

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **WHITCHURCH COMBINED PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Aylesbury

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110333

Headteacher: Simon Blore

Lead inspector: Fred Ward

Dates of inspection: 28<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup> June 2004

Inspection number: 258400

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: 200

School address: North Marston Lane  
Whitchurch  
Aylesbury  
Buckinghamshire

Postcode: HP22 4JG

Telephone number: (01296) 641 418  
Fax number: (01296) 640 632

Appropriate authority: The governing body  
Name of chair of governors: Colin Rose

Date of previous inspection: 14<sup>th</sup> September 1998

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

Whitchurch Combined Primary is about the same size as most primary schools, catering for pupils aged four to 11. The number on roll has been steady since local schools were reorganised in 1999 when pupils started to transfer to the secondary stage at 11 years old rather than at 12. Around 97 per cent are of white British heritage, with the rest of mixed descent from a range of ethnic backgrounds, including a few Travellers; none use English as an additional language. Pupils come from the village of Whitchurch and surrounding area, with most from families with incomes above the national average. The number of pupils with special educational needs varies from year to year but is usually well below the national average. Currently 11 per cent of pupils have special educational needs, mainly with moderate learning difficulties, and two have statements. The overall attainment of children starting school aged four is just above that expected for their age. Pupils are selected by their capabilities for secondary schools during their final year at Whitchurch. The school gained the Investors in People standard in 2001 and the School Achievement Award in 1999, 2000 and 2001.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
18605	Fred Ward	Lead inspector	English French Music Religious education
11566	Hilary Smyth	Lay inspector	
32624	Richard Harrison	Team inspector	Special educational needs Mathematics Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology Personal, social and health education and citizenship
20907	Clive Price	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Science Geography History Physical education

The inspection contractor was:

Tribal PPI  
Barley House  
Oakfield Grove  
Clifton  
Bristol  
BS8 2BN

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is a very good school.** Pupils grow in maturity and achieve well because teaching is good. Overall, standards are well above average. The school is very well led and managed, providing very good value for money.

### THE SCHOOL'S MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES ARE:

- Generally, standards are well above average for seven- and 11-year-olds, and are especially high in mathematics.
- The few pupils with special educational needs and particular talents make good progress.
- Teachers are very good at knowing how to get the best out of pupils and work very well with assistants.
- The curriculum is rich and varied in and beyond the classroom, with staff making good use of new technologies and other resources.
- Pupils are given very good guidance but are not always confident in recognising and learning from their mistakes independently.
- Parents think highly of the school and make a major contribution to their children's education.
- Links with other schools are very good but transfer to the secondary stage can be stressful, particularly for the few Year 6 pupils who do not gain places at the school of their choice.
- The very experienced headteacher, very well supported by governors and staff, is making sure the quality of education continues to improve.

Since the school was inspected in 1998, improvement has been good, with all the key issues tackled successfully. Standards have remained well above average in English, mathematics and science, and have improved in other subjects. The school gained the Investors in People standard in 2001 and the School Achievement Award in 1999, 2000 and 2001.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

**Pupils generally achieve well.** Children start school, aged four, with overall attainment just above that expected for their age. They make good progress through the reception class and most reach or exceed the early learning goals set for them, with well over a third doing better. They achieve well in Year 1 and 2. Unconfirmed national tests results for 2004 show that standards in reading and writing have risen and are now well above average. They are especially high in mathematics. These results are confirmed by inspection findings. Progress

through the juniors is also good. Results in 2003 national tests for Year 6 pupils in English, mathematics and science were in the top five per cent in the country, and according to unconfirmed results for this year, look like remaining so. The inspection confirms that these very high standards are still being achieved and standards of work seen in other subjects are also above average. The few pupils with special educational needs and those with talents are also very well provided for and make good progress. The small number from different ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as others with similar capabilities.

**Pupils' personal qualities, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are very well promoted.** Pupils have a very clear understanding of right and wrong, have a very well developed sense of fairness and play and work happily together, regardless of their background. They are fully involved in everything the school offers, are eager to take on responsibility and gain in maturity. Behaviour is very good. Attendance is very high.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The school provides a very good quality of education, as teaching is good.** Teachers and assistants know their pupils very well, working effectively together to get the best out of their pupils by making lessons very interesting and stimulating. Pupils respond very well and are keen learners. While staff give pupils good guidance in lessons, many individuals are not very confident in recognising and learning from their own mistakes when working on their own. All pupils, regardless of their backgrounds, are able to take a full part in lessons as work is well matched to their capabilities. The curriculum is very well planned to help pupils develop their literacy and numeracy skills, with increasing use of new technologies. Learning opportunities are rich, varied and challenging, extending well beyond the classroom. Pupils are very well looked after, feel secure and able to express their views. Links with the community, local business and other schools make a very effective contribution to pupils' learning. However, selection arrangements for transfer to secondary schools are stressful for many pupils, particularly for the few not being allocated places in their chosen school.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are very good.** The governors, headteacher and senior staff work effectively as a team to improve the school. Governance is very good. School developments are firmly based on a rigorous and systematic examination of teaching and learning and pupils' performance. Financial and administrative procedures are very efficient.

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

Parents are very appreciative of what the school does and are very supportive with their time and finances. Inspection findings do not support the view of a few that there was insufficient information in school reports. Pupils say they have to work hard and find other children friendly. Some said they do not have an adult to turn to at school; further inquiries during the inspection do not confirm this observation.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS THE SCHOOL SHOULD DO TO IMPROVE ARE:**



- Help pupils become more competent at reviewing their work in order to identify and learn from their mistakes, especially when studying on their own.
- Continue to make every effort to reduce the emotional effects on Year 6 pupils of not being allocated the secondary school of their choice.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS**

Overall, pupils achieve well. In Years 2 and 6, standards are well above average in English, mathematics and science and above average in the work seen in other subjects.

#### **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- Children in the Reception Year achieve well.
- Mathematics is a strength of the school.
- Standards in English and science have varied since the last inspection but are now securely well above average.
- While pupils achieve well overall, many are not confident at dealing with difficulties when working on their own.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those with talents make good progress.
- Standards of work seen, in subjects other than English, mathematics and science, are also above average.

#### **COMMENTARY**

1. Children enter school in the term when they are five with overall attainment just above that expected for their age. They make good progress in the reception class as a result of consistently good teaching and achieve well. Around a third are likely to reach the early learning goals set for them, with a third doing better. Some of the youngest, who started school at the beginning of the summer term, are not expected to reach these goals. This good achievement is similar to findings at the last inspection.
2. From an early age, great importance is given to making learning interesting, practical and thought provoking, giving pupils a thorough grounding in the basic skills. This has been most effective in the teaching and learning of mathematics, a strength of the school. Pupils are very adept at problem solving, being able to identify quickly what calculation is required when faced with a spoken or written question. They are able also to choose an efficient way of working out solutions and confidently explain their thinking. As a result, national test results in mathematics for seven- and 11-year-olds have been consistently very high since 2001 and often in the top five per cent of the country, as they were in 2003 for Year 6 and look like being for both year groups this year, according to unconfirmed test results. In comparison to similar schools grouped together by the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, Year 2 results in 2003 were well above average and in Year 6 were above average when compared to similar schools with the same results for pupils when in Year 2.
3. While standards have been more variable in reading, writing and science, particularly for seven-year-olds, generally standards have been above average since 2001. This is also because of the concentration from an early age on learning and consolidating the basic skills. Actions to encourage boys to enjoy reading and all pupils to want to write and carry out scientific investigations systematically were extremely effective in raising achievement. As a result, results in national tests for 11-year-olds in 2003 were very high

and securely in the top five per cent of the country in these subjects. Unconditional results for seven-year-olds in the 2004 test have now risen to well above average as well in reading and writing. Looking at comparisons with similar schools in the same way as for mathematics, Year 2 results in 2003 for reading were below average and average for writing; Year 6 results were above average in English and science.

4. These high standards in English, mathematics and science are similar to those reported at the last inspection. The tables show clearly the comparisons with national results:

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.2 (17.6)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	15.5 (15.6)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	18.4 (16.6)	16.3 (16.5)

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

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	31.0 (29.2)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	30.7 (29.2)	26.8 (26.7)
science	31.5 (29.7)	28.6 (28.3)

*There were 44 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

5. While pupils achieve well overall in Years 1 to 6 because of good teaching, many do not deal confidently with difficulties when working on their own. They are inclined to wait or seek adult help rather than make an attempt or turn to other pupils for advice. As a result, their concentration and productivity are reduced, usually in those parts of lessons when staff are engaged in helping individuals or small groups and they are expected to work independently.
6. There are currently no differences in achievement between boys and girls or by pupils from different ethnic backgrounds, including the few Travellers. Pupils with special educational needs are identified early and given very effective support from teachers and assistants and make good progress. Those with specific talents are given additional opportunities, often with others from local schools, to extend their skills and also make good progress.
7. During the inspection, it was not possible to make overall judgements about the standards in subjects other than English, mathematics and science, which are confirmed as being well above average. However, based upon a scrutiny of recorded work in displays and books, talking to pupils and observing learning in a limited number of lessons, standards of the work seen in all other subjects, including religious education and information and communication technology, were above average. This is an improvement since the last inspection when standards were generally average.
8. The school accurately identifies pupils' capabilities and their likely performance in national tests. As a result, school targets are realistically challenging.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES, VALUES AND OTHER PERSONAL QUALITIES

Pupils have a love of learning and enjoy all that the school offers. They behave very well and gain in maturity. Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is very good. Attendance is high.

### MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Pupils, regardless of their backgrounds and capabilities, play and work very happily together.
- Pupils love coming to school and attendance is very high.
- They enthusiastically take part in all school activities.
- Their personal development is very well developed.

### COMMENTARY

9. When questioned, nearly all pupils report that they are expected to work hard and find other pupils friendly. Some feel that a few individuals behave badly and that they do not have an adult to turn to if worried. During the inspection no inappropriate behaviour was observed and all pupils spoken to know where to go for help. Despite these findings, the school is exploring these issues further. In lessons and at other times, pupils of all ages and backgrounds work and play happily together and behaviour is very good. These are similar findings to the previous inspection.

10. No pupils have been excluded.

#### *Ethnic background of pupils*

#### *Exclusions in the last school year*

Categories used in the Annual School Census	Number of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	178	0	0
White – any other White background	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Parent/pupil preferred not to say	2	0	0
Information not provided	18	0	0

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

11. Good attendance is actively encouraged and achieved. As a result, attendance is high, an improvement since the last inspection when it was above average.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.0	School data	0.2
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.*

12. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are able to take a full and active part in the wide range of school activities in and beyond the classroom. Pupils

from non-white British backgrounds and the few Travellers are well integrated and achieve as well as others with similar capabilities.

13. Pupils are encouraged to express their opinions and their views are taken into account in lessons and, more formally, through the school council. They enjoy taking on responsibilities and are very willing to help others, particularly those younger than themselves or in distress.
14. Pupils respond very well to the provision for their personal development. They feel valued and appreciated for what they do and are encouraged to reflect on their feelings and their effect on others. They have a firm sense of right, wrong and fairness as moral values are very well promoted. There are very many opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills in small and large groups. Pupils are well aware of their own culture and have an increasing appreciation of how other people live in the world and the contribution of different ethnic groups to British society. These findings are a significant improvement on the previous inspection when provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development was only satisfactory. Most children in the Reception Year achieve well in their personal, social and emotional development.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is very good. Teaching and learning are good, the curriculum is rich and varied, extending beyond the classroom, and pupils are very well looked after. Parents are very appreciative of the school.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school.

## MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Teaching and learning in the Reception Year, English and mathematics are consistently good and on occasions very good.
- There is a strong focus on developing thinking skills within language, literacy and numeracy.
- Staff set and achieve high expectations in work and behaviour.
- Many pupils are not taught how to tackle difficulties when working on their own.
- Teachers and assistants work very well together to make lessons interesting and appropriate for all pupils, making increasing use of new technologies.
- Pupils' progress is thoroughly checked and the information is used effectively to plan lessons and help individuals learn from their mistakes.

## COMMENTARY

15. Teaching and learning are good overall and consistently good or better in the Reception Year and in English and mathematics. This is a significant improvement on the previous inspection when the teaching in just over one in ten lessons was unsatisfactory.

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 36 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0 (0%)	5 (14%)	28 (78%)	3 (8%)	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; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.*

16. The strengths in the teaching and learning come from the importance given to helping pupils become confident in discussing and organising their thoughts. From the reception class, pupils are presented with many interesting challenges and encouraged to explain their thinking to each other and with staff. As a result, pupils' speaking and listening skills are very well developed. This emphasis on developing and using oral language skills is very effective when teaching reading and writing. Pupils are also particularly adept at problem solving in mathematics and science. Consequently, pupils achieve well and most attain standards in literacy and numeracy in advance of their age.
17. Overall, pupils work hard in lessons and are very well behaved as staff set and make sure their high expectations are realised through gentle reminders and appropriate encouragement. However, pupils have not been taught how they can deal with difficulties when working on their own and have become too dependent on adults for help. This means that sometimes individuals have to wait for help and do not always get as much done as they could.

18. Teachers and assistants work very effectively together to ensure all pupils are able to take a full part in lessons, especially when giving support to individuals and small groups. This is particularly helpful for pupils who learn at a slower rate and for those with special educational needs, who make good progress as a result. Generally, the more able are given harder work and achieve well. In the juniors, mathematics is taught in classes set by prior attainment and this has been especially beneficial for pupils in Years 5 and 6, where the range in capabilities is widest.
19. All teachers use a wide range of teaching methods that brings pace and variety to lessons, and keeps pupils attentive and involved. They are increasingly using new technologies to make learning more visual and active. The specialist support from the full-time information and communication technology technician has been particularly effective in ensuring teaching and learning make the best use of available resources.
20. Teachers thoroughly check and record pupils' performance, using observations, marking of recorded work and regular tests. They use this information very well in planning lessons and keeping track of pupils' progress. As a result, staff and pupils are very aware of what needs to be done to improve learning further. These procedures are very well established in the Reception Year, English, mathematics and science and increasingly so in other subjects.

## **THE CURRICULUM**

The school provides a very good curriculum for all pupils.

## **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- The curriculum is rich and varied and very effective.
- There are very strong subject links across the curriculum, including the use of language, literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology.
- The school has a broad and varied range of out-of-school activities to support learning.
- Pupils' personal, social and health education and citizenship are very well promoted.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.

## **COMMENTARY**

21. The school provides a very good curriculum for all of its pupils. The schemes of work have been improved since the last inspection, particularly in information and communication technology and religious education. Subjects and areas of learning are well planned and organised and kept under review. Pupils now have a very rich, varied and stimulating curriculum, which fully meets statutory requirements and prepares them very effectively for the next stage of their education.
22. Effective links between subjects help make pupils' learning meaningful. Language, literacy, numeracy and new technology skills are very well used to support learning in all subjects. Proper attention is given to personal, social and health education, including drugs and sex education, which is covered sensitively. These topics, along with notions of citizenship, are covered in many subjects and also separately in class discussion times. Religious education effectively follows the locally agreed syllabus and collective worship

meets requirements. The Foundation Stage, judged sound in the last inspection, is now very good.

23. Teachers keep the curriculum fresh and innovative. They provide interesting and creative ways to motivate pupils like, for example, the use of drama in history. All pupils are being encouraged to develop their thinking skills and they benefit particularly from the problem-solving activities in mathematics and science. Pupils also gain much from the many relevant and stimulating educational visits, visiting experts and special days, for example, the 'Big Arts Week' and dramatic productions. Teachers make very good use of the local area to support work in subjects such as history, geography and art. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have very good opportunities for residential visits, which enrich their learning as well as enhancing their personal and social development. The school further enriches the curriculum by working very closely with other schools with, for example, 'master classes' for the few talented and gifted pupils.
24. There is very good provision for pupils' learning outside the school day. There is a broad, exciting and popular range of activities for pupils that helps pupils develop their creative and performing skills. At present there are no after-school activities for the younger pupils but the school aims to introduce a sports club for infants next year. The sports teams do very well in competition with other schools.
25. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Lesson plans take full account of the pupils' needs and reflect the targets in their clear and purposeful individual education plans. As a result, pupils make good progress. More able pupils and the few gifted and talented pupils are also very well supported and make good progress, as can be seen by the very high numbers achieving standards above the level for their age in national tests. All pupils, boys, girls and those from ethnic minority backgrounds, have equal access to the curriculum.
26. Staffing and resources are very good. While the accommodation is generally good, the split levels in some classrooms and corridors limit their use and entails additional supervision for safety reasons.

## **CARE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

Pupils are very well looked after.

## **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- The school is a friendly, caring and safe place where all pupils feel fully included and valued.
- Pupils are given very good guidance but can be too reliant on adults for help.
- High expectations of behaviour are set and achieved.
- Very good arrangements are in place to welcome both parents and children who are new to the school.
- Pupils contribute to the life of the school increasingly as they get older and are expected to help and support younger children.



## **COMMENTARY**

27. The school places great importance on the health, safety, care and protection of pupils in line with locally agreed arrangements. This is an improvement since the last inspection.
28. The school provides very good support for pupils with special educational needs and is ready to involve external agencies when appropriate. The specific needs of pupils are assessed very early and plans are developed with parents, teachers and assistants to plan an appropriate individual education programme. Whatever their background or need, all pupils are welcomed and valued in the school community.
29. Staff work hard to ensure that children's efforts are encouraged and appreciated. Relationships are very good so pupils are confident in approaching staff for advice and support. This positive guidance is generally very valuable but can lead to pupils becoming over-reliant, particularly when facing minor difficulties in their work.
30. High standards of behaviour are set at every level through the school. There is a "house point" system, which is used to identify and reinforce positive behaviour and good work. A code of values and expectations, the 'Whitchurch Way', is promoted throughout the school to encourage pupils to care for each other and to find enjoyment in learning. Staff and pupils display a high level of courtesy towards each other and towards visitors. As a result, the working atmosphere in classrooms and throughout the school is calm and orderly.
31. Four-year-olds and other new pupils make a smooth start to their schooling because of effective induction arrangements involving visits and meetings.
32. Older children are encouraged to take a responsible role in contributing to the life of the school. In Year 6, pupils often assist lunchtime supervisors in helping younger pupils and may be attached to specific classrooms during bad weather in order to help with play activities. Junior pupils elect representatives to the school council, which meets regularly to discuss and contribute to issues affecting the school community. These experiences help them mature and understand the workings of society.

## **PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS, OTHER SCHOOLS AND THE COMMUNITY**

Parents are very supportive and think highly of the school. Links with other schools and the community are very good.

## **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- Parents are very appreciative of the school, very well informed and play a major part in their children's education.
- Transfer to the secondary stage can be stressful.
- Contact with other schools and community links make a very effective contribution to pupils' learning.

## **COMMENTARY**

33. The school is especially good at keeping in touch with parents so they are very well informed and know how to help their children at home. They feel their concerns are dealt with quickly and sensitively. Parents are very supportive, raising considerable funds to

provide additional facilities and activities from which all pupils benefit. They are very happy that their children have to work hard, love coming to school and grow in maturity. A few feel that they are not given enough information about their children's progress, but inspection findings do not support this view as reports are comprehensive and clear.

34. Nearly all parents are actively interested in their children's education and help their children complete homework. This home support has been particularly effective in helping children in the early stages of learning and to recall and use number facts, such as multiplication tables.
35. The school has very good links with other local schools, with staff attending joint training and pupils taking part in special events, such as area sports and games competitions and arts festivals. These activities enrich teaching and learning opportunities. However, transfer arrangements to the secondary stage are selective and parents report this causes considerable anxiety. The school provides ongoing support, keeping parents and pupils informed of the likely outcome of the selection process, but the long wait for a decision for the few appealing when not being allocated their first choice is very stressful.
36. The school is very much involved in the local community and is extending links with local business and commerce. The parish vicar is a regular visitor, leading the collective act of worship once a month, and recently contributed to the successful school's arts week. These experiences help broaden pupils' awareness and understanding of society.
37. Overall, these findings on links with parents, other schools and the community are an improvement on the previous inspection.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership, management and governance are very good.

## MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The very experienced headteacher is a very effective leader.
- Governors are very supportive and involved.
- Staff with management responsibilities do a very good job in developing teaching and learning.
- Finances are very well directed at improving the quality of education.
- While development priorities are well chosen, actions to help pupils become independent learners have not yet been effective.
- Money is very well spent.

## COMMENTARY

38. The very experienced headteacher has been most effective in the 18 months since his appointment. He has developed a very strong team in which governors and staff with management responsibilities complement each other in their respective roles. They are continuously looking at ways of improving the quality of teaching and learning and sustaining the high standards being achieved, as they have done most successfully with reading, writing and scientific investigation. The headteacher's leadership has been crucial in this drive to focus on pupils' learning, now shared by all staff and governors.
39. The chair of the governing body works closely with the headteacher; he is very supportive and makes sure all important decisions are fully discussed by governors. The governing body's committee structure has recently been re-organised and efficiently ensures all statutory requirements are fully met. In addition, the progress of development actions is examined thoroughly at special termly meetings, giving governors an accurate picture of the school and providing opportunities for them to influence any changes necessary. Overall, governors are very supportive of the school, attending meetings with co-ordinators and school training sessions. As a result, governance is very good.
40. Governors use their finances wisely, keeping a careful check on expenditure. In particular, they have used their funds very effectively to increase the number of assistants, extend and refurbish the buildings and improve facilities and resources for new technologies.

### *Financial information for the year April 03 to March 04*

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	604,963	Balance from previous year	27,349
Total expenditure	652,465	Balance carried forward to the next year	1,134
Expenditure per pupil	3,380		

41. Generally, staff with management responsibilities are also very good leaders and managers. They rigorously analyse test results, scrutinise samples of pupils' work and look at lesson plans to identify and tackle shortcomings. Consequently, they have a very accurate picture of what needs to be done to improve teaching and learning. They set

very good examples through their own teaching and actively seek to help colleagues through training, advice and leading staff meetings.

42. The school improvement plan identifies very appropriate priorities to move the school forward. It is very clear what has to be done, by when and what results are expected. This enables the school to have a clear idea about its performance and check the effectiveness of its actions and spending decisions. Inspection findings confirm that current actions to strengthen the role of subject co-ordinators and increase pupils' enthusiasm for learning have been very successful. However, actions to help pupils become more independent learners have not yet been as effective.
43. Performance management procedures are very well used to help all staff set professional targets and identify their training needs. These are very well linked to improving pupils' learning.
44. The school is very aware of and applies the principles of best value, when taking financial decisions to improve the quality of education. New ideas are carefully considered, costs compared and wide consultation takes place. The thorough research being undertaken to investigate the value of increasing the number of interactive 'whiteboards' is an example of this approach to spending. Overall, teaching and learning are good, pupils achieve well and standards are well above average, indicating that leaders and managers have done a very good job. Consequently, the school provides very good value for money. This is a significant improvement on the previous inspection when the leadership, management and value for money were satisfactory.

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

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

In the Reception class, the inspection focused on children's personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy skills and their mathematical development. In other areas of learning, there was insufficient evidence to form an overall judgement.

Children achieve well, reach good standards and are well prepared to enter Year 1. The standards attained and the quality of teaching and the curriculum have all improved since the previous inspection. The teaching is consistently good. The teacher and nursery nurse, who work as a very effective team, are very experienced and know the children well. They have high expectations of what children can do and set tasks that challenge their thinking. They successfully inspire the children, who are very happy in their activities and always keen to learn. The assessment of children's learning is accurate, frequent and is used effectively to plan the teaching. Children with special educational needs make good progress because they are well supported and fully involved in the curriculum. Leadership and management are good as the co-ordinator knows what needs to be done to continue to improve provision. She carries out her intentions effectively.

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

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

### **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- Children achieve well.
- Learning opportunities are varied, interesting and motivate the children.

### **COMMENTARY**

45. Children are keen to come to school and are eager to learn as they know they are safe and well cared for. Children sit sensibly whilst listening attentively to a story, share building blocks and paints and work well together in the role-play area. They start to appreciate the beliefs of others through discussion and the celebration of religious festivals. A key to the positive attitudes to learning is the way children's curiosity is captivated through a wide variety of very well planned, interesting activities that they find fun and enjoyable. The good teaching helps pupils achieve well. Staff are also very good at praising and encouraging children for keeping to the everyday routines and as a result the children feel good about themselves and want to work and play happily together. All are becoming increasingly independent and take responsibility for themselves, such as going to the toilet, getting changed and putting things away. Children take turns and share well. They are very aware of right and wrong and know how to behave within the class. As a result, a third of the children are likely to achieve the early learning goals set for them and a third already have.

### **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

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

### **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- Pupils achieve well.
- Children make a good start with their reading and writing.
- Opportunities for children to talk are well planned and implemented.

### **COMMENTARY**

46. Children achieve well, with a third already attaining levels in the first stages of the National Curriculum and a further third expected to reach the early learning goals set for them. They listen well and recall good detail from stories. They join in with rhymes with great enthusiasm. Staff take every opportunity to create opportunities for discussion, in groups and with individuals. As a result of this good teaching, nearly all children quickly learn to speak clearly and respond in confident sentences. Children handle books carefully and know that print carries meaning. Most are reading simple, common words in books and around the classroom. Children regularly take home books and parents play their part in supporting early reading activities. There is a strong focus on helping children recognise and use initial letter sounds and appreciate that words give meaning. Effective use is made of drama and role-play to reinforce stories read together. Staff create good opportunities for children to 'write' during play and in lessons. The majority of children are writing well-shaped recognisable letters in their simple sentences. Children are developing a very good understanding of the purpose of writing. Writing activities are preceded by useful discussion and practical activities to make sure that children want to write.

### **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

### **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- Pupils achieve well.
- Children enjoy practical and creative mathematical activities.
- Children have good awareness of number.

### **COMMENTARY**

47. Teaching and learning are based very much on practical and interesting activities. This helps children to have a firm understanding of the mathematical processes, particularly in the use of number and measure. Staff are very good at using everyday activities to focus children's attention on the use of mathematics, such as when taking the register, lining up and comparing quantities and sizes. They also make effective links to other topics. Many of the children can count up to 50 correctly; some can go on to 100. They recognise numbers to ten and many above ten, although not all can write them correctly. The children can recognise many two- and three-dimensional shapes and name some of their properties. As a result, a third are already attaining levels within the first stages of the National Curriculum and a further third are expected to reach the early learning goals set for them.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD, PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT AND CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

48. Children's **knowledge and understanding of the world** is well promoted through a range of interesting and relevant topics. Whilst testing how effective different materials are at keeping out water, children watched carefully and waited their turn patiently. Their understanding grows because staff carefully explain and illustrate the ideas. Children thoroughly enjoy their time in the computer room, using computers sensibly and skilfully.
49. Children are given many directed and free-play activities that are well planned to promote their **physical development**. Children competently and accurately use small tools and equipment, such as pencils, crayons, paint and paste brushes and scissors. Good teaching provides plenty of opportunities for children to improve their skills. They confidently use large apparatus and small equipment both in and outside the classroom.
50. Staff plan many exciting opportunities for **creative development** using a good range of media. The many attractive and colourful displays of the children's work in the classroom and around the school illustrate this. Children enjoy singing and making music, accompanying songs with the good range of percussion instruments available for them to experiment with. Children also gain much from activities in the role-play areas, playing cooperatively and imaginatively, using a good range of vocabulary.

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

### **ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

#### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is **very good**.

#### **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- Standards are well above average.
- Teaching and learning are consistently good.
- Pupils achieve well for most of the time but many are not good at dealing with difficulties when working on their own.
- There is a strong focus on speaking and listening.
- Reading and writing have improved as a result of effective initiatives.
- Leadership and management are very good.

#### **COMMENTARY**

51. There has been some fluctuation in standards since the previous inspection but they have generally been well above average, as they were at that time. There was a gradual decline in standards of reading and writing for seven-year-olds, and 11-year-olds were not achieving as well as they could in writing. The school identified and successfully tackled these shortcomings by developing more effective teaching and learning in these areas. The inspection confirms that standards in English have risen and are now securely well above average.

52. The consistently good teaching and learning ensures pupils achieve well. They are expected to work hard and provided with interesting and challenging activities, being given many opportunities to practice and develop their literacy skills in all subject lessons. Teachers and assistant know their pupils very well and provide very effective support to individuals and small groups. However, many pupils are not very confident at sorting out difficulties when working on their own and rely too much on adult help rather than find solutions for themselves.
53. Standards in speaking and listening in Years 2 and 6 are well above average. Pupils speak confidently and clearly, eagerly contributing to the many class discussions. A key to this success is the strong focus throughout the school on encouraging pupils to put forward their own ideas, explain their thinking and listen attentively to what others have to say. In addition, oral reviews are very much an important part of lessons and increasingly new technologies are being used to complement these presentations, as Year 6 pupils effectively did when reporting on their recent residential trip.
54. Standards in reading are well above average because the school has a well-established approach to teaching the basic skills and parents are generally very supportive in encouraging and supporting their children to read at home. When staff noticed that some boys were mastering the basic skills but were not very keen readers, more non-fiction and adventure stories were introduced, to good effect. As well, despite the increase in using new technologies for research, pupils are taught library skills from an early age and, by the time they are in the juniors, are very competent at seeking and retrieving information from books.
55. Writing has improved as a consequence of teachers making sure that pupils are first stimulated to think and talk about what they want to communicate rather than just be set an exercise to complete. Nearly all now write easily and to a high standard. They are particularly good at publishing their own work in well-presented booklets that are displayed in class libraries and frequently read. Pupils are able to adapt their style of writing to suit the purpose and older pupils are especially good at note taking. Handwriting is generally good and nearly all pupils take pride and care when producing finished pieces of work.
56. The subject manager provides very effective leadership. She is very active in ensuring standards remain high. She keeps a careful check on pupils' performance by analysing test results, looking at samples of pupils' work and observing their learning in lessons. As a result, she keeps staff fully informed and is very effective at leading professional discussion and training to develop teaching and learning further. In particular, she has helped ensure marking of work is consistent so that pupils know what they need to do to improve their work.

## **LANGUAGE AND LITERACY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM**

57. There are many very good opportunities for pupils to apply their language and literacy skills in all subject lessons and special events, such as the annual school production, nativity play, speech competition and the 'Big Arts' week. As a result, they improve their communication skills further.



## FRENCH

Only one lesson could be observed during the inspection, insufficient to make an overall judgement about provision. Inspectors examined pupils' recorded work, looked at curriculum plans and talked to teachers.

58. French has been taught to Year 6 pupils for a number of years and has recently been extended to Year 5. The deputy head is a trained modern languages teacher and pupils benefit greatly from his experience and skill. In the Year 6 lesson observed, pupils responded enthusiastically and with evident enjoyment to familiar games and question-and-answer sessions. Their accent and pronunciation were very good as they practiced and reinforced phrases and short sentences. The lesson contained a well-balanced mixture of the familiar and the new; in this way, colours were introduced and quickly learnt.

## MATHEMATICS

The provision for mathematics is **very good**.

## MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Standards are high.
- Pupils achieve well as a result of good teaching that emphasises problem solving.
- Many pupils lack confidence in identifying and learning from their mistakes on their own.
- The curriculum has been very well adapted to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Leadership and management are very good.

## COMMENTARY

59. Standards for pupils aged seven and 11 are high and have been maintained well above average since the previous inspection. Pupils of all ages, capabilities and backgrounds achieve well as a result of good teaching that helps them to solve problems efficiently. Those who learn at a slower rate and the few with special educational needs benefit particularly from the effective individual and small group work and make good progress.
60. Pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2 as they are given plenty of interesting practical work to support their learning. By the age of seven, the great majority of pupils are managing many aspects of work of an older age group with confidence and success. Great importance is placed on pupils learning and using basic number facts in a wide range of activities. This gives them a very firm foundation on which to build when they move into the juniors.
61. Pupils make good progress in Years 3 to 6 as a result of good teaching that combines an appropriate balance of challenge and support. Teachers and assistants work very effectively together and make very good use of resources, including new technologies. Pupils respond very well in their behaviour and attitudes to the clear explanations, well-structured lessons and positive atmosphere. They concentrate well and are enthusiastic learners. However, they are not always confident in their ability to resolve difficulties on their own or to draw upon the assistance of their workgroups. This holds back their productivity while they wait for help.

62. Staff report they have greatly benefited from training in the use of the National Numeracy Strategy and have very effectively adapted the guidance given to match the differing needs of pupils. This year, junior pupils have been taught in classes set by capability. The greatest gains have been for pupils in Years 5 and 6, where the range of pupils' abilities is widest. Consequently, from next September, only the older pupils' classes will be organised in this way.
63. Leadership and management are very good. The co-ordinator has been instrumental in helping staff place problem solving at the heart of lessons, making sure high standards have been reached and sustained. He is very experienced and enthusiastic, keeping a careful check on teaching, learning and pupils' performance. As a result, he knows what needs to be done and developments have been well chosen to tackle the appropriate priorities; currently, these are to help pupils become more adept at learning from their mistakes and agreeing and setting personal goals.

## **MATHEMATICS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM**

64. Teachers take every opportunity to help pupils use and develop their mathematical skills effectively in other subjects, such as in a geographical study of traffic congestion, measuring the lengths of shadows in science, and making sure materials are fixed at right angles in design and make activities.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **very good**.

## **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- Standards are very high and pupils achieve very well.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- The science curriculum is very good.
- Leadership and management are good.

## **COMMENTARY**

65. Talking with pupils and looking at their work shows that standards for seven-and 11-year-olds are well above average, an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils have a very secure knowledge of what they have learned. By the time they reach Year 6, pupils have a very good understanding of how to conduct a science experiment and can explain clearly and confidently how to make a fair test. They make good use of helpful guidelines provided by the teacher to carry out investigations systematically. Their work is well presented and is recorded in a very good range of formats, including graphs, charts, diagrams and writing.
66. Teaching and learning are good. In the two lessons observed, pupils were motivated by the teachers' interesting and clear introduction and considerably helped by the ready availability of suitable materials. In both the Year 3 and 5 lessons, pupils worked hard and concentrated well. All pupils, including the few with special educational needs and those from different backgrounds, were fully included and made good progress. Pupils were able to work independently and collaborate with each other constructively.

67. Pupils are very enthusiastic and show excitement about engaging in practical work and the very good curriculum offered. This is because teachers are knowledgeable, confident and well organised. They give clear explanations and check pupils' understanding. This gives the pupils a firm understanding of how to carry out investigations systematically. Teachers use the relevant scientific vocabulary and pupils, in turn, are building up and using these new words appropriately. Effective use is made of information and communication technology to support pupils' learning, particularly for presenting and interpreting results of experiments.
68. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and knowledgeable. She effectively develops teaching and learning through observation of lessons and examination of pupils' work. She is constantly looking for ways of enriching the curriculum and has a clear view of how to improve science further. As a result, marking of work has improved and pupils are more aware of what they need to do to improve.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

## **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- Pupils achieve well because of good teaching and specialist support from an experienced technician.
- Facilities and resources have improved considerably since the last inspection.
- Pupils are inclined to wait for adult help rather than tackle minor difficulties on their own.
- The subject is very well led and managed.
- New technologies are well used to support learning in other subjects.

## **COMMENTARY**

69. Standards for seven- and 11-year-olds are above average. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils achieve well because teachers provide a wide range of very appropriate opportunities, which helps them develop their skills progressively. Staff have completed a full programme of training and are now very confident and growing in knowledge and understanding. As a result, teaching and learning are good and pupils work hard. While word processing, graphics and data handling are well taught, staff are in the process of developing more opportunities in control and modelling.
70. The school now has a well-organised and resourced computer suite, including a data projector. This enables teachers to demonstrate new learning effectively and pupils to present their work to the class. Year 6 pupils collaborated very well in pairs to produce audio-visual presentations on their recent residential trip. Good use is also made of an interactive whiteboard in the library.
71. The school benefits from the specialist support of an information and communication technology technician. This has ensured that all equipment is kept in working condition and staff and pupils have expert guidance when required. However, pupils are inclined to rely on instruction from staff when encountering a minor problem. As a result, they often have to wait for help and are less productive.

72. The co-ordinator has played a key role in improving provision at an impressive rate. She has provided very good leadership, organising training and helping staff try out new ideas. She keeps a careful check on planning, regularly looking at samples of pupils' work, and ensures that shortcomings are effectively tackled. Currently, she is developing more accurate assessment arrangements so that activities are more finely matched to pupils' individual needs.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM**

73. New technologies are used effectively to support learning in all subjects. The Internet is frequently used for research and to send and receive emails, especially in geography and history. Older pupils also take home laptop computers to reinforce their learning and for independent study.

## **HUMANITIES**

Two lessons were seen in history and none in geography, insufficient to make an overall judgement about provision in these subjects. Inspectors talked to pupils and staff and looked at recorded work and curriculum plans.

74. Learning opportunities in **geography** and **history** are well planned to build on pupils' personal experiences and help them gain a wider appreciation of the past and the world as it is today. Effective links are made to topics being covered in other subjects, especially art, music and religious education. In the Year 2 history lesson on seaside holidays in the past, the teacher made very good use of displays of postcards and photographs to stimulate discussion, comparing Victorian times with pupils' knowledge of their own holidays. Their interest and understanding were further developed through painting and singing.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

Provision for religious education is **good**.

## **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- Standards and provision have improved significantly since the last inspection.
- The subject is very well managed.
- The subject makes an important contribution to pupils' personal development.

## **COMMENTARY**

75. Religious education was identified as a key issue at the previous inspection and significant improvement has taken place. A scrutiny of pupils' recorded work shows that standards in Year 2 and Year 6 are now above that expected locally. The co-ordinator has worked successfully to give the subject a higher profile, adapted the locally agreed syllabus to link with topics in other subjects and helped teachers plan more effectively to match the interests and capabilities of pupils. Currently, she is helping staff be more accurate at making judgements about pupils' progress.
76. As only one lesson was observed, no overall judgement about the quality of teaching could be made. In the Year 6 lesson, pupils made good gains in their understanding of

sacred art as they analysed and compared religious paintings in contrasting styles and different time periods. Every effort is made to broaden pupils' awareness of the importance of religious belief, wherever possible through first-hand experience, such as by visiting a mosque and making a pilgrimage to the local church. Overall, the subject makes an important contribution to pupils' personal development.

## CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Two lessons of art and design and one each of design and technology, physical education and music were observed. This is not sufficient to form an overall judgement about provision. Inspectors also talked to pupils and staff, looked at recorded work and curriculum plans and attended two school assemblies.

77. A recent success of the school has been the 'Big Arts' week, which provided a rich and varied programme of creative activities for pupils of all ages. As well as providing the opportunity to work with artists and performers, the experience was used to encourage pupils to reflect on their work and to understand how they can further improve their learning.
78. A wide variety of high quality **art** was displayed in classrooms and other areas and recorded in sketchbooks. The specialist skills of staff and parent volunteers are well used to develop pupils' work. In a Year 2 lesson, pupils worked carefully to explore the ideas of shades and colour mixing. Throughout the lesson, music was played and the pupils were engrossed in their activity. Good support and very appropriate resources enabled pupils to experiment and extend their skills. New technologies are also used to good effect as, for example, when pupils used graphics to create vivid representations of 'The Blitz' and of Aboriginal art.
79. In **design and technology** the work on display was of a higher standard than that expected for pupils' ages. They are confident in designing, making and improving their work. Year 6 pupils had prepared careful plans and made well-constructed model replicas of air-raid shelters to illustrate their work in history on World War II. In a Year 1 lesson, the teacher took particular care to assist pupils in understanding the need for care in using hand tools as they constructed model houses. As a result, they were able to cut out roofing panels carefully, ensuring they were a very good fit to the walls of the buildings.
80. Pupils of all ages enjoy singing and making and listening to **music**. School assemblies are used well to give pupils opportunities to sing familiar hymns and for those learning instruments to perform. Guidance is available to help non-specialist teachers but is not always helpful. The co-ordinator is currently reviewing the scheme of work to provide a better balance between listening and appraising, singing, composing and performing. In the Year 1 lesson concerned with recognising and repeating a rhythmic pattern, the teacher blended these elements skilfully by using recorded music and her own voice to help the pupils develop and use these skills in an enjoyable way.
81. Music has a high profile in the school. Nearly a third of the juniors are learning to play an instrument and there are opportunities for pupils of all ages to sing in a choir. All pupils benefit from the wide range of enrichment opportunities, such as productions and concerts, organised by the school and in the local area. A recent Arts week and other special events enable pupils to work and listen to professional musicians and raise their awareness of music from their own and different cultures.
82. Pupils are given many opportunities to extend their experiences in **physical education**, for example, through coaching from a local cricket club coach, and residential trips, where they take part in outdoor pursuits. The residential visit in Year 6 extends the provision to outdoor and adventurous activities and helps pupils mature by further

developing their social skills. The school participates successfully in many inter-school sports, like soccer and netball.

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

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

### **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- There are many very good opportunities for pupils to discuss their feelings.
- Lessons are well matched to the age and maturity of pupils.

### **COMMENTARY**

83. The school is very good at helping pupils in their personal development. Lessons are timetabled regularly in all years and allow pupils to understand and explore their feelings, often by the effective use of group discussions.
84. Teachers are very good at planning lessons that match the age and maturity of pupils. As a result, pupils show great enthusiasm and achieve well. In a Year 1 lesson, pupils spoke confidently and listened attentively when discussing how to make and keep friends, while in a Year 4 session, mime and drama were used effectively to help pupils focus on their feelings. The school nurse skilfully presented a Year 5 sex education lesson for girls, who responded in a mature and thoughtful way as they developed their understanding of the physical and emotional changes of growing up. As a result of this good teaching and instruction, pupils across the school are being helped to mature and lead happy lives.

## 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	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	2

<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>2</b>
Pupils' achievement	3

<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>2</b>
Attendance	1
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	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	2
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	2
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2

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