
- The quality of general information provided for parents is outstanding.
- Reports to parents about their children's progress are very good and parents were actively involved in devising the report format.
- The school regularly seeks parents' views and ensures that any concerns are acted on promptly and effectively.
- Links with the grammar school enrich the curriculum by providing French lessons for Years 5 and 6.

### **Commentary**

#### *Partnership with parents*

39. The very positive views of parents reflect an extremely high level of satisfaction with all aspects of the school's provision. A very small minority expresses some concerns about the information that parents receive about pupils' progress and about bullying. Inspectors support the positive views of parents. Parents have very good opportunities to discuss their child's progress with the teacher, both formally and informally and reports are of a very high standard. When bullying does occur, it is dealt with firmly and quickly. Teachers and other staff are very good at identifying and resolving difficulties in relationships, which reduces the distress to pupils.
40. The school provides all parents with regular curriculum newsletters that are of an outstanding quality and provide useful ideas about how to help their child at home. This, coupled with the very clear home school agreement and homework policy, ensures that parents are well able to support their child's learning at home. Pupils' reports give a very good picture of their strengths and weaknesses as well as providing well focused targets to guide progress to the next stage of their learning.
41. The report format was devised with parents and is regularly reviewed to ensure that it meets their needs. The school is very open to suggestions from parents. Those who choose to help in school are made very welcome and are well supported. The school benefits from an active parent, teacher and friends association.

#### *Links with other schools*

42. Links with other schools are very good and the school plays an active part in the academic council, where staff from several schools meet regularly together and organise projects across the different age ranges. In particular, teachers from the grammar school come in to school to

teach French to pupils in Years 5 and 6. This enriches pupils' experience as well as providing a good foundation for learning at secondary level.

### Example of outstanding practice

**In order to ensure a successful partnership with parents the school continually seeks opportunities for parents to visit the school and express their opinions.**

The school holds a coffee morning for parents each month and these provide an excellent informal forum for the exchange of views, as well as giving parents the opportunity to raise any concerns they may have and to see some of the work their child is doing. During the inspection, over 40 parents, grandparents and younger siblings attended and were treated to a recorder group and singing practice to demonstrate what goes on in school on a regular basis. The teacher skilfully ensured that parents appreciated how difficult some of the tasks were, which boosted pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Parents have the chance to raise any issues with the headteacher, either in writing or face-to-face. This helps make sure that any concerns, for example about work or bullying, are raised at a very early stage and can be addressed before they get out of hand. Governors also attend and are available to discuss issues with parents. The coffee mornings make a very significant contribution to the outstandingly successful partnership between parents and the school.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall leadership and management are very good, with outstanding strengths in some areas. Governors make a significant contribution to the school and the governing body undertakes its work very well. The headteacher's leadership is excellent and he is very well supported by the deputy headteacher and subject leaders. Very effective management structures ensure the school is highly effective and applications of the principles of best value are very good. Financial management is good overall, although the school would benefit from improved forward planning in view of the anticipated reduction in the budget.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding.
- Very good support from staff and governors.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have created a united and highly effective staff team.
- Fully inclusive school and the leadership and management of the work with pupils who have special educational needs is very effective.
- Very good procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.
- Very effective identification and use of professional development in all areas of the school.
- Subject leaders are conscientious and very effective in moving curriculum development forward.

### Commentary

#### *Leadership*

43. *'Above all, we aim to run a school in which every child is valued, happy, secure and encouraged to achieve their best.'* These school's aims very successfully underpin the work of the school. The key to this very good school is the excellent leadership by the headteacher, who has guided the school during the last four years. He has a strong educational vision, linked closely to providing a broad education that enables pupils to develop as well rounded people. He has a very firm grip on all that goes on at Starcross and has a clear picture of the strengths of the school and areas for development. This is based on his careful monitoring of teaching and learning and his very good analysis of assessment data. He works very sensitively with staff and governors and enables them to develop their own roles through a programme of training and support.
44. The deputy headteacher also works extremely enthusiastically and effectively. She leads the teaching very well and brings her many talents to bear on her work in the school. The deputy,

with the headteacher, has created a highly effective staff team with a shared sense of purpose and vision. All pupils are valued at Starcross and staff are mindful of the needs of all pupils.

45. All teaching staff have responsibility for leading at least one subject area. These roles are very well developed, especially in relation to monitoring and evaluating provision and standards in their particular areas. Strategic planning in individual subjects is very good because action plans clearly identify what needs to be done to push standards higher.

*Management*

46. Overall the management of the school is very good. Highly effective systems are in place to ensure that there is a very clear programme for monitoring and review of standards for governors and staff throughout the year. Governors are involved in the analysis of achievement by different groups, including those from ethnic minorities. Results of monitoring form a basis for the school improvement plan. The day-to-day running of the school is highly efficient and all procedures are designed to ensure this is maintained.
47. The general administration is very good and owes much to the competence of the administrative officer and her assistant. All staff enjoy working at Starcross and the headteacher and governors ensure that all are valued for their contribution. All staff are consulted when changes are proposed and everyone involved with the school contributes to the very effective care of the pupils.
48. The management of special educational needs by the headteacher and the SENCO (special educational needs co-ordinator) is very good. Pupils' progress is tracked regularly and resources are used efficiently. A teaching assistant is the governor linked to special needs and she keeps the governing body well informed about the school's very good provision in this area. The school encourages all staff to seek professional development and funds this as much as the budget will allow. The accommodation for special educational needs is very good. The dedicated room for these pupils is really stimulating and attractive and pupils are keen to work there. There are many areas outside classrooms where groups of pupils work very productively with a teaching assistant.
49. The management of the school's finances is good. The governors are very active at all stages of planning and monitor outcomes well. They plan annual expenditure, taking into account information on standards achieved. A high priority is given to maintaining a good level of very good quality staffing. Funding is tight and may well reduce next year based on high mobility of families in the area and predicted numbers, but the staff and governors do not have any longer-term financial planning which outlines a range of scenarios on staffing, pupil numbers and funding.

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

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	465,760.63
Total expenditure	455,384.46
Expenditure per pupil	2,288.36

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	20,716
Balance carried forward to the next	10,376.17

50. Balances are low and currently stand at almost three per cent below the recommended contingency. The headteacher and governors are aware of this and regularly seek ways to reduce spending in one area to support it in another.
51. The school makes very good use of the principles of best value in its expenditure decisions. One very good example of this was the rebuilding of the swimming pool. From the outset, there was wide consultation and a very good level of challenge in seeking sources of funding from parents and other organisations to gain additional income. Full competitive tendering is

employed and the school seeks and uses comparative information effectively. The school is giving very good value for money.

52. There are very good procedures for evaluating the work of the school and these are based on a carefully planned programme of monitoring that includes all staff and governors. Detailed analysis of pupils' performance in statutory tests provides important information of where improvement is required and this feeds into the school's improvement plan. Rigorous self-evaluation of other aspects of the school, including teaching and learning, ensure that additional priorities are clearly identified and action taken.

### *Governance*

53. Overall the governance of the school is very good. Present governors have a wide range of talents and expertise, which they use very well in the best interests of the school. Many are also parents and are frequent visitors to the school. Governors' involvement with the school is very good and they effectively work with the school staff to monitor what the school is doing and plan for improvements. Governors effectively challenge decisions made by the senior management team and ensure that all the options are considered. All governors have a curriculum responsibility and meet regularly with the subject leaders to discuss progress with individual subject action plans. A range of committees has been established and much of the work is undertaken in these and then reported to the full governing body. One governor has taken the lead over the safety of pupils outside the school when parents are delivering and collecting children at the start and end of the school day. He has instigated a 'travel plan' to overcome the problems and worked tirelessly with the local council to achieve some vital changes. The 'travel plan' has been recognised as a significant document gaining an award from the Department of Transport. All statutory requirements related to governors are met.

### **Example of outstanding practice**

**In order to ensure children's safety travelling to and from school and improve the environment, the headteacher and governors set about devising a travel plan that has now been approved.**

Congestion around the school at peak times is significant with increasing numbers of pupils arriving at school by car. Lacking any practical road safety provision, the headteacher and governors decided to take action.

They campaigned for a one-way system, traffic calming, reduced speed limit and pavements along the narrow but busy village streets leading to the school. Children were totally involved. They conducted surveys, timed how long it takes to walk to school and wrote letters to parents explaining how children's safety could be improved if they used their cars less and walked more.

One governor took responsibility for documenting all the work and the solutions that would improve safety for all. The resultant 'travel plan' is still waiting for the final approval in writing, but it is expected that work will start on the one-way system before the end of this financial year. This represents the tireless efforts made by the governors to improve safety for all connected with the school. The minister for transport presented the school with an award for its work in July 2003.

### **COMMUNITY PROVISION**

Both the links the school has established with the community and the provision for community use are **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Excellent use of accommodation on school site for community use.
- School continually seeks and promotes ways of involving community in the life of the school.
- Staff at the school work closely with the local council to promote ways to improve the community.

## Commentary

54. Governors and the headteacher are justifiably proud of the excellent community links that have been established as a result of their open door policy and desire to provide facilities for the local community. The school is seen as being at the heart of the community and there is a determination to attract all members of the community to share in the school's facilities. This has a positive impact on the school's provision and pupils' achievements.
  
55. A specific governor has taken the lead in ensuring that two mobile classrooms in the school grounds are promoted well and available for community use. Currently these rooms are used daily by the village playgroup as well as several other youth groups. Families regularly use the facilities for celebrations and special occasions involving large parties of people. The school is embarking on a family learning project to encourage parents to come together to support and learn vital parenting skills. Excellent links with elderly residents and the church have been established and the school regularly works with the parish council on ways of improving the community. One excellent example of this is the plan to improve the local electricity sub-station opposite the school which regularly attracts local youth and results in considerable vandalism. The headteacher has led a working party involving different members of the community to find ways to improve the sub-station. Money from the parish council has now been earmarked for this project and work will commence in the near future.

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

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

Children start school slightly below average especially in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. Consistently good teaching enables most children to reach the expected standard at the end of the year, which indicates good achievement. Leadership of early years is very good and staff ensure that all children, including those with special educational needs, are very well supported.

Teaching is consistently good and sometimes very good, by both teachers who share the responsibility for this class. These teachers have high expectations of what young children can achieve and provide a good range of stimulating learning experiences to enable these youngest children to be confident learners. Planning is very detailed and well informed by good assessment procedures. The areas of personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy are very well promoted through all areas of learning. The teachers and classroom assistant work very well together.

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is **good** and has improved since the last inspection. The curriculum is well planned to provide a wide range of interesting and relevant activities based on the early learning goals. Good assessment procedures ensure that activities are well matched to the needs of the children.

Most children have attended the playgroup which meets on site with which the school has good relationships. There is a very good induction programme, which gives children the opportunity to make over ten visits in the term before they start school. This ensures that starting school is a happy experience for the children and enables the teachers to be aware of a child's needs before he or she starts school. Accommodation and resources for these children are good, both inside and outside.

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

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Personal, social and emotional development is promoted strongly through all areas of learning.
- Praise is used effectively to help children understand what is expected of them.
- Children who were receiving behaviour support at the playgroup are now behaving appropriately.

### **Commentary**

56. The teachers have high expectations and children achieve well because of the consistently good teaching. In half a term they have become familiar with school routines, know that they have to listen to the teacher and each other and put their hands up when they want to speak. They take turns, for example sharing materials when making coloured glasses.
57. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers and teaching assistants use praise very effectively so that supportive relationships are established and children feel confident and happy.
58. There are 13 children in the class this term; another 15 will join in January. Because of the high priority this area has been given, all the children listen with interest and are keen to answer questions. They clear up after an activity with minimum supervision. The gains in

learning in this area are the result of continual reinforcement of expectations by the adults who treat each other and the children with courtesy and respect.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers and teaching assistants take every opportunity to develop the children's language skills through all areas of learning.
- The focused teaching of early reading and writing skills is good.

### **Commentary**

59. Teaching and learning are good and all children achieve well. Early indications are that most of the children are on course to meet the expectations in this area. All the children listen attentively to stories and predict what might happen and recall what has happened. They really enjoy sharing Big Books and are beginning to recognise some words. Many children can write their name and are beginning to learn to form letters correctly. Most demonstrate good manipulative skills and colour in pictures, carefully keeping within the lines. They are aware that letters represent sounds and name appropriate objects that begin with a certain letter, for example, 't' for teapot, teddy, tiger and television.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision for mathematical development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers plan a wide range of activities to support learning and children achieve well.
- Teaching is based on accurate assessment of children's needs.

### **Commentary**

60. Teaching and learning are good. Most children are on course to achieve the early learning goals for this area. Children can confidently count, order, match and write numbers to five and are now working on higher numbers. They are taught to write numbers correctly. They enjoy singing and acting number songs. As well as a focused session each day, children have good opportunities to develop their mathematical skills through play, activities and games. Through these, children learn to use and understand mathematical language, 'one more than', 'how many more?' and 'less than' as well as positional language such as, 'before', 'next' and 'after'. During a well-planned activity a group of children worked with a teaching assistant choosing a coloured number card and placing the correct number of the same colour pegs on the board. The teaching assistant constantly asked 'How many more are needed?' and used her fingers to demonstrate how many more were required.

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

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- A wide range of interesting activities is planned to promote learning in this area.
- Visits and visitors enhance learning.
- Children have regular opportunities to use the computer.

## Commentary

61. Teaching and learning are good and most children are working at the expected level for their age and are likely to achieve the early learning goals by the end of the year. A good variety of interesting activities is planned to stimulate children's curiosity and enhance their understanding of this area. Children have visited the millennium garden, planted plants and watched them grow. They have talked about the signs of autumn and made a picture of a tree, using handprints. Planning shows that later in the term they will make a card, go to the local post office, buy a stamp and post the card. Visits from the fire and police stations are booked and children will learn about road safety. Already the children are keen to use the computer and follow the teacher's instructions carefully to support their learning in literacy. Each child was able to create a sentence using a combination of words and pictures. Displays show that children are learning about other religions and the need to show respect for the beliefs of others.

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for physical development is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children have access to a safe, secure outside area where they can play with wheeled toys. This is an improvement since the last inspection.
- Children have regular, highly effective sessions in the hall.

## Commentary

62. No sessions were observed either in the hall or in the outside area, so no judgment can be made on teaching. However, photographic evidence of what children have achieved since September indicates that children are likely to reach the expected standard by the end of the year. All children achieve well. They can climb, jump and balance safely. They can travel forwards and backwards in different ways and be aware of others around them. Most children have developed appropriate manipulative skills by handling scissors, brushes and spreaders. There is a good range of small construction equipment to further enhance physical development.

## CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision for creative development is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Role play is used effectively to develop imagination and co-operation.
- A wide range of materials and tools helps children to achieve well in this area.

## Commentary

63. Only one activity was observed, which indicated good teaching and learning. All but two children used scissors competently and were able to choose appropriate material to decorate their 'magic glasses'. They shared the materials well and worked carefully so as not to make a mess. Photographic evidence of work covered this term shows that children enjoy singing and playing instruments, fishing in the water tray for various creatures and painting portraits after careful observation of each other's features. Role-play activities are regularly and carefully planned. Four children dressed up as a king, prince, princess and a dragon. This involved a great deal of negotiation about roles. One child explained the storyline – the dragon breathes fire and the prince has to rescue the princess while the king keeps a watchful eye. Some children needed help in putting on their costumes and these activities contributed



to personal and social development. Children are on course to achieve the early learning goals in this area by the end of the year.

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

### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is **very good**. The quality of teaching is very good and, as a result, pupils achieve well. Standards are currently above average in both Year 2 and Year 6.

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

- English is very well managed.
- Reading, handwriting and spelling are promoted consistently.
- Target setting is used effectively.

#### **Commentary**

64. Standards in English have been steadily rising over the past few years and are consistently above average in both Year 2 and Year 6. Although most pupils enter school with below average language and literacy ability, the very good teaching means they achieve well and most reach average or better standards by the end of Year 2.
65. The teaching of English is very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and have implemented the National Literacy Strategy very effectively. Teachers use a variety of teaching strategies in each lesson and the pace of lessons is maintained so that pupils have to concentrate and work hard. A real strength of the teaching is the accuracy with which tasks are matched to prior learning so that all pupils are successful learners. There is constant challenge for the most able and very good support for the less able and those with special educational needs. The teaching assistants are well qualified and very experienced and give excellent support within the classroom, outside in group work and sometimes in a one to one situation. As a result of continuously good and very good teaching, standards are above average for pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 – these pupils started in Year 1 with average standards. This represents good progress. However, in this small school cohorts vary and standards are not above average in every year group. Pupils from minority ethnic groups do well and pupils with special educational needs are equally well supported by their teachers and the teaching assistants.
66. The subject manager manages English very well. She is constantly looking at ways to raise standards whilst setting realistic school targets. There has been a particular focus on raising the standard in writing, especially boys' and this has been achieved. New resources have been purchased and a wide range of teaching styles used to sustain boys' interest. The subject manager monitors planning, pupils' work and teaching and learning, therefore she has a very clear idea of what is happening in the school.
67. Reading has a high profile in the school and pupils have daily opportunities to read; sometimes individually to an adult, or in a group reading session, or silently. A good number of parents come into school to hear pupils read and make a significant contribution. Home/school reading diaries show that most pupils read regularly at home. This is very beneficial and helps pupils to achieve well. Careful records are kept of the books pupils read and the skills they are acquiring. Pupils are strongly encouraged to read a range of genres and to share with each other books they have enjoyed.
68. Handwriting is taught consistently through the school. As soon as the younger pupils can form letters correctly they are introduced to joined script and by Year 2 most pupils are joining many letters. By Year 6 most pupils use a neat legible joined script in all their work.

69. Spelling has been a focus this year and is promoted strongly in all classrooms. Spelling rules are taught and displays reinforce this teaching. Pupils refer to the displays when they are writing. Notices in classes remind pupils to check their work for spelling errors. Pupils use dictionaries and thesauri competently; thus redrafted work is not spoilt by careless spelling mistakes.
70. All pupils have individual literacy targets. These are known clearly by the pupils and used in their writing. Each lesson has a clear focus and work is marked according to this particular focus. There is evidence of some good evaluative marking which informs pupils what they have done well and indicates what they need to do to improve, but this is not consistent practice.

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

71. Pupils use their language and literacy skills well in other subjects. The use of different writing styles is particularly well planned using other areas of the curriculum, for example writing about experiments in science.

### **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

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

- Improved standards since the last inspection.
- Planning is very good and regularly evaluated.
- Strong leadership and management of the subject.
- The consistent use of mathematical vocabulary is very effective.
- On occasions there is insufficient emphasis on problem solving techniques.
- Teachers make very effective use of brisk mental and oral starters to each lesson.
- Tasks are modified well to cater for all levels of ability.
- Very good questioning skills.
- Marking is inconsistent and only occasionally used to help pupils know what to do next to improve.

#### **Commentary**

72. Standards in mathematics have been steadily rising over the past few years and, with the exception of Year 6 in 2002, when a higher than average number of pupils had significant special needs, are consistently well above average in both Year 2 and Year 6. Although most pupils enter school with below average mathematical ability, the very good teaching means they achieve well and most reach above average standards by the end of Year 2. By Year 6 standards are above average and last year almost 50 per cent of pupils achieved the higher Level 5. This is partly because of the very good teaching and partly because of the effective recognition of different ability levels and differentiated learning.
73. The school supports all its pupils well. Ability grouping and the targeted use of teaching assistants means pupils of all abilities are suitably supported and challenged. They make good progress and achieve well. Boys and girls are currently making good progress. Pupils from minority ethnic groups do well. Pupils with special educational needs are equally well supported by their teachers and the teaching assistants and as a result achieve well.
74. Overall standards are currently above average in Year 2 and in Year 6. The National Numeracy Strategy is used very well as the basis for effective planning and ensures a strong focus on the teaching of numeracy skills. Teachers throughout the school make very good use of quick fire sessions with pupils to increase their understanding of number and enable them to recognise and recall number facts. A very good example of this was seen in a Year

5/6 class as pupils participated in a brisk introduction to their lesson. Pairs of pupils had to compete in a 'Shoot Out' game to see who the 'fastest on the draw' was to 'shoot' out the answer to a mental calculation. Pupils concentrated well and used individual strategies to find the answers in this highly enjoyable and productive session. This imaginative use of games stimulates and captures pupils' enthusiasm.

75. In the lessons seen teaching was consistently very good. This is because teachers work hard to plan and develop interesting activities to motivate their pupils and help them achieve well. Particular strengths include the consistent use of mathematical vocabulary, very good questioning techniques and carefully planned lessons. In some classes there is insufficient emphasis on problem solving to enable the pupils to apply their knowledge and skills to a variety of situations. Marking is variable and whilst it always praises pupils' efforts, it does not always tell pupils what they have achieved and what they can do to improve.
76. The subject leader has provided strong leadership and made very good use of assessment data and the monitoring of teaching and learning to identify areas for development and worked to address these. Since the last inspection the school has developed the subject curriculum very well and supported and improved teachers' expertise.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

77. Mathematics is used well in other subjects as pupils record data, make calculations or measure materials. As a result, pupils develop an appreciation of the practical uses of these skills.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good** overall.

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

- Pupils achieve well overall as a result of the good teaching.
- The investigative strand of the subject is a strength.
- The subject is very well led and managed.
- Slightly below average standards in science achieved by Year 6 in 2003 are improving this year to match the higher standards in Years 1 and 2.

#### **Commentary**

78. Scrutiny of work indicates that standards are above average in Years 1 and 2. Standards were marginally below average in last year's statutory tests for Year 6 pupils. Scrutiny of work and evidence from teaching seen indicates strongly that standards are improving in the current Year 6. Pupils in Year 6 are in line to achieve at least expected standards by the end of the year, as a result of good teaching and very good emphasis on the investigative strand of the subject. No differences were observed between the achievement of boys and girls and they all achieve well, including those with special educational needs and higher attaining pupils.
79. In lessons seen during the inspection, teaching overall was good with some very good elements. Where teaching is good the lesson is well organised with resources that are thoughtfully chosen and prepared in advance so that pupils can carry out experiments. In the best lessons, pupils plan and carry out their own investigations, exploring ideas that are the focus of the lesson, using good scientific methodology. A good example of this was a carousel of activities on the theme of forces where pupils' understanding was broadened by the opportunity to devise a series of fair tests using the equipment provided. In all teaching observed the teachers used questioning very well to promote scientific thinking and extend pupils' learning. Pupils are encouraged to record their predictions and use appropriate

scientific language when they express their conclusions. There are many examples of the use of mathematics in the use of charts, graphs and tables and the use of ICT, such as data logging, to support work in science. Homework and home holiday projects are used well to consolidate and extend learning. A good example is the amazing range of devices made at home by Years 5 and 6 pupils, often with their parents, with the aim of slowing down the descent of a penny coin. These provided an excellent springboard for a lesson about forces, including gravity.

80. The subject is very well led and managed by the subject leader for science. Improvements she has led since the last inspection include:
- thorough monitoring of pupils' learning and the quality of science teaching on a regular basis;
  - a good policy statement that has been recently updated;
  - regular assessments of attainment, with tracking of pupils' progress, including the evaluation and acquisition of new, improved test materials for greater accuracy of assessment;
  - a rolling programme of topics on a two year basis to accommodate the mixed age classes and ensure all elements of the subject are taught;
  - themed weeks and outstanding extra-curricular enrichment activities; and
  - very well-organised and stored resources that match the planned curriculum.
81. An area for development that the school has already planned to undertake is the detailed analysis of last year's statutory tests to highlight strengths and weaknesses that can be fed into planning.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Strong leadership and management of subject.
- Improvement in resources and staff expertise since last inspection.
- ICT used well to support learning in other subjects.
- Recognition of and challenge for higher attaining pupils.
- Ways of sharing information, particularly by e-mail, is underdeveloped.

### **Commentary**

82. Examples of pupils' work seen and the lessons observed show that in Years 2 and 6 standards in ICT are average. Pupils achieve well and are making good progress. They are highly enthusiastic and fully focused during activities involving ICT.
83. Since the last inspection the school has used national funding and its own resources to improve facilities and develop staff confidence and expertise through training. Development of the ICT suite allows for whole class development of ICT skills. Individual classroom computers provide opportunities for the use of ICT skills in other subjects during lessons. Very good use of the digital projector is made to draw the whole class's attention to particular teaching points both at the start and during the lesson. Discussions with pupils confirm that all computers are regularly used for research and to present work, although there were few examples of this during the inspection. Other resources, for example, the digital camera and the Roamer' programmable floor robot, are used very well to further extend learning in ICT.
84. Overall, the teaching of ICT is good, with some very good examples. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Lessons are well planned and teachers ensure that pupils use the correct terminology in their learning. Pupils receive good support from their teacher and their

classmates. This ensures all achieve equally well, including those pupils with special educational needs. Older pupils regularly support younger ones in different classes and higher attaining pupils are presented with greater challenges so that they continue to make good progress. Year 6 pupils confidently use 'Power Point' to present findings to an audience, and two Year 6 pupils make very effective use of the Internet to research information for the archaeology club they run for younger pupils. Throughout the school pupils have regular opportunities to support their learning in history and geography by using the Internet to find out about famous people and different countries. Older pupils have the opportunity to e-mail one another and their teachers as part of their work in ICT lessons. Ways of developing the use of e-mail to include a wider audience have yet to be developed. All pupils clearly enjoy ICT lessons, maintaining concentration for lengthy periods.

85. Very capable leadership has ensured that the subject is moving forward well. There is a detailed action plan to support this process and the subject leader gives a very supportive lead through planning, discussion, informal training and the introduction of a very comprehensive assessment system. A portfolio of pupils' work provides clear examples of expected levels for each year group. Overall, the school has made good improvement since the last inspection.

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

86. The use of ICT to support learning in other subjects is developing very well. The subject leader has created an overview of links and teachers regularly structure this into their planning. ICT skills are used to support work in science, literacy, humanities and numeracy, as for example Year 2 pupils' work on sequences in a mathematics lesson. ICT was very well used in a Year 5/6 session where pupils entered numerical results onto a spreadsheet and then discovered how to use the 'sum' facility to find the total.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **good**, an improvement since the last inspection.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Most pupils are achieving the expected levels.
- The planned curriculum is well developed and there are good links between subjects.
- The subject is managed well.

### **Commentary**

87. A lively and interesting approach is used by teachers to deliver the curriculum. Planning indicates they use good cross-curricular links, especially with science and mathematics. Only one lesson was observed during the inspection and the teaching in this lesson was very good. Year 5 and Year 6 pupils engaged in very effective role play to help them to understand what it is like to live in parts of the world where people have little access to water. Pupils worked together in pairs and were fully engaged in the lesson. The local area is used well, particularly for map work and looking at geographical features of the environment. In addition to observing the one planned lesson, inspectors looked at pupils' work, talked to the subject leader and spoke to pupils about what they had learnt. From the work seen it is evident that standards are in line with expected levels in both Year 2 and Year 6. All pupils achieve well.
88. The subject leader is enthusiastic about her role and she has established an effective action plan that highlights areas needing attention. She makes good use of monitoring to identify priorities. The subject leader has a very good understanding of the subject and her leadership is strong.

## History

Provision in history is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good use of literacy skills.
- Improved resources which are used well in lessons.
- Leadership is good.

### Commentary

89. Planning for history has improved since the last inspection. There is now a two year rolling programme of topics, which makes effective use of national guidance. Overall teaching is good. Resources have improved and teachers make good use of original artefacts. In the one lesson seen, for example, pupils worked with old flat irons, copper kettles and toasting forks to see how the use of electricity has changed over time. The teaching in this lesson was good with pupils highly motivated and enthusiastic about their learning. Teachers make good use of local museums to enhance opportunities for pupils to see and handle historical artefacts first-hand. Inspectors looked at pupils' work and spoke to them about what they had learnt. This indicated that pupils are achieving well and attaining standards in line with expected levels.
90. The subject is lead and managed well by the subject leader, who has a clear agenda for developing her subject year on year.

## Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject makes a good contribution to spiritual, cultural and moral development.
- Leadership is good.
- Good links with other subjects.

### Commentary

91. Religious education has an appropriately high profile in the school. Both strands are taught well – 'What we learn about religion' and 'What we learn from religion'. Role-play and drama are used effectively, for example Year 2 pupils acted out the story of Moses travelling through the wilderness when he was given the Ten Commandments by God. The concept was made relevant to the pupils' experience when they were each asked to write a rule to keep the Millennium Garden neat and tidy. The older pupils use ICT effectively, for example when they are studying other religions. Pupils develop their literacy skills in religious education, for example, when they were asked to write a character reference for Barnabas. There are good resources to enable teachers to plan interesting lessons to meet the needs of all pupils.
92. From the lesson and work seen it is evident that standards are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils study the Christian and several other faiths, which helps pupils to develop further their understanding of different cultures. There are several opportunities for reflection and empathy, which contribute well to spiritual development. Links are made with assembly themes when possible. All pupils achieve well.
93. The subject leader was very involved with the revision of the locally agreed syllabus and the school piloted this a term early. This enabled all teachers to benefit from the expertise and experience the subject leader brings to her role. There is an effective action plan that

identifies areas for improvement. Monitoring is used well to identify what needs to be included in the action plan.

## CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

94. Only one lesson was seen in both music and design and technology. Two lessons were seen in art and design and physical education. It is therefore **not possible to make a firm judgement about provision**. In addition to observing lessons, inspectors spoke to subject managers about their work, spoke to pupils about what they had learned and looked at pupils' work.
95. It is evident from pupils' sketchbooks, teachers' planning, lessons seen and the subject leader's records that work planned in **art and design** is varied, interesting and the work seen in Year 2 and Year 6 was just above national expectations. This is an improvement since the time of the last inspection. This lively approach and good quality of work was evident in displays of artwork around the school. Good attention to the development of painting skills was a particular feature of some 'explosion' pictures and portraits painted by Year 4 pupils. The use of sketchbooks to compile visual and other information to assist with the development of ideas has been improved under the very good leadership of the subject leader for art. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities to extend and enrich pupils' experience of art.
96. In **design and technology**, the one lesson observed, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with the subject leader indicate that pupils are gaining experience of a range of materials and techniques and developing the expected subject skills through designing and making a variety of products. This is in line with findings in the last inspection. The subject leader keeps a good photographic record of items made by pupils as well as samples of their planning and design. There is good evidence that pupils carefully evaluate their products and those of their classmates very thoughtfully at the end of each topic covered. As a result of very good leadership there is regular monitoring of teaching and learning. This is an improvement since the time of the last inspection. The subject leader has identified the need to introduce work on focused practical skills in the current development plan for this subject. Resources are good and opportunities to build on learning at school through a thriving technology club and holiday homework projects are excellent. In such a project at the time of the inspection, pupils in Year 3, with some help from their parents, had designed and made an impressive array of sailing boats.
97. In **music**, pupils were only observed in Year 2, although the whole school was heard singing in assemblies. The recent introduction of music folders provides evidence that pupils are creating and developing musical ideas, responding to a range of music and listening very well. In the teaching observed, very good opportunities were provided for pupils to explore the meaning of pulse and, more challengingly, pitch. In that lesson pupils were developing their understanding of high and low sounds very well. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Peripatetic instrumental tuition of very high quality was observed during the inspection. This experience enhances the National Curriculum, as does an array of musical clubs, visitors and opportunities to participate in performances. There are plans to start an African drumming band. This subject is very well led and managed by the subject leader. She monitors teaching and learning regularly and has arranged appropriate training for teaching staff. The subject leader ensures that music has a high profile in school life; there is a school anthem and the school's rules are reinforced through a special song.
98. In **physical education**, from lessons observed, viewing planning, discussions with the subject leader, displays of photographs and the school prospectus it is evident that all strands of the subject are regularly taught during the course of a two-year cycle. By the age of 11, most pupils achieve above average standards in swimming and it is rare for a pupil to leave the school as a non-swimmer. This was the position at the previous inspection, although the swimming pool has been considerably improved since that time and is now an excellent resource.

99. In one lesson seen, Years 5 and 6 pupils made good progress in developing the basketball skills of passing, catching and dribbling. The clearly planned objectives gave the lesson a sharp focus, which was supported by the teacher's highly motivating coaching skills. In another lesson where the focus was gymnastics, pupils worked with increasing levels of independence to refine sequences of movements and evaluate each other's work. A good range of clubs and activities, including opportunities for higher attaining pupils to compete on a wider basis, develops sports skills further. The subject is very well led and managed by the subject leader. Resources for the subject are very good and well organised. The subject leader undertakes regular monitoring of teaching and learning. She monitors teachers' assessments and, in an excellent example of monitoring, undertook an attitude survey of pupils towards physical education. This has had an impact upon what is taught and many pupils say they really enjoy physical education activities. Staff training on the most up-to-date health and safety requirements has been identified as a priority following an audit the subject leader carried out with staff.
100. In all these subjects the **role of the subject leaders** is very strong. The subject leaders are enthusiastic about their area of responsibility and very knowledgeable. Their files are comprehensive and very well organised. They share a clear view about the strengths and areas for development in their subjects as a result of systematic monitoring and evaluation.

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

### **Personal, social and health education**

101. Provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is well integrated into other subjects, making it relevant to pupils. Although there is insufficient evidence to make a judgement on teaching and learning from specific taught sessions, the results of the school's policy, plans and practice are evident in the very good attitudes and behaviour of pupils observed throughout the school.
102. Only one lesson was seen in this area of the school's work. The school sees this area as a very important part of its work. The subject manager has been on courses to increase her expertise, which she has shared with colleagues. This has enabled her to have a greater influence in the school. The programme for personal, social, health education and citizenship is comprehensive and includes work on diet, health, drugs, sex and relationships and alcohol abuse. Much is planned and taught through the main curriculum but 'Circle Times' provide good opportunities for pupils to consider and manage their emotions. The very good relationships at all levels and the excellent role models of the adults who work in the school enhance this area.



## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

### *Inspection judgement*

### *Grade*

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

<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>3</b>
Pupils' achievement	3

<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>2</b>
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	2
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	1
Accommodation and resources	2
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	1
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	1
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	1
The quality of the school's links with the community	1
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2

<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
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).*