

INSPECTION REPORT

WHITECREST JUNIOR AND INFANT SCHOOL

Great Barr, Birmingham

LEA area: Sandwell

Unique reference number: 103922

Headteacher: Mrs H R Williams OBE

Lead inspector: Ms B Matusiak-Varley

Dates of inspection: 19th - 21st April 2004

Inspection number: 258404

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:	205
School address:	Whitecrest Great Barr Birmingham
Postcode:	B43 6HQ
Telephone number:	(01213) 586 348
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr K Morris
Date of previous inspection:	6 th July 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Whitecrest Junior and Infant School is a smaller than average school with 205 pupils on roll, situated in Great Barr, Sandwell on the borders of Walsall and Birmingham. Only four per cent of pupils (below national average) are eligible for free school meals. The school's socio-economic circumstances are average. There are 12 per cent (below national average) of pupils on the special educational needs register and two pupils have statements of special educational needs. The range and nature of pupils' special educational needs varies from emotional and behavioural difficulties to moderate learning difficulties. There are 20 per cent of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds, the biggest group being Indian and Asian British but there are several black British pupils attending. None of these pupils have English as an additional language. The school has a very good reputation in the area and in 2002 attained its Active Mark Gold Award and its Basic Skills Quality Mark. In 2003, the school successfully received its Investors in People Award. Since the previous inspection there have been many staff changes. Within the last 18 months a new deputy headteacher has been appointed. In the intervening period since the last inspection the headteacher has led the school for two years with acting deputy headteachers.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
19938	B Matusiak-Varley	Lead inspector	Religious education Areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage Provision for pupils with English as an additional language
9399	R Watts	Lay inspector	
5862	S Heaney	Team inspector	Science Design and technology History Physical education
20007	T Neat	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Geography
11642	C Parkinson	Team inspector	English Art and design Music Provision for pupils with special educational needs

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very good school which provides a very good quality of education for its pupils. Standards are high and pupils' achievements are good with very good achievement seen in English and mathematics. The quality of teaching is good, with many examples of very good practice, and the curriculum is very good. The school is very well led and managed by a highly competent headteacher and dedicated governing body. The school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards are high; by the end of Year 6 pupils achieve very well and make very good progress in English and mathematics due to good teaching and a very good curriculum.
- Standards in speaking and information and communication technology (ICT), whilst average overall, need improving.
- The school band is a credit to the school and pupils are becoming accomplished musicians.
- The personal development of pupils is very good and pupils have very good attitudes. They are responsible citizens and behave very well, due to very good provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and these pupils achieve very well.
- Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well in spite of some initial barriers to learning.
- Plenary sessions at the end of lessons and opportunities for pupils to become even more responsible for their learning, whilst satisfactory overall, could be even better.
- The use of numeracy and ICT to support learning in other subjects, whilst satisfactory, could be improved.
- Provision for enrichment of learning opportunities is very good.

In spite of many obstacles, such as a high turnover of staff and the lack of a permanent deputy headteacher for two years, the headteacher has relentlessly pushed for school improvement, and improvement since the last inspection in 1998 has been good, with very good improvement in leadership and management. A new deputy headteacher has been appointed and all key issues have been addressed. Good improvement has been made in the quality of teaching, and there is now no unsatisfactory teaching. Standards in English and mathematics have improved and are now well above average.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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.*

Overall standards are above average and pupils' achievements are good. Pupils are well prepared for their next stages of education. In comparison with all schools nationally the 2003 test results show that, by the end of Year 2, in reading and mathematics standards were average and were above average in writing. In science pupils attained average standards, by the end of Year 6 standards in

English, mathematics and science were well above average. In comparison with similar schools nationally, pupils in Year 2 attained standards that were below average in reading and mathematics and above average in writing. Pupils attained above average standards in English and science and well above average standards in mathematics. The school consistently meets its challenging targets.

Attainment on entry to the school is average overall but there is a significant number of pupils with weak skills in language, mathematics and personal, social and emotional development. By the end of the Reception Year children meet the early learning goals in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development, and exceed them in all other areas of learning. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6 pupils attain average standards in ICT and they achieve well due to the recent appointment of a very knowledgeable ICT co-ordinator. In religious education standards exceed the expectations of the locally-agreed syllabus and pupils' achievements are good. In English, mathematics and science, by the end of Year 2, standards are above average and pupils' achievements are very good. By the end of Year 6 standards in English and mathematics are well above average and pupils' achievements are very good. In science, art and design, design and technology, geography and history, standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are above average and pupils' achievements are good. No judgements were made on attainment in music and physical education. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well and pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds achieve as well as their peers, with no pupils attaining below average standards. Pupils' personal development is very good overall. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning, behave very well, and attendance rates are satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a very good quality of education. Teaching and learning are good with examples of very good practice. The teaching of English and mathematics is very good. The teaching of ICT is at least good. Teachers work very hard and support staff make a valid contribution to pupils' learning. The teaching of children with special educational needs is very good. The school provides a very good and interesting curriculum which is enriched very well by visits and visitors. Literacy is used very well in other subjects, the use of numeracy and ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory. The school's partnership with parents is good as are links with the community and other schools. The school takes very good care of all of its pupils and all of them are fully included in all aspects of school life. Learning is good overall.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are very good. The headteacher has won the hearts and minds of staff through her clear education vision and very good support. Teamwork is very good and the whole school community works very well to resolve areas of weakness. The governance of the school is very good. The school knows what it needs to work on next because it asks the right questions about how well it is doing and its self-evaluation is very good. The school is on track to meet its targets.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Both parents and pupils have favourable views of the school. They are delighted with what the school provides.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve upon satisfactory standards in speaking and ICT.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to become independent learners in science.
- Ensure that further opportunities are provided for pupils to use their skills of numeracy and ICT in other subjects.
- Develop a further range of strategies to improve the summing up of lessons in science and ICT so that pupils can identify what they found easy or difficult.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Pupils' achievements are **good overall** and are very good in English and mathematics. Standards are well above national averages in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6 and all groups of pupils make very good progress. From an average baseline on entry to Year 1, pupils overall attain above average standards by the time they leave school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children in the Foundation Stage get off to a good start and their achievements are good.
- Pupils of all capabilities achieve well throughout the school with very good achievement seen in English and mathematics.
- Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress because all staff are aware of their needs.
- Standards in speaking and ICT, whilst average overall, could be higher.
- Instrumentalists make very good progress and the standards of performance by the school band are high.
- Standards in religious education exceed the expectations of the locally-agreed syllabus; in science, art and design, design and technology, geography and history standards are above average.
- Standards of presentation of pupils' written work are high.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.2 (16.3)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	16.1 (15.0)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	16.7 (17.4)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 29 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	28.9 (29.4)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	29.6 (29.1)	26.8 (26.7)
science	30.9 (30.0)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 31 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

1. The national test results and teacher assessments show that in 2003, compared with all schools nationally, pupils in Year 2 attained average standards in reading and mathematics and well above standards in writing. Standards in science were average. Higher attaining pupils did well in writing and in mathematics. In reading, the percentage attaining the higher levels was broadly average. There was no significant difference in attainment by gender. In comparison with similar schools, standards were below average in reading and mathematics and above average in writing. In the Year 6 tests, in comparison with all schools, standards were well

above average in English, mathematics and science, and in comparison with similar schools, standards were above average in English and science and well above average in mathematics. Pupils who were above average attainers achieved really well in all subjects. There were no significant differences in gender or ethnicity.

2. Due to the very good systems of school self-evaluation, the school immediately acted upon its weaknesses, as identified by analysis of test results, and introduced rigorous procedures for teaching guided reading and problem solving which have helped to raise standards.
3. Over time, the attainment of pupils in the juniors in English, mathematics and science was well above the national median for their age.
4. Attainment on entry to Reception is very variable but it is average overall. However, in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and personal, social and emotional development a significant minority of children experience barriers to learning. For example children demonstrate:
 - weak concentration skills;
 - an inability to synthesise information;
 - weaknesses in explaining why things happen and finding reasons;
 - difficulty in developing independent opinions;
 - difficulty speaking in extended sentences;
 - difficulty applying their mathematical knowledge to simple problem exercises;
 - weaknesses in following a logical line of enquiry;
 - an inability to choose their own resources for learning without being prompted and advised what to do; and
 - an inability to use mathematical language when problem solving.
5. These barriers prevent pupils in Year 2 from reaching even higher levels, especially in mathematics, because it takes a long time for learning to be truly assimilated. By the time pupils move into the juniors their learning difficulties are 'ironed out', because of the rigour of teaching basic skills in Year 1 and Year 2, and pupils assimilate new knowledge at a much faster rate.
6. The school is very good at looking at what individual pupils need to achieve well, and include all pupils in all of the activities. This is central to the school's aims and is brought about by very good leadership and management. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well because teachers and classroom assistants adapt work successfully, using the very good quality of individual education plans. They achieve as well as others because of the school's very good assessment procedures and use of teaching assistants and other support. Pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds make good progress and achieve at least average standards and, in many cases, above average standards. Children in the Foundation Stage make a good start in their education. They attain the expected standards in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development and exceed them in other areas of learning because of good teaching. Very good teaching, especially in reading, writing and number work has enabled children to make very good gains in their learning. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6 standards in speaking and listening are average. Pupils have a wide range of vocabulary and their skills of presentation and public speaking are good, although a significant minority struggle with verbalising their thinking, synthesising information and explaining why they have taken a particular course of action. Standards in reading and writing are above average in Year 2 and well above average in Year 6. Pupils are avid readers, they talk at great lengths about their favourite authors and their writing shows a competent use of tenses, genres and descriptions.

7. By the end of Year 2 standards in mathematics are above average due to pupils' good number calculations. In Year 6 standards are well above average. Pupils achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment both in the infants and in the juniors, where they excel in applying the four rules of number. The school's emphasis on developing pupils' skills in problem solving is paying dividends and examples of very good achievement were seen across the school. The good systems for homework are helping raise standards and parents play an active part in helping their children consolidate learning. Pupils have acquired good skills of working out problems in their heads and they are very quick at finding the correct strategies to solve problems, but are less confident in explaining how they arrived at the answers.
8. In science, by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 standards are above national average. Pupils' achievements are good, especially in writing-up experiments, but too few opportunities are provided for pupils to develop research skills to follow up independent inquiry of topics of interest and design their own experiments. The use of pupils' target setting in mathematics and science is not as well developed as it is in English and pupils are not fully aware of what they could do in order to improve. The school is already working on rectifying this issue.
9. In art and design, design and technology, geography and history, standards exceed the expectations of seven- and 11-year-olds. Pupils make good progress and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment largely as a result of good teaching of subject-specific skills, very good curriculum planning and very good enrichment of learning opportunities offered through well planned trips and visits. Standards in ICT are average and pupils' achievements are good but are not yet fully reflected in end-of-year results; a new co-ordinator has been appointed and already standards are rising because of his very good leadership. Pupils in Year 6 have made good gains in learning in data logging and using digital cameras on their residential visit to Edgmond Hall.
10. Particular aids to raising attainment have been:
 - very good involvement of the governing body in monitoring standards;
 - very good leadership and management of the headteacher who, in spite of the lack of a permanent deputy headteacher for two years, has moved staff on in developing their practice by providing very good opportunities for continuous professional development;
 - the introduction of target setting, especially in English;
 - very good monitoring of teaching and learning and very good implementation of performance management;
 - good use of assessment data to help raise standards;
 - good links with parents; and
 - the school's attaining of the Basic Skills Quality Mark.
11. Standards have improved in art and design, design and technology, geography, history and religious education and good improvement has been made in English and mathematics where standards are now well above average at the end of Year 6. The use of literacy across the curriculum is good, the use of ICT is satisfactory. Insufficient evidence was seen of music and physical education to make a judgement on standards. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance and punctuality are **satisfactory**. Pupils have **very good** attitudes towards their school and behave **very well**. The school promotes their personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development **very well**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy coming to school and are very interested in their work.
- Pupils' very good discipline in lessons creates a very good learning environment.
- Pupils have very good relationships and work and play well together.
- Pupils respect the beliefs of others.
- Knowledge and practise of pupils' own culture and that of others is well established.

Commentary

12. Most parents believe, rightly, that their child enjoys school. Pupils come to school with eager anticipation that they will enjoy lessons and the other activities it provides. They can think of little that would improve it. This confidence is reflected in their approach to work. They are very attentive in lessons and keen to answer questions. More -able pupils make perceptive comments, helping the teacher raise the level of challenge for the rest. When asked to work individually or in groups, they start quickly, work hard and seek to resolve any problems that arise. Sometimes, however, for example in science investigations, they do not have sufficient opportunity to plan their own work and in plenary sessions they do not always explain what they found easy or difficult in learning.
13. Pupils take part in the very good range of activities outside lessons with enthusiasm and evident enjoyment. For example, the school wind band come in early for rehearsals, and was heard giving a commendable rendering of the *Radetsky March* at 8.30 in the morning. Pupils love learning and are appreciative of the very hard work of staff.
14. Pupils are very obedient in lessons and the teacher rarely needs to use more than a quiet word to keep their attention on what they are doing. Teachers expect and receive respect from pupils, which allows them to devote all their efforts towards teaching. Pupils with special educational needs have very good attitudes to learning because they receive very good support and are able to take a full part in school life. Ethnic minority pupils are very well integrated into school life. The school promotes a strong community ethos, with all pupils being encouraged to look after and support each other, leading to the absence of confrontation and the ability of pupils to resolve differences amicably. There were no exclusions last year. Children in the Foundation Stage of learning exceed the early learning goals in personal, social and emotional development and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. They acquire good learning habits and are well prepared for work in the infants. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory and parents are very diligent about bringing their pupils into school on time.
15. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Pupils are encouraged to look at the beauty of nature, appreciate the work of artists and composers and reflect on the lives of people who endure hardship to help others such as Florence Nightingale. Pupils clearly know what is right and wrong, which comes from the lessons given in assemblies and the strong role models of staff. They have the opportunity to discuss the rules that give them an orderly, secure society in which trust develops between individuals. Some older pupils are starting to understand 'love thy neighbour as thyself' as a principle for moral behaviour in the absence of rules or sanction.
16. The school raises pupils' social awareness very well through assemblies and by discussion in class. In some classes, pupils are encouraged to discuss their feelings and problems in 'circle time', a structured discussion forum, and this is improving their speaking and listening skills, as well as social, moral and spiritual development. Pupils have a very good range of residential visits which, as well as giving them wider experiences in various subjects of the curriculum,

also promote independence and self-confidence. Pupils play well together and say that there are very few conflicts, either of bullying or racism. If there were any, pupils are confident both that the staff would take appropriate action and other pupils would support the victim. A school council and pupils' parliament is well established as a means of seeking pupil opinion and also makes pupils aware of how democracy works. Pupils take the lead as officers and circulate minutes. They have made suggestions about how to improve playtimes, for example, and have taken the lead in organising the 'buddy bench' volunteers.

17. Pupils' knowledge of their own culture is very good overall. This is promoted by visiting musicians and story-tellers as well as participation in local musical and dramatic events. They visit local museums and show a good knowledge of famous composers and artists. Although their knowledge of religions other than Christianity is very good, their perception of Britain as a multicultural society is only good. However, they are very strong in their belief that they should be tolerant of those who have different religious or cultural backgrounds to themselves. At present there are still missed opportunities, both in art and design and music, for pupils to develop their understanding of other cultures. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	5.2	School data:	0.0
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.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is very good overall. Whilst teaching is good, with examples of very good teaching, it is improving rapidly. The curriculum is very good with plenty of rich opportunities offered to enhance learning.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is good overall, with examples of very good teaching seen in many lessons. Pupils learn quickly and effectively. Assessment procedures are good and are generally used well to respond to pupils' needs. Some staff are new to their posts and are still familiarising themselves with the curriculum of certain year groups.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught very well.
- Teachers are very hard working and have very good relationships with their pupils, encouraging them at all times to do their very best.
- The quality of teachers' planning is very good.
- Plenary sessions at the end of lessons could be more effectively used to deepen pupils' understanding of their learning.
- Teachers manage behaviour very well and support staff make a valid contribution to pupils' learning.

Commentary

18. The school has made good improvements in developing the quality of teaching because of the very good monitoring undertaken by the headteacher and the very good opportunities provided for continuous professional development. The staff have only been together as a team for just under two years and already they are growing from strength to strength. They are totally dedicated to improvement, keen to learn how best to improve their practice and have very good relationships with pupils. At times, however, too few opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their skills of independent learning.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 29 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	10	15	4	0	0	0

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

19. The quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage is good with examples of very good practice. Basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught very well and good explanations are given, resulting in children being very clear as to what is expected of them and feeling secure in their learning. Planning throughout the school is very good and teachers conscientiously evaluate their lessons, identifying what aspects of their teaching worked well. Occasionally, in the satisfactory lessons where the rates of pupils' progress slows down, teachers spend too long giving explanations and end of lesson reviews are rushed, with pupils not having enough time to explain where they found learning too easy or too difficult. This is a missed opportunity for pupils to develop their speaking skills. Furthermore, not all teachers place sufficient emphasis on developing subject skills but focus too narrowly on knowledge content, this reduces opportunities for pupils to find things out for themselves such as planning their own experiments in the lower juniors in science.
20. Teachers throughout the school manage behaviour very well and because lessons are interesting, pupils want to learn. Support staff make a very valid contribution to pupils' learning, they break down the focus of the lesson into manageable chunks so that less-able pupils and those with special educational needs experience success and this helps them acquire knowledge at a fast rate.
21. All teachers explain new ideas well and use resources well. Support staff have worked endlessly at producing games and prompts for parents to support their children's learning at home, especially reading, and this is one of the reasons why standards are high. In lessons, a lot of attention is given to ensuring that the correct technical vocabulary is taught and used so that pupils become comfortable with spelling key words and using them in every-day discussions. Teachers ask good quality questions, sharply focusing pupils and having a positive effect on developing their thinking skills. However, at times, especially in science and ICT, teachers do not use plenary sessions sufficiently well to encourage pupils to learn from their successes and mistakes. The sessions used for summing up at the end of lessons are not always used to allow pupils to evaluate what improvements they could make in their learning and, as a result, valuable opportunities are missed for teachers to evaluate further how well pupils have received the information given.
22. In a very good religious education lesson in Years 5/6, pupils made very good gains in understanding the difference between valuing materialistic good and memories of events and people. The class teacher very expertly demonstrated to pupils that 'there are some things money just cannot buy' and the pupils made very good gains in understanding that material goods do not necessarily bring happiness. The teaching of ICT is at least good; in a Year 5/6

class, the teacher gave pupils very good opportunities to develop their research skills, although this type of very good practice is not yet consistently applied throughout the school, especially in science.

23. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good: it is thorough, methodical and well rooted in enabling pupils to overcome their limitations. The special educational needs governor makes a very good contribution to pupils' learning. Pupils love coming to work with him because 'He makes maths fun'. The special educational needs co-ordinator keeps meticulous records on pupils and is very knowledgeable in relation to the types of interventions that pupils need. Pupils with special educational needs learn quickly and effectively because staff ensure that they prepare work that is very well suited to their need. Pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds learn as well as their peers. The school's promotion of equal opportunities is good and all pupils have full access to the curriculum. The teaching of literacy across the curriculum is good. The teaching of ICT and numeracy is satisfactory. At times there are missed opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in other subjects.
24. Staff are working very well as a team, they engage in professional dialogue with one another about which methods work well in the classroom and they are very keen to share tips with one another.
25. Parents are rightly justified in being very pleased with the quality of teaching throughout the school.
26. Marking and assessment are generally good, but in English, mathematics, science and ICT pupils would benefit from using the good quality targets recently set to enable them to learn at an even faster rate. Most teachers mark very thoroughly and parents are pleased with the way in which homework is given regularly to support learning. The quality of homework is good. It is exciting and relevant to pupils' learning. Assessments in other subjects are satisfactory but the school has recognised this as an area for development. Assessments in the Foundation Stage of learning are very thorough and are good overall.

The curriculum

The overall quality of the curriculum is **very good**. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is **very good**. The curriculum is enriched **very well** with visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities. The quality and range of learning resources are **satisfactory** and accommodation is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The enrichment of the curriculum is very good, especially provision of extra-curricular opportunities.
- Good quality planning enhances learning.
- The provision made for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- Some aspects of the accommodation detract from the progress pupils make.
- The provision for personal, social and health education is good.

Commentary

27. The curriculum for Years 1 to 6 is broad and balanced and makes a very good contribution to the standards that pupils achieve. All subjects of the National Curriculum are fully covered and the curriculum is enriched very well by a host of additional opportunities that the school

provides. These include a very good range of extra-curricular activities, such as French, sports of many kinds and music. Provision has improved since the last inspection. Visiting specialists give tuition in a wide range of musical instruments and others such as artists in residence, theatre groups and story-tellers bring more variety, stimulate fresh interests and teach new skills. All pupils have the chance to go on residential trips to an outdoor education centre. These excursions have a considerable impact on the pupils' personal development as well as making a very valuable contribution to their progress in subjects such as geography and physical education.

28. The very good quality of teachers' planning of learning opportunities significantly improves pupils' progress. This planning is very inclusive, in that it makes provision to meet the needs of different groups and individuals very effectively. The school makes good use of the planning guidance given by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, using it as a means of ensuring that learning takes place in a progressive, sequenced way. The guidance is adapted to suit the circumstances of the school and is evaluated regularly by staff to suit the particular needs and interest levels of the classes that they are teaching. Teachers' short-term planning is of a high quality. It is detailed, well structured and identifies how the success of pupils' learning will be judged. The school has recently bought a commercially produced assessment software package that will allow staff to further refine the curriculum further and continuously amend planning to improve learning. The learning opportunities offered to children in the Foundation Stage of learning are good. There is a good balance between teacher-directed learning and learning through discovery. All areas of learning are appropriately covered. Pupils are well prepared throughout the school for their next stages of education.
29. The school's provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and this ensures that additional support and equipment are available so that pupils are included in all aspects of school life. Individual education plans are clear and effective. Pupils with statements of special educational needs receive the support to which they are entitled and so take a full part in school life. Outside agencies are used very well to provide additional very good quality support for pupils who make very good progress as a result.
30. The provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education is good. Personal, social and health education underpins all aspects of the school's curriculum. Strong features include the school council, to which each class elects representatives and pupils' participation in a local 'children's parliament'. The school provides appropriate sex education and raises pupils' awareness of the dangers of drug misuse effectively. Pupils benefit from the involvement of local police officers in helping them to understand 'stranger danger'. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection.
31. The accommodation is satisfactory and allows the curriculum to be taught effectively overall. The grounds are extensive and pleasant, and there are additional rooms which are used by the playgroup and for teaching small groups. However, two aspects of the building detract from the school's efforts to raise standards further. Currently, there is no library. The school has put into place appropriate arrangements to minimise the impact caused by the lack of this facility, including the creation of book collections in each classroom, and the provision of additional books on loan from the library service. Plans have been drawn up to finance the creation of an extension to house a library, but presently, the opportunities for pupils to develop skills in using a library are limited. The computer room is relatively small. The space available is restricted, especially for older and larger pupils. This makes the acquisition of keyboard skills more difficult. Staff make the best use possible of the restricted accommodation. The match of teachers and support staff to the curriculum is satisfactory.

Care, guidance and support

Health and safety and welfare procedures are **very good** and the school gives pupils **good** support and guidance. Pupils are consulted **very well** on what they would like to see improved. Pupils are **very well** cared for and looked after.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Procedures for ensuring the safety of pupils and staff are rigorous and thorough.
- Pupils can approach adults with their concerns and are very well supported in their personal development.
- The school council system is a very good vehicle for seeking pupils' views.
- Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported.

Commentary

32. The school is a happy secure place where pupils are confident and are hence able to learn. Staff know pupils very well and take an interest in the welfare of each. Ethnic minority pupils are treated with sensitivity and included in all aspects of school life. In lessons such as religious education, some are asked to explain or clarify the beliefs and practises of their religion. The school takes care that new pupils are quickly integrated into school life and any problems are resolved in consultation with parents. Induction procedures are good. Conversations with pupils confirmed that they could rely on staff to resolve minor conflicts and personal worries. Individual academic targets are used well in English to encourage pupils to improve but they are not as effective in mathematics and underused in other subjects.
33. The premises are regularly inspected for safety hazards and any necessary remedial action taken promptly. Inspection results and action taken are collated well. All equipment is correctly maintained. When pupils are taken off the premises, written risk assessments are prepared and staff are assiduous in adhering to the precautions identified. Safety measures are identified for activities in school, such as physical education. The school has an access plan to modify the school for any disabled pupil or member of staff. Child protection procedures are in place and staff are appropriately trained. Staff have access to guidance on the procedures and a simple referral system. The school maintains good liaison with outside agencies, for example in the care of 'looked-after' children. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported and they receive very good intervention from all staff. The school works effectively with outside agencies to make the best possible help available to those pupils. This has a very good effect on their integration in all lessons.
34. The school council is a very good system for seeking pupils' views. It is elected, with two representatives from each class for Year 2 and above. The older ones represent younger pupils. Before each meeting, the officers, who are all pupils, draw up a written agenda so that representatives can canvass their classmates for their views. When the issues are discussed and decisions taken, they are minuted and circulated. Pupils are also encouraged to write articles for the school newsletter. Pupils have brought forward such issues as playground litter and the provision of a 'buddy bench', where those who have no one to play with can sit and be helped by volunteers. The council allows the school to engage in a very good two-way dialogue with pupils about those areas that are of concern to both parties. High levels of care have been maintained since the previous inspection.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has **good** links with parents and the community contributes **well** to school life. Pupils benefit from **good** links with other schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides good information to parents.
- Parents provide good support at home for their children's work and play an important role in the school community.
- Links with the community are good.
- Good liaison between the staff and other schools improves and enriches the curriculum.
- Parents of children with special educational needs receive very good information about the progress of their children.

Commentary

35. The school has addressed all the issues of weaknesses in communication identified in the previous report. Parents hold the school in high regard. At the time of the previous inspection, some parents were concerned that they did not receive enough information about the school and what their child was learning. The school has responded well and now explains to parents, both when their child begins school and throughout their time there, what is taught and how. Good quality newsletters keep them up to date with practical information. The school has run several workshops to explain to parents how modern teaching methods, such as the numeracy strategy, work. Although these are not always well attended, they enable those who do come to understand homework and avoid confusing their child about methods. During the year, parents come into school formally to meet the class teacher and this allows parents to establish a productive relationship. Informal contacts are also encouraged to raise minor issues at the start and finish of the school day. The annual pupil reports meet statutory requirements. There are extensive written comments for all subjects as well as perceptive comments on the pupil's attitudes towards the school, their personal and social development and targets for improvement.
36. The majority of parents hear their child read at home and give appropriate support with homework. Some parents, as well as other adult volunteers, give valued support in classrooms and around the school. The parent teacher association organises fund-raising and social events. These bring the parents, children and staff together and help cement the relationships that make the school such a harmonious community. They also contribute well towards resources. The school takes opportunities to consult with parents about how well the school is doing, and these general questionnaires have a very positive response. Individual comments are also encouraged and the school analyses the results and tells the parents what action it will take. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept very well informed and involved in their children's learning and progress and have every opportunity to attend meetings and to talk to staff.
37. The school plays an active part in the local community and calls on local people to broaden pupils' experiences and bring lessons to life. Public services, like the police, talk to pupils as part of personal and social education. Members of a local church take assemblies each term to provide a broader assembly programme. Pupils have visited local places of worship, such as a synagogue and temple, as part of religious education. Links with local businesses are developing well. In a new project, pupils are to work with staff from a local car manufacturer to provide a mathematical garden on the school site and pupils are being consulted on the design

of new features in a local park. Pupils have visited a local supermarket to support several aspects of the curriculum. Pupils give concerts for local senior citizens at Christmas and take part in performances with other primary schools. The headteacher relentlessly seeks opportunities to enable pupils to work closely with the community and just recently, pupils were invited to design an adventure park in the locality.

38. Staff from ten secondary schools, to which pupils from Year 6 transfer, liaise well with teachers to ensure that the move is as smooth as possible. Pupils attend activity days at two of these schools and further links support subjects like design and technology, swimming, French club and dance. New links between a 'triad' of local primary schools will gain extra funds to strengthen the teaching of ICT, personal and social education and creative thinking and examples of best practice are to be shared among the schools. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good and parents are pleased with the school and all that it offers.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff are very good and the highly organised structure of management ensures that the aspirations for the school are put into practice effectively.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school and leads by example.
- The governance of the school is very good.
- The senior management team provides strong support for the headteacher and share her vision.
- The school monitors its performance data very thoroughly.
- Financial management and budgetary controls are very good.
- The headteacher has acted on the areas identified for improvement at the last inspection and the school's improvement since that time is good.

Commentary

39. The headteacher has developed a very effective team through her educational vision for the school and as a result of her drive and enthusiasm and her very good management skills. The governors are dedicated to the success of the school, know its strengths and weaknesses and are very well informed and involved in all aspects of school life. They challenge the senior management, pursue information and see the quality of teaching first hand on regular visits to the school. Governors ensure that all statutory requirements are met and monitor inclusive policies, such as race relations, disability and requirement to ensure that curriculum requirements are met.
40. The headteacher has led and managed the school well despite the lack of a permanent deputy headteacher for two out of the last six years. Since the appointment of the new deputy headteacher, the headteacher has been able to relinquish some of her co-ordination duties and take other priorities forward, particularly as regards accommodation. The senior management team is strongly united, loyal, purposeful and effective, although it has been in existence for only eighteen months. This is because of the headteacher's clarity of vision, in her drive to improve standards and to ensure that the school remains a happy and constructive place where pupils learn to value people and education. Her strategic management is highly effective. Ideas and actions are well transmitted and implemented through the very well focused school development plan so that members of staff know what they have to do and how to do it. As a result, the school advances steadily towards its goals through successful performance

management which addresses the continuous professional development of staff and is an integral part of raising standards in teaching and learning. This is closely linked to the school's very good self-evaluation which is clear, thorough and the basis for the school's development plan. The headteacher monitors the teaching and learning very well and has set up very good systems for monitoring performance data. Staff induction is very good and students on placements receive very good support from these hard working teachers.

41. The headteacher is committed to inclusion and care of all groups of pupils, the involvement of their parents and the wider community.
42. The leadership and management of special educational needs is very good. The systems to identify pupils' special educational needs, the management of the provision and resources, the link between assessment and teaching and the keeping of records are meticulous and practical. The school's accommodation limits the access of pupils in wheelchairs to different areas. The disability access plan is up to date but the building remains inaccessible in some areas.
43. Resources are only satisfactory and it is difficult to find space for essential requirements and the money to buy them. Finances are very well managed and planned for and the 15 per cent carry over is already accounted for by rebuilding development, due to the very good monitoring of the budget by the governing body, but the budget is restrictive and the school struggles to improve the learning environment for its pupils.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	518,445
Total expenditure	523,036
Expenditure per pupil	2,502

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	39,000
Balance carried forward to the next	77,355

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

44. Children enter the Foundation Stage in the term of their fourth birthday. Almost all children have experienced playgroups but there are a few who have limited pre-school experiences. Attainment on entry is very variable and fluctuates from average to above average. This year it is average overall but a significant minority of children do experience learning difficulties in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development due to restrictive vocabulary and lack of experiences in these areas. Children in the Reception Class are taught by two part-time teachers and a nursery nurse who act as good role models for them. Provision is good overall but the accommodation, whilst satisfactory, is very restrictive and there is very little room for collaborative collage work and engagement in free musical activities. The quality of display work is very good. The quality of teaching is good, with examples of very good teaching, enabling children to learn quickly and effectively. Children attain the expected standards in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development and exceed expectations in other areas of learning. Overall, they achieve well in relation to their prior attainment and are well prepared for work in Year 1. Assessments are good and are used well to support children in their work.
45. Improvement since the last inspection has been good when taking into consideration that children's attainment on entry to Year 1 is now average. Standards in personal, social and emotional development, physical development, creative development and knowledge and understanding of the world now exceed expectations. The quality of teaching has improved and none is unsatisfactory. Standards in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development meet the national expectations rather than exceed them but children's achievements in all areas of learning are now good rather than satisfactory as judged previously.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The adults are sensitive to the children's individual needs and create a warm and supportive environment in which children flourish.
- More opportunities could be provided for children to be more responsible for their learning.
- Children have very good attitudes to learning and behave very well.

Commentary

46. Children exceed the expected standards on entry to Year 1 and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Children's personal, social and emotional development is well supported. The quality of teaching is good. Praise is used effectively and good manners are encouraged at all times. When children are praised they grow before your eyes, secure in the knowledge that they have done something well. During the time when milk and biscuits are shared, children are encouraged to take their turn, say please and thank you and be courteous and polite to others. In lessons they are encouraged to write neatly and put away resources. They can get themselves dressed and undressed for physical education and they are interested in all aspects of learning.

In 'circle time' children are given very good opportunities to describe and name their emotions and this contributes very well to their very good attitudes. Teachers have good subject knowledge, their expectations are high and they ensure that learning is sufficiently 'scaffolded' so that each child achieves appropriately in relation to their prior learning in a safe and secure learning environment. A good range of stories is used to help pupils identify their emotions and through them children are developing an awareness of their own needs, views and feelings of others. Children are able to consider the consequences of their actions on others.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good with very good features.
- Children achieve well in spite of a significant number of learning difficulties.
- Children love stories and can identify initial letters well.
- Many children find it difficult to say what they think but they do have good skills of sequencing stories.

Commentary

47. Children attain the expected standards at the end of the Foundation Stage, achieve well and generally make good progress but they struggle to explain why they take a particular course of action, what they find easy and difficult in learning and pupils' listening skills are not developed as well as their speaking skills. They can identify what makes them happy or sad and they can sort out pictures of the way people behave in situations by talking about whether this is the correct manner in which to behave. Children understand characters in a story, they can now rhyme words and nearly all of them know their initial sounds. Children are making good gains in using capital letters at the beginning of sentences and higher attaining children know and identify exclamation marks and question marks. Children love writing and eagerly make price lists in the Whitecrest 'garden centre' and become very absorbed in ensuring that the plants that are sold are not wilting. The quality of teaching is good with very good features. Writing activities are well planned and every attempt is made to ensure that children form their letters correctly. During the week of the inspection, under the guidance of the nursery nurse, the children used magnifying glasses to see precisely where they needed to start the correct formation of letters. This they did meticulously and enjoyed themselves tremendously, producing a whole line of correctly formed g's. The quality of planning is very good and all activities are very well linked to the main teaching.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are given good opportunities to explain their thinking but higher attaining children are not always given sufficient opportunities to record their number work.
- A good range of practical experiences is provided for children to develop their concept of number.
- Good opportunities are provided for problem solving.
- Teachers check the children's understanding well and, as a result, children make good progress.
- ICT is used well to support learning.

- A significant minority of children have difficulty in retaining what they have learnt in lessons over a longer period.

Commentary

48. Children attain the expected standards at the end of Year 2 and achieve well in spite of their inability to retain some of the main teaching points in lessons. When asked questions they do not always offer answers quickly and often rely on a child taking the lead and then repeating what they said without really thinking things through. Teachers are aware of this and consistently push children to explain their thinking but this is not always easy because children struggle with concentrating over longer periods of time. A very good range of practical activities is prepared by the class teacher and nursery teacher which quickly grabs the children's attention. For example, in a very good lesson the class teacher read the story 'Dinosaur Roar' and then asked the children 'if I placed ten dinosaurs on the board and added two more, how many would I have?' Using a number line, children counted two on from ten and eagerly called out 12, the class teacher insisted that they checked their answers before they moved onto another problem. This is having a positive effect on learning but even greater progress could be made if higher attainers were given more opportunities to formally record their number work. The quality of teaching is good, with examples of very good teaching. In a very good lesson, the class teacher relentlessly pushed children to explain their thinking about how best to solve a number problem. She used whiteboards very well to check the children's understanding and when children had not quite got the answer right she gave further explanations. By the end of the lesson, under the watchful eye of the nursery nurse, below average attaining children knew that ladybirds with six black spots on each side had a total of twelve. The class teacher has high expectations of her pupils and knows exactly when to offer support, and pupils are developing into confident workers.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children thoroughly enjoy learning about the natural world around them.
- Children are making good gains in acquiring simple map skills.
- Teaching ensures that children have a good variety of tasks to learn using their senses.

Commentary

49. By the end of the Foundation Stage, children exceed the expected standards and achieve well with several examples of very good progress seen in their developing understanding of how plants grow. In the Whitecrest 'garden centre', a role-play area set up for children. Children eagerly talked about the need to water plants regularly otherwise they would die. Children know that with the onset of different seasons the weather changes, they know the months of the year but they are unsure as to which months correspond to the different seasons. Children have a good knowledge of their locality, they can describe the route they take to school and they know how they have changed since they were babies. Children are given good opportunities to learn about the stories Jesus told and the way different religions celebrate festivals. The quality of teaching is good with very good features. The class teacher and nursery nurse make a dynamic duo as they encourage children to observe flowers carefully and when discussing their journey to school draw a line transect to show the buildings passed en route. This has a very positive effect on developing children's spatial awareness and potential language. Children use the computer well to support their learning, they can click, drag, print and they can name the main functions on a keyboard. Children achieve well because of high expectations of learning as demonstrated by the class teacher's use of technical vocabulary.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are well co-ordinated and have very good attitudes to learning.
- Very good opportunities are provided for children to develop the skills of prediction and estimation.
- Very good use is made of using children's responses.
- Staff present very good role models of good practice because they remind children of the need to wear proper physical education kit and pay particular attention to health and safety issues.
- Good emphasis is placed upon teaching children about the importance of warm-ups.

Commentary

50. Children exceed the expected standards by the end of the Foundation Stage and achieve well. They are well co-ordinated and use space appropriately. They know that health and safety rules have to be adhered to and they are very careful when they move equipment around the hall. They have good skills of co-operation and know how to take turns. The quality of teaching is good. Very good use is made of using children's responses as examples of good practice. This enables children to learn from one another and builds up their self-confidence. Teachers use instructions such as change direction, curl, move, jump, hop and ask children to demonstrate their understanding; this has a positive effect on learning as all children are clear about what is expected of them. Very good opportunities are provided for children to develop their skills of prediction and estimation. For example, the classteacher asked children how many jumps they could make to reach a particular point; this, in turn, helps children develop their mathematical awareness. Children have very good attitudes to learning and behave very well. Staff place a high emphasis on physical development. They are very effective role models for their children as they insist on ensuring that all children have the correct physical education kit and they themselves wear appropriate clothing for each lesson. The limited space for outside play is used well and good opportunities are given in lessons for children to develop their fine and gross motor skills.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children work with good quality resources.
- Skills of visualisation are frequently encouraged.
- Good opportunities are provided for children to participate in role-play.

Commentary

51. Children exceed the expected standards by the end of the Foundation Stage and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. They have very good attitudes to learning and participate eagerly in all the activities provided for them. They eagerly play at shops in the outside play area and get merrily frustrated when customers do not have the correct money to pay for their goods. Children can print patterns in sequences, make paper flowers and design patterned paper to wrap flowers in. They choose appropriate colours and make giant ladybirds out of dough, meticulously counting their spots. The quality of teaching is good. Staff work very hard at

valuing and developing children's skills of imagination and visualisation. They frequently ask children questions such as 'what does that look like in your head?' and this has a positive effect on the children's use of creativity. Good quality resources are used such as different coloured and sized card, shiny paper, different types of materials and paints so that children are continuously interested in the creative process. Children love singing and participate eagerly in all action rhymes and songs.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision for English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils achieve very well.
- Teaching is very good throughout the school.
- Average standards in speaking and research could be improved.
- Leadership and management are very good and are helping to raise standards.
- ICT is used well to support learning.
- Literacy is used well in other subjects.

Commentary

52. The 2003 national test results and teacher assessments show that, in comparison with all schools by the end of Year 2, pupils attained average standards in reading and well above average standards in writing. By the end of Year 6 standards were well above average. In comparison with similar schools, standards at the end of Year 2 were below average in reading and above average in writing. By the end of Year 6 in comparison with similar schools standards were above average overall. There were no differences in attainment by gender. The school met its targets and a high percentage of pupils achieved the higher levels in Year 6. The performance of pupils in English over three years has been well above the national median for their age.
53. Standards rise steadily as pupils go through the school. When pupils join Year 1, they have little idea of expression when reading, their vocabulary is limited, although they can make themselves understood, and their listening skills, whilst average overall, have some weaknesses. By the end of Year 2, pupils have made good progress in the areas of English they find most difficult and standards overall are just above average in writing and in line in speaking, listening and reading. Overall standards are above average but there are many pupils in Year 2 who are average and below average attainers, and this will have a bearing on the end of year national test results which will not be as high as they were last year. By the end of Year 6, standards are above average with particular strengths in writing. Pupils' achievements are very good because of the very good opportunities provided for them to write in other subjects, such as religious education, geography and history. Pupils love reading and are keen writers. They make steady progress in these areas and rapid progress in word recognition, sentence construction, spelling and hand writing. In Years 3 to 6, pupil make rapid progress and continue to build on their well-established basic skills. Their reading is well supported by their decoding skills, ability to retell events from print and to identify different grammatical structures so that their reading, speaking and writing develop together effectively. Pupils' achievements are very good throughout the school, particularly when their difficulties in

speaking and listening on entering the school are taken into account. Pupils with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum and make very good progress.

54. Teaching is very good because of the consistently high quality teaching of basic skills and the way teachers plan lessons in response to formal assessment of pupils' work and their knowledge of every child's potential. Work is challenging and teachers have very good relationships with their classes, high expectations and work at a good pace so that pupils are interested, work persistently and are proud of their achievements. The teaching of guided reading and writing is very good. The school identified that pupils needed more experience in these areas and teachers provide very good opportunities for pupils to develop their comprehension skills and knowledge of writing conventions. Teachers model what is expected, check pupils' understanding, give pupils a chance to attempt learning on their own and offer very good support. As a result, pupils learn very well. The quality of writing in pupils' books and displays around the school clearly demonstrates pupils' ability to produce high quality work. For example, pupils in Year 2 write at great length about being inanimate objects, such as a packet of crisps, using the first person very effectively. In Year 6 pupils write poems that are full of metaphors and elaborate descriptions, and their stories demonstrate very good use of connectives, extended sentences and correct use of tenses. Pupils love reading and talk with enthusiasm about their favourite authors, such as Roald Dahl and Michael Morpurgo.
55. The quality of teaching of basic skills in Year 2 is particularly impressive. In this class the very experienced teacher relentlessly pushes pupils to improve on their previous best performance by setting very high standards and continuously checking that pupils have understood her instructions. Throughout the school, staff make lessons interesting, lively and vibrant. In Year 6 teachers instil in their pupils a passion for learning by encouraging them to visualise scenes from texts read and really begin to understand characters' motives. They highlight how the authors craft their interactions so that pupils get a very good idea of a range of writing conventions.
56. The leadership and management of the subject is very good. Standards and teaching are monitored rigorously and assessment is well implemented. Governors are kept very well informed of standards and are involved with support for pupils with special educational needs. Assessment is good and is used well to support learning.
57. The school has no separate library because of limited accommodation, so pupils' research skills are satisfactory but could be improved upon. The school insists that books are modern, plentiful and inspire pupils to learn and achieve well. However, too few opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their skills of independent learning and research and there is a lack of quiet space for reflective study. Resources are good and a lot of money has been spent on ensuring that pupils have access to good quality literature. The use of ICT is good and in Year 6 several examples of high quality research on topics such as multicultural faiths were seen.
58. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, considering pupils' lower attainment on entry.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

59. Literacy is used well in all subjects of the curriculum and pupils can read and write with confidence because of their very good grasp of their basic rules of literacy.

MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average at age 11.
- Pupils achieve well.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Target-setting is not sufficiently effective.
- Further work is needed to raise standards in problem-solving.

Commentary

60. The 2003 national test results and teacher assessments show that, in comparison with all schools by the end of Year 2, pupils attained average standards. By the end of Year 6 pupils attained standards that were well above national averages. In comparison with similar schools, standards by the end of Year 2 were below average and by the end of Year 6 they were well above average. There were no differences in attainment by gender and, over time, pupils performed well above the national median for their age group. The school met its targets and a high percentage of pupils achieved the higher levels in Year 6.
61. Inspection evidence broadly reflects the results of the tests but confirms that pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 is above average and is well above average at the end of Year 6. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well – better than at the last inspection. The scrutiny of pupils' work demonstrates that all groups of pupils achieve very well. This very good achievement is due to the high quality of lesson planning, which identifies suitable tasks for all groups of pupils, and to the support given to individuals by teachers and their assistants, and the consistently high quality of teaching of basic skills.
62. Aspects of Year 2 pupils' arithmetic work are strong, including their understanding that multiplication is the inverse of division. Most answer division questions, but not those with remainders. Examples of very well thought out aspects of mathematics were seen in Year 6, where pupils were using and interpreting co-ordinates in four quadrants. Most pupils can cancel to reduce fractions, although not always to the simplest form. They also show strengths in working out the sum of the angles of triangles and in finding the value of external angles.
63. The very good achievement of pupils by the time they leave school is due largely to the very good quality of teaching basic rules of number, which has improved since the last inspection. In the lessons observed, teaching overall was very good. It will take sometime for the high quality of the teaching in Years 3 to 6, by teachers many of whom are new to the school, to be reflected fully in even higher standards.
64. The principal strengths of the teaching are:
 - very good lesson planning which meets the needs of pupils of different capabilities, ensuring all are included and given equal opportunities to succeed;
 - expectations of pupils;
 - most lessons are conducted at a brisk pace, resulting in pupils engaging very well with the teaching; and
 - insistence on high standards of behaviour, allowing everyone to concentrate hard and work at a good rate.

65. In a very good lesson about percentages for Year 5, the high level of challenge and the very good use of computer equipment led to pupils making very good progress. The very good pace, supported by the setting of time targets, helped pupils in a Year 6 lesson to make very good gains in learning.
66. The very good practice of most teachers gives rise to very good learning. This is marked by very good levels of application and supported by pupils' very positive attitudes to learning, which are better than at the time of the last inspection. Very good behaviour also enhances the progress pupils make.
67. Short term targets are set to help pupils focus on the next steps in learning. In the best practice these are based securely on the key objectives identified in curricular planning. However, there is some inconsistency in how the target setting system is implemented, with some teachers choosing objectives which are not focused closely enough on mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding. This reduces the impact that the targets have in helping to raise standards.
68. The school analyses information about pupils' attainment very well and assessment procedures are good. Very good self-evaluation takes place. A weakness has recently been identified in pupils' ability to solve mathematical problems. A focus on this area has resulted in its inclusion in the school's improvement plan. Suitable arrangements are in place to monitor progress in addressing the weakness. Examination of pupils' work shows that by the time they leave the school those of average ability try to solve problems using their own ideas and present their results in an orderly fashion. However, they do not always give reasons to support the conclusions they reach. More-able pupils work confidently and creatively to discover, for example, patterns in the values of square numbers. The use of ICT is good overall, helping to raise standards. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to use charts and graphs.
69. The subject leader has been in post since 1998 and has done much to improve standards. Leadership of the subject is very good as test results are rigorously analysed.

Mathematics across the curriculum

70. Teachers provide pupils with satisfactory opportunities to develop and improve their mathematical skills in other subjects. The provision is good in science, especially in Years 3 to 6. For example, Year 6 pupils produce line graphs to show the relationship between the length of shadows and the distance of the object from the light source. The contribution to work in geography is underdeveloped.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above national expectations for seven and 11-year-old pupils.
- Science is well taught using carefully designed practical investigations.
- Lessons are well focused, well managed, and carefully planned to meet the learning needs of individual pupils.
- Pupils show a very positive attitude and work sensibly and safely.
- The pupils' experience could be enhanced by providing them with more opportunities to raise questions and plan their own investigations and develop their research skills.

- Teachers could develop and share targets with pupils to help them appreciate their own achievements and take more responsibility for their learning and progress.
- Plenary sessions are not sufficiently well structured.

Commentary

71. The 2003 national test results and teacher assessments show that standards at the end of Year 2, in comparison with all schools, were average and at the end of Year 6 standards were well above average, with a very high percentage of pupils attaining the higher levels. In comparison with similar schools, standards at the end of Year 6 were above average. There were no differences in attainment by gender or ethnicity.
72. Inspection findings show that standards are above national expectations for seven- and 11-year-old pupils; sustaining the standards found at the last inspection. These standards are maintained because the school's curriculum is very well designed and carefully monitored, and because teaching, learning and achievement are all good. Teachers also use good quality assessments to guide their planning and teaching effectively.
73. Pupils in Year 2 understand the differences between living and non-living things, basic life processes, the importance of diet and exercise for health. They are able to explain some of the basic properties of materials and are beginning to appreciate how some of these can be changed through heating and cooling. They have compared sounds, looked at materials that transfer light in different ways, and have worked with electrical circuits. They are becoming more confident when explaining physical phenomena due, for example, to the distance that sound travels or the effect of an open circuit on a bulb. Sometimes, however, pupils have difficulty recalling their previous experience when explaining their science. Pupils show a very positive attitude to the subject. This is due, in the main, to the teachers' use of practical work to illustrate and develop conceptual understanding. Pupils' skills of enquiry are promoted effectively. They are able to recognise when a test is fair, use appropriate skills and tools to measure and record their work. Good use is made of numeracy and ICT to enhance pupils' presentation of results. However, achievement could be even better if these pupils were given more opportunities to raise questions, look for patterns or to evaluate their own work because, at present, much of their learning is strongly teacher directed.
74. Pupils in Year 6 understand the main stages of human and plant life cycles, the feeding relationships between plants and animals, and can identify the main organs of a flowering plant as well as those found in the human body. They are able to separate mixtures effectively because of their understanding of solids, liquids and gases, and can explain processes of evaporation and condensation. They have a good understanding of air pressure, gravitational and magnetic forces. However, they show less experience of the ways in which forces affect movement, and of the effects of the relationships between the position of the earth and sun and the impacts these have on day and night, or seasons. Pupils are skilled at presenting evidence in response to their investigative work but show less confidence in considering and evaluating their findings.
75. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good, with examples of very good practice. Teachers plan and prepare their lessons very effectively, they provide tasks that are designed to meet the learning needs of all pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported and those capable of higher attainment are often challenged to research the topics under study. All work is very carefully explained by teachers. Whilst pupils have good opportunities for practical learning there are too few opportunities for them to raise questions and plan their own investigations through discussion. Plenary sessions are not sufficiently well

structured to enable pupils to explain their learning and, as yet, the use of individual target setting is not rigorously applied to move pupils on in their learning. In the most effective lessons teachers work at a good pace, give good explanations and ask thought-provoking questions. In most lessons they make good use of the plenary to check appropriate use of scientific vocabulary, check for any misconceptions, consolidate learning, set homework and introduce the next lesson's topic. Where pupils' learning slows down, as in some of the overall satisfactory teaching seen, too much time is spent on giving explanations, and occasionally work does not tax the pupils' capacity for learning. Pupils respond well and show a very positive attitude during lessons and in their carefully prepared written records. Whilst teachers mark pupils' work regularly and address literacy issues as well as the on-going development of pupils' knowledge and skills in science, target setting is at an early stage of development.

76. The curriculum is very carefully structured to ensure the development of the concepts and skills expected by the programmes of study in the National Curriculum. It also offers pupils good opportunities for the use of literacy, numeracy, ICT, and problem-solving skills. Leadership is good; the subject leader monitors the planning, teaching, resourcing and assessment effectively. She is well supported by the senior management team and is in a strong position to increase teachers' confidence in helping pupils become more autonomous in their decisions and researching skills. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and high standards have been maintained.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision for ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ICT is not yet an integral part of teaching and learning in all subjects.
- Examples of very good teaching were seen in the juniors.
- Leadership and management are very good but this has not yet filtered through the school as the deputy headteacher has only recently been appointed.
- More emphasis needs to be placed on teaching keyboard skills.

Commentary

77. Pupils at ages seven and 11 attain average standards, as they did at the time of the last inspection. The ICT suite is very small and not all pupils can fit into it at any one time. However, ICT skills are taught well and, coupled with the very good leadership and guidance of the deputy headteacher, standards are improving. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. At seven, pupils use ICT to share ideas, such as their stories about teddy bears. They use the Internet to find information about seaside holidays and identify natural materials to help their science studies. Pupils aged 11 collect and enter information to create spreadsheets, for example, about pocket money. They use equipment linked to computers to sense physical data, such as light sensors which turn on the 'streetlights' of their models. However, their understanding of ICT use outside school is underdeveloped.
78. Teaching is good, due to the good subject knowledge of teachers. Explanations are clear, teachers are confident about what they are doing, the pace of learning is good and the teachers and their assistants worked tirelessly to support individual pupils. The teachers' high

expectations result in pupils behaving very well. However, there was a tendency for staff to give too much help to pupils by showing them how to do something rather than asking questions to enable them to find a solution for themselves. Pupils work hard, listen attentively, but do not ask enough questions to clarify their understanding. More use could be made of the final part of the lesson to get pupils to evaluate their learning. Discussion with pupils and observation of lessons show that opportunities are missed to use classroom computers and, as yet, ICT is not an integral part of teaching and learning. The development of pupils' keyboard skills lags behind other aspects of their work. In the lessons seen, most pupils in a Year 5/6 class used one finger and entered text and other information slowly. This is partly due to the cramped conditions in the computer room, which particularly affect older and larger pupils. Most of the pupils share a computer and the teachers' failure to get them to move carefully so that the individual typing is directly in front of the machine and keyboard compounds the problem. Leadership and management is very good, the subject co-ordinator is knowledgeable, efficient and very effective. His work impacts well on the standards that pupils attain. The provision of computers and other equipment is satisfactory overall. The linking of all computers, including those in classrooms, to each other and the Internet is a valuable feature.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

79. Teachers make good use of ICT in English and mathematics and satisfactory use in other subjects. Overall the use of ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory but could be developed even further. Pupils in Year 2 use computers in their history work about Florence Nightingale and create 'paintings' in the style of Mondrian on screen in art and design lessons. Year 6 pupils develop their literacy and word-processing skills in composing their own versions of stories such as 'Harry and the Wrinklies'. However, opportunities are missed to improve standards in some subjects, such as art and design, and the school has yet to formalise a programme for promoting ICT skills across the curriculum.

HUMANITIES

80. In **geography** too little evidence was gathered to make reliable judgements about provision overall. The scrutiny of pupils' work shows that standards are above average at seven and 11 years of age and achievement is good. Standards have improved since the last inspection. Pupils aged seven work above the level expected in describing and contrasting the physical and human features of different locations. They discuss in detail the types of jobs and the landscapes of Great Barr and the seaside. They begin to record their findings in appropriate geographical vocabulary such as 'natural' and 'man-made' features. Pupils aged 11 recognise how human activities affect environments and know why industrial estates are frequently located on the edge of towns. They investigate land use at a variety of scales and carry out fieldwork to answer questions about this at the local shopping centre. They read maps well and identify grid references to three places. There is much depth and rigour to their studies. Too few lessons were observed to judge the quality of teaching and learning reliably, but the scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that expectations of what they can achieve are high. This suggests that teaching is good. The teaching and learning in the few lessons observed was good. It was planned well, with good levels of challenge for pupils of different capabilities. The subject co-ordinator exercises good skills of leadership and management and gives the subject high profile within school. The curriculum is enriched with very well planned visits to the Frank Chapman Centre, where pupils undertake studies of the local environment. The unsatisfactory provision of maps and other materials noted in the last report has been addressed, and improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well and make good progress.
- Pupils show increasing understanding of chronology.
- Pupils empathise very well with characters of the past and appreciate the effect of past events on the people who lived then.
- Teachers make good use of opportunities to promote literacy.
- Visits are used very effectively to enrich the curriculum.
- An increase in the use of artefacts and source materials can further enrich the pupils' experience of the subject.
- A more systematic approach to the development of enquiry skills would enhance pupils' abilities to talk and discuss ideas, whilst also promoting their independence as learners.

Commentary

81. The attainment of pupils is above that expected nationally at the end of Years 2 and 6, and all groups of pupils achieve well.
82. Pupils in Year 2 use simple sentences and pictures to show their understanding of the ways in which what happened in the past differs from events in their own lives. They show an appreciation of when, across historical time, events such as the Great Fire of London took place and they empathise with the impact this had on the people involved: they can explain, for example, how fire-fighters tackled the blaze and how people attempted to escape its worst effects. Pupils are aware of the ways in which contemporary information sources have been built from records that were prepared at the time, and show an interest in picture books about the past. However, pupils are not yet using questions about the past to gather information and ideas from source materials.
83. Pupils in Year 6 recognise some of the most important features of past periods and societies, linking their factual knowledge, as well as their understanding of the present, to review the past in other countries. They use pictures, drawings of artefacts, and some use web-based information, as sources from which to examine differences between then and now. These pupils are beginning to show an appreciation of the differences between primary and secondary sources, and are becoming increasingly aware of the fact that sources may give different views about events of the past. Higher attaining pupils prepare carefully considered accounts of past events, selecting relevant information and, using appropriate terms and dates, explain their understanding and write detailed historical accounts.
84. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers' planning is well focused and teaching methods are good and varied, involving reading and re-telling stories from the past and role-play, together with well-formed direct teaching using careful explanation and targeted questioning. Most teachers draw on good subject knowledge to plan their lessons and use historical knowledge and vocabulary effectively. Lessons are usually taught at a good pace and pupils respond positively. Teachers ensure that pupils with special educational needs are very well supported and often give more-able pupils work that challenges their thinking. Pupils' work is marked effectively and regularly. Good opportunities are given for pupils to develop their writing skills in history. Teachers work extremely hard to bring history alive and, as a result, pupils are well motivated and show a good attitude to the subject. Teachers use information books effectively to support pupils' learning and some good examples of research

were seen in the juniors in history and religious education. However, their interest and skills of empathy could be further extended if teachers were able to illustrate their lessons with a wider range of artefacts, resources and source materials.

85. The subject leader has only recently taken up this post and already is showing promise. The subject leader is well supported by senior management, and leadership and management of the subject is good. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory and high standards have been maintained.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have good knowledge of world faiths.
- Pupils are very respectful of other religions.
- The quality of teaching in Year 6 is very good.

Commentary

86. Pupils exceed the expectations of the locally-agreed syllabus and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. In Year 2, pupils are eager to recall the stories that Jesus told and know the meanings behind the story of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son. Pupils understand the concept of a special place such as a church, mosque or temple and that different faiths have a good range of forms of worship. They know that all major world faiths have different holy books and that these contain teachings of the faith.
87. In Year 6, pupils are very eager to talk about special journeys that people undertake; they know that people of all faiths go on pilgrimages to holy places. Pupils are respectful of one another's faiths and have very good attitudes to learning.
88. Teaching is good, with very good teaching seen in Years 5/6. Teachers have good subject knowledge and give very clear explanations about what is expected of pupils. They constantly link religious concept skills and attitudes to pupils' experiences. For example, pupils explore the concept of belonging to a religious community, by comparing it with people who have the same beliefs and opinions about things. When talking about the Easter story, pupils are encouraged to explore how Jesus felt when he was let down by his friends. ICT is used well in the juniors to support learning. Some good examples of research on faiths were seen in Years 5/6. There pupils had imported pictures into text and effectively summarised the main points of their investigations of how different faith groups worship. They link faith communities to the idea of belonging to a family and improvement has been satisfactory.
89. Leadership and management are good. The locally-agreed syllabus is well implemented. The school has maintained the high standards identified in the previous report.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

90. No judgement is made on provision in **art and design** as no lessons were seen. Resources are satisfactory and ICT programs help to extend pupils' knowledge and artistic experience. Pupils have not had the opportunity to visit an art gallery but the school has visitors and art focus weeks to improve and extend pupils' knowledge effectively. Displays are neat, well presented

and pupils' work demonstrates a curriculum which is broad and balanced and provides a very good range of artistic experiences. Standards of pupils' work on display are above average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 and pupils are given plenty of opportunities to work with a full range of media. Overall pupils' achievements are good.

91. Work in **design and technology** was sampled. There were no timetabled lessons during the inspection. Evidence was gathered from a scrutiny of pupils' work and through discussion with a group of Year 2 and Year 6 pupils. Standards have improved since the last inspection for seven year old pupils, and sustained for 11-year-old pupils. They are now above national expectations for both groups of pupils, and pupils achieve well. Pupils in Year 2 show, through their sketches, how they hope to assemble simple products such as a healthy meal, and a glove puppet. They have experience of joining and fixing materials, and can explain which methods were most effective. At the end of their projects these pupils are able to note in simple terms where their work was effective, where they would improve on the finished product, as well as giving some indication of their satisfaction with the finished product's usefulness and aesthetic appeal. To do so they use carefully constructed prompt sheets. Pupils in Year 6 are able to build quite complex, intricate, and attractive model toys; using a cam mechanism for movement. These models are well constructed and show that pupils have been given a choice about what they will build using the mechanism under study. As their project unfolds pupils keep a simple record, using well-designed prompt sheets, of their design, materials used, problems encountered and the solutions they achieved, as well as recording their satisfaction with the product and a note of what they have learnt. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about their experiences of making puppets, purses, clay pots, papier-mâché hats, bridges, toys that move and shelters. Sadly, they seem not to recognise that food technology forms a part of this subject even though they have experience linking the science of healthy eating to making attractive sandwiches and lunch boxes. The prompt sheets that teachers use to support pupils' appreciation of the design process are well structured to promote their development and understanding. Opportunities to use digital photography and folders of ongoing work are not at present supporting the pupils' personal records of their work. The subject leader for design and technology was appointed in September 2003. She is receiving training to develop her expertise. Meanwhile the headteacher is carefully monitoring standards. The curriculum offers a very good range of experiences for pupils to develop an appreciation of the design process, work with tools, equipment and a range of materials and mechanisms to activate products. Pupil experience is enhanced by community links; for example, older pupils are soon to be involved in a real design project, constructing ideas for the development of a play area within a local amenity and the local university has arranged to film pupils' work to disseminate ideas about good practice in the teaching of design and technology. Pupils respond positively and achieve good results in their work.
92. No judgements can be made on standards or teaching in **music** as only one lesson was seen. The curriculum is very good. Pupils can talk about famous composers and their own musical compositions. The school has an enthusiasm for music. Pupils sing well during collective worship, attend a recorder club and there is a very good small wind band which rehearses with the headteacher twice a week and which is a credit to the school. Over a very short space of time pupils make very good progress and their performance skills are clearly well accomplished. Resources are satisfactory but accommodation for storage and composition is limited. No teaching was observed in **physical education** as this was not the focus for inspection but learning opportunities provided are very good. The school has received its Active Mark Gold and there is a strong emphasis on inter-school sports which contributes to pupils' self-development and collaborative skills. Swimming is undertaken regularly and pupils achieve well in this area, with many of them attaining the expected standard.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal, social and health education and citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Personal development permeates all aspects of school life.
- Many very good opportunities are provided for pupils to discuss issues and share feelings.
- The school council plays an active part in the daily life of the school.

Commentary

93. Personal, social and health education and citizenship is a central feature in the life of the school. At present the school does not have a scheme of work for personal, social and health education and citizenship but the subject is taught alongside science, religious education and physical education and underpins all aspects of school life. Every class has regular circle time where themes concerning citizenship and health, both physical and emotional, are discussed. The result shows in the pupils' maturity, their very good attitudes to learning and the harmonious and inclusive atmosphere of the school. The school's drive to improve pupils' speaking skills are exercised through this subject. Religious education lessons involve seeing both sides of an argument, English lessons explore ideas and feelings through the study of literature and pupils are given good opportunities to discuss the dangers of Internet chat rooms. The school provides many very good practical opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and pupils in the upper juniors organised a highly successful bring and buy sale for charity. School councillors take far-reaching decisions that affect all the other pupils and they are quickly learning that responsibility is not for the purpose of being popular but improving things for others.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	2
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

Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3

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

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

The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
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).