

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND INFANT SCHOOL

Maidstone

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118626

Headteacher: Lorna Priddle

Lead inspector: Peter Lewis

Dates of inspection: 19th – 21st January 2004

Inspection number: 260605

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:	4 – 7 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	107
School address:	Douglas Road Maidstone Kent
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Dorothy Gurhy
Date of previous inspection:	26 April 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school serves a mixed area near the centre of **Maidstone**. It is smaller than other primary schools with 107 pupils who come from a range of social and economic backgrounds. A very small proportion come from minority ethnic families and nearly all pupils speak English as their first language. The percentage of pupils claiming free school meals is below the national average. Pupils starting school this year have attainments that are generally below average, although in previous years the range has been broader with many starting school with attainments that were well below average. The proportion of pupils having special educational needs is around the average at just under 19 per cent. Although some of these pupils have significant difficulties, most are a little behind their peers and none have a Statement of Special Educational Needs at present. The percentage of pupils leaving or joining the school at other than the normal time is about average.

There has been considerable disruption in the last two years following the resignation of the previous headteacher. As a result, standards of attainment and of teaching at Year 2 declined dramatically, and when the headteacher joined the school in September 2003, considerable effort had to be put into making sure that systems were in place to support staff in working to the expected standard

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21351	Peter Lewis	Lead inspector	English Science Information and communication technology Design and technology Music Physical education Religious education
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23385	Suzanne Gerred	Team inspector	Foundation stage Mathematics Art and design Geography History

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

The school provides a **good** standard of education which is improving rapidly. This is as a result of strengths in the leadership and management which are good and in the teaching, much of which is also good. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards of attainment in science and information communication technology in Year 2 are unsatisfactory;
- Pupils' achievement is good overall as a result of good teaching and teachers' good use of assessment;
- Pupils' attitudes are very good and their behaviour and personal development are good which has a considerable impact on their learning;
- There is not enough planned development of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills across subjects.
- Procedures to provide support and advice for pupils are very good;
- The links established with parents are very good;
- The leadership provided by the headteacher is very good and has made a considerable difference in the pace of securing improvement;
- Although subject leaders have a satisfactory understanding of some features of their subjects, their knowledge of standards across the school is insufficient to ensure clear development planning;
- The overall quality of the curriculum is satisfactory but planning in the reception classes does not always ensure that there is enough structure to some play activities;

The improvement since the last inspection is good. Following a decline in both standards and provision during a period of considerable turbulence in the school's leadership since the last inspection, the new headteacher has provided a clear focus upon improving pupils' learning through rigorous self-evaluation and effective action. As a result, standards have improved, the weaknesses reported have been addressed and strengths noted at that time have also improved.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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*

For pupils who took the national tests and assessments in 2003 achievement was unsatisfactory. These pupils entered the school with standards that were well below those normally found, which is lower than the attainments of children now entering the school. Inspection evidence shows that the school's strong focus on improving teaching and the good use made of assessment have been successful in raising standards so that by the end of Year 2 standards are now average in speaking and listening, writing, and reading and mathematics. Achievement is good, and this is also the case for pupils with higher attainment and for those with special educational needs. Standards in science and information and communication technology (ICT) are below expectation and in religious education are in line with those expected. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support and make good progress in relation to their prior attainment. Potentially higher attaining pupils regularly achieve as well as they should due to the high level of challenge that is planned in much of their work. Achievement overall in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory.

Pupils' personal development, including their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is **good**. It is well promoted through the very good provision for their moral and social development and the good provision for their spiritual and cultural development. Pupils behave very well in lessons and at other times and have very positive attitudes to their learning. Attendance is good, although punctuality is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is **good**. The quality of teaching is **good** overall, with over a third that is very good and so most pupils learn well and make rapid progress. This is because good relationships and interesting activities enthuse them and support their learning well. There is no teaching that is unsatisfactory. Teachers' use of assessment is good and this enables them to plan lessons that fully challenge all pupils. The curriculum is clearly based on the requirements for the Foundation Stage and the National Curriculum and is well supported by a range of visits and extra-curricular activities and by good links with the community. Parents support the school very well which has a positive impact on pupils' learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**, with some very good features. The leadership provided by the headteacher is very good and that of key staff is good because the school's analysis of its effectiveness is accurate and clearly focused on raising standards. As a result, appropriate actions to improve the quality of teaching and learning are clearly identified and this good management has had a positive impact on raising standards. Subject leaders are well supported in their role by the newly-appointed headteacher. Because many are new to their leadership roles, the school recognises that more needs to be done in order to enable them to evaluate the effectiveness of their subjects and to plan appropriate action. Governors' understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school is good and all statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have an overwhelmingly positive view of the school and have no significant concerns. Pupils who were spoken to during the inspection thoroughly enjoy being in the school, feel that they are encouraged to work hard and know that they have an adult to turn to if they are worried.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise standards in science and information communication technology;
- Improve the use made of English, mathematics and ICT to support learning in other subjects;
- Extend the role of subject leaders so that their identification of required improvements stems consistently from a clear understanding of standards, achievement and provision across the school.
- Improve the planned use of the range of facilities and provision in the outside area of the reception classes.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects

Achievement overall is good. In Years 1 and 2, and in the reception classes, achievement is consistently satisfactory and frequently good. Standards are average in English, mathematics and science by the time pupils are seven. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good and is good for those with higher attainment because of teachers' high expectations of them.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have risen overall in English and mathematics but remain too low in science and ICT.
- There is insufficient planned use of skills in English, mathematics or ICT to support learning in other subjects.
- Pupils' achievement is now good in English, mathematics and science as a result of strengths in teaching and assessment.
- Pupils with special educational needs receive good teaching which has a positive impact on standards.
- The school recognises the need to make more effective use of the outdoor provision for the reception classes.

Commentary

Foundation stage

1. Children enter the reception classes with attainment that is below average, although they have a wide range of personal needs. Overall, children achieve at a satisfactory level and, as a result, are likely to achieve the Early Learning Goals in their personal, social and emotional development and in their mathematical development. Lower standards on entry mean that most will not achieve the expected standards in communication, language and literacy by the time they enter Year 1.

Results in national tests

2. The results of the 2003 national assessments for pupils in Year 2 showed a drop from the standards noted in the last report. Standards in reading and writing were well below average and, in mathematics, were very low, which demonstrated a drop in reading and in mathematics from the results achieved in 2002. The trend in the school's results was slightly below the national trend following a decline in standards in the last three years. Results in these tests were skewed downwards for two reasons:
 - no action had been taken to address weaknesses in assessment and in teachers' planning, which had a negative effect on their learning, and
 - pupils with high-level special educational needs were inappropriately entered for the national assessments.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	75 (83)	84 (84)
Writing	65 (83)	81 (86)
mathematics	73 (83)	90 (90)

There were 40 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Inspection findings

3. Pupils throughout the school achieve well as a result of skilled teaching and the impact of clear strategies for improvement recently introduced by the school. Inspection evidence confirms that standards have risen to average in English and mathematics at the end of Year 2, although there remain some weaknesses in the standard of pupils' writing which the school has recognised and has begun to address. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and because of this, achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. In a similar way, lessons are planned to cater appropriately for those with higher attainment and, as a result, their achievement is good also. The school has worked successfully to reduce the differences in achievement between boys and girls and, as a result, their achievement is broadly similar. Standards in science and ICT are below expectation because, although these weaknesses have been clearly identified by the school, the focus on improvement since the appointment of the new headteacher in September 2003 has rightly been placed on securing improvement in standards in reading, writing and mathematics. In religious education and other subjects where it was possible to make a judgement, standards are broadly in line with those expected.
4. There are some opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in subjects like science, history, geography and religious education but these are not planned sufficiently for a positive impact on standards to result. In a similar way, pupils' use of ICT to support learning in other subjects is limited, which has a negative impact on their achievement.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes are **good** as they start school and **very good** as they grow older. Most pupils have **good** rates of attendance although punctuality is generally **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils show a lively interest in learning which stems from their good spiritual development.
- They deal kindly with others because all adults treat them with respect and value their opinions. Their personal and social skills are developed well.
- Visits and visitors in school add a different perspective to pupils' knowledge about customs and traditions. Pupils' cultural development is good.
- Not all parents follow the standard, satisfactory procedure of notifying the school when their children are absent.

Commentary

5. Pupils' attitudes to learning improve over the time they are in school. The consistent pattern to each day helps children settle into school life and to understand what is expected of them. They quickly learn to answer the register to their name and not to shout out answers to the teacher's questions. As they get older, they become committed to producing the best results, whatever the activity. For example, at an after-school **ICT** club, a group of Year 2 pupils were delighted to see how quickly they could produce digital images of their surroundings and bring these up on screen. They are keen to do things for themselves and share their experiences with adults.
6. The good range of extra-curricular activities, displays and literature on world religions, as well as the broad curriculum ensure pupils' cultural knowledge is good. Important festivals and traditions are celebrated and explained, often by those with detailed knowledge or personal experience of the event. For example, pupils explored the traditions of Michaelmas Day by visiting the local church and taking part in activities related to the origins of the festival. Creativity and expression are encouraged well by experiences such as these. A parent with a daughter in Year 2 on hearing his child say "*God looks on the inside, not the outside*" felt that the school was doing a good job in promoting pupils' spiritual development. The inspection evidence would support his view. Events such as "Doing my Best" assemblies ensure that every pupil, regardless of age, gender or ability is given an opportunity to share in the feeling of a job

well done. The newly established school council is already proving itself a useful vehicle in helping pupils think creatively and develop an understanding of citizenship.

7. Through personal example and direct teaching, staff help pupils judge right from wrong and to see the value of socially and morally responsible behaviour. Pupils' good behaviour bears testimony to their understanding. Parents are confident that the school deals effectively with incidents of bullying or aggressive behaviour. Pupils agree. None was observed during the inspection and no exclusions have been made in recent years. Staff view all incidents of racism or intolerance between individuals and groups of pupils as serious incidents and everyone in school understands they have a duty to report and to combat them. When asked, pupils had no hesitation in saying they would seek help from the teacher or adult supervising them if they were upset or unhappy in school.
8. Registers show that although attendance levels are good and above the national average, there are slightly too many unauthorised absences. The hardworking school secretary has to rely on parents contacting the school about their children's absence and not all parents are prompt in doing so. The school works effectively with outside welfare agencies where there are concerns about the attendance or punctuality of certain pupils.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	4.3
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.8
National data	0.4

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

Exclusions

There have been no exclusions at the school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality of education overall. Pupils at Key Stage 1 consistently achieve well because they are taught well. Children in the reception classes achieve at an appropriate level. A good range of cross-curricular links is planned and the curriculum is supported well by a good range of visitors and the very good range of extra-curricular activities that are provided. Following improvements to the buildings, the school's accommodation is good, although the limited use of outdoor space and the lack of facilities for structured outdoor play restrict the degree to which the school can provide for reception children's physical development.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is good throughout the school, with much that is very good. This marks an improvement over time since the last inspection. The school has passed through a period when it had difficulty in recruiting staff and this was compounded by the absence of a permanent headteacher until September 2003. A clear focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning through support and training has now had a positive impact on pupils' achievement. The school recognises that more remains to be done, and has clear plans in place to improve further. Pupils' progress is assessed thoroughly and the information available is used well in planning how to move pupils forward.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have high expectations.

- Good support from skilled and experienced learning support assistants helps pupils to move forward.
- There is good inclusion of pupils with special educational needs and those with higher attainment.
- A good range of assessment information is used consistently in planning work for all pupils.
- In many lessons there is a good use of questioning to challenge pupils.
- Very good use made of individual teachers' strengths.

Commentary

9. The table below indicates the quality of teaching seen across the school. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, there are some weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge which result in a slower pace or in tasks that do not fully stretch all pupils. The school has recognised this as an area for improvement and has an appropriate range of plans in place to ensure that all teaching is of the best quality. Parents and pupils are very positive about the teaching staff. Pupils especially feel that their teachers help them to learn well.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 19 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	2	7	7	0	0	0

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

Common strengths

10. The best lessons share some common strengths that support the quality of pupils' learning very well. Teachers make use of a broad repertoire of styles that enable all pupils to understand what is expected and take a full part in activities and discussion. These lessons are run at a very good pace and with clearly stated high expectations that stretch all pupils. Good support from skilled and well-informed learning support assistants means that those with special educational needs have opportunities to work in small groups with adult help. Very good questioning and discussion enable pupils to think carefully and develop their understanding while considering the contributions made by other pupils. Teachers apply the school's behaviour policy and expectations well, which enables all pupils to learn. In the reception classes, teaching is well modelled by a more experienced member of staff to a newly qualified colleague and, as a result, teaching overall is satisfactory.

Consistently good and very good teaching in Years 1 and 2

11. Good teaching was observed in most classes during the inspection but a significant strength of the school is the high percentage of good and better teaching observed in one of the two reception classes and in Years 1 and 2 and this is a significant factor in the rising standards. The quality of teaching of children aged under five is satisfactory overall in each area of learning and is generally good in relation to their social development. In the very best lessons in Years 1 and 2, the teachers used very good subject knowledge to challenge all pupils through activities and questioning directed at individuals and the whole group. Tasks were accurately planned in relation to pupils' abilities and teachers had the confidence to adapt the planned activities in response to the work that pupils were doing, which promoted rapid learning for all groups.

Good teaching in English and mathematics

12. In all classes English is taught well with examples of very good teaching in both year groups. Teachers have a secure subject knowledge and use this to provide a variety of stimulating lessons that motivate and, in the best examples, inspire pupils. Teaching in mathematics is good overall. This was because the work was challenging for pupils of every attainment. Class teachers and learning support assistants work well in ensuring the right level of support for all

pupils. The most able pupils are well challenged in English and mathematics as a result of teachers' good subject knowledge, and the way in which assessment information is planned to make subsequent learning precise. The school recognises that greater emphasis is required in planning to apply the skills acquired in English and mathematics to other subjects of the curriculum.

Assessment

13. Assessment procedures have improved significantly since the last inspection. Pupils are tested frequently in English and mathematics. The statutory test results are thoroughly analysed so that all staff have a clear picture of pupils' attainment. This data is used rigorously in planning subsequent work. Tracking systems are a strength and, because they are focused on the progress that pupils make, they are used well to help teachers in planning future work. Accurate lesson evaluations support teachers well in identifying strengths and gaps in learning and are used well in planning subsequent work. Generally, teachers give pupils good verbal feedback on their work, and the marking of work is usually helpful in giving pupils a clear picture of whether they have learnt what was intended. Very good whole-school expectations for how teachers' day-to-day assessment is recorded are linked to the targets that show the expected learning. Examination of pupils' previous work and teachers' planning shows that assessment information is used just as consistently in planning appropriate work to extend the most able pupils and those with special educational needs.

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory in Reception and in Years 1 and 2. It is enriched through cross-curricular links, visitors and a good range of extra-curricular activities. Accommodation is good and resources are satisfactory overall, both having been considerably improved recently.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is not enough planned development of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills across subjects.
- Weaknesses in learning opportunities for information and communication technology result in below average standards and unsatisfactory achievement.
- There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- There is good enrichment of the curriculum through the use of visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities.
- Pupils are very well prepared for transition to the junior school.

Commentary

14. The curriculum is sufficiently broad and balanced. It has recently been reviewed in order to link areas of learning wherever possible. A cycle of topics planned over three years allows all national requirements to be met and avoids repetition in mixed age classes. The key issue from the previous inspection has been addressed through the development of medium term plans and schemes of work based on national guidance. There is ample provision for personal, social and health education, which includes drugs and sex education. Adequate time is allowed for all subjects.
15. Although the strategies for literacy and numeracy are effective in enabling pupils to achieve well in English and mathematics lessons, there are not enough planned opportunities for skills in literacy and numeracy to be developed across the other subjects, particularly in science, history, geography and religious education. Consequently the range of pupils' writing and mathematical experiences is limited and learning in other subjects is also restricted.
16. The lack of staff training and resources for information and communication technology (ICT), including too little use of the resources that the school does have available, are factors in pupils'

below average competence in this area. ICT is not established sufficiently across subjects. While improvement has been slow since the last inspection, recent changes in the school's leadership and management and the appointment of a new co-ordinator have accelerated the introduction of good systems for planning and the checking of pupils' progress.

17. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. There are clear individual educational plans and staff are well informed and monitor the gains made by individual pupils closely. Teachers and support staff work together closely to ensure consistency of provision; as a result, the contribution made by support staff is effective. The headteacher, as special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) is very knowledgeable and ensures that the annual reviews are carried out in accordance with the current Code of Practice, and that parents are well involved in planning and reviewing their child's attainment and personal development.
18. There is good enrichment of the curriculum through sport, after school clubs, visits out of school and visitors who talk to pupils in lessons and assemblies. These opportunities contribute well to pupils' personal development as well as supporting the work in lessons.
19. The school has developed a very good relationship with the junior school. Curriculum links, joint training of staff and visits by the Year 5 junior pupils to act as 'buddies' to pupils in Year 2 ensure very good induction for pupils into the next stage of education.

Care, guidance and support

The attention given to the pupils' pastoral care and their health and safety is very good. Children are well guided and supported. Pupils' views are sought and acted upon well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Child protection procedures are very good. Staff are vigilant for signs that indicate a pupil is making insufficient progress or failing to thrive.
- Pupils turn readily to adults for support in school.
- The well structured daily routines in school underpin the high level of care pupils receive.
- The school's assessment systems are used well to support and advise pupils about how their learning might be improved.

Commentary

20. Pupils flourish in the friendly and purposeful atmosphere in school. Teachers ensure each child is warmly greeted and welcomed each day, with pupils quickly developing the confidence they need to become less dependent on their immediate family. Pupils have very good opportunities to seek guidance from adults in school who they trust and who know them well. The child protection procedures adopted in school are well known to staff and likely to ensure that concerns on pupils' welfare are identified and brought to the notice of the appropriate authorities. The headteacher, who is the designated officer acts promptly in establishing the facts, dealing with the situation and supporting those affected by it.
21. Welfare procedures are very good. Staff update their first aid training on a regular basis to provide a good level of expertise and cover throughout the day. Parents are kept properly informed of all matters related to the well-being of their children and the school works closely with the parents of pupils with specific medical needs. As a result, all pupils are able to take a full and active part in all lessons and activities. The potential of risks occurring at school is minimised by vigilant staff and the concentrated efforts of all in keeping the school a tidy, clean and an attractive place in which to play and learn. The new, attractive fenced off areas in the playground add to the 'umbrella of care' in school by giving pupils somewhere they can play quietly and, at the same time, view life on a busy street from a safe vantage point.

22. The progress of each individual pupil is carefully assessed and regularly monitored over the year. This enables pupils to be given the appropriate support quickly to stop them from falling behind. All staff contribute strongly to the care, guidance and support of pupils with special educational needs, and they achieve well. The recently-established school council goes a long way to enabling pupils to be involved in the decision making processes of the school by taking responsibility at class and council levels.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The very good links the school has with parents and the good links with other schools and the community support pupils' learning and achievement well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents receive very good information on the curriculum and what their children have learned.
- Staff listen to parents' concerns and are keen to support them. They work in partnership with them to influence pupils' lives outside of school.
- The school, parents and the community work closely together on specific projects.
- Parents think well of the school. They make a very good contribution to school life and to their children's education.

Commentary

23. The school has established some very good ways to reach out to parents, to inform them and involve them in their children's education. As a result, parents have trust in what the school provides. Friendly staff provide open and honest opportunities for parents to help their children make better progress in their learning. They promote constructive dialogue by passing on information, answering queries or dealing with concerns before they escalate into problems. Effective liaison with parents, particularly those whose children need extra support, underpins the good teaching in school. Parents are appreciative of the work of the school in identifying their children's special educational needs and in planning and providing the right level of support for them.
24. Parents are keen to find out more about how the school operates and the progress their children make, and are provided with very good opportunities to do so. The good assessment procedures support the well-informed feedback parents receive on their children's progress at consultation evenings and in annual reports. Records show teachers and parents arriving at mutually agreed decisions on how best to help pupils' improve. The quality of the information in weekly newsletters is particularly useful. Alongside timely reminders on dates and events, parents are told what their children have been doing in class that week, what they have learned and the work they will be moving onto next. As a result, parents feel well prepared and briefed to support their children's learning at home, and a good number do so.
25. The good relationships the school already established with the local community have been extended through joint efforts to overturn a controversial planning proposal affecting the school. Parents sided with local residents to ensure two mature trees were kept in the playground. A good number of parents, grandparents, governors and college students are regular visitors and workers in school. Pupils benefit from the wide range of skills and expertise their visitors bring with them, and the extra support they receive from them in the classroom and on trips. Valuable links exist with the nearby junior school through joint writing projects for pupils and joint surveys on parents' views.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good overall. Governance of the school is good. The headteacher and key staff provide very good leadership. The school is managed well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Governors understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
- The headteacher has a clear vision that she shares well with governors, staff and parents.
- Key staff set clear objectives that they work hard to achieve.
- The roles of subject leaders are insufficiently focused on improving provision.

Commentary

26. The governing body works in close co-operation with the headteacher and key staff. It shares a common vision and is committed to further improve the learning opportunities for pupils, whilst at the same time maintaining the welcoming, friendly ethos that pervades the school. Committee structures are now well established and these ensure that all issues are dealt with effectively and efficiently. Governors are involved in writing the school management plan and in monitoring progress against targets set. These are linked to longer-term goals.
27. The newly appointed headteacher, very well supported by senior staff, has a clear vision, shared with the governors that she is determined to achieve. She has led the school very well through a period of rapid change during which morale had to be re-established while, at the same time policies and schemes of work across the curriculum were being updated, assessment procedures were being introduced and considerable refurbishment of the buildings was begun. As a result, the head has had to provide significant levels of direct support to managers and teachers in introducing the monitoring and action strategies that are necessary in the fulfilment of their roles. The school has identified the need to distribute management roles more evenly across the staff to make best use of their expertise and this particularly applies to the role of subject leaders. The updated management plan identifies this as a key area for improvement to enable staff to track the progress of both individuals and groups in their quest to raise standards still further.
28. The co-ordination of special educational needs is very good. The headteacher is the co-ordinator and has a clear overview of all aspects of provision for this area across the school. She works very closely with the well-qualified and experienced learning support assistants for special educational needs, and good teamwork is evident. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported by teachers and by support assistants who are effectively deployed in this respect. The governor designated for special educational needs liaises appropriately with the co-ordinator and is involved in all aspects of this area. Special educational needs provision is given a high priority in the school's development.
29. Statutory requirements are met when budgets are set. Budget planning is closely linked to the management plan, especially in planning to raise achievement. The finance officer supports the headteacher and governors very well, overseeing efficient systems of financial management and ensuring that they have the necessary information to prioritise when making spending decisions. The expenditure per pupil is broadly in line with the average cost for schools of their size. However, governors know that additional expenditure will be incurred for ICT equipment and when outdoor facilities for the youngest children are improved and they have wisely planned for this anticipated expenditure.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	272473
Total expenditure	262386
Expenditure per pupil	2282

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	30826
Balance carried forward to the next	40913

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

When children enter the reception classes in the September of the school year in which they will be five, their attainment is below average, although they have a wide range of personal needs. There are currently 21 children attending full-time in the reception class and a further 10 children in a mixed Year 1 and Reception class. The four children who have been identified as having special educational needs are well supported to help them participate fully in all the areas of learning. There are good arrangements for the induction of children into school.

At the time of the last inspection the provision in the Foundation Stage was very good. Staff changes and the need, recognised by the school, to improve the use of the outdoor facilities, means that provision is now satisfactory overall. Teachers provide an adequate range of learning opportunities, which are planned satisfactorily. There is an appropriate balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. There are good procedures for checking children's progress and satisfactory use is made of the information gathered to guide children's next steps in learning.

Provision is suitably led and managed and there is good liaison between the two reception teachers. The newly built outdoor shelter is an attractive and useful addition to the secure, outside area. However, there is now a need to make more effective use of this outdoor provision and the co-ordinator has identified this as a priority.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's achievement is good and reflects good teaching.
- Children settle well and make good progress in developing personal and social confidence.

Commentary

30. Children's achievement is good and reflects good teaching in this area of learning. Almost all children are on course to reach the standards expected nationally by the end of the Reception Year and a few are likely to exceed the expected standards.
31. Children already know the routines well and settle to tasks with a minimum of fuss. Good teaching in a happy, stimulating and supportive environment ensures children settle well make good progress in developing personal and social confidence. Children respond positively to the good care given by the staff and to the good role models they provide. Behaviour is good. The gains in learning already evident in this area are as a result of the continual reinforcement of rules and insistence on high standards of behaviour.
32. Teachers provide a good range of activities that promote social skills in a variety of ways. As children play with others in the sand, with construction materials, on climbing apparatus or with wheeled toys they engage in conversations. They learn to play co-operatively, to share resources and equipment sensibly and begin to solve problems together developing co-operation and collaborative skills.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Although standards are below average, children's achievement is satisfactory.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall with some good features.
- There are missed opportunities to develop speaking skills.

Commentary

33. Standards are below average when children enter the reception classes. Many children have a limited vocabulary and communication and language skills are below those normally found for children of this age. Few but a small number of higher attaining children, are likely to reach all the early learning goals expected by the end of the reception year. Nevertheless, almost all children achieve satisfactorily in relation to their capabilities. Standards in reading are better than in writing and a small number of children who are capable of higher attainment are well on course to exceed the expected standard by the time they enter Year 1.
34. Children are attentive and listen well during whole-class activities. However, speaking skills are less well developed. There are missed opportunities for adults to engage children in conversations and to question them in a way that encourages more than one word answers. Children enjoy looking at books and listening to stories. This is because teachers are enthusiastic and encouraging. Children are taught to hold books carefully and to turn the pages correctly. They realise that print conveys meaning and almost all successfully tell a story from the pictures. Those capable of higher attainment are beginning to read a simple text accurately especially when similar words and sentences are repeated.
35. Teaching is satisfactory overall with some good features. In a good lesson, the teacher captured children's interest in a new book by introducing actions, which the children could do to help them remember the sequence of the story. Letter sounds and letter formation are taught adequately, supporting development of early reading and spelling. Consequently, children demonstrate knowledge of initial letter sounds and a few are beginning to employ them as they try to read or spell unfamiliar words. Almost all children recognise and write their own names. The more able children are beginning to write words and simple sentences independently. However, few children form their letters accurately.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children make the most progress when teachers and teaching assistants are actively involved in their learning.
- The use made of assessment information to plan specifically what different groups of children should be learning is underdeveloped.

Commentary

36. Teaching and learning are satisfactory allowing children to make adequate progress in relation to their below average attainment on entry. Many children are on course to reach the expected standard in the number aspect of mathematics. However, children's understanding of calculation and of shape, space and measure is less secure and few are on course to achieve the expected standards in these aspects.
37. Teachers plan a range of interesting activities to promote mathematical understanding linked to themes and stories such as, 'We're going on a bear hunt' and 'The Three Little Pigs'. Children already count accurately to seven, matching one to one. The most capable children are beginning to add on one or two to a given number using a number line.

38. Children make the most progress when teachers and teaching assistants are actively involved in their learning. During a good lesson in the mixed Reception and Year 1 class, children were helped to solve a problem of dressing three pigs in as many different ways as possible, combining 3 different coloured shirts and shorts. In this session children's learning progressed well, particularly in using skills of observation because the teacher questioned them effectively to challenge and extend their visual perception and reasoning.
39. Greater detail is needed in teachers' planning for the smaller steps in learning that the different groups of children take towards the broader learning goals expected by the end of the Reception year. Although assessment procedures have improved throughout the school, there is scope for better use to be made of assessment information to plan specifically what different groups of children should be learning in their mathematical development. In some activities there is too little variation in the level of challenge provided, which holds back those capable of higher attainment. This is particularly the case when children from the two classes are taught together.

OTHER AREAS OF LEARNING

The provision for **knowledge and understanding of the world, physical and creative development** was sampled and therefore no judgement can be made about provision in these areas.

Commentary

40. In the one lesson seen where **knowledge and understanding of the world** was being developed, teaching and learning of early geographical skills were satisfactory. Children learned the function of maps and were helped to plan a route around their classroom, on a 'bear hunt,' and to draw a simple map.
41. Teachers provide a satisfactory range of learning experiences that promote the development of skills in **physical and creative development**. However, the outside area is not always used satisfactorily to promote children's learning. Planning does not always ensure that there is enough structure to some play activities. On some occasions there are too few resources for children to choose. There is a lack of clarity and purpose and there are occasions when children are not well enough challenged so they do not sustain concentration. This results in children running around and chasing each other without specific purpose and holds back their learning.
42. Adults successfully help children to develop pencil control and hand-eye co-ordination as they manipulate small tools such as scissors and glue sticks and as they use chalks, pencils, crayons and brushes to paint, draw, write their names and practise letter formation. There are satisfactory opportunities for children to develop control of larger movements as they climb and balance on large apparatus outside and as they ride tricycles and other wheeled toys. Those observed outside demonstrated the expected standards for their age.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 1

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and pupils are achieving well.
- Assessment, tracking and target setting procedures are good and help teachers match work well to the needs of the pupils.
- The subject leader manages the subject well and leads by example.
- The use of English to support learning in other curriculum areas needs to improve.

Commentary

43. National tests in 2003 indicate that standards at the end of Year 2 were well below average in all aspects of English. However inspection evidence indicates that standards at the end of Year 2 are now average in speaking and listening and reading and in writing.
44. Several factors have contributed to the recent improvement in standards. Staffing is now stable, assessment procedures have been introduced and are good, teachers plan effectively, they match work well to the needs of the pupils and their expectations are high. In addition very effective programmes of work have been put in place, supported by teaching assistants, to give extra support in reading to pupils both with special educational needs and those who need support in a small group to increase their confidence. Individual targets are set and shared with pupils and these are closely monitored.
45. Teachers' presentation is often lively capturing the pupils' interest and encouraging them to respond to questions and become fully involved in the lessons. Teachers are skilled at asking questions that encourage the pupils to justify and explain and also often ask them to discuss issues with a partner before responding to the class. All these activities impact positively on their speaking and listening skills. In one class the teacher played the part of television interviewer and pupils responded very well, reflecting positive attitudes and competing to have the opportunity to respond to the teacher's questions.
46. Resource provision to support the teaching of reading is good. The newly refurbished school library is beginning to be used well as a base for reading activities and for selecting non-fiction books to support learning. Displays in the library and around the school engage pupils well with questions clearly displayed encouraging pupils to read and respond. Teaching assistants offer good support. Because of these features, pupils have positive attitudes to reading. They understand the difference between fiction and non-fiction and are keen to talk about their favourite books. Home/school records are well maintained and contain useful comments that will guide parents when listening to their children read at home.
47. Standards in writing are around the nationally expected level, although continuing to raise them is a top priority for the school. Additional time is allocated to practise writing skills and staff give additional support to groups of pupils in Year 2. Scrutiny of work indicates that this extra support is making a difference and pupils are achieving well, especially since the beginning of this academic year. Staff take opportunities to encourage writing for a purpose in subjects across the curriculum but these instances are co-incidental, rather than planned in relation to identified literacy targets. At present, computers are infrequently used to support pupils' written work, although some examples of this were seen. Marking is good as teachers indicate clearly what the pupil needs to do to improve and individual targets also state clearly what the pupils need to do to raise standards further.
48. The subject leader is effective and is keen to achieve higher standards. She has made good use of the newly introduced tracking sheets and has begun to monitor the standard of writing across the school. Her enthusiasm and drive are impacting positively on teaching and learning, and place the school in a strong position to achieve the targets set.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

49. Staff ensure that pupils have some opportunities to use their literacy skills in other subjects. However there are still too many worksheets used that do little to structure pupils' writing skills. Neither do teachers systematically plan to develop writing skills in other subjects by, for example, developing report writing skills in science or factual writing in geography. Plans are in place to address both of these issues.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have improved, and are now average.
- There is good teaching throughout the school characterised by good pace, challenge and high achievement.
- Higher attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are well challenged.
- Pupils' use of mathematics in some other subjects is not planned systematically.

Commentary

50. Standards in mathematics were well below average at the end of Year 2 in 2003, with a low percentage of pupils achieving the higher level, in contrast with the school's target predictions. Following a period of turbulence, leadership and staffing are now stable and this has enabled the school's good induction and support procedures to work effectively. Assessment procedures are good and teachers plan collaboratively. Individual targets are set and shared with pupils and these are closely monitored, and there is clear evidence that test results are set to improve this year. The quality of teaching and learning is now good and this is raising the attainment of all pupils. As a result, standards in Year 2 are about average, reflecting the good achievement that is made.
51. Teaching is good throughout the school. In these lessons the work was challenging and the good support of the learning support assistant ensured that pupils of lower abilities achieved well. Higher attaining pupils were working at levels above those expected nationally. Very good use of discussion frequently supported the pupils' learning.
52. Teachers group pupils to help ensure that work is pitched at the right level and plan work for different abilities within their classes. This ensures that all are challenged sufficiently and pupils consistently achieve as well as they can. Pupils take care and pride in their work. Their confidence in early number facts helps them to tackle increasingly challenging mathematical tasks. The school has identified its more able pupils and makes good provision for them. They are given a real sense of challenge to achieve high standards.
53. Good teaching in the school is characterised by the good pace of teaching and learning. Lessons are brisk, but pupils are given sufficient time to think and reflect. The amount of work they cover in lessons is good and all pupils try hard. Practical approaches work well, particularly for those pupils with special educational needs. The quality of teaching and learning is now good and this is raising the attainment of all pupils. This is an improvement since the last inspection when standards were judged to be sound. The subject is managed well, with the subject leader being well-supported by the headteacher. This arrangement has enabled the subject leader to develop her monitoring and planning skills while ensuring that all teachers are familiar with the subject and confident in how to teach it.

Mathematics across the curriculum

54. The school has a good range of planning in place to begin to identify opportunities for pupils to develop the skills they have learnt in mathematics within other subjects of the curriculum. However, such opportunities are not planned systematically into other lessons, such as science or geography. This means that pupils do not practise, consolidate and improve their mathematical skills in other subjects as much as they might.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**. Although the picture is not as strong as it was at the last

inspection, there is every indication of an upward trend in standards.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at this point in Year 2 are below average.
- Achievement overall is satisfactory.
- A small number of pupils, who are capable of higher attainment, are not consistently challenged to an above average standard.
- There is insufficient development of writing, numeracy and ICT skills in science.
- Changes in leadership and management since September have resulted in improvement in provision.

Commentary

55. In the national assessments in 2003, teachers assessed standards in science as well below average compared with all schools nationally and also compared with similar schools. Standards currently in Year 2 are below average. While standards are lower than they were at the previous inspection, there is now an upward trend as recent improvements in leadership and management, planning and assessment are beginning to take effect.
56. Pupils currently in Year 2 do not have the expected depth of knowledge and understanding in all the aspects of science required by the National Curriculum. This is particularly the case in scientific enquiry. Pupils record results through drawings and simple tables. They are beginning to make straightforward predictions. However, few express their own ideas about finding solutions. Only a small number of higher attaining pupils have an awareness of a 'fair' test. Achievement in lessons at this point is satisfactory for all groups of pupils including those with special educational needs or those with English as an additional language. Although pupils with potential for higher attainment make satisfactory progress overall they could do better. The problem is that the work set is not consistently adapted to challenge these pupils and it does not do enough to encourage initiative. Consequently they are held back from reaching higher standards.
57. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. None of the lessons seen during the inspection was less than satisfactory and there were some good features in all classes. Teachers question pupils effectively to challenge pupils' thinking. They use introductions well to review earlier work so that learning builds on pupils' prior knowledge. Pupils are clear about what is expected of them and about learning intentions. This is because teachers share their expectations with them at the start of lessons. Good use is made of teaching assistants in practical activities to reinforce teaching points or to provide additional support for less able pupils and those with special educational needs.
58. Expectations are not high enough for the use of different kinds of writing in science. For example, there is too much reliance on drawing and too few opportunities to write or use computers to record their scientific knowledge and understanding or to plan and record observations and investigations. There is insufficient use and development of pupils' mathematics skills, for instance by recording findings as simple graphs.
59. Changes in the school's leadership and management and the appointment of a new subject co-ordinator since September have resulted in a revised curriculum plan. This ensures full coverage of the National Curriculum requirements. It provides continuity and progression through the school, taking specific account of the mixed age classes to avoid duplication of work. This is already seen to be giving greater emphasis to scientific enquiry and practical investigations. The head teacher and science co-ordinator have a clear view of what needs to be done to raise standards in science and have begun to address them. The introduction of systems for keeping track of pupils' progress and for checking the quality of teaching and learning, mean that the school is now well placed to accelerate improvements.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been little investment in resources or staff expertise.
- ICT is not planned effectively to support learning in other subjects.
- Procedures for monitoring and evaluating provision and standards in ICT are developing rapidly.
- The co-ordinator is very knowledgeable and committed to improvement

Commentary

60. From the one lesson seen, discussion with staff and pupils and a scrutiny of the available work, it is clear that by Year 2, pupils' ICT skills are below those expected. In the lesson seen, good teaching enabled pupils to make rapid progress and achieve well. Although planning identifies the skills to be taught, there is too little consistent use made of the computers in classes. The time available for pupils to use the computers to apply those skills in other subjects is not identified in the school's planning. These features have a negative impact upon pupils' learning and the standards attained.
61. Conversations with pupils and examples of their work show they are confident in using the keyboard to manipulate text and screen images but that few have appropriate experience of using programmable toys or of accessing the Internet for research and presenting text.
62. The subject is well led. The recently appointed subject leader is very knowledgeable and committed to ensuring the best for the pupils and, to this end, has begun to develop plans for updating the equipment and the range of software. She and the headteacher have worked closely with the local advisory service in beginning to develop an appropriate scheme of work and assessment. Plans are in place to revise assessment procedures in the near future. A portfolio of pupils' work is being assembled and will provide all teachers with clear exemplification of standards.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

63. During the inspection little use was seen of ICT outside the direct teaching sessions but other evidence indicates that the use of ICT to support learning is underdeveloped. The school recognises that there is a need to improve provision and standards in ICT as well as formalising planning for ICT to support learning in English and mathematics.

HUMANITIES

In humanities, work was sampled in **religious education**, but not in **history** or **geography**. It is therefore not possible to form an overall judgement about provision in these subjects.

Commentary

64. Teachers' planning in all three subjects indicates that a range of visits and visitors play an important part in making the work interesting and relevant. However, from an examination of pupils' work it is clear that, there are not enough planned opportunities for skills in literacy to be developed through history and geography. Consequently the range of pupils' writing is limited and learning in these subjects is also restricted.
65. Subject co-ordinators have revised the schemes of work and have begun to monitor their subjects by checking teachers' planning. However, their roles in checking standards and the quality of teaching and learning are not sufficiently developed.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

66. No lessons were observed in design and technology or art and design but pupils' previous work was examined.
67. It is evident from teachers' planning and from displays, that work planned in **art and design** is varied and interesting. The curriculum is enhanced by an after school art club, which provides specialist teaching in aspects of art such as three-dimensional work with clay.
68. The role of the co-ordinator is underdeveloped. She is enthusiastic about her area of responsibility and is knowledgeable, but her overview of whole-school strengths and areas for development is limited by a lack of systematic monitoring and evaluation.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

No lessons were seen in this area of the school's work so it is not possible to make a secure judgement about provision.

Commentary

69. No lessons were seen in this area of the school's work and so no judgements are made about standards or quality of teaching and learning.
70. The school sees pupils' personal care and guidance as an important part of its work. The programme for personal, social and health education is satisfactory and includes work on diet, health, sex, drugs and personal safety. This programme helps pupils develop a safe and healthy life style, gain confidence and interact with others. It is well supported by visits from outside agencies. The School Council provides pupils with opportunities to take part in making decisions about their school and in experiencing 'democracy' at a level appropriate to their ages.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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