

INSPECTION REPORT

TRENT VALE C of E (VA) PRIMARY SCHOOL

Trent Vale, Stoke-on-Trent

LEA area: Stoke-on-Trent

Unique reference number: 124309

Headteacher: Mr P Bateman

Lead inspector: Mrs J E Platt

Dates of inspection: 17 – 19 November 2003

Inspection number: 258231

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	101.5
School address:	Newcastle Road Trent Vale Stoke-on-Trent
Postcode:	ST4 6NS
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J A Capewell
Date of previous inspection:	27 March 2000

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Trent Vale is a Church of England voluntary aided primary school. It is a smaller than average size school having 101.5 pupils on roll including 14 in the nursery, one who attends on a part time basis. Numbers are falling because the school is due to merge with another school on a new site and parents are opting for an alternative school because they consider the new school is too far away. A very low number of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and no pupils need help because English is not their first spoken language. An above average number (30 percent) of pupils are entitled to free school meals. Twenty-two pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs and one pupil has a formal Statement of Special Educational Need. Identified concerns include moderate and profound multiple learning difficulties. The area served by the school is socially and economically disadvantaged and the school is part of an Education Action Zone.¹ Children's attainment on entry to school is below what is expected for their age. The school places significant emphasis on physical fitness and has an Activemark Gold Award.

¹ Education Action Zones are local partnerships of schools, local authorities, representatives from business and community organisations working together to develop new ways to raise standards of education.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
11565	Mrs J E Platt	Lead inspector	English Special educational needs English as an additional language
9399	Mr R Watts	Lay inspector	
22740	Mrs M Leah	Team inspector	Science Areas of learning in the Foundation stage Humanities
17736	Mr P Dennison	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Creative, aesthetic, practical and physical subjects

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school provides **an acceptable quality of education with some good features**. Achievement is good in the Foundation Stage² and satisfactory in the rest of the school. Standards are average in the infants and below average in the juniors. Teaching and learning are satisfactory with a strength in the management of pupils so that behaviour is good and pupils try hard. Leadership and management are satisfactory which ensures all statutory requirements are met. Pupil numbers are declining in the area and the school is moving to a new site and amalgamating with another school. This has led to numbers on roll falling because parents are transferring their children to a nearby school. This means the school receives a high income for pupils and the decline in numbers results in **the current value for money being unsatisfactory**.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teaching and learning are good in the Foundation Stage and children reach the level expected for their age.
- Overall achievement in mathematics in the juniors is satisfactory but higher attaining pupils are underachieving so overall standards are below average.
- Pupils make good progress in reading in the juniors and leave school with the level expected for their age although writing is below average.
- In science the achievement of most pupils is satisfactory. However, standards are below average because assessment procedures are not identifying the higher attaining pupils and this leads to a lack of challenge for these pupils who are underachieving.
- Attendance is well below average and many pupils do not arrive at school on time.
- Overall personal development is good. Pupils benefit from a very good range of after-school activities. Spiritual development is strong in keeping with the school's Christian character. Social and moral development is good and most pupils show respect for each other.

The school has had to overcome several barriers since it was last inspected in January 2002. The imminent relocation of the school has led to pupils moving to other schools, staffing changes and a time of parental unease. Nevertheless, the rate of improvement has been satisfactory. Over the last three years standards in English have improved in the national tests in Year 6 but have dipped slightly in mathematics. Standards in information and communication technology have improved. Monitoring of teaching is better although with the change of staffing it has been difficult to have a significant effect on the quality of teaching. Similarly, staffing changes have hampered the development of the role of subject co-ordinator as some staff are new to their roles. Assessment is used satisfactorily to set pupils targets in English and mathematics.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Year 6 results

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

² Foundation Stage begins when children start in the nursery and ends at the end of the reception class.

Overall achievement is satisfactory. The results of national tests show that compared with similar schools pupils are doing very well in English. Current standards in Year 6 remain in line with the national average in reading and most make good progress. Standards in writing are below average. In science and mathematics results show pupils are not doing as well as expected. Current standards in Year 6 show most pupils make satisfactory progress but standards are below average because higher attaining pupils are underachieving. Standards in Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics are average and achievement is satisfactory. From a low starting point on entry to the nursery the children in the Foundation Stage make good progress and reach the learning goals set for them. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.

Overall provision for pupils' personal development is good. Attitudes to learning are good and pupils behave well in lessons and around school. Attendance is well below average and a core of pupils arrives late for school. Spiritual development is good. Staff include all pupils in lessons and give due attention to celebrating achievement and raising pupils' self-esteem. Moral and social development is good and leads to an orderly community. The promotion of pupils' own culture is satisfactory and they also learn about other faiths and traditions.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. It is best in the Foundation Stage and in the mixed Year 5/6 class where much of the teaching seen was very good and achievement improves in these classes. All staff in the Foundation Stage have a good understanding of the needs of these children and make learning exciting. Early numeracy and literacy skills are taught effectively and children get off to a good start especially in reading and problem solving. A strength in the teaching seen throughout the school is the positive management of behaviour. Learning is rarely disturbed by misbehaviour. Teachers do not always plan with enough attention to the different abilities in their class and this leads to a lack of challenge for the higher attaining pupils. Resources are used well, including artefacts in history, which makes lessons more stimulating. Classroom assistants make a positive contribution to learning by supporting in class and often leading small groups. These groups are beneficial for pupils with special education needs. Tasks meet the needs set out clearly in their individual education plans. However, pupils are occasionally withdrawn for tasks which are not closely linked to needs and learning is then less effective.

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is made exciting by a very good range of after school activities especially in sport and music. Procedures to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety are good and lead to a secure environment for learning. The school has a satisfactory partnership with parents and the community. There was some loss of confidence by parents because of the relocation of the school. This is now improving as parents come to terms with the school's future.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. Governors carry out their role satisfactorily. The chair of governors offers good support and is more involved than the rest of the governors in strategic planning and in evaluating the school's performance. Others are in the early stages of developing their roles. Leadership is satisfactory. The headteacher is providing a clear sense of purpose for the school at a difficult time and future plans are now giving due consideration to the smooth transition to the new school. Teamwork has been hampered by the change of staff. This has restricted the effect of some changes including the extension of the role of subject leaders. Management is satisfactory. Financial management has improved with closer monitoring and there are now clear plans to spend the large surplus.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents generally have positive views of the school and made it clear that they are transferring their children because the new school is too far away and not because they were unhappy about the education at the school. Most pupils are happy in school and enjoy taking part in all activities.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise standards in writing in the juniors.
- Ensure higher attaining pupils are sufficiently challenged in mathematics in the juniors and in science throughout the school to raise the standards in these subjects.
- Improve attendance and punctuality.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress and reach the level expected for their age. Achievement in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory and standards are average in reading, writing and mathematics and below average in science. Overall achievement is satisfactory in Years 3 to 6 but higher attaining pupils are not making enough progress. As a result, standards are average in reading but below average in writing, mathematics and science.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- From a below average starting point children achieve well in the Foundation Stage and reach the early learning goals³ by the time they move into Year 1.
- Overall standards are average in English in Year 6. Pupils make good progress in reading with many reaching and exceeding the level expected for their age. However, standards in writing are below average.
- In mathematics, the higher attaining pupils have not made enough progress in the juniors and this means overall standards are below average in Year 6.
- Although the majority of pupils make satisfactory progress in science throughout the school the higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged and standards are below average.
- Standards in information and communication technology have improved and are satisfactory.
- Pupils with musical and sporting talents make good progress because of the very good range of activities and training provided for them.

Commentary

1. Teaching is consistently good and often very good in the Foundation Stage and this enables the children to learn effectively in all areas of the curriculum and they make good progress. They settle happily into the nursery because of the caring support they receive. In the reception class they develop knowledge, skills and understanding in all areas of learning and grow in understanding of how to learn and play collaboratively. Effective teaching of numeracy and literacy enables children to begin to read and write and develop a sound grasp of numbers.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores⁴ in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	14.9 (16.8)	15.7 (15.8)
Writing	14.4 (16.8)	14.6 (14.4)
Mathematics	16.5 (18.8)	16.3 (16.5)

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

³ The early learning goals are the expectations for most children to reach by the end of the Foundation Stage. They refer mainly to achievements made in the six areas of learning. These are communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; personal, social and emotional development, and also include knowledge and understanding of the world; physical and creative development.

⁴ The average point scores provide schools with a statistic to compare the overall grades attained by all of their pupils with the grades attained by pupils in another school as well as an average for all schools nationally. The score is obtained from the National Curriculum level attained by pupils in the national assessments. For example, in mathematics pupils are awarded 9 points for a Level 1, 15 points for a Level 2 and 21 points for a Level 3. The average score is calculated by totalling the points and dividing by the number of pupils.

2. The test results in 2003 at the end of Year 2 were below the national average in reading and writing and average in mathematics. When compared with similar school a more positive picture emerges and results were well above average in mathematics, above average in writing and average in reading. This shows many pupils were doing better than expected, however, the trend in results has been below the national trend and test results are not as high as in previous years. This particular cohort included 25 percent of pupils with special educational needs as well as pupils having had their learning disturbed by staff absences. Another reason for the fluctuation in results has been the imminent relocation of the school and an increasing number of pupils transferring to another school because parents consider the new school is too far away. Assessment procedures have also been reviewed and more rigorous tracking of pupils' progress suggests that the current results in Year 2 are a closer reflection of standards. The inspection found no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. The present Year 2 had some disturbance to their learning last year with several staff changes. However, the temporary staff were monitored by the local authority and the headteacher to check that the teaching was satisfactory. Standards have risen and pupils are currently working at the level expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. The lack of assessment procedures in science led to teachers not identifying the higher attaining pupils who are underachieving and this is leading to below average standards.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.0 (25.5)	26.8 (27.0)
Mathematics	25.3 (26.0)	26.8 (26.7)
Science	27.2 (28.3)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 25 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

3. The school's history of disturbances has hampered progress especially in the early parts of the juniors. Most pupils in Year 6 have come through this well and are reaching the level expected for their age. However, higher attaining pupils have not been making enough progress and, despite them now achieving well in Year 6, few are likely to exceed the national average in writing, mathematics and science. This is holding down the school's overall performance in these subjects. This was evident in the results of national tests in 2003 in mathematics and science which were well below the national average and below the average of similar schools. The focus on English has had a positive effect on standards and test results were in line with the national average and well above the average for similar schools showing pupils were doing better than expected. Current standards are average in reading because additional time is available during the day for pupils to enjoy reading a variety of books. Pupils' ability to write imaginatively has improved because a teacher with expertise in encouraging the use of creative vocabulary has taught them. However, pupils are making errors in spelling and punctuation and overall standards are below average. Trends overtime are difficult to establish because the mathematics test papers were lost in 2000. However, since then the picture has been in line with the national trend.
4. Literacy skills are well promoted in other lessons and teachers emphasise the importance of neat writing and spelling. Teachers could plan more opportunities for the promotion of numeracy.
5. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Support assistants often lead small groups and plan practical activities which match the specific targets set in their individual education plans and achievement is good. However, occasionally these withdrawal sessions are less effective and teachers are not always keeping a close eye on pupils' current needs and sometimes pupils could benefit more if they are supported in class.

6. There is no difference in the progress of boys and girls. The school does not identify any pupils as academically gifted. Several pupils are seen to have special talents in music and sport and they make good progress in extending their skills through additional training and after school activities.

Pupils’ attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance is well below average and punctuality is unsatisfactory but otherwise pupils have good attitudes towards their school and behave well. Their personal development is well promoted by the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attendance is well below the national average and too many pupils are a few minutes late each morning.
- The school does not take enough action to obtain explanation for absence from parents.
- Most pupils enjoy coming to school, are interested in school life and accept responsibility willingly. However, in their questionnaires a significant number of parents and pupils say that they do not like school.
- Pupils’ behaviour is good, they are confident and care well for others; the school promotes these attitudes well. A few pupils are occasionally poorly behaved and other pupils do not like this.
- Pupils’ personal development is good, particularly their spiritual, moral and social development. Knowledge of others’ cultures and traditions is satisfactory but lacking in depth.

Commentary

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%) 2002/03

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.4	School data	1.1
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

7. Attendance last year was well below the national average with unauthorised absence being high. Some of the absence was due to an epidemic, and much to holidays taken in term-time, but this has continued for several years. Although registers are marked correctly each day and the school contacts parents immediately if a pupil is not present, the school is not sufficiently rigorous in continuing to seek explanation from parents who cannot be contacted then. It does not give sufficient attention to reducing the significant number of pupils who are late each day.
8. The majority of parents believe that their child enjoys school and most pupils agree. However, about one parent in six disagreed with the statement in the questionnaire that their child liked school and similar proportion of pupils had a similar opinion. Pupils interviewed during the inspection did not support this view and could think of little that could be improved. In lessons, pupils respond with enthusiasm to good teaching and work hard. Their work is well presented. Many take part in the good range of activities outside the classroom and after school.

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	101	2	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0

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

- Behaviour observed during the inspection was good in lessons, assemblies, the dinner hall and on the playground. Pupils are generally considerate towards others and teachers rarely have to speak sharply to them. However, several pupils and parents complained about roughness and poor behaviour by some pupils and the school's records indicate that there is an undercurrent of violence by a small number, mainly boys. In the main, these incidents have been resolved but there is still some parental dissatisfaction over this, which is shared by some pupils. Last year, one pupil was excluded for two fixed term periods, for violent and disruptive behaviour. The school is committed to admitting all pupils to the school and took successful steps to re-integrate the pupil into school life and there has been no recurrence this year.
- The school works hard to promote a calm, positive ethos in the school. Pupils strive for rewards which are part of the school's code of conduct. They help set their own class rules and understand what makes good and bad behaviour. Pupils are tolerant towards those who have different religious beliefs and those of other ethnic groups, although they have little direct experience of either. Pupils are well developed socially, for example, the school council meets regularly and gathers ideas from across the school. Spiritual awareness is developed in assemblies, where the introductory hymn singing by older pupils creates a calm and reflective atmosphere. There are several examples of displays around the school where pupils have expressed their inner feelings. Although pupils have been given experience of other cultures that they will encounter within Britain, these have not made a lasting impression. For example, last year pupils visited a local restaurant to celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr but they could not recollect the importance of Ramadan to Muslims.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. A sound range of learning experiences is enriched by a very good range of visits and after school activities. This is a caring community and good attention is given to the pupils' care and welfare.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with good features in the Foundation Stage and Year 6. Assessment is satisfactory and in English and mathematics teachers are developing the use of individual and group targets to involve pupils more in their own learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff in the Foundation Stage have a good understanding of the needs of these children and this leads to effective learning.
- Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subjects they teach. The teaching of reading and numeracy is good.
- Overall planning is satisfactory but teachers do not always make it clear what they intend pupils to learn in lessons or plan work that is closely matched to pupils' ability. This leads to a lack of challenge especially for the higher attaining pupils.

- Resources are used well and this often makes learning more relevant to pupils' interests.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and classrooms are organised efficiently so that lessons run smoothly.
- Assessment is now good in English and mathematics and teachers are starting to set individual targets for pupils. Procedures to assess progress in other subjects are not in place and this makes it more difficult for teachers to have an informed picture of pupils' progress.
- Pupils with special educational needs are included in all aspects of the curriculum. Support staff offer effective help although some activities that take place away from the classroom would be more effective if the pupils were not withdrawn from their classes.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 21 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	3	9	9	0	0	0

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

11. The grid above shows that no teaching seen was less than satisfactory and this is an improvement since the last inspection. Parents are happy with the teaching in the school. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Most of the very good teaching was in the Foundation Stage where teaching is consistently good and often better. Teaching in the mixed Year 5 and 6 class was often very good and achievement increases as pupils move into this class. During the inspection a temporary teacher was responsible for the Year 1 and 2 class and overall teaching there was satisfactory.
12. Children get off to a flying start to their education in the nursery and reception class because of the stimulating experiences carefully matched to their needs. The strong focus on personal, social and emotional development successfully establishes routines and a respect for others. Great care is given to enabling children to work alone or with an adult and this enables them to grow in independence. Early literacy and numeracy skills are taught imaginatively through practical activities, role-play and rhymes. As a result, the children not only learn these skills well but recall them in their early attempts at reading, writing and simple calculations.
13. In Years 1 to 6 teachers have a secure knowledge of the subjects they teach. Mathematics is now taught well and achievement in lessons is good. Introductions are lively and pupils are improving their skills of problem solving. Reading is taught well and teachers in the juniors encourage pupils to read widely. In the infants, pupils are taught the mechanics of reading but are not encouraged to read books other than those in the school's reading scheme and do not recall other stories. In the past, teaching of writing has focused on developing pupils' skills to write imaginatively. This to some extent has been successful and most are confident expressing their thoughts in words. However, standards remain below average in Year 6 because spelling and use of punctuation are weak. The teacher is tackling this by setting pupils' individual targets and pupils are now more aware of the need to give more attention to these skills.
14. Overall planning is satisfactory. The school is following national guidelines in most subjects so that planning is allowing pupils to build on knowledge and understanding gained earlier in their school life. A weakness in some lessons seen was a lack of clarity about the outcome of the lesson, or in some cases too many outcomes. This restricted learning because pupils were unclear about the overall purpose of the tasks and the evaluation of the lesson did not always bring the lesson together to assess the pupils' understanding.

15. In the best lessons teachers make good use of resources to make lessons more stimulating. Computers are used efficiently by some teachers not only to extend learning in the computer suite but also to supplement learning in class. This was effective in Year 5 and 6 where the classroom assistant led a group in the suite working on writing newspaper articles and others worked in class. This is not always the case and some opportunities are missed to extend pupils' information and communication technology skills. In the best lessons the focus is on learning through practical activities. For example, in a history lesson in Year 2 the teacher dressed in costume and used artefacts very imaginatively so that pupils gained a real sense of living in the past and very good learning was assured.
16. Lessons run smoothly because of teachers' high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Relationships are positive and teachers and support staff work patiently with pupils who find it difficult to maintain good behaviour and concentration for a length of time.
17. Pupils with special educational needs also benefit from the support of classroom assistants. This enables teachers to include these pupils in all activities. Some group sessions are practical and lead to effective learning. In lessons, teachers are not always closely checking on pupils' individual education plans to ensure the tasks whether in class or elsewhere match their current needs.
18. Assessment is now good in English and mathematics and the school has resolved the weakness identified in the last inspection. Information is now being used to set targets so that pupils have a clearer understanding of how to improve their work. The school is now more aware of the needs of the higher attaining pupils in mathematics and in Year 6 they are starting to be more challenged. However, the disruptions of the past mean that these pupils have a long way to go if they are going to close the gap and exceed the level expected for their age. In science, a similar problem exists for the higher attaining pupils but the school has not yet got to grips with assessment and these pupils are not being sufficiently challenged to make the progress of which they are capable. Assessment is in place in information and communication technology and is leading to standards improving. In other subjects assessment is at an early stage of development and to some extent has been left as an area for development because of changes of staff and responsibilities.

The curriculum

The overall quality of the curriculum in Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory. The range and quality of learning experiences for children in the Foundation Stage are good. Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. The accommodation for pupils in Years 1 to 6 is good, and the curriculum is supported by resources of satisfactory range and quality. In the Foundation Stage accommodation and resources, enhanced by the stimulating outdoor learning environment, are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In the Foundation Stage, the high quality of the curriculum is a significant factor in the children's good progress. The very good accommodation and resources are well organised to support learning.
- The National Literacy and National Numeracy Strategies are effectively implemented. The promotion of literacy in other subjects is good.
- The curriculum provides insufficient challenge for higher attaining pupils in mathematics and science.
- The curriculum in mixed age classes is not always well matched to the full range of age and ability.
- The range and quality of extra-curricular provision is very good with particular strengths in opportunities to participate in sports.
- Above average levels of provision of swimming lessons in all year groups promotes good progress.

- Although there is no formal scheme of work to ensure progression in physical, social and emotional education the school makes good provision for pupils to learn about healthy life styles.

Commentary

19. Statutory requirements are met in all subjects.
20. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is based on well-organised practical activities in each of the six areas of learning, and meets the children's needs effectively. Very good use is made of the attractive outdoor resource to enhance the curriculum and to promote first-hand learning successfully. The very good range and quality of resources in the Foundation Stage support the delivery of a broad curriculum.
21. In Years 1 to 6, the National Literacy Strategy is effectively adapted to meet the school's needs and the extra attention to reading is beginning to raise standards. Literacy is promoted well in other subjects. In numeracy, daily sessions of lively mental and oral work are quickening pupils' responses and increasing their ability to work independently. However, the use and practice of numeracy skills across the curriculum is limited. In most subjects, apart from English and mathematics, a two-year cycle of topics ensures full coverage of programmes of study in the mixed age classes. Lesson plans, however, are not always sufficiently focused to ensure that work is planned specifically to meet the needs of all ages and abilities in each class. In science and in mathematics in particular, work is not planned specifically to challenge higher attainers. Consequently, some pupils do not make as much progress as they could.
22. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory in Years 1 to 6. In the Foundation Stage provision is good. Pupils have good individual education plans which identify what pupils need to do to improve. Inclusion is good when pupils stay with their class for the opening of the literacy lesson and then are supported by classroom assistants for practical activities linked to the needs in their individual plans. On other occasions, pupils are withdrawn for support which fails to match their current needs and leads to missed opportunities in class. A contributory factor to this weakness is the lack of attention a few teachers give to pupils' individual education plans to check that support is matching current needs.
23. Weekly personal, social and health education lessons promote personal development satisfactorily, but the absence of a scheme of work to provide step-by-step learning by building on what pupils already know hinders progress. Nevertheless, particularly good attention is given to encouraging healthy life styles through teaching about diet and exercise, drugs and medicines and through sensitive sex education. The provision of swimming lessons for one and a half terms per year for every pupil in Years 1 to 6 promotes skills very well.
24. Extra-curricular provision is very good. A wide range of after school and lunchtime clubs are well attended. The school is close to its aspirations of involving every child from Year 1 onwards in some kind of extra-curricular activity. Opportunities to join in competitive sport are very good with the school taking part in a variety of team games. The school has recently been awarded a Gold Activemark for its outstanding commitment to promoting the benefits of physical activity and school sport. Musical activities include choir and peripatetic music lessons. Visits and visitors, including residential trips, enhance the curriculum considerably.
25. The good number of teachers and of support staff are deployed effectively. The accommodation is generally spacious and used well although insufficient use is made of the library as a learning resource. Overall, the range and quality of resources are adequate to support the delivery of the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

The school has good procedures for ensuring care, welfare, health and safety, and gives satisfactory support and guidance for pupils based on the monitoring of their achievements and personal development. The school involves pupils well in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has good procedures for health and safety and for child protection; individual pupils are well cared for.
- Views of pupils are taken into account.
- Arrangements to introduce new pupils to school are good.

Commentary

26. Staff are trained thoroughly in child protection procedures and know the action to take should the need arise. Where there have been cases, outside agencies have been consulted and provided good support. The premises and equipment are regularly checked for safety. The risks associated with visits off the site are assessed and precautions taken. Staff know the pupils well and support them individually. Teachers have started to make good use of assessment information to set pupils' individual or group targets in English and numeracy. This is having more impact on learning in Year 6 than in other classes because the teacher is making more reference to them in lessons. This is not the case in other subjects and, especially in science, pupils are unclear how to improve their work and there is a lack of challenge for higher attaining pupils. The school is developing healthy eating and promotes the physical fitness of pupils.
27. The school gives parents and children a good introduction to the school when they start, so that children can quickly and happily settle into the routines of school life. Many children have few social skills when they start nursery, but quickly gain the ability to work and play collaboratively with others.
28. Pupils on the school council take the role very seriously and collect the views of the class members in formal meetings. Having discussed these views in council, they then report back to their class. They feel that consultation is meaningful and that the school takes their views seriously. They are very proud of the games resources that the pupils raised funds for in school. Pupils think playtimes are now more fun.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has satisfactory links with parents and the community. Liaison with other school is very good and the school and pupils benefit greatly from these links.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Too many parents are not fulfilling their duty to ensure their children attend school regularly.
- Confrontations with some parents over the move to a new site are causing some strains in relationships.
- Parents are kept well informed and pupils' annual reports to parents are good.
- Good links with the church improve the school's ethos and support the teaching of religious education.
- Liaison with the local Beacon Primary School⁵ and several secondary schools are very good and help to improve teaching and broaden the curriculum.

⁵ Beacon School- this is a school which excels at one or more activities and has applied to and been accepted by the DfEE for Beacon School status. The scheme is to raise standards in school through sharing and spreading of practical ideas and knowledge between schools.

Commentary

29. The school has been through a traumatic period involving a controversial move to a new site. Although the school has worked hard to consult parents about the design of the new building and to explain the rationale behind the move, many parents have opted to move their children to other schools. However, the vast majority of those who remain are supportive of the school, as evidenced by the majority comments at the parents' meeting and the questionnaire. They were insistent that other parents have moved their children because of the extra distance involved and not because they were unsatisfied with the education Trent Vale school provides.
30. Information to parents is good. An increasing number of parents come to consultation evenings but about one third do not. The annual pupil reports are thorough and describe what each child can do and how they need to improve, the latter written in a way that is very helpful to parents. The reports also describe the pupil's personal development well. Parents are informed about the regular targets that their child is set in English and mathematics. Most parents support their children at home especially by hearing their child read at home and give appropriate support with homework. However, too many parents do not ensure their children attend school regularly and on time. This is a barrier to pupils' learning. The parents' and friends' association is active in organising social events, which raise money for resources.
31. The school has well-established links with the local church and these enhance pupils' religious education. The planting of plants encourages pupils to appreciate and protect the area in which they live. Good use is made of the locality to give practical impact to the study of history and geography.
32. Pupils transfer to a wide range of secondary schools, and this school gives good individual advice to parents about how to apply for these. In seeking to improve the teaching of basic subjects, the school has made very good use of the expertise and example of the local Beacon Primary School. Staff and pupils from several secondary schools who either invite pupils to attend classes or visit this school enhance standards in art, sports and science.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall. Governance is satisfactory with good features in the leadership from the chair of governors. The headteacher and key staff provide satisfactory leadership. The school runs smoothly because of sound management.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Governors carry out their duties responsibly and statutory requirements are met.
- The chair of governors is fully involved in the school's strategic planning and the evaluation of performance. Other governors are new or less active and are not as aware of the school's areas for development.
- The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and the school's development plan includes priorities to achieve this vision.
- The school has good procedures to monitor the performance of the school and is now starting to adjust its practice based on this information.
- Changes of staff have restricted the development of the role of subject leader and a few lack information about standards and teaching in the subjects they lead.
- Financial management is satisfactory although in the past a close eye was not kept on spending and the school now has a large surplus.

Commentary

33. Governors carry out their duties in an organised way through a system of committees and ensure statutory requirements are met. They are supportive of the school and have a good idea of the school's strengths. They are less clear about areas for development and many recognise they need to develop their role in monitoring what is happening in the school. Many rely on the information provided by the headteacher and although links have been established with some subject leaders these are in the early stages of development. This is not the case for the chair of governors who is the driving force behind the governing body. He is very well informed about what is happening in school. He has been very supportive to the headteacher during the difficult time of change and has set in place formal procedures to deal with parental concerns.
34. Overall leadership is satisfactory. The leadership of the school has faced much criticism from the parents as they campaigned to keep the school open. Almost a quarter of the parents who responded to the questionnaire are unhappy about the way the school is led and managed. This has led to an unsettled time for the leadership of the school as time has been spent reacting to parents' concerns. As a result, other issues have not received the attention they might otherwise have done. The situation is now improving as parents and the community are becoming reconciled to the school moving to a new site. Since his appointment the headteacher has focused on creating an atmosphere which more reflects the Christian nature of the school. In this he has been successful and the school is a friendly community. A team approach to changes has been put in place and the school is following the local authority's guidance on self-evaluation. Historically, priorities have been driven by issues raised in the last inspection and national initiatives and the school is now starting to include more targets based on their own evaluation of the school's needs. The school development plan is a useful document to record and monitor changes. However, because it is linked to the school's financial year it does not show how the school responds to the findings of the most recent national test results. The school is aware of this difficulty and in practice it reacts well to its analysis of test results and takes practical action when a weakness is spotted. Staffing changes have been a barrier to developing the role of subject leaders. All subjects are managed at least satisfactorily although few co-ordinators have had time to develop their leadership roles in full. The deputy headteacher is new to the school and is working for half of a week in Trent Vale and the rest of the time in the other school involved in the amalgamation. This is working well as the headteacher and the deputy are gelling as a team and planning ahead for the new school.
35. Management is satisfactory. The headteacher has given good attention to the need to improve assessment. Procedures are now in place in English and mathematics so the school can track pupils' progress from entry to school to Year 6. This has highlighted differences in teachers' use of National Curriculum levels and has led to more moderation of pupils' work so that the school now has a more accurate picture of standards. This information is now being used not only to set targets but to adjust the curriculum. For example, in 2002 the school had booster classes in Year 6 with a focus on increasing the number of pupils exceeding the national average. Results show this was not effective and this year the support will be used to enable all of Year 6 to be taught as a single age class so that they all benefit from working in a small group with their class teacher. Performance management is in place although staff changes make it difficult to assess its effectiveness. Teachers' professional targets are now being linked to the new school as the headteacher strives to take into consideration the different experiences of staff and their potential roles in the new school. Despite dealing with many issues around the relocation of the school the headteacher has found time to monitor teaching. Initially evaluations were not sharp enough and insufficient attention was given to implementing the actions that were needed to bring about improvement. With support from the local authority and paired monitoring this has improved and monitoring is now leading to changes of practice in the school.

36. The management of special educational needs is satisfactory. The requirements of the Code of Practice⁶ are fully met and the school endeavours to provide equal access to the curriculum for these pupils. This is especially successful for the pupils with formal statements where staff are more aware of their needs and sensitively offer support not only to meet academic needs but also to help overcome any social problems. Pupils' needs are assessed closely and the co-ordinator draws up an individual education plan to guide teachers when planning work for these pupils. However, there is no close check to see that teachers are giving sufficient attention to the pupils' needs.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	417,041	Balance from previous year	119,150
Total expenditure	430,038	Balance carried forward to the next	110,280
Expenditure per pupil	2,867		

37. The quality of financial management is now satisfactory. In the past the school did not use the support of the local authority to help with financial management. This, plus the time the school was without a headteacher, has led to a large surplus being accrued. The most recent financial audit identified several areas needing attention and the school is in the process of tackling these points. With effective support from the school's administrative staff and the local authority the school now keeps a closer eye on spending. Checks have been made to ensure that the surplus can be used for the new school. It has been suitably earmarked to retain current staff, improve furniture and resources for information and communication technology. Principles of best value are being soundly applied. Governors and the headteacher see the spending on classroom assistants as good value because it has eased teachers' load and monitoring shows an improvement in teaching. Consultation with the local authority and the local Beacon School has been effective in helping the school to overcome many of its difficulties.

⁶ Code of Practice- this gives practical advice to schools and local education authorities about their responsibilities, duties and tasks to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs receive the most appropriate help and support to further their learning and personal development. This is a statutory duty under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

The quality of provision is **good**.

Since the previous inspection, the school has continued to build links between the nursery and reception classes. This good liaison now results in a cohesive and coherent curriculum which successfully meets the needs of three to five-year-olds. The school's recently developed attractive outdoor area is well resourced and considerably enhances the curriculum. Best use is made of individual talents. Two senior nursery nurses are effectively deployed in the nursery where they ensure children enjoy a good start to their school lives.

The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the Foundation Stage. Children achieve well in each area of learning because of the strong curriculum and the good teaching. The vast majority reach the early learning goals in each area of learning by the time they start in Year 1. Assessment systems are satisfactory and used efficiently to track children's progress but not always to plan new work. Leadership and management are good and enable all staff to work well as a team with a shared purpose.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff make their high expectations clear to children.
- Relationships are good.
- Good procedures to introduce children to school and supportive home/school links are successful in making parents and children feel secure.

Commentary

38. All staff work successfully together to promote a calm and caring environment where children are confident and happy. Simple routines are clearly established so that children know what is expected and try hard to succeed. In the reception class gentle daily reminders ensure that children are aware of the positive *Golden Rules*. Adults use praise effectively to raise the children's self-esteem. As a result, the children become increasingly independent in selecting activities and in persevering to complete tasks. Children respond quickly and helpfully to the frequent opportunities to take responsibility. They take pride in carrying out small duties efficiently. Opportunities to co-operate are effectively planned. For instance, children show high levels of involvement and link successfully with others when playing together with the giant parachute. Well-organised pre-admission visits and helpful booklets for parents, together with curriculum meetings, establish mutually supportive home/school relationships which help children settle quickly into school life.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good use is made of dramatic story telling to encourage children's interest in books.
- The teaching of early reading skills of letters and their sounds is particularly good and children make very good progress in this aspect.

- Although there are frequent opportunities for children to practise their early writing skills through play, opportunities to promote speaking and listening skills systematically through imaginative role-play are not well developed.

Commentary

39. All the adults are skilled storytellers. Consequently, children learn to enjoy listening to stories and looking at books. Nursery children enthusiastically search for clues in picture books to follow a story. Children in the reception class are good at guessing what will happen next. They show accurate recall when joining in repeated refrains. Nursery and reception staff use their secure knowledge and understanding of how young children learn to teach early reading skills thoroughly. As a result, the children make very good progress and almost all reception children recognise most letters by shape and sound. Many children accurately build up simple words like *run* and *jump* in their early attempts at writing. Higher attaining children already read fluently from the first reading books. The National Literacy Strategy is successfully adapted to meet children's needs in the reception class. Usually, group work is focused clearly, but not enough planned use is made of imaginative role-play areas to promote speaking and listening skills systematically.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All staff take every opportunity to develop the children's counting skills across the curriculum, throughout the day.
- A good range of number rhymes and practical activities promote understanding successfully but occasionally group tasks do not fully challenge children.

Commentary

40. Staff take every opportunity to raise children's awareness of numbers and counting throughout the day. Colourful interactive classroom displays reinforce learning well. Children count with increasing accuracy to find out how many boys and girls are in the line, or how many apples they need at snack time. Good use is made of computer programs to reinforce counting skills. All children join enthusiastically in number action rhymes, correctly reciting numbers up and down to five or ten. With help, most children count out ten sweets accurately and find the total number of sweets in two groups by counting all of them. In a practical sorting activity, they use language, like *long* and *short*, *thick* and *thin* correctly. Occasionally group activities are not well focused and pupils spend time on tasks like drawing round templates and colouring in, which do not support their mathematical development well.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective use is made of the well-planned outdoor area as a learning resource.
- Staff ask questions skilfully to help children make sense of what they see and feel but opportunities for children to ask their own questions and pursue their own investigations are not well promoted.
- Classroom resources are efficiently prepared and computers are used effectively to support learning.

Commentary

41. Careful organisation provides all children with regular access to the outdoor learning area. Through practical gardening activities like raking up autumn leaves or planting spring bulbs children learn effectively about change and seasonal patterns. Staff provide a good range of artefacts so that children can explore concepts. For instance, children in the reception class are successful in identifying light sources through handling a range of torches, lamps and candles. Children are thoughtful in response to adults' skilled questions but do not have sufficient opportunity to develop their own ideas. Almost all children in the Reception class use computers competently. They are adept at controlling the mouse to move objects, to count, or to draw pictures on screen.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good outdoor play resources are used effectively to promote physical development.
- All staff manage children effectively in a well-established, ordered environment.

Commentary

42. Children show increasing control in driving large wheeled toys around the track. Reception children manoeuvre adeptly with good awareness of others. When playing together in the hall, children show good control to shake the parachute gently, getting faster and faster to create the desired effect. Reception children control tools like pencils and paintbrushes with sound skill. Staff manage children consistently with praise and encouragement. As a result, children quickly grow in confidence and independence. Clear instructions are given so that children know what is expected of them.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children experience a wide range of creative media and techniques.
- Opportunities are missed to make best use of the attractive, imaginative role-play areas.

Commentary

43. Staff prepare resources thoughtfully so that children explore media and techniques with a clear purpose. The children's careful observations of Van Gogh's work have influenced the style they have used in firework paintings. Their splatter pictures of clouds and raindrops show enjoyment of the media. Staff respect children's ideas and give positive feedback by displaying children's work attractively. Much thought and effort has been put into setting up high quality play areas like *The Fire Station*. When given the opportunity, children use these areas effectively. They build on their own experience to develop their ideas dramatically. However, access is often restricted and opportunities are missed to extend children's creative development by more frequent use.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory overall**. It is better in reading than in writing and this has led to good improvement in standards in the juniors.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Reading receives good attention and overall progress is good with many pupils in Year 6 enjoying reading and an increasing number are exceeding the level expected for their age.
- The focus on writing imaginatively has improved pupils' confidence to put down their ideas in words but punctuation and spelling are weak and standards are below average in Year 6.
- Marking is good and teachers make it clear to pupils how they can improve their work.
- Assessment is good and the school can now track pupils' progress from Reception to Year 6 and offer additional help when it appears a pupil is not making enough progress.
- When pupils with special educational needs receive help in small groups, tasks match their needs and learning is effective.
- Letters and sounds are taught well in the Foundation Stage and the infant classes and help pupils with their early reading and writing.
- Management of the subject is satisfactory but the change in leadership has put a brake on the effectiveness of some initiatives, especially to the attention given to improving standards in writing.

Commentary

44. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and overall standards have risen in the juniors. The results of national tests in Year 6 in 2003 were in line with the national average and well above average when compared with different schools. This improvement has been brought about by:
 - improved assessment and tracking of pupils' progress;
 - better use of classroom assistants;
 - support from the local Beacon School and the local authority with a focus on teaching pupils how to write creatively;
 - giving additional time to reading so that pupils have time to appreciate a good book.
45. Current overall standards in Year 6 are in line with the national average although writing is below average. In the very good lesson seen in Year 6 pupils took part in a role-play of a press conference and pupils confidently jotted down questions and responses. A few showed more awareness of styles of writing as they used bullet points and sub-headings to make it easier to extract information. Examples of stories reveal a good use of vocabulary to enhance their ideas. Most have a neat style of handwriting. However, a weakness remains in spelling and the accurate use of punctuation. Standards are below average because pupils are failing to transfer their punctuation and spelling skills to their writing in other subjects. Pupils achieve well in reading and most have a good range of skills which they use confidently to extract information from a text. The school has a good choice of books and many have favourite authors. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has been used effectively as a text in literacy lessons and pupils appreciated the language was more difficult to follow but still had gained an overview of the plot.
46. Achievement in the infants is satisfactory. Standards are better than the results of national tests in 2003 which were below the national average although average in reading and above average in writing when compared with similar schools. Test results suggested boys were not doing as well as girls. This is similar to the national picture and during the inspection there was no evidence of inequality. Most pupils now reach the level expected for their age. They

are competently reading simple books and responses show an understanding of the text. Few are reading widely and refer to their school's reading scheme book as their favourite story. They use letter sounds well to decipher unfamiliar words and to spell new words. Most are developing the use of early punctuation to demarcate sentences.

47. The school encourages discussion in all subjects and pupils reach average standards of speaking and listening. In Year 2 they join in confidently in the class discussion although some are less articulate talking to an adult about their work. In Year 6 pupils listen carefully and in their *press conference* respond to the opinions of the previous speaker.
48. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. It is best in the Year 6 class where the pace is good and the imaginative activities captures the pupils' interest and much new learning takes place. Information and communication technology is used effectively to support learning. Homework in Year 6 is set daily and extends learning. In other classes teaching, although satisfactory, was less effective. Activities lacked challenge and too much talking led to pupils losing interest in important parts of the lesson. In the mixed Year1/2 class pupils were confused because the lesson included too many learning outcomes and a lack of clarity about the overall focus of the lesson. During the inspection this class was being taught by a temporary teacher because of staff absence and the match of task to ability was not quite right. The pupils in Year 1 found it difficult to understand alliteration and the higher attaining pupils in Year 2 could have written more and so learning was not as good as it could have been. Teachers manage the pupils effectively and behaviour is good. Classroom assistants make a positive contribution to learning. They use practical activities when leading small groups of pupils with special educational needs and this leads to effective learning. The overall progress of these pupils is satisfactory but teachers are not always keeping a close eye on their individual education plans to check that they are making as much progress as they can. Marking is good and teachers take time to comment on how pupils can improve work.
49. Overall management is satisfactory. The co-ordinator is new and only working in the school for half of the week and is currently in the process of auditing overall provision. Assessment procedures are good and helping the school to check on the overall performance of the school. Individual targets are being set to give pupils more idea how to improve their work. The analysis of work by examining books has been effective in the past and has led to an improvement in the use of description in writing.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

Language and literacy are used effectively to support work in other subjects. For example, pupils write up their findings in science lessons. When marking work teachers often identify errors in spelling and punctuation in their endeavours to improve this aspect of English.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and leads to effective learning which is improving the progress pupils are now making.
- Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils who need additional help.
- Higher attaining pupils do not always achieve as well as they could in Years 3 to 6.
- There are insufficient planned opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills to support work in other subjects.

Commentary

50. Standards in mathematics in Year 2 are in line with the national average and overall achievement is satisfactory. This is similar to the most recent results of national tests that were in line with the national average and well above the average of those achieved by similar schools. Current standards in Year 6 are below average which is similar to the findings of the last inspection. However, this is an improvement on the test results in 2003 that were well below the national average and below the average achieved by similar schools. The small numbers in each year group make comparisons between years difficult. However, in response to good teaching, most pupils in the current Year 6 are now achieving well and reach the expected standard. However, higher attaining pupils are underachieving and this is holding down the school's overall performance. Part of this is linked to staffing changes which have disturbed the continuity of pupils' learning as they have moved through the juniors and this has especially restricted achievement over time for the higher attaining pupils.
51. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by teachers and teaching assistants and make sound progress. Boys and girls are currently making similar progress.
52. In Year 2, the higher attaining pupils have a clear understanding of the value of numbers and they carry out simple calculations accurately. Most have good understanding of patterns in number and know the difference between odd and even. Lower attaining pupils have a limited ability to recall number facts mentally but they are able to use apparatus effectively to aid calculations. Pupils have a secure understanding of common shapes and use non-standard units to measure length and mass. Higher attainers achieve well and progress to measuring length and mass using standard measures such as grams and centimetres.
53. Pupils in Year 6 have a sound grasp of spatial concepts and can use a variety of methods to collate and represent data they have collected. Classroom assistants provide effective support and enable the lower attaining pupils to apply the four rules of number effectively. However, they lack confidence to explain their working out, and as a result, struggle to recall how to solve problems involving more complicated calculation. Because of previous disturbances to learning pupils do not have a secure knowledge and recall of multiplication tables and addition and subtraction facts. As a result, higher attaining pupils can use fractions and decimals accurately but they are not sufficiently confident with their mental arithmetic to enable them to work at speed.
54. Pupils make sound use of computers to support their numeracy skills, especially those related to data handling. Some good examples of this were observed in the Year 3/4 class. Pupils in the Year 1/2 class used the computer to practise their skills of sorting shapes.
55. In all the lessons seen teaching was good and pupils learnt well. Lessons are characterised by the thorough preparation of resources, allowing teaching to proceed at a brisk pace. Teachers throughout the school make good use of the framework provided by the National Numeracy Strategy and this is having a positive impact on pupils' learning. Most teachers make mathematics fun by using practical apparatus and varying their style. As a result, pupils are interested and enjoy the sessions. Teachers make good use of questioning to assess and develop pupils' understanding and provide support as necessary. Pupils receive good feedback on their work through verbal comments and written marking. There are regular assessments of pupils' attainment and progress. The school also uses assessment information effectively to identify pupils who need additional support. Teaching assistants provide helpful support for those who need it and they make a valuable contribution to learning. Information is not always used as effectively to spot the higher attaining pupils and to ensure tasks are extending their learning.
56. The co-ordinator manages this subject effectively. There is a good range of resources to support learning and these are used well. The National Numeracy Strategy is used as an effective framework for planning and is having a beneficial effect on standards, especially in mental work and the development of mathematical language.

Mathematics across the curriculum

57. Pupils make satisfactory use of mathematics in other subjects but opportunities tend to occur coincidentally rather than as part of systematic planning.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 2 and Year 6 are below average. Overall standards are generally depressed because the proportion of pupils working at the higher levels is small.
- The achievement of the majority of pupils including those with special educational needs is satisfactory, but potential higher attainers do not do as well as they can.
- Assessment systems are not used effectively to inform teachers' planning, or to set challenging targets particularly for higher attaining pupils.
- There is insufficient emphasis on the development of investigational skills and independent research.
- There are good links with literacy.
- The subject makes an effective contribution to pupils' personal development.

Commentary

58. Overall standards are below average in Year 2 and Year 6. As at the time of the previous inspection, most pupils are on line to reach average levels for their age but very few are currently in line to reach the higher levels. This was the case in the teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2003 when no pupils exceeded the level expected for their age. A similar picture was seen in the national tests at the end of Year 6 when the percentage reaching the higher level was below that of most schools and that of similar schools.
59. Current evidence shows that most pupils achieve satisfactorily. Pupils with special educational needs are often supported in small groups with extra adult attention in class so that they make satisfactory progress. The achievement of potential higher attainers is unsatisfactory, as work is not always well matched to their needs. In the lesson seen in Year 6 most pupils could record their results after using forcemetres to weigh objects in the air and in water. Many could make a general statement about their findings but found it difficult to explain their results using scientific terminology.
60. No lessons were observed in Years 1 and 2. In Years 3 to 6 teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers manage pupils successfully and classes are efficiently organised. Resources are carefully prepared to support learning. Plenary sessions are used effectively to consolidate teaching points. Assessment systems have recently been put in place across the school. However, information gained is not used rigorously to plan work for the full range of attainment in each class. Individual or group targets are not clearly set. In particular, teachers do not plan tasks specifically to challenge the higher attainers and these pupils do not always make the good progress of which they are capable. As at the time of the previous inspection, insufficient attention is given to the development of investigational skills across the school. While there is good practice, in some age groups in others there is still an over-reliance on worksheets, which do not promote pupils' abilities to set up their own investigations and work independently.
61. Effective links with literacy are promoted by good use of subject specific vocabulary and opportunities to write formally for a particular purpose. Personal development is fostered when pupils consider healthy life styles and learn about the importance of diet and exercise as well as the dangers and benefits of drugs and medicines. Leadership and management are

satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, the subject leader has begun to monitor teaching and learning and to develop the curriculum with moderate success. Standards of presentation of pupils' work have been greatly improved. Disruption due to considerable changes in staff, and the disturbance caused by the proposed amalgamation, are barriers to success in improving standards.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Improvement since the last inspection has been good and standards in Year 6 are now in line with the national expectations.
- The school has developed a clear scheme of work to cover all areas of the subject.
- Information and communication technology is not used consistently to support learning in other subjects.

Commentary

62. Only one class lesson was observed. In addition, groups of pupils were observed using the computers. The observations made, along with a scrutiny of pupils' work, and discussions with teachers and pupils, indicate that standards of attainment are broadly in line with the national expectation by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils make sound progress and achievement is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs are fully involved in computer lessons and with additional help from peers and staff make sound progress.
63. The school has developed a clear scheme of work, helped by their colleagues in their partner Beacon School. Examples of pupils' work show they are learning to use information and communication technology effectively for word processing, graphics, the Internet and data handling as well as control, monitoring and modelling. Conversations with pupils and examples of their work show they are confident in accessing the Internet for research, and presenting text. They are enthusiastic about the use of computers, clearly enjoy their lessons and work well with partners or groups.
64. Most pupils in Year 2 log-on to computers independently, open and close files and save or print their work. Pupils use control programs using the mouse and keyboard. Keyboard skills are developing as pupils are beginning to recognise and appreciate the function of the most used keys and icons. By Year 6 most pupils word process competently although a few are at the early stages of developing their skills. Most can use a search engine to find appropriate websites, saving the required information on a word processing programme. They use spreadsheets confidently, inputting information and re-ordering it. They create artwork using graphics packages where they successfully use the mouse to click and drag pictures to a new location where they are able to resize them.
65. In the lesson seen, teaching was satisfactory. The teacher's own subject knowledge was used well to give clear succinct explanations and demonstrations using the digital projector. However, the lack of any additional support staff meant that pupils had to wait for support at times and this hampered their progress. In group activities, teachers and teaching assistants provided clear guidance and support which enabled pupils to make sound progress.
66. The co-ordinator provides satisfactory leadership. The school has introduced an assessment system developed by the local education authority and this is used to monitor progress and support teachers' planning. The local education authority has also supported the school through advice and training and links with the Education Action Zone and this has raised all staff's confidence in teaching the subject. This has been particularly useful in developing pupils' skills in multi-media presentations.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

67. During the inspection limited use was seen of computers outside the direct teaching sessions. Pupils use computers to complete programs that consolidate numeracy skills in mathematics and for writing tasks in English. Pupils use information and communication technology to support their work in subjects such as history, making effective use of the Internet to research information. However, there is little mention of the use of information and communication technology in teachers' planning for other subjects.

HUMANITIES

In humanities work was reviewed in history and geography. Only one lesson was seen in history and none in geography. It is therefore not possible to form an overall judgement about provision in these subjects.

Evidence from pupils' work indicates that standards in Year 2 and Year 6 are broadly average in both subjects, as they were at the time of the previous inspection. In the history lesson seen, very good teaching in the mixed Years 1 and 2 class led to very good learning about the Great Fire of London. The teacher used considerable personal expertise and enthusiasm to engage the pupils in well-planned, imaginative role-play. This caught the pupils' enthusiasm so that they concentrated hard. Particularly good use of artefacts, including costumes, brought the period to life. The very clear focus on historical enquiry was furthered by the teacher's skilled questioning which encouraged the pupils to listen and observe closely and to think for themselves.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Curriculum leaders have begun to monitor their subjects but this has not been as effective as it could be because of several changes of staff. Systems of assessment are at an early stage of development and are not yet used rigorously in planning future work.

Religious education was not part of this inspection.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Only one lesson was seen in art and design and music; two lessons were seen in physical education and none in design and technology. It is not therefore possible to make a firm judgement about provision. In addition to observing lessons, inspectors spoke to co-ordinators about their work, and looked at pupils' work.

Strengths and weaknesses

- The very wide range of extra-curricular activities to support physical education.
 - The good quality and obvious enjoyment boys and girls get from singing.
 - The planning for design and technology leaves too lengthy a time between topics and this restricts the continuity of learning skills in this subject.
 - Pupils' cultural development is promoted in art and design.
68. It is evident from teachers' planning, and displays of work around the school that work planned in **art and design** is varied and interesting. Standards are in line with those expected for the age group by Year 2 and Year 6. Teachers' planning indicates a range of media including drawing materials, paint, printing, modelling and collage work is provided during the year. Pupils also have opportunities to study the work of other artists and apply this to their own work. This extends their cultural knowledge as they review the work of Picasso, Van Gogh and the sculpture of Andy Goldsworthy. Work shows an understanding of colour mixing and the ability to select suitable materials. Pupils express themselves through drawing, painting and modelling and use simple techniques with developing control. Pupils' accuracy in representing what they observe is developing well, but they also have opportunities to express their feelings in an imaginative way.

69. Samples of work from last year in **design and technology** indicate that standards in Year 2 are broadly average. No samples of work were available to judge standards in Year 6. Teachers plan using national guidance and provide adequate coverage in each year group. However, design and technology is not taught in every term and this leads to erratic rather than steady progress in the development of skills.
70. In **music**, pupils were only observed in Years 5 and 6, although the whole school was heard singing in assemblies. Older pupils sing tunefully, with awareness of breathing, diction and dynamics and most obviously enjoy singing. This positive picture has been maintained since the last inspection. Concerts and performance also contribute to pupils' overall musical experience. Small groups of older pupils also have the opportunity to learn an instrument through the peripatetic music service.
71. In **physical education**, the school provides a good programme of activities. Pupils learn to play games, participate in gymnastic activities and respond to music through dance. All pupils have opportunities to attend swimming lessons. From viewing planning and discussions with teachers and pupils it is evident that all strands of the subject including outdoor and adventurous activities are regularly taught. In the lessons seen standards were satisfactory. Teaching was satisfactory but some over-direction by the teacher prevented pupils developing their own ideas.
72. A very good range of extra-curricular, physical and sporting activities is planned throughout the year and supports the physical education curriculum. These activities enhance physical education for those who take part. The school also takes part in competition with other schools. Effective use is made of outside coaches to develop pupils' interest and skills in sports. The school gives physical education a high profile. It has achieved a number of awards: Dolphin awards for swimming, the Active Gold Mark for physical education and the Football Association Charter Standards for schools.
73. Overall management is satisfactory. Assessment systems are at an early stage of development. The subject leaders manage subjects satisfactorily but a change of roles has restricted opportunities to monitor teaching.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

No lessons were seen during the inspection and so it is not possible to make a judgement about overall provision. The religious education scheme of work includes many aspects of personal and social education. This was not part of the current inspection and so evidence from this subject was not available.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Every class has a lesson devoted to developing pupils' personal and social skills.
 - The school lacks a scheme of work to guide teachers with their planning.
 - Pupils are learning about their role in society through the school council.
74. It is evidence of the importance the school places on pupils' personal development that every class has specific time for activities and discussions to enhance their social skills. Since the headteacher arrived he has focused on encouraging pupils to accept responsibility for their own actions and how these can hurt or help others. This has improved the relationships in the school which are now in keeping with the school's Christian character.

75. Although the school does not have a formal scheme of work to guide their planning teachers have several commercial schemes to dip into for ideas. This means lessons have a clear focus but teachers would be unsure about pupils' previous experiences. Circle Time⁷ is used when teachers think it is needed. In Year 6, the teacher has been using this approach sensitively with a small group to enable them to come to terms with some relationship difficulties. Teachers grasp opportunities as they arise in other subjects to discuss personal and moral issues. For example, in a very good Year 6 literacy lesson pupils discussed the issues of a mugging and how this affected people. Pupils also write about healthy lifestyles recognising the dangers of smoking and drug abuse.
76. Members of the school council take their role seriously and represent the views of other pupils. Their notice board keeps other pupils informed about their activities and the response to their actions. They know their ideas are taken seriously by the school and raised funds for games equipment to improve playtimes.
77. Overall management is satisfactory. The co-ordinator is very new to the role and is in the process of formalising planning guidelines for teachers. Although assessment is informal it has been effective because in a small school staff know the pupils well and reports to parents include a useful comment about pupils' personal development.

⁷ During Circle Time pupils discuss a wide range of personal and general issues. It is agreed by all pupils that no interruptions should occur and only one person at a time will speak. Respect for other pupils' views will occur at all times so pupils can feel confident that they can talk at ease without interruption from other pupils.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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