

INSPECTION REPORT

BLAKENALL HEATH JUNIOR SCHOOL

Bloxwich, Walsall

LEA area: Walsall

Unique reference number: 104144

Headteacher: Mr P K Heath

Lead inspector: P T Hill

Dates of inspection: 23rd – 25th February 2004

Inspection number: 260502

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	208
School address:	Field Road Bloxwich Walsall West Midlands
Postcode:	WS3 3JF
Telephone number:	01922 710145
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr D Austin
Date of previous inspection:	27 th September 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Blakenall Heath Junior School is situated in Bloxwich, to the north of Walsall. There are 208 pupils between the ages of seven and eleven on roll. Almost 45 per cent of the pupils are eligible for free school meals. This is well above the national average. The vast majority of pupils are of white ethnic background. There are 64 pupils on the special educational needs register of whom four have a statement of special educational need. Although the school's catchment area is socially diverse, by and large there is a significant level of disadvantaged households and an above average level of unemployment. Pupils enter Year 3 with overall levels of attainment that are below those typical of pupils of this age and which are well below in language development.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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9009	Valerie Bradley	Lay inspector	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an effective school providing good value for money. Although pupils' overall standards are below the average of schools nationally, all pupils achieve well. Those with special educational needs achieve very well. Teaching and learning are both good with a significant amount of very good teaching. Leadership and management are very good. This is an inclusive and very caring school. The level of pupils' attainment on entry to the school is variable each year but overall it is well below expectations. In general pupils have limited use of language and many are unable to express themselves clearly: this inhibits their learning.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Leadership and management are both very good.
- Teaching is good.
- Pupils achieve well.
- Pupils are cared for and supported very well.
- Considerable improvements have been made throughout the school and especially in the provision for the use of information and communication technology (ICT).
- Standards of attainment in English, including those of speaking and listening, are well below national expectations.

The school has made very good progress since its last inspection in 1999. All the key areas for development have been successfully addressed and improved. The school has very successfully developed and improved the quality of teaching. This has been a very significant advance and with it the school has laid a very good foundation for raising standards. Assessment of pupils' work, and the subsequent analysis and use of the findings to improve standards, is very good.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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.*

The above table shows the results in national tests in 2003. The standards attained were well below average and for English in the bottom 5 per cent nationally. Analysis of levels of attainment, on entry to Year 3, show that standards are well below national average, especially in speaking and listening. Inspection findings clearly show that pupils limited use of language and the resultant difficulty many experience in expressing themselves clearly inhibits their standards of attainment. Overall standards are improving and in most subjects have improved from well below average to below average. The recent stability in staffing and the resultant good teaching are unmistakably improving standards.

Pupils' personal development is good and is very well supported through the good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are very happy at school and have positive attitudes towards learning. Their behaviour in lessons and at playtimes is good. Attendance is below average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good education. Teaching is good throughout the school. As a result of good teaching, supported by very good relationships and classroom and behaviour management, learning is good with pupils making good progress. The quality of assessment is very good and information is very well used to match lessons to the needs of pupils and improve standards. The curriculum is good and is enriched very well through a range of additional experiences and activities. The care, support and guidance of pupils is very good and a significant and very positive factor in teaching. Partnership with parents is good and the school works hard to involve them in their children's learning. Links with the community are very good and links with other local schools are good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are very good. The very good leadership of the headteacher, very well supported by other senior managers, gives the school a clear sense of direction. This has been the key area that has led to the very good level of improvement that the school has made since the last inspection and to the stability in staffing and improvement in teaching that is now raising standards in all areas of the school's work.

Governance of the school is good, with governors acting purposefully as critical friends of the school: they have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and carry out their statutory duties well.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Overall, parents are very supportive of the school and are very satisfied with its work. They have no significant concerns. Pupils like coming to school and enjoy lessons. They feel secure and very well cared for.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- Raise standards of attainment in English, mathematics and science.
- Ensure opportunities for developing pupils' language skills, and especially speaking and listening, are planned in all subjects.

The school is very aware of the need to develop pupils' language and has already put important strategies in place. These include a new reading scheme, an emphasis on writing and the very important 'You Can Do It' project to raise pupils' self esteem.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards reached by Year 6 pupils are **below average**. All pupils, regardless of background or ability, **achieve well**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well and make good progress as they move through the school.
- Pupils with special needs achieve very well.
- Attainment of pupils is below average and well below in English.
- A significant number of pupils have limited use of language and many are unable to express themselves clearly.

Commentary

The majority of pupils enter the school with levels of attainment which are well below average and which are very variable from year to year. By the time they leave they have attained levels, which, while still below average, have improved, and they have made good progress as they move through the school. Pupils with special educational needs have made very good progress and those who are gifted and talented have made good progress and achieved well. English language and literacy skills are well below average overall. This has a significant effect on pupils' standards and progress in other subjects of the curriculum. The school is fully aware of this situation and has a number of strategies to develop pupils' skills, an important one of which is raising levels of confidence and self-esteem through the 'You Can Do It' project.

Overall, all pupils achieve well throughout the school in mathematics, science, religious education, and ICT and satisfactorily in English, art and design and music. There is no area of the curriculum in which pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory. In all subjects, pupils of all abilities achieve well because of the skilful and very effective way that teachers meet individual needs, for example in their questioning techniques and in the work set for pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are given additional and effective support to enable them to make very good progress and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Similarly, those pupils who are particularly able are presented with additional challenges that ensure they are extended in their learning, for example in the use of spreadsheets in ICT and mathematics.

The table below shows that in 2003 standards for all pupils in Year 6 tests were well below average in all three subjects.

A lack of staffing continuity and stability in recent years has made it difficult for the school to make a significant impact on standards in the past, especially considering the low level of pupils' language development on entry. The inspection clearly showed that there is now a good level of staffing and that the school has entered a period of stability with teaching being good overall and with very good and even excellent teaching in some areas. This is now clearly raising standards.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	23.0 (24.3)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	23.7 (24.4)	26.8 (26.7)
science	25.5 (26.0)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 54 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' behaviour is **good** and their attitudes, to all that the school has to offer, are **very good**. Pupils' personal development is **very good**, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Attendance is below the national average but punctuality is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' attitudes towards learning are very good.
- The school promotes very good relationships and motivating principles, which result in pupils' very good personal development.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall.
- Attendance is below the national average but the school does all it can to promote improved attendance.
- There is some underdevelopment of multi-cultural awareness.

Commentary

1. The ethos of the school is one of support, challenge and high expectation, which successfully promotes pupils' desire to learn. As a result, pupils are becoming more confident and successfully developing their self-esteem. A highly motivating 'You Can Do It' project permeates all lessons, the curriculum and out-of-class activities. Pupils are very aware of the principles of the project such as organisation and persistence and strive very hard to include these in their approach to work and play.

2. The youngest pupils talked enthusiastically about the 'keys to success'. They are excited by school and by the activities offered. Most pupils enjoy school and are very happy to be there. Lessons are planned well and work is carefully assessed. Consequently pupils are usually very aware of their own successes, feel secure about their learning and know exactly how they can improve. They concentrate and listen well and are given opportunities to organise themselves and to work together in different ways. Some older pupils still lack self-esteem and find it difficult to express their ideas or feelings but they are showing pride in their work. Most work is well presented.

3. Relationships throughout the school are very good. Almost all pupils behave well in and out of class. They are co-operative, work and play constructively and most listen carefully to their teachers. Almost all pupils are polite although some younger pupils have not quite learnt to wait their turn in discussions and some older pupils are reticent.

4. Pupils' moral, social and emotional development is also significantly enhanced through being incorporated within the You Can Do It project and extended through activities such as the well-organised and effective school council and well structured lessons. Spiritual awareness is reflected well in pupils' responses to assemblies and to religious education lessons. In these lessons, work is marked to acknowledge pupils' responses to feelings. This results in greater self-awareness. Pupils are given a range of opportunities to develop their cultural understanding through drama or musical performance or through working with artists. There is some provision for the development of multi-cultural awareness within most subjects but this is underdeveloped.

5. Although attendance is below the national average, the school does everything it can to encourage pupils to attend regularly. The learning mentor works closely and effectively with specific pupils to improve attendance. Incentives such as rewards and a class attendance cup are having a positive effect on the pupils who are sometimes more conscientious about their attendance and punctuality than their parents. The proportion of pupils with very good attendance levels is high.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	8.1
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.0
National data	0.4

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

6. Most pupils arrive punctually at school. However, there are a few pupils who regularly arrive late. The school monitors these late arrivals, and actively encourages parents to appreciate the importance of children arriving at school punctually.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	177	7	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	3	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	5	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	17	0	0

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

7. The school is very cautious about the use of exclusions and they are considered a sanction to be used only in very difficult circumstances. However, on three occasions last year, the school felt that the situations warranted the use of fixed term exclusions of pupils while the problems were successfully resolved.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning has significantly improved and is now **good** overall. Sometimes it is **very good** or **excellent**. Teachers and support staff work well together to provide a challenging and supportive atmosphere. The school's assessment system is a notable strength of the school. The school is successfully overcoming its significant difficulties in recruitment and retention of staff. A more settled staff is reflected in the improvement of teaching and learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. In English, science, ICT, personal, social and health education and in citizenship it is very good.
- The school's assessment system is very good and contributes significantly to improvement.
- There is some excellent teaching in science.
- There is good provision for gifted and talented pupils.
- There is some weakness in subject knowledge.
- There is some weakness in lesson structure and preparation.

Commentary

8. The quality of teaching and learning is good because the very secure assessment systems are used consistently. Teachers have a very clear picture of exactly how well the pupils are doing and regular review meetings adjust teaching methods and activities to challenge and support them. The marking system provides very good feedback to pupils and is appreciated by them. Pupils adopt the same system to mark their own or others' work. There is a very good 'traffic light' system for pupils' self-assessment. For example, a red spot on written work would mean they had not understood and a green that they had. Similarly a thumb up, straight or down indicates understanding in lessons. This results in a very clear appreciation of what they know and understand and what they do not. Assessment is strongly linked to the 'You Can Do It' personal development project and underpins the development of self-esteem. Teaching of personal, social, health and emotional development is very good because it is well established within the planning, curriculum and management of all school activities.

9. There were no unsatisfactory lessons seen and the majority of lessons were good or better. One science lesson was excellent. In this lesson the pupils were totally involved at a very high level because the teacher's overall management of the lesson and classroom was excellent.

10. There is very good teaching across the core subjects of English, science and ICT and these lessons were identified by very good planning and high expectations. This resulted in high motivation and therefore good learning. Lessons encouraged and engaged pupils who were challenged to do well. Teachers expect pupils to behave well. Consequently most listen and learn well.

11. Although teaching in science is very good overall, there is some lack of teachers' subject knowledge, which must be addressed. The very good teaching of ICT results in very good use of the technology to develop pupils' learning. For example, in English, one group wrote narratives on laptop computers using appropriate vocabulary to show the reader what their characters were like. They checked each other's work on screen and successfully made improvements.

12. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented are taught well. They are well supported in class and are given opportunities to develop talents in music, art and design or writing.

13. Occasionally, lessons were not as well prepared or organised. Although these lessons were satisfactory overall, they lacked some pace and consequently pupils lost interest and motivation for short periods of time. They were marked by a lack of excitement and, sometimes, overlong introductions.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 21 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	4	8	8	0	0	0

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

The curriculum

The curriculum is **good**, being broad and balanced, with a **very good** range of opportunities for pupils to extend their learning beyond the school day. There is a **good** match of teachers and support staff to the curriculum. Accommodation is **satisfactory** and learning resources are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Planning in English and mathematics is thorough and helping to raise standards.
- The provision for science, ICT and music has been much improved since the previous inspection.
- The arrangements for pupils' personal development are very good.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and helps these pupils to achieve well.
- There are not enough structured opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills across the curriculum.
- The school uses visits and visitors very well to extend pupils' learning.
- Pupils have access to a good range of resources in all subjects.

Commentary

14. The planning arrangements for literacy and numeracy sessions are thorough and are helping to raise standards in English and mathematics. Sufficient account is taken of the different needs of pupils and leads to them being suitably challenged. As a result, pupils are working at the levels of which they are capable and most of them make good achievement in relation to their poor skill levels on entry to school. There is recognition of the need to provide more structured opportunities in other subjects to encourage pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills, so they are better able to communicate their thoughts and ideas to others. The science curriculum now provides many opportunities for pupils to take part in structured, practical investigations, which enable them to gain scientific knowledge and understanding in an interesting way. Consequently, standards are improving and pupils now achieve well. The provision for ICT has been much improved with the creation of a computer suite and the introduction of better quality computers and interactive whiteboards in some of the classrooms. Because there are planned opportunities for pupils to practise their computer skills when working in other subjects, most of them are showing better competency in ICT. There is much greater breadth to the music curriculum, which includes pupils being able to work with a variety of professional musicians to help develop their skills. Pupils can also join a high quality choir that takes part in music festivals and also gives performances for parents and members of the community.

15. There is very good provision for the pupils' personal development. The school provides many opportunities to help them in learning to respect the values and beliefs of other pupils and adults, in addition to developing their confidence and self-esteem. Central to this provision is the 'You Can Do It' scheme, which has very successfully developed positive attitudes within pupils towards their life in school and the wider community. All pupils have opportunity to take part in a wide range of visits that enriches the curriculum by providing further worthwhile learning experiences. A range of visitors complements these visits, such as theatre groups and artists who have worked with the pupils to develop a variety of skills. Pupils can also take part in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, such as art and design, basketball, football, ICT, drama and music. These experiences support pupils' personal development well, as they give them a chance to learn how to socialise with each other in situations away from the classroom.

16. A good match of teachers to the demands of the curriculum enables most aspects to be taught well. Teaching assistants are of a high quality and make a positive contribution to pupils' learning. They enhance the very good provision for pupils with special educational needs by providing good support for them within lessons. When these pupils have this support, they make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans and achieve well. Resources for teaching and learning are good and enable all areas of the curriculum to be covered. The

accommodation is satisfactory overall, though some classrooms are rather cramped for practical investigations in science. The school has, however, put a lot of effort into improving facilities and the school is very well decorated and bright with very good display. Pupils appreciate the way their toilets have been refurbished to such a high standard.

Care, guidance and support

The care, guidance and support for pupils are **very good** overall. This supports pupils' learning appropriately and **very effectively**. Procedures to ensure pupils' health and safety are **very good** overall. The school's procedures to monitor pupils' academic achievement and progress are **very good**. The school procedures to seek pupils' views through the school council and survey questionnaires are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships are very good; staff know the pupils very well.
- The headteacher, assistant and deputy headteachers, teachers, the learning mentor and support assistants provide thoughtful and caring support to pupils.
- The learning mentor very effectively supports pupils whose behaviour is sometimes inappropriate.
- The 'You Can Do It' programme is very effective in raising pupils' self-esteem.
- The school uses its very good assessment data to ensure very effective monitoring and excellent tracking of pupils' achievement and progress.
- Individual agreed targets for each pupil enable them to evaluate their own progress.

Commentary

17. The school very effectively promotes the care and support of all its pupils. It provides them with a very clean, safe and secure environment so that pupils are happy to come to school and keen to learn. Parents appreciate the school's expectations for their children to work hard.

18. Relationships within the school are very good. The headteacher, assistant and deputy headteachers, teachers and support staff provide very caring and thoughtful support to pupils; they are accessible and responsive to pupils' pastoral needs. The very good relationships throughout the school create a very good learning environment and have a very positive impact on pupils' learning. Regular weekly assemblies provide good opportunities for celebrating pupils' individual work, effort and good behaviour.

19. The learning mentor, who plays a valuable role in establishing links with parents and suitable external agencies, provides a high level of very effective support for pupils who are experiencing difficulty in meeting the high standards of behaviour expected of them.

20. Pupils' academic progress is monitored closely and very effectively through the very good assessment data available. This enables individual targets to be established, drawn up and agreed by pupil, teacher and parents. Pupils are thus very effectively involved in their own education; they are increasingly able to evaluate their own progress and plan the next step forward. Pupils' social development is similarly very effectively monitored.

21. Child protection procedures are securely in place. The headteacher is the designated teacher with overall responsibility and both he and the learning mentor have been suitably trained. This is a very effective and important aspect of the school's work.

22. Pupils are given a good opportunity to put forward their views, through the well-established school council, on a wide range of issues. In addition, surveys have been conducted to establish pupils' views. Pupils are encouraged to comment on their progress towards their agreed individual targets.

23. The school gives high priority to a well-organised programme of weekly lessons in personal, social and health education. The 'You Can Do It' programme provides a very good framework to help pupils to become more mature and better organised, and to improve their self-esteem. The programme includes the necessary elements of health education, including drugs awareness.

24. The school gives appropriately high priority to pupils' health and safety. Regular safety checks are carried out, and equipment is regularly checked.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's partnership with parents has improved, and is now **good**; links with the local community are **very good**. Links with other schools are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school makes good efforts to improve its partnership with parents.
- Information to parents is good.
- Parents are successfully involved in setting their child's individual targets.
- A range of visitors into school from the local community, in particular artists and musicians, successfully extends the range of cultural experiences for pupils.
- The school actively participates in local and national initiatives, and makes good use of the expertise and funding available.
- Links with other schools, through local initiatives, are good.

Commentary

25. The school continues its efforts to improve its partnership with parents, and this is now good. From the very small number of parents who attended the meeting prior to the inspection and the questionnaires returned, evidence shows that most parents are very supportive of the school. Parents say that they are comfortable about approaching the school, and appreciate the opportunity to speak with staff at the end of the school day.

26. Parents are happy that their children enjoy coming to school. Parents value the school's emphasis on encouraging their children to work hard and do their best. Most parents feel that the school enables their children to make good progress.

27. The school prospectus, written in conjunction with the infant school, gives parents a good range of useful information. Regular newsletters keep parents well informed about areas of work to be covered, and school successes. Parents are effectively encouraged to support their child's learning at home. Homework is set on a regular basis. Parents have a very good opportunity to be actively involved in their child's education when individual targets for their child are set and agreed. In addition parents were consulted through an extensive survey carried out in conjunction with Keele University as to their views on a wide range of aspects of their child's education.

28. The majority of parents feel that they are well informed as to the progress their child is making. Home-school communication through homework diaries and reading records is effectively used. Annual reports to parents give them satisfactory levels of information. Reports give indications of what pupils know and can do, with some information as to progress made, and targets to provide guidance as to the next step forward.

29. Currently very few parents are involved in the daily life of the school. There are two vacancies for parent governors. The school plans to approach parents of pupils in each class whom it has identified may be willing to play a more active part in the school community.

30. Links with the various secondary schools to which pupils transfer are good, as is the link with the feeder infant school. There are good links with other schools. For example, in conjunction with other local schools, pupils have benefited from projects undertaken within the New Deals for Communities programme, together with the Excellence in Cities initiative.

31. Links with the community are very good, and the school actively participates in, and benefits from, many local and national initiatives, including some through the Education Business Partnership. A good range of visitors into school, for example musical groups and theatre groups, supports pupils' learning and development well. In particular, pupils have been able to work with a series of artists within the school, producing some very impressive collaborative work. Year 5 pupils are currently undertaking a project with Walsall Art Gallery.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the headteacher and other key staff are **very good** and have played an important role in the very good improvement that the school has made since the previous inspection. Governance is **good**, with governors playing an active role in the life of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is very well led by the headteacher, who has high aspirations for all pupils and staff.
- Governors play a full part in helping to shape the direction of the school.
- All staff and governors work well together as a team and are committed to enabling each pupil to achieve as well as possible.
- The procedures for checking the performance of the school are very strong.
- Management of the provision for those pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- There is very successful management of the school's finances with very good support from the school bursar.

Commentary

32. The headteacher is a very good leader who gives purposeful direction for the school. He has been the driving force behind the successful tackling of the key issues from the previous inspection. This has led to much improved provision for science and ICT, so that pupils now achieve better in these subjects. Thoughtful recruitment of new staff means that teaching is now stronger, and improved assessment procedures ensures that the progress of pupils is closely tracked so that work can be set that matches their needs. In leading these developments, he has created a climate in which all staff and governors work successfully together, with a clear focus on school improvement and the raising of standards. There is a shared vision of governors, staff and headteacher of the way that the school is to be taken forward, for example, by continuing to emphasise the 'You Can Do It' strategy that has so successfully raised pupils' confidence and self-esteem. The headteacher has delegated managerial responsibilities wisely so that effective teams have been developed. The phase co-ordinators provide very good role models for other staff and for pupils and play an important role in the leadership and management of the curriculum and teaching. The reorganisation of the management of pupils with special educational needs has led to these pupils having much better support, so that their achievement is now good. Subject co-ordinators have been given stronger roles so they are able to have a clear view of the quality of teaching and learning through the school. There is good use of performance management to determine training needs in line with school improvement planning. There are many opportunities for teachers to take part in training linked to school and personal priorities, to help build up their own professional development.

33. Governors are actively involved in the life of the school and in the school improvement planning process. Consequently, they have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are able to carry out their statutory duties well. They are very supportive but also prepared to challenge the senior management team, which is valued by the head as this brings an objective view of the school's work. There are very good procedures for monitoring and evaluating

the school's work. The school improvement plan is thorough and enables the school to measure accurately the progress made towards its targets. Since the previous inspection, the assistant head has played a key role in the improvement made in the collection and use of assessment information to build up a picture of pupils' attainment and progress. This has enabled the school to set realistic targets for improvement in English, mathematics and science. There are successful arrangements for the senior management team and subject co-ordinators to monitor teachers' planning, sample pupils' work and undertake lesson observations to check the quality of teaching and learning though the school.

34. The school budget is managed very well, with efficient systems in place to make sure that the finances are carefully controlled and expenditure regularly reviewed. There is a good understanding of the principles of best value, which is applied well when comparing costs for purchases and their effect on standards attained by pupils. The value that the school places on the well-being of its pupils is reflected in the way money has been spent on the high quality refurbishment of their toilets. Administration by the bursar is very good, as are the systems of financial control. She oversees these systems well, and also supports the running of the school and the work of the teachers in an efficient way. The value for money that the school gives is good.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	631 417	Balance from previous year	52 696
Total expenditure	541 434	Balance carried forward to the next	89 983
Expenditure per pupil	2 450		

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of attainment, including those of speaking and listening, are well below national expectations.
- Teaching is good overall.
- Assessment is very good and is well supported by very good leadership and management.
- There is good use of ICT to support learning.
- There are insufficient opportunities to develop pupils' speaking skills.

Commentary

35. Pupils' standards of attainment at eleven years of age, in the 2003 national tests, were very low compared to those nationally and well below those of similar schools. However, there was a high percentage of pupils who had special educational needs in this group. Pupils in the current Year 6 attain standards well below expectations. These pupils have achieved unsatisfactorily over time because of considerable staffing difficulties. The disruptions to their learning have had a substantial impact on their progress. When pupils enter the school their attainment is variable each year but generally it is well below expectations. Pupils have limited use of language and many are unable to express themselves clearly.

36. The school has now entered a period of stability. Good and some very good teaching in lessons is raising standards across the school. Pupils are achieving satisfactorily and often well. Improvements in teaching have been developed further by very good leadership and management of the subject. The new subject leader has worked very hard and is an excellent role model for all staff. She is also assessment co-ordinator and assistant head, and this has placed her in a unique position to influence teaching and the progress of pupils. The very good assessment procedures are almost always used consistently. These procedures give teachers and pupils a very clear indication of successes. Achievable targets are set for improvement. Marking is positive and challenges pupils to improve and think further about their work. Pupils are usually positive about their learning and younger pupils are excited by it. In light of the assessments the school has given extra time to English to support all learning.

37. The National Literacy Strategy is used well and teachers plan for each ability group in detail. Where good and very good teaching was seen, staff had high expectations and good subject knowledge and also established ways to develop speaking and listening skills. In a very good Year 5 lesson for example, the brisk pace of teaching resulted in good efforts by the pupils and an improvement in their learning. Very good use was made of ICT overall and in this same lesson the teacher used the interactive whiteboard to focus attention and to motivate pupils. They were fully involved in moving text boxes and in making their own decisions. Pupils use the mobile set of laptop computers to improve their writing skills.

38. The new reading scheme has been very well received by all the pupils and has given them a new purpose. Pupils of all abilities in Year 3 spoke enthusiastically about their books although some revealed that they do not have access to many books at home. Support from home, however, has recently improved and pupils' homework diaries are often completed. Reading resources are stored and labelled well and there is a range of well-chosen texts for teacher-guided reading sessions. Some younger pupils found difficulty in recalling the names for simple objects but all were successful in reading their books because they were interested in them. Older pupils also read

satisfactorily and say they enjoy books. However, these pupils are reticent and sometimes do not have the language they need to explain or describe well.

39. The school's focus on writing is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' work. They are given the opportunity to write for a variety of purposes and the very good assessment and marking are raising standards. Handwriting has generally improved and presentation is usually neat. Gifted and talented writers are identified and invited to join writing projects with a local university and study centre. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well by all staff. They work towards their targets on their individual action plans and generally achieve well.

40. The school is aware of the need to develop speaking and listening opportunities and in some lessons this was well planned. However, it does not have the high priority that is needed throughout the curriculum. This results in some pupils struggling to find suitable words to use and explaining in an imprecise way. Teachers provide the technical vocabulary for different subjects but do not always model the sentence structures to help pupils.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

41. There are good opportunities to use writing skills within other subjects such as science, history and religious education. For example, pupils in Year 3 wrote holiday postcards to describe their 'meeting' of Jesus. They use ICT to write newspaper reports or poetry and learn to take notes for other subjects. There is good provision of non-fiction books for topics and pupils use the Internet to research information.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below average, though pupils are now achieving well.
- Very good leadership and management by the co-ordinator are helping to raise standards.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Good support is given to those pupils with special educational needs.
- Planning and assessment procedures are thorough.
- There are inconsistencies between classes in the quality of plenary sessions and in opportunities given for pupils to develop their mathematical vocabulary.

Commentary

42. Over the past few years, the results of the national tests for eleven year olds have been well below average. To improve standards, the school has worked closely with the numeracy team from the local education authority to provide training and support for all teachers. The co-ordinator, who provides very good leadership and management of the subject. His teaching provides a good role model for others and his analysis of test results has helped the school to focus on aspects that require development, such as the identification of mathematical patterns and interpretation of information from graphs. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection, particularly in the quality of teaching for pupils in Years 3 and 4. The work the school has done is beginning to bear fruit and though standards for most pupils in Year 6 are below average, they are now achieving well in relation to their poor skill levels on entry to school.

43. Teaching is enthusiastic and pupils are given activities that are interesting so that learning is made fun. The good subject knowledge of teachers enables them to set work that meets the individual needs of their pupils well and, as a result, they achieve well. The introductions to lessons are brisk, which results in pupils making good progress in their quick mental recall skills. This was evident in a lesson for pupils in Year 4 when they were mentally multiplying single digits by 10, and in Year 6 when pupils were mentally calculating what each digit represented in a number with up to

three decimal places. Teachers make good use of interactive whiteboards to explain mathematical ideas, such as when pupils in Year 6 were being taught about place value involving decimals. In some classes, there are better opportunities for pupils to develop their mathematical vocabulary to help them explain the methods they have used to solve problems they have been set. Similarly, some plenary sessions are more effective than others in enabling pupils to review and consolidate their learning.

44. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about their work and clearly enjoy their mathematical activities, especially when they are practical ones. Because of this, their behaviour is good and they are able to maintain their concentration for lengthy periods of time. They work well together in pairs and small groups, which makes a positive contribution to their personal development. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by teaching assistants and this enables them to take a full part in activities and meet the targets on their individual education plans. Assessment arrangements are thorough and let teachers have a clear view of their pupils' attainment and know what is needed next to improve their performance in the subject. The planning procedures are successful in ensuring that all pupils are given work that builds on previous activities, so they are able to develop their learning in a progressive manner.

Mathematics across the curriculum

45. There are good opportunities for pupils to practise their numeracy skills in other subjects. For instance, pupils in Year 6 use their mathematical skills to handle a variety of data during scientific investigations, while in design and technology they have made careful measurements when making the wooden frames for their moving toys.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good quality teaching and learning enable all pupils to achieve well.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning.
- Science is very well managed and led.
- Very good use is made of ICT in science lessons.
- There has been a very good level of improvement since the last inspection.
- Pupils' below average language development inhibits their learning in science and therefore their attainment in national tests.

Commentary

46. The results of the 2003 national tests show attainment to be well below the average across the country. However, from lesson observations and analysis of the work of Year 6 pupils, standards of the current Year 6, whilst still below average, are clearly improving. Overall there has been good improvement in standards since the last inspection.

47. Teaching is very good overall. Lessons are very well planned and teachers use a very good range of strategies to ensure lessons run smoothly and that pupils understand the lesson content. Teamwork between all staff is very good and is a significant factor in the very good learning that occurs in lessons. All staff share in the very good classroom and pupil management that makes these lessons so successful and ensures that all pupils, whatever their individual needs, are fully involved in the lesson. Pupils with special educational needs are very well catered for in all lessons. Work is matched to their individual needs and level of attainment and they are very well supported. All lessons are typified by the very good relationships, high expectations and respect that teachers have for pupils and that pupils have for all adults in the school. This results in pupils who want to learn, listen carefully and contribute well to discussion. All these factors came together in an excellent Year 6 science lesson where pupils were involved in recovering clean water from dirty

water. The lesson was exceptionally well planned and managed. The teacher ensured that all aspects of the lesson built on the previous one. Excellent use was made of ICT, including an interactive whiteboard and a digital microscope. Pupils were engrossed and achieved very highly as a consequence of excellent teaching, resulting in excellent learning. Teachers make good use of language development strategies by, for example, having key science words around the classrooms and encouraging pupils to discuss and explain investigations. However, pupils lower than average language skills have an inhibiting effect on the standards they achieve in science.

48. Pupils' behaviour is at least very good. Besides good levels of concentration, they are very considerate of others, listen well and are aware of others' points of view. This ability to share and to get on with others enables them to work very successfully in groups and whole-class activities as well as individually.

49. Leadership and management are very good. There are two co-ordinators, who work very closely together to ensure that there is continuity in learning as pupils progress through the school. Very good and thorough analysis of standards has resulted in a focus on investigative and experimental science and on the development of pupils' language in science.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and results in very good learning for all pupils.
- Although overall the standard of pupils' attainment is below average, pupils achieve well.
- There is a very good awareness of the use of ICT in all areas of the school.
- Improvement has been very good since the last inspection.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- Subject leadership is very good with an excellent view of future needs and development.
- Resourcing is very good including an ICT suite, and interactive whiteboards in many classrooms.
- The use of ICT to support pupils with special educational needs should be more focused.

Commentary

50. The school has put a lot of effort into improving its facilities for ICT. All classrooms have internet access, there is a central ICT suite, many classrooms have interactive whiteboards and a set of laptop computers is available for use in any classroom. This has resulted in pupils having lots of opportunity to learn new skills and to apply them in their work in other subjects. Standards attained by the current Year 6 pupils are below the national average overall but pupils achieve well and are making good and often very good progress. Standards in some aspects of ICT are in line with the national average. A very good example of this was seen in a Year 6 lesson on spreadsheets and modelling. Here pupils produced spreadsheets to calculate the total cost involved in making a product, developed a formula to calculate profit, and produced graphs and reports to present the information to others. The very good improvements in resources and staff expertise made since the previous inspection are quickly improving standards in pupils' attainment.

51. Teaching is very good across all years. The very good relationship between adults and pupils is a very important factor in the very good level of learning which results directly from very good teaching. Teamwork between teachers and support staff is very good, ensuring that all pupils are very well provided for, for example when groups move from their classroom to the ICT suite for parts of the lesson. The use of ICT to support pupils with special educational needs, through the use of 'Successmaker' software, is good. However, the use in both the both in the ICT suite and in classrooms needs to be more directed at meeting their individual needs. The interactive whiteboards in a number of classrooms were very well used as an integral part of a range of lessons, thus ensuring that all pupils clearly understood the topics being covered.

52. Pupils are very well behaved. Co-operation between pupils when sharing computers in the ICT suite is usually good but occasionally one pupil in the partnership takes over the computer to the disadvantage of the other pupil. Most teachers are aware of this and take effective action to ensure equality of opportunity.

53. Subject leadership is very good. The co-ordinator has a high level of personal skill and is very aware of the future developments needed to continue to improve the subject and standards throughout the school. She is an excellent role model in her use of ICT as an integral part of teaching and learning. Resourcing is of a very high standard and senior management lead by example in the use of ICT. It is clearly very important in the development of all aspects the school, through management, teaching and learning to raising standards and attainment.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

54. The use of ICT across the curriculum is developing very well and is one of the strengths of the school. Besides the use of the ICT suite for developing skills in, for example, mathematics through the use of spreadsheets, the provision of a class set of laptop computers and of interactive whiteboards, soon to be in every classroom, enables teachers to use ICT as an integral part of teaching and learning in many subjects of the National Curriculum.

HUMANITIES

In humanities no lessons were seen in **geography** and **history** and therefore it is not possible to form an overall judgement about provision in these subjects.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of attainment, at the end of Year 6, are a little below expectation.
- Teaching and learning are good overall.
- Subject leadership and management are good.
- Visitors and the good use of artefacts strengthen the curriculum.

Commentary

55. Although standards of attainment of the current Year 6 pupils are a little below expectation, this is strongly related to their lower standards of English and abilities to express their feelings and ideas. Higher ability pupils complete assessments of their work at the end of units and these show a good understanding of the work covered. Their work demonstrated some depth of thinking through a variety of presentations such as art and design, diaries and song. However, some pupils found it difficult to talk about their knowledge and understanding in any detail. Younger pupils are more enthusiastic about their work and reach standards which are generally in line with expectations. They know the basic story of the life of Christ and can talk simply about the Bible and church.

56. Teaching is generally good. Lessons are planned well and provide opportunities for pupils to express themselves in different ways. The work is well marked to give feedback on pupils' responses. Teachers use questions to challenge pupils' knowledge and thinking. This results in good learning. For example, in a Year 3 lesson, pupils were asked to clearly explain why things in their lives are special. By the end of the lesson they were able to identify why the Bible is special. Most pupils find their lessons interesting although some older pupils sometimes feel confused about different religions.

57. The subject leader is well informed. She oversees the planning and has ensured that the curriculum is challenging. More time is now devoted to teaching and the subject has taken a higher priority. Pupils' knowledge and understanding are assessed each half term and at the end of a unit of work. The findings, from these assessments and from lessons, are discussed regularly. This can result in changes to lesson plans or to units to improve teaching and learning.

58. The curriculum is based mainly on Christianity but pupils learn about other faiths such as Judaism and Islam. There is a good range of artefacts which is used to illustrate similarities and differences between faiths and to help pupils develop an understanding of others' beliefs. The local vicar takes regular assemblies which often reinforce learning about the Christian faith and can illustrate other cultures. For example, pupils had raised money for the protection of a water source in Kenya. The vicar brought in photographs of the villagers and the spring and of the villagers expressing their thanks to the school.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

In **art and design** standards of attainment are in line with expectations at the end of Year 6. However, when pupils work with resident artists or in specialist summer school activities their work is sometimes above expectations. The school regularly provides opportunities for pupils to work with artists. These opportunities raise the expectations of pupils, parents and staff and result in improved standards of work. The school's 'time tunnel' illustrates a range of techniques and media experienced by the pupils. These include well-finished appliqué 'Egyptian' wall-hanging, detailed 'Greek' clay modelling and intricate 'Roman' mosaic tiles. Pupils in Year 3 love art and design and can talk in simple terms about their masks and about their designs for a chair. Year 6 pupils talked about preparation for making headdresses but they found it difficult to explain techniques. An ongoing project with the local art gallery has created the opportunity for all classes to visit the gallery and to benefit from unique resources being created to enhance the project. There are opportunities for gifted and talented pupils to develop their skills through the art club, which is currently engaged in screen-printing based on 1950s Pop Art. As only limited amount of teaching was seen no overall judgement of teaching has been made. However, the lessons seen were taught satisfactorily. Teachers' subject knowledge has improved and the subject is well resourced. ICT is used as a resource for research and for expression. There are some difficulties when pupils have poor access to sinks and occasionally classrooms are not prepared well enough for art and design lessons. Leadership and management of art and design are good. A new scheme of work has been adopted and the subject leader has taken advice from an art specialist to tailor the scheme to the school. She monitors work and oversees planning well. In **design and technology** a good curriculum gives pupils opportunities to use a wide range of materials to develop their skills in the subject. Pupils are provided with activities that enable them to practise techniques in order to improve the quality of the finished product and are allowed to experiment with different ways of joining materials. After designing and making products they are expected to make evaluations of their quality and say how they might be improved. Good links are made with other subjects, as is shown by the way pupils in Years 5 and 6 have used their scientific knowledge and understanding of forces when making toys that incorporate cams as a method of movement. Pupils have positive views on the subject and say how much they enjoy working with a variety of tools and different materials to make things. There has been considerable improvement in the provision for **music**. Consequently, standards have improved and are generally average at the end of Year 6. Pupils have achieved well. The new scheme of work and training for staff have resulted in more confident teaching. The scheme is carefully structured to support non-specialists and can be used quickly and easily in the event of staff changes. Now that the school has a more stable staff, improved confidence will allow the scheme to be used flexibly. Pupils sing regularly and their singing is clear and tuneful. There is a very well attended choir, which has been especially invited to sing in national concerts and for the local education authority music services. All pupils in the choir have their own uniform and are very proud of their achievements. Music is a major part of two large school productions each year. The subject leader is a music specialist and has taught alongside most other staff to guide and act as a role model for improved teaching. She has improved resources and has effected the repair and renovation of some instruments. There are some instruments from other cultures, and music for assemblies focuses on different composers, traditions or cultures. The school has welcomed visiting

music groups and some pupils take advantage of instrumental teaching offered in school by the local education authority. Pupils of all abilities are given the same opportunities and from time to time up to 90 pupils attend the choir although about 30 are taken out to sing in concerts. Although pupils do sometimes compose, and Year 3 pupils recalled occasions when they had worked on compositions, Year 6 could not recall any opportunities to compose. This is a relative weakness of the provision. A broad and balanced curriculum in **physical education** provides good opportunities for enrichment, and makes a positive contribution to pupils' personal and social development. For example, pupils can take part in a wide range of extra-curricular activities and are also able work with a variety of professional coaches to develop their skills in basketball and football. In Years 3 and 4, pupils have sessions in the local swimming pool to promote their swimming skills and develop their knowledge and understanding about water safety. There are enough resources to cover all aspects of the subject. The accommodation is satisfactory, with a spacious hall and sufficient outdoor hard surfaces and grassed areas for suitably developing the pupils' physical education skills.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

This area is a very significant part of the school's work and a lot of effort is put into developing pupils' personal and social skills. Assemblies play an important part in this with pupils learning to take responsibility, listen to the thoughts and feelings of others and develop self-confidence. With a wide-ranging intake the school feels that it essential to develop children's responsibility, their independence and their self-belief. The 'You Can Do It' project is an important strategy in the school's development of pupils' tolerance and self-esteem. The project has far-reaching implications for the development of pupils' behaviour and social skills as well as their keenness to join in learning and to answer questions. It is being very successful in improving the way pupils relate to each other and to adults and is helping with language development: pupils are becoming much more willing to express their thoughts and feelings and join in discussions. The school ethos is very much centred on the school as a caring, valuing community and it is very successful in this.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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