

INSPECTION REPORT

HUNTER'S BAR INFANT SCHOOL

Sheffield

LEA area: Sheffield

Unique reference number: 106995

Headteacher: Mrs M Shipley

Lead inspector: Mrs L Traves

Dates of inspection: 3rd – 6th February 2004

Inspection number: 260601

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	5 to 7 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	221
School address:	Sharrow Vale Road Sheffield
Postcode:	S11 8ZG
Telephone number:	0114 266 0541
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Tom Nuttgens
Date of previous inspection:	May 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Hunter's Bar is an average sized infant school situated close to Sheffield city centre. The area is one of wide cultural and social diversity. An increasing number of pupils travel to the school from other parts of the city. There are 268 pupils on roll, with slightly more girls than boys. Of these, 87 are taught in the Foundation Stage (reception classes). In four classes, pupils are taught by 2 class teachers at different times of the week. A wide range of ethnic backgrounds are represented within the school community, with a higher than average percentage (19 per cent) of pupils having English as an additional language. This figure has increased significantly in recent years. However, few of these pupils are in the early stages of language learning. The most prevalent ethnic group other than white British pupils is Pakistani and the most widely spoken first language other than English is Punjabi. The number of children who have free school meals is broadly average (9.5 per cent). The number of pupils who have special educational needs (10.0 per cent) is below average. Of these, 2 pupils have statements. These are mostly related to learning and emotional and behavioural difficulties. When children start school, their skills are very wide ranging but overall, are broadly as expected for children of this age. The present headteacher was appointed to the school in January 2002. Since the previous inspection, there have been a significant number of staffing changes, due to retirements and promotions and three changes of leadership, for similar reasons. The school has Beacon status for its good work in supporting the transition, for example, from home to school and between schools.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
24039	Mrs L Traves	Lead inspector	Mathematics Geography Physical education The Foundation Stage English as an additional language
11084	Mrs J Hughes	Lay inspector	
27337	Mrs S Oultram	Team inspector	English Art and design History Music Special educational needs
4295	Mr D Dodds	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Religious education Design and technology

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an improving school with significant strengths. The care it provides enables all pupils to flourish. The standard of education provided is sound. The quality of the teaching is satisfactory, overall, with some high quality teaching that is enabling pupils to achieve well in key areas, such as English. However, pupils could do better in information and communication technology (ICT) and science. The headteacher, senior staff and governors provide good leadership and management, and are moving the school forward. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The strong leadership of the headteacher sets a very clear direction for the work of the school;
- Pupils get off to a flying start in the Foundation Stage (reception classes);
- Standards in English are above average and those in art and design are much better than usually seen;
- The school takes very good care of its pupils and provides particularly well for those with special educational needs;
- It has forged very strong and productive links with other schools;
- It highly values and celebrates pupils' cultural diversity;
- Standards in ICT are unsatisfactory
- Pupils could achieve more in science;
- There are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning;
- The skills of some subject leaders need to be developed.

There has been satisfactory improvement in areas identified as issues at the last inspection. Initially, progress was slow because of several changes in leadership and staffing, and important areas dipped. However, in the last two years, improvement has rapidly accelerated. For example, pupils' personal and social development is now good. The use of information on pupils' progress to enhance learning is now strong in English and improving in mathematics, but there is still more to do in ICT and science. The school has worked very hard to achieve stability and to reverse the decline in standards which have fallen from well above average to average since the last inspection.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
reading	B	C	C	C
writing	B	C	C	D
mathematics	B	C	C	C

*Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average
Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals*

Pupils' overall achievement is satisfactory. They reach average standards in most subjects and there are signs of improvement, particularly in English, which suggest that the recent decline has been halted. The current Year 2 pupils are likely to reach above average standards in reading and writing. More pupils are likely to reach solidly average standards in mathematics, with fewer just scraping through. Standards are much better than usually seen in art and design, but they are not high enough in ICT. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good because of the very good support they receive. The majority of higher attainers achieve as well as they should

overall, although they could do better in science. Those with English as an additional language and from ethnic minority groups achieve as well as others. In the Foundation Stage children do well in all areas of learning and achieve very well in their personal and social development. They are on course to meet or exceed the goals expected of them by the end of the reception year.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Attendance and punctuality are average, overall, but there is a higher than average number of pupils who are absent for long periods without the permission of the school. Pupils behave well and have good attitudes to learning.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory overall. It is very good in the Foundation Stage and gets children off to a strong start. Although there are examples of good and very good teaching in Years 1 and 2, there is a significant percentage of teaching that is more ordinary, which slows progress. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are provided with high quality support, which accelerates their learning. The school enriches pupils' learning well through visits, visitors and very strong links with other schools. A successful partnership with parents enhances learning. Staff take very good care of the pupils, support them well and have their best interests at heart.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's leadership is particularly strong and is a crucial factor in the school moving forward. She is well supported by the deputy head. Governance is good. Governors use their wide expertise well and fulfil their statutory responsibilities. Some subject leaders are very effective in their roles, but some need further development of their skills in order to maintain and improve standards in their subjects.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have positive views about the school and value and support its work. Children enjoy school and feel their views are taken into account. A small number of parents would like to have more information about their child's progress.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise standards in ICT, ensuring that all strands of the subject are covered in sufficient depth and provide pupils with more opportunities to practise their ICT skills in other subjects;
- Develop teachers' skills in science, to ensure that assessments are used effectively to provide work at the right level of challenge for all pupils;
- Use the examples of exciting, stimulating teaching to raise the quality of the more ordinary, less effective lessons;
- Improve the skills of some subject leaders to enable them to take a more effective part in developing their subjects.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards are average and achievement is satisfactory overall. The vast majority of pupils achieve well in English and very well in art and there are some signs of improvement in mathematics. However, standards are not high enough in ICT and pupils could achieve more in science. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in relation to their abilities. Those who speak English as an additional language make good progress in their language development and reach similar standards to others. Boys and girls do equally well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well overall and very well in their personal and social development;
- Standards in English and art and design are better than in most infant schools;
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because they are very well supported;
- Standards are below average in ICT;
- Pupils could make better progress in science.

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 (15.9)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	14.5 (14.2)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	16.7 (16.9)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 90 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

1. Results in the national tests in 2003 were broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics, in relation to all schools nationally and in reading and mathematics, in relation to schools in similar circumstances. There was improvement in all three areas from the previous year, in relation to similar schools. In reading and mathematics, a slightly higher proportion of pupils achieved the average level than in the majority of schools in the country. However, a significant percentage only just made it. In reading, a slightly higher percentage of pupils achieved the higher level (Level 3) in the tests than nationally.
2. When children enter the reception class, they demonstrate a very wide range of attainments. Although a significant percentage have skills that are above those expected for children of this age, a similar proportion have skills which are below and sometimes well below those usually seen. In addition, there are an increasing number of children starting school who speak English as an additional language, although few of these are in the very early stages of language learning. The current reception pupils have weaker skills in language than they do in other areas. Their mathematics skills are better. Very good teaching leads to rapid learning and most pupils achieve well from their starting points. The majority will meet the standards expected in all areas of learning by the time they enter Year 1, and a good proportion will exceed these. In personal, social and emotional development, most pupils are on course to exceed the expected goals.

3. Standards have declined since the time of the last inspection, when they were judged to be well above average in reading, writing and mathematics and good in science and ICT. Results in the national tests have also shown a downturn, although the overall trend has been broadly in line with the national picture. There are several key factors that have affected attainment. Since the last inspection, the school has gone through a period of turbulence, with many staffing changes and several changes of leadership. These factors slowed developments and other schools nationally made sharper progress than Hunter's Bar. In addition to a changing staff profile, the pupil profile has changed. There is now a much more diverse cultural and social mix of pupils entering the school, from many different parts of the city. A significant increase in the percentage of pupils having English as an additional language and those with special educational needs has resulted in the school having to rethink its approaches to these important areas. The current headteacher and deputy head have worked extremely hard to stabilise the situation, halt the decline and set the school on a firm course towards improvement. The impact of this strong leadership is now beginning to be seen in key areas, such as reading and writing.
4. The current Year 2 pupils are on course to do better in both reading and writing this year. Standards are above average and all pupils are achieving well, as a result of the measures the school has put into place. Standards are starting to improve for several reasons. The full implementation of guided group reading, better assessment procedures and a strong emphasis on teaching and learning in writing are having a good impact on learning. In mathematics, the school's own evidence and inspection findings indicate that standards are likely to remain at an average level, compared to schools nationally. However, more pupils are on track to reach a solidly average level this year, rather than just scraping through.
5. In the 2003 tests in reading and writing, those from particular ethnic groups or those with English as an additional language did just as well as their classmates. This is largely due to the school effectively recognising and addressing their needs. In mathematics, these pupils did not perform as well on the oral sections of the tests. The school is addressing this issue through providing extra adult support in lessons, in particular to reinforce vocabulary and understanding. As a result, these pupils are now achieving as well as others in the class. Pupils with special educational needs are achieving particularly well because the school has ensured that clear, achievable targets are set for them, backed up with good quality support in lessons.
6. Standards in ICT overall are unsatisfactory. Although pupils make steady progress and reach average standards in some areas, such as word processing, other areas are much less well developed. In addition, pupils have insufficient opportunities to practise their skills in other subject areas. Standards in science are average overall. However, variations in the quality of teaching between and within classes affect progress and some pupils are not achieving as much as they could, for example, in scientific investigation. Pupils achieve very high standards in art and design because of the high profile the subject is given, very good leadership and management and skilful teaching.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good and have improved since the last inspection. There have been no exclusions in the last year. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Attendance and punctuality rates are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Endlessly exciting activities for the youngest children make them want to come to school;
- Pupils learn to be sensitive to the needs of others;
- The 'Friendship Charter' is at the heart of the unremitting focus by adults to the improvement of children's personal development;
- Moral and social issues take centre stage in all areas of school life through the seamless provision of care, behaviour management and positive examples from staff;
- New monitoring systems now promote more regular attendance and better punctuality among children;
- Instances of unauthorised absence are much higher than normally found in similar schools.

Commentary

7. Staff strive determinedly to cultivate a school full of enthusiastic children and, by and large, they succeed well. From the time children join the Foundation Stage, they are bombarded with a huge range of fascinating opportunities. Their response is delightful as they bounce into school, conscientiously self register and 'sign in' for lunch and then busy themselves in groups around the different areas of learning. Adults working with them constantly encourage positive reactions, by talking and reasoning with them and pushing them to become increasingly independent. These children love it and flourish in such a supportive environment. Washing up after painting is considered a fun job and children show pride when all the palettes are gleaming again on the tables, ready for the next person to use. Staff show great appreciation when children think of others in this way and the children glow with happiness at a job well done. If such good work results in a mention in the Golden Book, so much the better.
8. Positive examples of challenging teaching that capture pupils' imagination and allow only the very best responses can be found dotted about the school. In the best lessons, where pupils are only too aware that they have to think and work really hard all the time to satisfy their teacher, results are proportionately impressive. In classrooms where teaching is less focused, the resultant lack of rigour is mirrored in the more sluggish responses from pupils that hinder their work rate and progress.
9. Children throughout the school know how to behave well and react appropriately in different situations. They know what the expectations are and where the boundaries are set and they rarely venture beyond these. Occasionally, a few of the more precocious children cause some restlessness in lessons and teachers have to settle the whole class down again. However, such instances are rare and do not significantly disrupt learning. This is an improvement from the time of the last inspection, when a small minority of pupils with poor behaviour often disrupted lessons. Although a few parent questionnaires flagged up concerns about bullying, no instances of any unacceptable behaviour were seen during the inspection. The school has very good systems in place to deal with any inappropriate incidents.
10. Pupils' personal qualities are inextricably linked to the 'Friendship Charter' that encompasses all aspects of personal development in the school. Children draw up the rules, with some help from staff. It is indicative of the importance the headteacher attaches to this area of children's education that, after their initial attempts to formulate these rules, she looked at the negative set of statements they produced and asked them if this was really how they wanted visitors and parents to perceive the school. They had a rethink and compiled a set of positive, life affirming statements against which to measure themselves and their peers. As a result, children practise what it means to be kind and caring throughout their time in school. There is a constant 'drip feed' of reminders during the day, as children attend 15-minute sessions of personal, social and health education and citizenship (PSHCE) twice

during the day. This helps to reinforce all the positive messages and links in with assembly topics and religious education themes. This is an innovative approach that weaves a cocoon around the children, allowing their personalities to blossom and helping them to become increasingly sensitive to the needs of others.

A really good example was seen in Year 1 in a short, 'Circle Time' session, which was a prelude to a religious education lesson about 'special people'.

As the children sat quietly the teacher played some quiet 'mood' music. The classroom lights were switched off and the room took on the shadows of a grey winter afternoon. The teacher lit a candle.

'When I light the candle what do we think about?' said the teacher.

'Nice calm things' said a girl. The room fell silent except for the mood music.

'Today I've got some lovely things for you' said the teacher quietly. 'Some special cards. They are not ordinary cards. They are magic. When I come round the circle to give you a card, the card will choose you. It's a special card for you. It's your card, and it's just about you.'

The cards were beautiful. Gold backed, in a gold box secured by a gold ribbon. This was untied, the box carefully opened and the teacher proceeded round the circle. At each child, there is a pause.

'The card will choose you. Take one. It WILL be the right one. It knows you. It knows who you are. It's for you.

Only you! 'Each child takes a card. The card is turned over and often there is a pause as the words are carefully read. As the child reads the card a transformation comes over their face, from deep concentration, to a smile, to radiant happiness. All of this happened in almost silence around the room. The children loved it! Some of the statements were:

'You're a good friend'.

'You bring sunshine into our classroom'.

'You're always so helpful'.

Words to treasure, to lift, and to go straight to the soul of a child. You could almost feel the 'glow'. After a pause the teacher brought out some gold blank cards.

'You think of someone you could give a special card to. What do you think they would really like to hear the card tell them? Think of somebody. Think what it will be good for them to hear. I'm going to give you a pencil and you can write your special magic card'.

This was a very simple way of creating a very special time and helping children 'grow' in 15 minutes, as receivers and then as givers.

11. The impact of this coherent and inclusive approach is evident in much of the school's work and pupils' responses. They raise significant sums of money for charity, learn to talk about their successes and concerns and become productive members of the school community and beyond. This is a significant achievement for such young children.

Attendance

Commentary

12. The school consistently promotes the importance of regular attendance and punctuality to parents. The majority take heed but still, a number of parents bring their children to school late or think it is acceptable to be away from school for extended periods. The headteacher is sensitive to the fact that there are times when this is unavoidable, and, as more children who have extended families overseas join the school, the problem will not disappear. However, there is now an effective attendance plan in place and the headteacher and school administrator work effectively with the local inclusion officer to ensure that individual pupil attendance is carefully tracked and potential problems identified at an early stage. This is commendable practice as parents are now beginning to understand that unexplained absence and lax time keeping have an impact on how well their children do at school. Currently, unauthorised absences are higher than the average because some families need to go abroad for extended periods to visit relatives. The school is being as proactive as it can in addressing this aspect of attendance.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence

Unauthorised absence

School data	4.4
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School data	0.9
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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 satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. There is a sound curriculum, which is effectively enriched by visits, visitors and extra activities. Pupils are very well cared for. There are strong links with the community and very good links with other schools and institutions.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. This is not as strong as it was judged to be at the last inspection. Much good and some very good teaching was seen in Key Stage 1, particularly in English. However, there were inconsistencies in teaching between classes in the same year group and within some classes taught by two teachers. This slows the pace of learning overall. In the Foundation Stage, very good teaching leads to rapid learning and ensures that children achieve well. Assessment arrangements are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching in the Foundation Stage is very good; children make very good progress and achieve well overall, as a result;
- Pupils who have special educational needs achieve well because of the high quality support they receive;
- Teaching in English is good, overall and is leading to improved standards;
- There are inconsistencies in teaching between classes and subjects which slow the pace of learning;
- Teachers do not always make best use of information on pupils' progress to provide appropriately challenging work, particularly for the more able.

Commentary

13. Children in the Foundation Stage learn rapidly and achieve well because of the high quality teaching they receive in each reception class. Teaching was judged to be good for children under 5 at the last inspection, so this represents an improvement. Activities in all areas of learning are very well planned to ensure an excellent balance between work directed by staff and opportunities for children to explore and investigate for themselves. Teaching in this part of the school is imaginative, dynamic and lively. As a result, children bubble over with enthusiasm as they carry out their tasks and develop very good levels of independence and concentration. Another key factor in children's rapid development is the very good quality of the procedures used for assessing their progress. This ensures that the 'next steps' in learning are clearly identified and tasks planned which closely match pupils' learning needs. Very good teamwork ensures that pupils have access to a similar range of learning experiences, whichever class they are in. Pupils in the earlier stages of learning English and those who are not yet fully confident English speakers receive very good support, which enables them to learn as well as others.
14. In Key Stage 1, about half of the lessons were good and some very good teaching was seen. However, teaching is judged to be satisfactory overall, because of the inconsistencies between and within year groups and classes, which affects the rate of learning. There are also inconsistencies between subjects. Teaching In English is stronger, for example, than in mathematics and science. There is greater consistency in English because it has been a priority area for development. There are also signs of improvement in the teaching of mathematics, with mental and oral parts of the lessons usually being well taught and all teachers giving greater priority to investigative work. However, as yet, mathematics teaching has not been fully monitored to ensure that improvements are throughout the school. This is also the picture in some other key subjects, such as ICT and science, where insufficient monitoring has allowed inconsistencies in practice to creep in. However, there are sufficient

examples of good practice to build on throughout the school, in order to improve teaching further.

15. There are some key features which characterise good and very good lessons:
- teachers are confident with the subject they are teaching. As a result, learning objectives and the use of assessment are sharper;
 - tasks are closely matched to the varying abilities of the pupils and they learn more rapidly. In particular, the more able pupils are stretched to the limit. For example, in the best mathematics lessons, they are challenged through rigorous questioning and the tasks they undertake make them think really hard, as they are required to apply their knowledge;
 - teaching is exciting and practical activities catch pupils' interest, ensuring that they want to learn. For example, in a good Year 1 science lesson, pupils thoroughly enjoyed exploring the properties of magnets, working enthusiastically and drawing sensible conclusions based on their findings;
 - high quality, well chosen resources are used particularly effectively to enhance learning. A very good example was seen in a Year 1 art and design lesson, in which very good use was made of resources to demonstrate weaving techniques. The colours and textures of the patterns they were shown captured the pupils' imaginations and they were very keen to carry out the task themselves;
 - relationships are particularly good and pupils are managed well to minimise disruptions to learning. This is an improvement from the time of the last inspection.
16. Where teaching is less effective and more mundane, the following characteristics are evident:
- some pupils are not challenged as effectively as they could be in the tasks they undertake because teachers do not use information about pupils' progress well enough to take learning to the next level. Consequently, they 'tread water' rather than cover new ground;
 - lesson objectives are not sharp enough and lessons do not 'flow' as well as they could. The pace of learning dips, as a result, and pupils' interest wanes;
 - the balance of the lesson is sometimes not quite right, for example, with pupils being expected to sit and listen for too long on the carpet. Consequently, they become restless. On occasions, the time at the end of lessons, when learning is checked and taken forward is squeezed and is less effective;
 - teachers' delivery of lessons and the tasks they provide lack sparkle and excitement and fail to fully engage pupils;
 - marking does not always follow the agreed policy and is not used effectively enough to point the way forward for pupils.
17. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in relation to their abilities because the support they receive is sensitive and tailored well to meet their individual requirements. These pupils receive very good teaching within classes and also, on most occasions, when they are withdrawn for individual and small group work. Precise targets are set; which are well matched to their needs. The children who have statements of special educational needs have highly focused individual support, which is instrumental in speeding their progress. Pupils who speak English as an additional language, particularly those in the earlier stages of language acquisition are also supported well in class to ensure they learn at the same rate as others. Teachers and classroom support assistants have good knowledge of their individual needs and stages of language development. They tailor support appropriately, particularly in mathematics and English lessons to ensure they are fully included and involved. The team of classroom assistants is knowledgeable and very committed to moving the children's learning forward. They have a significant impact on learning.

18. Assessment arrangements are satisfactory overall and improving, with some real areas of strength emerging. The procedures for assessing the requirements of those who have special educational needs are good and are the result of a significant amount of work recently. Rigorous assessment in English is a key feature in improving standards. In mathematics, although good systems are in place, these are new and are not yet used as effectively as they could be in all classes. Pupils have individual targets in these subjects and are aware of these, but it is too soon, as yet, to judge their impact in mathematics. In science and ICT, there is more to be done to ensure that children are challenged and supported to maximum effect. At whole school level, good systems are in place for monitoring pupils' progress in tests and through teacher assessments. Test results are carefully analysed so that weaknesses in the learning of groups of pupils can be addressed. Assessment and tracking procedures for monitoring those pupils of different ethnic groups and those at different stages of learning English are good. Any needs are quickly identified and the appropriate support given.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 32 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (3)	11 (34)	9 (28)	11 (34)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)

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

The curriculum

The curriculum is of sound quality and is improving. The school offers a very good range of learning experiences in the Foundation Stage and a satisfactory range of opportunities in Key Stage 1. A good range of enrichment and out of school activities is provided. The quality and quantity of the school's accommodation and resources is satisfactory overall. There is good provision for PSHCE.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum for the Foundation Stage is very good;
- The rolling programme for subject development is having a good impact;
- The curriculum is effectively enhanced through links with other schools, the community, visits and visitors;
- There is very good provision for special educational needs;
- There are insufficient opportunities provided to learn about, and through, ICT.

Commentary

19. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is very well planned to provide a really exciting and imaginative range of practical, 'hands-on' experiences in all areas of learning. A particular strength is the excellent, innovative 'Freeflow' time that takes place every morning, enabling all pupils to move freely around the wealth of activities set up in the three classrooms and the outdoor area. This develops a high degree of confidence and independence in the pupils. Exactly the right balance is achieved between the activities the children can explore and investigate for themselves and those supported and directed by staff.
20. The school has a suitably broad curriculum with some really strong areas and others that are still in the throes of development. The headteacher and senior management have rightly identified that while there are significant development needs across the curriculum, these must be prioritised and tackled systematically. The school has balanced the strong focus on English and mathematics with an equal emphasis on other subjects, such as art and design

which it has identified as one of its strengths. Provision for art and design is very good and pupils achieve very well in response to the high quality activities provided for them. Very good provision for English is accelerating progress. Mathematics is a current development area and provision is improving, for example, to include a stronger emphasis on problem solving. The science curriculum has areas for development. In particular, there is a need to provide work that matches the abilities of pupils more closely. The provision for ICT is currently unsatisfactory, but the situation is to be remedied imminently, with a refurbished and better resourced computer suite and more up-to-date, networked computers in every classroom.

21. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Pupils' needs are identified early and they receive very good support, which enables them to become successful learners. Meticulous records are kept and parents are fully involved. The co-ordinator has established close links with outside agencies, to enhance provision. There is good provision for pupils with English as an additional language, particularly in English and mathematics, to ensure, for example, that children develop the appropriate vocabulary for learning and are fully included in all that the school has to offer.
22. The school uses visits and visitors well to enhance learning. Pupils visit the theatre, art galleries and museums, making the most of what the city has to offer. Visitors as diverse as the local hairdresser and famous authors are often invited in to talk about their roles. There are particular strengths in the way the school uses its range of cultures to great advantage. For example, pupils learn through celebrating each other's festivals and pupils' visits to Pakistan, for example, are used to enhance learning in geography. This ensures that all pupils, whatever their backgrounds and cultures, feel valued. Through its 'Beacon' status and involvement in a range of local initiatives the school has developed very good networks of support that it uses to very good advantage for curriculum development. For instance, the ICT development plan includes the new co-ordinator working with her counterpart in another school, visiting schools that exhibit good practice, and establishing firm links with the junior school, where there is some good subject expertise. A range of out of school activities is provided, including French and football and the 'After School Club' provides a wealth of activities for those children who attend, which enhance their skills in many areas.
23. Learning resources are satisfactory. While some areas are particularly well resourced, such as art and design and English, others, such as science, are weaker. The school is housed in quite 'difficult' accommodation with an elderly building on several levels and access to only a hard surface playground. However, it has developed an imaginative improvement plan for the playground that is already having benefits and the buildings are in the middle of a remodelling and refurbishing programme. The school also actively seeks ways of overcoming these barriers, such as using the junior school facilities on occasions. The accommodation is well maintained.

Care, guidance and support

There are very good procedures to ensure children's care, welfare, health and safety. The school provides good levels of support, advice and guidance for pupils. Staff make good efforts to involve children in the work and development of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All adults are diligent in their duty of care and in carrying out necessary procedures to ensure the health and safety of the whole school community;
- Adults and children strike up effective partnerships so that staff are always in a position to reassure children and help them find solutions to problems;
- Children and parents are privileged to enjoy a highly effective induction programme;
- There is very strong commitment to equality of opportunity;
- Even the youngest children record their opinions about school and everyone's opinions are sought over new initiatives.

Commentary

24. There is huge commitment from staff to children's well being; all make their own valuable contributions to the health, safety and care arrangements in school. Well informed and willing lunchtime supervisors complement the work of the teaching assistant, who ably runs the 'Playground Friends' initiative. Office personnel, along with the site manager, governors and headteacher make sure security issues are scrupulously addressed. Day-to-day first aid arrangements are well considered and outcomes recorded. Child protection procedures are secure and outside agencies are involved as required. Clearly defined roles and systems ensure that everyone knows what they should be doing to make every day a safe and happy one for the children. The school is very successful at achieving this.
25. The commitment to care underpins all aspects of the school's work. A feeling of well being prevails in the Foundation Stage where children learn to love school and to feel very secure. Most pupils responded positively when asked in the questionnaire whether there was an adult they could turn to with any worries. Teachers are very approachable and make sure children get the most from school without wasting time on trivial problems. The well established PSHCE programme backs up all aspects of pastoral care in the school and the 'Friendship Charter' make crystal clear what is important to the school community. The school's policy for promoting racial harmony is very effective.
26. Staff know children very well and make sure that they receive all the support they need, whatever their individual needs. The impressive induction programme helps the youngest children to settle into school easily. A few of the parents whose children have already attended pre-school settings think it can be too long, but the headteacher and staff are firmly committed to this important provision. Many of the parents are very appreciative of this level of care. The senior management team does not rest on its laurels and is always looking to learn from current successes to improve provision. For example, staff are now starting to consider how they can offer even better support to pupils who join during the course of an academic year. Previous projects, which include the promotion of equality for girls and boys and the tracking of children from ethnic minorities to check their level of achievement, have had a good impact on learning.
27. Children are increasingly able to make a contribution to the life of the school now that a school council is in place. Everyone made suggestions for the new grounds before the plans were drawn up and children wait with anticipation to see their dreams turn into reality. Even the youngest children have their views about school canvassed by staff and they are able to give coherent answers to questions about what they like best in their work and play.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There are good links with the school and the local community; staff establish very good links with other schools and colleges.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is carefully prepared information for parents about all aspects of the school's work;
- Parents are very generous with the amount of time they offer to the school and the funds they raise;
- A few parents would like more information about the progress their children are making;
- Links with other schools, and transition in particular, are central to the school's Beacon status; staff and pupils benefit from this strong focus as it improves practice;
- Children regularly visit the local area to extend their learning experiences and make contact with the local community.

Commentary

28. The headteacher, staff and governors are strongly committed to encouraging parental involvement and ensuring that parents are given useful information about the school and how their children are getting on. For the most part, the school is successful at this and parents are justifiably pleased with the school. The replies to the pre-inspection questionnaire were very positive, as was the tone of the parents' meeting. Most parents understand what the school is trying to do and are very supportive. The headteacher underlines this when she speaks about parents' great generosity towards the school, not only in the fundraising they undertake, but also the loyalty of so many parents and their unstintingly kind offerings of spirit, time and talent.
29. Well produced newsletters, the newly revamped prospectus and the informative governors' annual report to parents, when linked with the many opportunities parents have for verbal interaction with staff, combine to ensure parents are generally kept abreast of everything important happening in school and with their children. Some parents commented that they would like clearer information about how well their children are doing at school. This is largely because the annual written reports are tick lists that neither inspire nor inform to any great degree. They are uninspiring in appearance and parents tend to turn straight to the brief general progress paragraph at the end, which is individual to their child and is handwritten by the class teacher. However, the reports do offer parents targets to show what their children should concentrate on next. The school recognises that the report format could be more 'reader friendly'.
30. The commitment of the headteacher and deputy head to the links established with other schools is impressive and, above all, brings benefits to the children. A significant number of other schools dovetail their practice with Hunter's Bar so that the best possible use can be made of any expertise. Similarly, staff collaborate with other colleagues to spread good ideas and help local schools to develop better practice. The main focus of this work centres on transition issues and how this critical period can be made as profitable as possible in terms of pupils' learning. Current work is focusing on leadership issues and mathematics. Plenty of very useful liaison is also maintained with several colleges of further education and these bring a variety of personnel with new ideas into school.
31. The school is well situated to take advantage of a number of useful outlets within the community. For instance, a parent who runs the local bookshop regularly makes an input into several literacy-based enrichment activities. Similarly, children work regularly around the locality, visiting the vet's surgery or nearby shops. These links help children to understand more about how local services support the school and the social fabric of the community in which they live. A large number of visitors come into school to fire children's imaginations, be they musicians, authors, artists or local service providers. Children also go on many trips to places of spiritual or social enrichment and their learning is well supported, as a result.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The leadership of the headteacher is very effective. She is well supported by the deputy headteacher in moving the school forward. Governance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has set a very clear direction for the work of the school;
- The headteacher, deputy head and governors are working together well to bring about improvement;
- The governing body fulfils its role well and makes good use of individual expertise;
- Links with other schools are used very productively to enhance teaching, learning and staff development;

- There is very effective leadership of the Foundation Stage, English and special educational needs which is having a significant impact on learning;
- There is a strong commitment to embracing the cultural diversity of the pupils and including all in the life and work of the school;
- The skills of some subject leaders need to be developed so that they can play a greater part in the monitoring and improvement of their subjects.

Commentary

32. The headteacher has worked with great commitment and energy to stabilise the school and start to move it forward in key areas, in the last two years. She is extremely positive, for example, seeing staff changes as golden opportunities to widen the expertise of the team, rather than obstacles that are hard to overcome. She has a very clear vision of how the school should be and has communicated this effectively to staff and governors. She has set the strategic direction very well, with the focus firmly on raising standards and is uncompromising in her belief that pupils at Hunter's Bar should achieve more in key areas.
33. New appointments have been made very astutely, to ensure the areas identified as priorities are well led and managed. As a result, the school has started to move forward and has significant capacity to improve further, although all recognise that there is still more to be done. The impact of high quality leadership and management can be seen, for example, in the complete overhaul of special educational needs that has taken place by the new co-ordinator and the expert analysis of test results in mathematics by the recently appointed subject leader. Both these initiatives are leading to improved provision and support for pupils. In addition, other staff have been well deployed in key areas. The deputy headteacher, working as English co-ordinator, has had a very significant impact on raising standards. For example, in English, reading and writing have both improved considerably, as a result of the increased focus on guided group reading, phonic teaching and the drive to provide a richer more varied range of writing opportunities. The Foundation Stage leader is particularly creative and innovative in her role. The leadership and management of other subjects, however, are more variable. This is because there are differences in the skills and expertise of the subject leaders. Some have only recently taken charge of their subjects and are very inexperienced. The majority have had little experience in monitoring teaching, learning and standards in their subjects. As a result, inconsistencies in teaching have not always been identified and ironed out. Their skills need developing to enable them to be more effective in bringing about the necessary improvements in their subjects. The school has identified this area as a key priority and linked developments closely to the performance management cycle. It is fortunate that there are good examples to draw on, both from within the school and through the close links it has forged with other schools. The headteacher and deputy have been instrumental in developing these partnerships, understanding the benefits of sharing good practice and developing joint initiatives. A good example of this is the collaborative leadership group they have set up for local headteachers and deputies, which is enabling effective sharing of expertise between the schools and the developing of individual skills.
34. A considerable achievement has been in the creation of a very caring and supportive climate for learning, without compromising the drive to raise standards. This is underpinning the good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning, which are having a clear impact on the achievement of many pupils. All pupils are included in everything that the school has to offer and their diverse cultures and backgrounds are valued and celebrated. An example of how important this area is to the school is to be seen in the efforts made to recruit governors who represent the school population more widely, to ensure that all have a voice.

35. The governing body is committed to improving the school and works effectively as a team with the headteacher and deputy head. Governors play a key role in monitoring priorities closely to ensure that progress is being made. For example, they are keeping a close eye on how well increased spending on classroom support is impacting on learning, through the regular good quality information they receive from the headteacher and staff. They take their role as critical friend seriously, for example, asking searching questions about standards and considering a range of possible budget models to get the best value for the money spent. Governors use their wide expertise very well in key areas. For example, governors with particular expertise in communications have taken the lead in producing an impressive new prospectus.
36. The school finances are managed well. Prudent management has enabled refurbishments to be carried out to the building. These have had a very positive impact. For example, a bright, new library has been created and is used regularly by all classes. The newly created entrance and office space is impressive, providing very good working conditions for the office staff and headteacher. It has improved security arrangements and disabled facilities, as well as providing a professional, but welcoming first impression for visitors. Extra funding, for example, from the Beacon initiative, is used wisely, for example, to increase the number of support staff. This is having a particular beneficial effect on the learning of pupils with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs. Secure contingency plans are in place to maintain staffing levels when this funding ceases.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	652,304
Total expenditure	530,400
Expenditure per pupil	2,400

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	44,294
Balance carried forward to the next	17,000

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision, including teaching, in the Foundation Stage is **very good**. There are currently 90 children in the Foundation Stage, split between 3 classes. Of these, 28 started in January and had been in school only two weeks. Children come from a diverse range of backgrounds and ethnic groups and when they enter school, they demonstrate a very wide range of attainments. However, overall, their skills are broadly average. In the current classes, around a third of the children have English as an additional language, although few are in the very early stages of language learning. Children achieve well in all areas of learning and they do very well in their personal, social and emotional development and also in communication, language and literacy. This is in response to teaching which is never less than good, often very good and sometimes excellent. A very rich and relevant range of exciting, 'hands-on' experiences are provided in each area of learning, which often reflect the diversity of children's backgrounds. These are carefully planned to ensure an excellent balance between activities that children choose and explore for themselves and those that are more closely directed by adults. Innovative practice ensures that learning is stimulating and exciting and that children are raring to explore and find out. An excellent example can be found in the 'Freeflow' sessions in which all pupils move independently between the three classrooms and the outdoor area, taking part in a wealth of high quality activities. Children can, for example, take part in dance, sing songs together, make their own books, work in the 'hairdressers' or visit the 'opticians' and these are only a small number of the experiences on offer. This high quality provision is a result of the very good leadership and management of the Foundation Stage leader. She has created a very strong team, who work together particularly well to ensure consistency of curriculum planning and delivery. Children's progress is extensively monitored and this ensures that staff know exactly what each child is capable of and their next learning steps.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The consistently high expectations of all staff and the level of care they provide;
- Very good quality assessment which ensures pupils' needs are fully met;
- High quality planning which ensures that all opportunities are taken to develop pupils' skills;
- Very good opportunities for children to explore and discover for themselves;
- A warm and secure environment in which children flourish.

Commentary

37. The school gives a very high priority to this area and ensures that opportunities for development and reinforcement are woven into all areas of learning. Children achieve very well and almost all will exceed the standards expected by the time they enter Year 1. All staff have high expectations that pupils will follow the class routines and rules. The children have been involved in creating these with their teachers, so not only do they know them well, but also, they understand their purpose. The warm relationships between the staff and those they form with the pupils create a happy, secure environment in which children can do their best. The high quality of these relationships spills over to the children themselves, who in turn have very good relationships with each other. As a result, they learn well because they are happy and feel valued. The caring way in which the children are treated helps them to become confident in their surroundings and learn very well. The excellent transition arrangements between home and school add greatly to children's sense of security and well being.

38. Children have lots of different opportunities to work together, for example, as they take on different roles in the 'opticians', the 'clinic' or the 'hairdressers' and as they solve the problem of how to construct a really tall tower from Lego without it falling down. Regular routines, such as 'signing in' in the morning and deciding when to take a snack and a drink develop independence very well.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A strong emphasis is given to developing children's speaking and listening skills;
- Very exciting opportunities are provided to encourage pupils to write;
- Classroom assistants support learning very well;
- Assessment is used very effectively to identify the next steps in learning for each child.

Commentary

39. Teaching is very good and as a result, children achieve very well. A high proportion of pupils are likely to exceed the goals set for them by the end of the reception year. However, a significant minority will have some way to go, despite the very good progress they make. A high emphasis is placed on developing the vocabulary and spoken language skills of all pupils, which benefits all pupils, and in particular, those whose first language is not English and those who have particular difficulties. All the adults who work with the children are skilled at encouraging a dialogue in all activities.
40. Very productive use is made of role play to develop speaking and writing skills. For example, children book appointments at the 'hairdressers' and speak to customers on the telephone in the 'opticians'. Teachers and support staff model the processes of reading and writing very well. Their enthusiasm for writing is catching and they entice pupils to write through creating exciting opportunities for them. For example, in one class, the children gasped in amazement as the teacher turned over the last page of the 'big book' they were sharing, at a picture of their classroom assistant dressed in a 'good witches' costume. At that moment, the classroom assistant burst in dressed as in the picture to introduce the writing task. This really captured their interest and as a result, they carried out the writing task with relish. Many children are beginning to write words independently and short sentences with support, although some are still at the stage of making random marks. A key feature is that children often choose to write for themselves. A good example of this was the girl who had made her own book all about hair, in the style of a book the class had shared. Plenty of opportunities are provided for children to read books and listen to stories and they show real enjoyment of reading. Many are beginning to recognise and spell a good range of familiar words and are beginning to use strategies to work out unfamiliar words for themselves.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- An exciting range of practical activities is provided;
- Imaginative teaching catches the pupils' interest.

Commentary

41. A significant number of the current reception pupils have entered school with skills better than expected for their age. Very good assessment of their skills and effective teaching is ensuring that learning is rapid. The vast majority will reach the standards expected by the end of the reception year and a high proportion will do better. Teachers use imaginative ways of introducing topics, which catch children's interest. For example, in one session, the teacher and her puppet 'assistant' were acting as magicians, to teach positional language, such as 'under', 'over' and 'behind'. As a result, pupils learned enthusiastically and rapidly. Good attention is paid to reinforcing the vocabulary of those pupils who have English as an additional language. In one session, the teacher played a game with the children, using small bears of different colours. This not only provided a very practical and visual way of reinforcing positional language, but also helped her to assess their understanding of colours.
42. Staff provide many 'real life' opportunities for children to develop their mathematical understanding, such as weighing the babies in the 'clinic', taking money and giving change in the 'hairdressers' and booking appointments at specific times in the 'opticians'. Many opportunities are also provided for counting, measuring, matching, recognising shapes and creating patterns.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A very exciting range of practical activities is provided, which encourage children to explore and investigate.

Commentary

43. Children have very wide ranging skills and very diverse experiences in this area when they start school. Very good teaching and a very strong curriculum ensure that all achieve very well from their starting points and most are in line to reach or exceed the expected standards by the time they enter Year 1.
44. A particular strength is the way in which activities are set up to encourage exploration and lead children to draw conclusions themselves. During the inspection, water trays in each room were filled with a variety of objects which reflected the current theme. For example, in one classroom, toy penguins had been frozen in ice and the task was to find a way of releasing them. The children felt so sorry for the penguins that they set to with gusto to try to set them free. They chipped away with tools and found that as the ice got thinner it melted more quickly. Another group found that if they poured cold water on the ice, it also started to melt; one boy had the bright idea of filling a jug from the hot tap to speed up the process further. In another class a girl put her block of ice outside until lunchtime to see if it would melt more quickly to release the shell inside. Visitors are often invited in to enrich pupils' experiences, such as the local hairdresser who talked about his job. There are always many

activities on offer for children to choose for themselves. For example, they build with construction toys, explore the texture of paint as they mix it with their hands, and use the computer, both in the classroom and in the computer suite. Many are adept at using the mouse to choose and click on items on the computer screen. The outdoor area is used very productively, with the activities provided mirroring those indoors and of similar high quality.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A very good range of activities is on offer for pupils.

Commentary

45. When children enter reception, their physical skills are average. The wide range of activities provided for them, coupled with skilful teaching ensures they achieve well. The majority are on course to exceed the expected standard by the time they enter Year 1. Children have daily, well planned and organised opportunities to develop their large movement skills outdoors, using bikes, wheeled toys and climbing equipment. They also have free play sessions with the older children. In addition, regular dance and movement sessions are held in the hall and sometimes followed up in small groups in the classroom. Regular opportunities for games and gymnastics, using a range of apparatus including 'soft play' equipment ensure that pupils refine, for example, their balancing, jumping and rolling skills. All these activities develop pupils' social skills in addition to enabling them to develop increasing control of their bodies. Pupils' manipulative skills are also developed well through opportunities, for example, to cut, colour, thread beads and do jigsaws.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The wide range of opportunities provided for pupils to access both independently and with staff direction.

Commentary

46. Children achieve well and are on course to reach the standards expected by the time they enter Year 1. Teaching is at least good and often very good. Plenty of good quality opportunities are provided for them to work with a good range of tools, materials and media. For example, pupils mix colours to make patterns and choose from a wealth of everyday recycled materials to make models. Role play is a key feature and children's imaginations are developed very well through the opportunities to take on roles and act out scenarios. Pupils have good opportunities to respond to music through dance, to sing rhymes and songs and to play a variety of instruments.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 1

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are enthusiastic and talk confidently about their work;
- Teaching is good and children are successful learners;
- Very good systems to assess and track progress are used effectively;
- The subject is well led and managed;
- ICT is used insufficiently to support the teaching of English.

Commentary

47. Standards in all aspects of English are above average and children achieve well in response to good teaching. Standards declined after the last inspection, when they were judged to be very high. Changes in staff and leadership led to inconsistencies in teaching and slower progress for some pupils. Important aspects of the National Literacy Strategy, such as guided group reading, were not fully introduced and as many schools improved in response to the strategy, Hunter's Bar marked time. However, a strong emphasis on raising standards through improving the teaching of both reading and writing has had a good impact. Both reading and writing results in the 2003 national tests for 7-year-olds showed improvement and these are set to rise further this year.
48. Pupils achieve well in speaking and listening and become confident and articulate speakers by the end of Year 2. Staff develop pupils' confidence in speaking effectively through encouraging them to ask and answer questions. They give them time to respond and in most lessons, encourage them to extend and develop their responses. Good use is often made of the shared parts of lessons, for example, to encourage children to share their experiences or present their findings. They are very interested in their work so they listen attentively to adults and to each other. Good opportunities are also provided to practise these skills, for example, in class role play areas. In Year 1, the children dressed up as characters from Cinderella and acted out sections of the story. Children with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language are very well supported and consequently they make good progress in developing their speaking skills. There are also good opportunities for children to discuss ideas and opinions, in pairs or as part of a small group.
49. Children make good progress in reading because it is taught well and they are encouraged to enjoy books and stories from the earliest stages. Systematic teaching of phonics and good use of guided group reading sessions ensure that children become confident with the strategies needed, for example, to work out unfamiliar words. As a result of the good examples provided by teachers, pupils develop as very expressive readers and love using different voices for the characters. They are keen to discuss what they are reading, report that they enjoy it and can talk knowledgeably about favourite books and authors. Records of children's' progress kept by the school are very good and ensure the next steps in learning for each child are accurately pinpointed and appropriate targets set. This has been instrumental in raising standards. The newly introduced home school diaries are being used well so that parents can be fully involved with children's progress. The diaries also contain useful information about the school's approach to all aspects of English. Additional well trained adults effectively target individual and small groups of children, in order to boost progress. Visits from authors, such as Ian Whybrow and book characters, such as Dr Seuss, enrich learning and give the strong message that reading is fun. This message is also reinforced by the good range of attractive books in each class and the bright, newly

opened library, which is inviting with comfortable seating where children can browse. The children state that they really like this area and have been involved in choosing some of the books.

50. Children write well and for a good range of purposes. Most children write neatly but there are differences in expectations between classes in the same year group. The school has identified this and has firm plans to address the situation. Overall, teaching of writing is good. All staff make work interesting for the children. For example, in Year 2, some children write fliers to advertise the race between the hare and tortoise. Others write placards to encourage their favourite character. They use phrases like 'Go Go Go', 'Don't Stop!' Good strategies are in place to teach spelling, these make the children confident. In a Year 2 class, in pairs, children compete against a timer spelling words like 'because' aloud quickly. They are very keen to get words right and this approach excites them and speeds their progress.
51. The subject is very well led and managed. The subject leader has been very effective in raising and maintaining standards. Her careful monitoring of teaching and learning has resulted in appropriate target setting, which means that all the children including those with special educational needs or those who are above average achieve well. Currently, however, there are too few opportunities for children to use ICT as part of their lessons, for example, to redraft and edit their work or to provide support for learning basic skills.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

52. The school has worked hard to create interesting opportunities for children to apply their skills in other subjects. A good range of 'big books' is used to support, for example, the religious education and science curriculum. In all subjects the children are expected to speak clearly. Many real purposes are created to write, for example, a brochure in history to explain how to do the washing 100 years ago and to use speech bubbles to show understanding of the parable of The Prodigal Son.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils with special needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress because of the support they receive;
- Teachers are working hard to provide more opportunities for problem solving and investigation;
- Good subject leadership is bringing about improvements;
- The consistency of teaching could be improved and some pupils are not always challenged as well as they could be;
- ICT could be used more extensively to support work in mathematics;
- The amount and quality of work recorded in books needs to be standardised between classes.

Commentary

53. Standards are average by the age of 7. This is not as strong a picture as at the time of the last inspection, when standards were well above average. In the most recent national tests (2003) for pupils of this age, results were average when compared to all schools nationally and when compared to similar schools. There was a slight improvement in the percentage of pupils achieving the average level, when compared to results in 2002. However, fewer pupils than nationally achieved the higher level (Level 3) and a higher percentage than in the rest of the country only just scraped over the Level 2 crossbar.

54. Pupils achieve steadily overall. In some classes, pupils achieve well because good teaching is ensuring that most are appropriately challenged. Throughout the school, good quality support is provided for those with special needs and those who are not yet confident English speakers. As a result, these pupils are achieving well. There is no significant difference in achievement between boys and girls.
55. The school's own analysis of pupil progress throughout the school indicates that the downturn has been halted and standards are starting to rise, albeit slowly. Inspection evidence confirms this analysis. The school has addressed the decline in a variety of ways. The National Numeracy Strategy has been fully implemented and a number of teachers have received training to sharpen their skills. Test results have been very closely analysed to identify gaps in teaching and learning and to pinpoint any particular groups of children who are not doing as well as others. This has resulted in sharper targets being set for those children with special educational needs and greater support being provided for them in mathematics lessons. The impact of this can already be seen in the good progress these pupils are now making. The school also identified that a significant percentage of pupils with English as an additional language did not fare as well on the oral section of the tests in 2003. It has responded to this by providing greater support in lessons for these pupils, for example, to reinforce learning and check on their understanding. As a result, they are fully involved and show more confidence, particularly during the oral and mental section of lessons. Inspection evidence confirms the school's own analysis that results for this year's Year 2 pupils are likely to be similar in terms of the numbers reaching average levels and just a few more should reach above average levels. However, more pupils are on course to reach a solidly average level, rather than just scraping through.
56. A strength of provision in mathematics is the amount of practical, problem solving work undertaken. Teachers have worked hard recently to develop this, after it was noted that pupils did not fare as well in this area of the national tests as they did in others. All lessons now have a problem solving element. For example, in Year 2, pupils were spending money at the 'café', calculating change from £1, in both the shared parts of the lesson and the tasks. In another lesson, less able pupils were adding three numbers that they had scored as they played darts on a 'Velcro' dartboard. They thoroughly enjoyed the activity and worked much harder because it was fun. More able pupils in this lesson were engrossed in investigating how they could arrange 15 counters on 2 intersecting rows of 3 paper plates so that each row added up to 10. They concentrated hard and worked really well together until they achieved a result. A weaker aspect of mathematics is the way in which children record this type of work. Often, calculations are carried out on a wipe off board, which if children are working independently, does not allow the teacher to note significant learning or deal with misconceptions. In addition, pupils do not have a record of their achievements or a reminder of how they solved the problem to refer to in the future. Practice varies from class to class and some standardisation would be beneficial. Opportunities are also missed to use ICT to support learning in mathematics lessons.
57. Teaching is satisfactory overall; with some evidence of good and occasionally, very good practice. However, there are inconsistencies throughout the school, which slows pupils' progress over time. The best lesson, seen in a Year 2 class, was carried out at a cracking pace, with an excellent quick fire oral and mental session at the start. This totally engaged the pupils and stretched them to the limit. They were doubling and halving whole numbers with ease, explaining the strategies they had used with great confidence. More able pupils were challenged to apply their skills to halving and doubling fractions, which they undertook with relish. Less able pupils and those with English as an additional language were very effectively and sensitively supported and included by both the teacher and the classroom assistant. This support develops high levels of confidence in pupils, and they are keen to answer questions and explain their strategies. In the majority of lessons, the mental and oral section is well taught and pupils are developing quick mental recall, as a result. The time at the end of lessons is used well in most lessons to reinforce and extend learning, although on occasions, this is cut short and is less effective. Where teaching is more ordinary, the pace

is often slower and expectations of the more able pupils in the shared part of lessons and sometimes in the tasks could be higher. Some teachers do not use the information about what pupils already know and can do effectively enough to set work at the appropriate level of challenge for them. For example, in a Year 2 lesson, one pupil was working out change from £1 with ease and could have been stretched much further. Similarly, another child was working with a group using real coins for the task, when he was very adept at calculating amounts mentally. In almost all classes, the standard of presentation of work could be better and teachers place too little emphasis on this aspect.

58. The subject is well led and managed. The recently appointed subject leader is working with energy and commitment. She has a clear understanding of what constitutes good teaching and learning in mathematics. She has identified key areas for improvement and has, for example, recently implemented good quality systems to assist teachers in monitoring pupils' progress and setting appropriately challenging targets for them. She has good expertise which she uses to support colleagues, for example, in making learning more 'hands-on' and investigative. Good links have been made with other schools in order to share best practice. She has not, as yet, had the opportunity to check on teaching and learning, in order to iron out the inconsistencies between classes. However, the school has identified this as a key priority for action.

Mathematics across the curriculum

59. Although pupils have some opportunities for using mathematics in other subjects, these are not systematically planned for. There are some sound examples of pupils, collecting data and producing graphs in geography and programming a floor robot to execute angles of turn. In a dance lesson, the teacher reinforced odd and even numbers and counting to a beat. Opportunities are often missed, however, to develop pupils' skills in this way. ICT could be used far more frequently to support learning in mathematics lessons, particularly in developing basic number and problem solving skills.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Much of the work is practically based and this consolidates understanding;
- There is some very good practice on which to base future development, but the overall quality of teaching is variable;
- The work is not sufficiently well matched to pupils' abilities, particularly for the higher attainers;
- Subject leadership and management are unsatisfactory;
- Assessment procedures need to be developed and used more effectively.

Commentary

60. Standards in science are average. This is not as strong a picture as at the time of the last inspection, when standards were above average. In 2003, teacher assessments show that the percentage of pupils achieving the expected level (Level 2) was slightly below average, although a higher than average percentage achieved the higher level (Level 3). Achievement is satisfactory overall. Although pupils do not achieve as well in the area of scientific investigation as they do in other areas. Those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make steady progress, particularly in lessons where they have support from a classroom assistant. There are, however, shortcomings in the provision for science, and more pupils, particularly those of higher ability, could reach higher standards. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, assessment is too closely geared to monitoring the scheme of work and not sufficiently linked to the national curriculum levels of

attainment. It is therefore more difficult to monitor pupils' achievement and set targets for them. Secondly, tasks are not always sufficiently well matched to pupils' ability. Pupils' progress is also limited because there are variations in the quality of teaching and provision between classes.

61. Through self-evaluation, the school has identified the need to improve the teaching of scientific investigation. This is being linked to the development of assessment procedures and is having a positive impact. However, often pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to record their findings and to show what they know and understand. Pupils' understanding is being developed through the use of practical tasks, such as constructing an electric circuit to light a bulb. Their understanding is enhanced still further when the work is linked to other subjects, for example, when the Year 2 pupils used an electric circuit to light features on models made in design and technology, such as the reindeer's nose. However, written work in science is often under developed, with pupils having too few opportunities to record their work in different ways. Opportunities are also missed to use ICT in science, for example, to handle data, carry out tests or to record findings.
62. The leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. The skills of the subject leader need to be developed and science should now be an urgent priority in the development programme. The scheme of work needs to be adapted to more closely meet the school's needs and assessment should be developed to ensure it is used more effectively to set work at the appropriate level of challenge for all pupils. The care, storage, range and accessibility of resources for the subject need attention.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below average and pupils do not achieve well enough;
- Aspects of the ICT curriculum are under represented and under developed;
- Out-of-date equipment limits pupils' progress;
- The quality of teaching and teacher's subject knowledge is inconsistent;
- There is good capacity to move the subject forward and good practice to build upon;
- A clear development plan effectively underpins developments.

Commentary

63. Standards in ICT are below those expected for 7-year-olds. This is not as strong a picture as at the time of the last inspection. The decline in standards has occurred for a variety of reasons, all of which are now receiving attention. The school has a clear plan for moving forward and the expertise and capacity to raise standards. While standards are below average, overall, they are at the expected level in some areas, such as word processing. Pupils are making sound progress in acquiring the skills and technical terms associated with ICT. Pupils with special educational needs often make good progress because of the good support they receive in lessons. Pupils benefit when links are made with other subjects. For example, a Year 2 class used word processing to develop reported speech dialogue linked to their literacy work and made good gains in learning, both in ICT and writing.
64. The impact of a lack of consistent subject leadership, a delayed development programme, remodelling of the buildings, and the need for the school to focus its development on other curriculum areas in the recent past, has had serious consequences for standards and achievement in ICT. Outdated and unreliable equipment has meant a discontinuity between work in the suite and classroom; pupils have not had sufficient access to ICT to ensure

coverage, continuity and progression; teachers' variable subject knowledge coupled to a lack of monitoring of teaching has resulted in some inappropriate practice developing. For example, the use of a too sophisticated word processor in Year 1 followed by a simpler and more effective one being used in Year 2. Aspects of the national programme, such as 'finding things out' and 'communicating' are under developed. There is some very good practice, and some good subject knowledge within the staff to support these developments. However, these are not consistent in all year groups and classes. In the two lessons seen, teaching was good and very good because of the expertise of the particular teachers and pupils demonstrated that they have the skills and enthusiasm to make good progress, when given appropriate time and opportunity.

65. Significant changes are on the agenda, with firm plans in place to develop the subject in the very near future. A new suite of computers is imminent, with sufficient capacity for whole class instruction. Machines of a higher specification are being placed in classrooms and networked, which will enable greater opportunities for pupils to use their ICT skills to support learning in other subjects. Subject leadership is sound. A new subject leader has very recently taken up the leadership and management of the subject. She brings good subject expertise and knowledge and has made a good start on identifying priorities for action when the new equipment is up and running. The school has a good capacity for improvement of the area.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

66. ICT is not used sufficiently well to support learning in other subjects. For example, opportunities for using computers to support the learning of basic English and mathematics skills are often missed and classroom computers often lie idle for large parts of the day. There are some examples of computers being used in other subjects, such as geography, for example, to research different places and to present data collected in graph form. Computers have also been used to produce pictures in art. However, such opportunities are not clearly identified in all subjects and systematically planned for.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils study a good range of interesting topics;
- Learning is enriched through opportunities for discussion, practical work and visits;
- Good use is made of pupils' literacy skills;
- There are inconsistencies in the consistency of teaching;
- Better use could be made of ICT for recording and research.

Commentary

67. Standards in geography are similar to those found in most infant schools and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Only one lesson was observed, in which teaching was good. However, a scrutiny of pupils' work suggests that, over time, teaching is satisfactory and enables pupils to make steady overall progress. However, teaching is inconsistent across and within year groups and some pupils have richer learning experiences than others.
68. A strength of geography is the opportunities provided for discussion, which enable children to express their ideas and make reasoned explanations. A good example of this was seen in the Year 2 lesson observed, where children were discussing the sort of clothes you might

need for a trip to Antarctica, compared with a trip to Spain. After researching from books, children were able to explain to their classmates that a pair of sealskin boots might be a useful thing to pack for Antarctica, but definitely not for Spain. Good use was also made in this lesson of the pupils' writing skills, as they wrote postcards from a place they had visited, setting out the address correctly and debating whether a formal or informal greeting would be best. They based their postcards on information gleaned from a homework questionnaire they had completed with their parents. More able children were challenged by the task of writing a letter and those with special educational needs were using a specially prepared writing template to support them. The teacher and classroom assistant ensured that these pupils and those who speak English as an additional language were clear about vocabulary and gave support when necessary.

69. Throughout the school pupils have covered an appropriate range of topics. Pupils in Year 1 have learned about houses and homes, for example, and identified the different types that they live in. In Year 2, pupils have compared the fictional island of Struay with life in Sheffield. The current 'Wider World' topic in Year 2 is closely based on the children's own experiences of places they and their families have visited. This enables the cultural diversity of the pupils to be celebrated, as children share their experiences, for example of visits to family in Pakistan. Learning is extended through fieldwork, such as traffic surveys around school and visits to places of interest, such as a seaside location. However, there are inconsistencies in the amount and quality of work in different classes, leading to differences in the progress pupils make. Some classes cover topics in greater depth than other. More opportunities could be provided for pupils to use ICT in geography. Although children have used computers for research on some occasions, opportunities for wider use are not systematically identified and planned for.
70. The subject is soundly led and managed. The subject leader has good expertise and supports colleagues with advice, for example, on how best a topic can be taught. She has recently updated the scheme of work. However, she has not had the opportunity to check on teaching and learning, to ensure that inconsistencies in practice are ironed out.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school makes good use of visits and artefacts to bring history alive for the children;
- More use could be made of ICT for researching and recording work.

Commentary

71. Standards in history are similar to those found in most infant schools and pupils achieve steadily. Pupils have a sound understanding of chronology. They can explain how things have changed over time. After visiting the local Heritage Museum the children in Year 1 wrote brochures to explain how to do the washing if you lived 100 years ago. Old things fascinate them. For example, in Year 1 classes, where children were studying the topic 'Then and Now', they correctly identified the old and new hot water bottle. They could explain why modern bottles are now made of rubber and hypothesise that this material was not available long ago. The work of Year 2 pupils is thoughtful as they sensitively describe the effects of war on their own families after 'Remembrance Day' and they show a clear understanding of why historical figures, such as Grace Darling are famous.
72. Good links are made with other subjects, such as art and design. As part of their work on houses the children visited the Bishop's House. They considered how homes have changed and there were good opportunities to develop their sketching skills as they looked carefully at the Tudor buildings. There are however, too few opportunities for children to use ICT in

history. Opportunities are missed to use the computer, for example, to research topics and record their work in more interesting ways.

73. Subject leadership and management are sound. The co-ordinator ensures that the scheme of work is followed and that resources are available for colleagues.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The way the school makes use of the pupils' own faiths and cultures;
- Time is provided for reflection and there are good opportunities for wonder;
- There is an increasing emphasis on discussion and practical tasks;
- More opportunities could be provided for pupils to record what they know and understanding.

Commentary

74. Standards are in line with the locally agreed syllabus and the pupils, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, make satisfactory progress. Much of what the pupils do in religious education is exciting and relevant. For example, they take part in discussion and role play, enjoy visitors coming to talk to them and celebrate festivals. However, because children are not often asked to record what they have been learning, when asked to recall or explain their recollection and understanding can be hazy. More recording of work would also ensure that teachers could check on learning more thoroughly to pinpoint the next steps. In the lessons seen the teaching was very good, and in one instance, it was linked to an outstanding and inspirational 'Circle Time' session, where children could express their thoughts and feelings. Despite this, teaching is satisfactory overall. The differences in the quality and amount of work between classes indicate a much patchier teaching picture.
75. Pupils' own cultural inheritance is used effectively, as illustrated in a very high quality display of some of the children's celebrations, costumes and customs related to their Islamic faith. There are some good links made between religious education and literacy, for example, in a Year 2 lesson, when pupils compared a parable to 'The hare and the tortoise' fable by Aesop, through role play. 'How on earth did he do it?' said a startled girl 'hare', as the tortoise won. 'Well, I never expected to, but I just kept going!' said a 'tortoise'.
76. The new subject leader has made a good start. She has a clear vision of what good religious education looks like and clear, workable plans in place for development. Already, in the short time she has been the co-ordinator, she has set about modifying the scheme of work, and has drawn in support from the local education authority.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design

Provision in art and design is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are much better than in most infant schools;
- The curriculum for art and design is very good;
- The subject is well led and managed.

Commentary

77. Standards are much better than usually seen and pupils achieve very well. Pupils are introduced to a wide range of skills, techniques and ideas. For example, in Year 2 the children have developed original sketches of natural objects, such as shells and wood into pastel work. Following this, they made pattern pieces in different coloured felts to make collages. In Year 1, children used different fabrics to create texture in their weaving. They organised their own compositions and used phrases like 'that's beautiful', 'they match well' and 'that reminds me of a beautiful sight when the sun is setting'. They are very mature and sensitive when evaluating their own work and that of others. Art lessons seen certainly had the 'wow' factor. The children bubbled over with enthusiasm and would not settle for second best. Resources are of high quality and this has a positive effect on their work. Art has a high profile in the school. A large board in the entrance area is dedicated to the celebration of children's work. Visitors to the school are invited to make comments and all praise the children's efforts. The subject leadership and management are good. The subject leader is very knowledgeable and enthusiastic and supports and influences colleagues well.

Design and technology, music and physical education

78. Although a limited number of lessons were seen, pupils' work was analysed and discussions took place with staff and pupils, these subjects were sampled, rather than examined in detail. However, the curriculum is satisfactory and pupils' achievement is at least as expected for their age.
79. In **design and technology** there was little evidence of designing and evaluating. However, there was sufficient evidence of 'made' articles to indicate that standards in the 'making' aspect are good. Pupils make a good range of well crafted, highly individual items. This is largely due to the expertise of individual teachers. Effective links have been made with other subjects. For example, the Year 2 pupils have linked work in religious education to computer aided design, mathematics and textile work to design and make a coat for Joseph. Pupils are taught the skills they need well in preparation for the tasks they undertake. For example, they learn how to use a range of stitches to join fabrics. However, the absence of clear leadership has resulted in a lack of suitable system for checking on coverage of the curriculum, and for retaining and assessing work. A new subject leader, with good expertise, has recently been appointed. The subject has good capacity to move forward.
80. Pupils are provided with a rich range of experiences in **music**. They sing sweetly and tunefully in lessons and in assembly. In the singing session seen, the children were enthusiastic and enjoyed the humour of the song 'There's a Snake in a Cake in my Little Bed'. In Year 2, the children are knowledgeable about instruments and can identify, for example, when the piano, violin and flute are playing. They record their compositions and sometimes write them down for future use. There are good opportunities for children to perform, for example, at the annual Winter Concert or to celebrate 'Eid'. There are also opportunities for them to hear live performances, when musicians visit to give concerts. A recent workshop led by a parent who is a drummer in a well known band added greatly to pupils' experience and enjoyment. The subject is soundly led and managed. The subject leader is knowledgeable and has rightly identified the need to review the scheme of work to more closely reflect the cultural diversity of the schools' population. Opportunities are missed to use ICT in music, for example, for composing and recording.
81. In **physical education**, the lessons observed were satisfactory, with some strong features. In a dance lesson, Year 2 pupils had the opportunity to create parts of a dance themselves; using country dance steps they had learned. They joined in with gusto and made constructive comments about the performances of their classmates. In a Year 1 gymnastics lesson, sensitive support was given to a child with special educational needs to enable him to be fully involved in learning. Pupils got out the apparatus sensibly and safely and worked with good awareness to the needs of others. In both lessons, lack of space in the hall and

the amount of time available limited progress. Subject leadership and management are sound. The subject leader has good expertise, which she shares with colleagues. She has ensured that staff have had recent, relevant training. However, she has had little opportunity to influence standards or observe teaching.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The innovative spread of PSHCE throughout the week for all pupils really highlights the most important messages for pupils' personal development;
- There is a clear focus on what the school wants to achieve through the programme, led by an enthusiastic subject co-ordinator;
- Different approaches are used to make sure pupils draw the best from the lessons.

Commentary

82. All the staff show keen commitment to the PSHCE programme and there is a sense of anticipation when children sit down as a class to discuss a particular issue in 'Circle Time'. They are very sure of the rules, and because PSHCE sessions happen so regularly, children are confident to talk about their feelings in front of their classmates. Boys and girls are equally forthcoming and waste no time when asked to participate in an activity. Year 1 pupils busied themselves by making cards with special messages for people they felt close to and were quite comfortable about reading them aloud to the rest of the class. Everyone showed sensitivity and trust in their teacher and each other as they listened to messages like 'You are a good friend'. PSHCE is carefully overseen by the co-ordinator who ensures that a number of different 'devices' are used effectively throughout the school to encourage communication between pupils. 'Worry Boxes' in each class are emptied regularly and children discuss their fears and find solutions from within their own class, which helps them to feel secure. An entry in the class Golden Book is worth working for and children are keen to be mentioned for some selfless act or good piece of work. Set alongside the 'Friendship Charter' and 'Playground Friends' scheme, there is a really firm foundation to the PSHCE programme and it permeates the curriculum well.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	4
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	4
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	4
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	4
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
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	2
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	3

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