

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **NORTHERN INFANTS SCHOOL**

Portchester

LEA area: Hampshire

Unique reference number: 116030

Headteacher: Mrs G Shelley

Lead inspector: Lindsay Howard

Dates of inspection: 22 - 24 March 2004

Inspection number: 260638

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
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 – 7 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	118.5
School address:	Richmond Rise Portchester Fareham Hampshire
Postcode:	PO16 8DG
Telephone number:	023 92370693
Fax number:	023 92214245
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Thomas Campbell
Date of previous inspection:	08 February 1999

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

The school is situated on the northern edge of Portchester. The catchment area consists mostly of private housing, but 37 per cent of the pupils come from nearby Paulsgrove, which is an area of some deprivation. Year on year more and more pupils have entered the school with attainment that is below that expected for their age. The background of the pupils is broad, but overall their attainment on entry now is well below that expected. There are 118 pupils aged four to seven on roll. The roll has fallen over the last seven years and continues to do so, and therefore the school is smaller than others of its type. This has meant changes in organisation of classes and the curriculum every year for the past seven years. At present pupils are organised into five classes: two classes have reception and Year 1 pupils, one has Year 1 pupils and two have Year 2 pupils.

The number of pupils having special educational needs (SEN) is above the national average. Some of these pupils have significant emotional and behavioural difficulties and the school provides a nurture group for them for part of every morning. There are no pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The number of pupils who move in and out of the school other than at the beginning and end of the school year is generally low, though it was high in the previous school year.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
7336	Lindsay Howard	Lead inspector	Foundation Stage English Information and communication technology History Geography Physical education Personal, social and health education
9769	Margaret Morrissey	Lay inspector	
24528	Garth Muton	Team inspector	Mathematics Science Art and design Design and technology Music Religious education Special educational needs English as an additional language

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**Northern Infants School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils.** Though standards at the end of Year 2 are well below national averages, most pupils now achieve well as a result of the satisfactory and often better teaching and the good leadership and management of the headteacher and management team. **The school provides satisfactory value for money.**

**The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:**

- The very good vision of the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and all staff is driving the plans to meet the diverse needs of all the pupils and raise standards.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to school, and the vast majority behave very well in and out of lessons.
- Standards at the end of Year 2 are well below national averages in reading and mathematics and in the lowest five per cent in writing.
- The good care and support always given to pupils, but especially through the innovative curriculum for social, personal and creative education, enable them to develop self-esteem and confidence and so achieve well.
- Children are given a good start to their education in the reception classes as a result of the consistently good teaching.
- Teaching in Years 1 and 2, though satisfactory overall, is inconsistent across the classes, so some pupils do not achieve as well as others.
- Individual target setting for pupils is not developed sufficiently for them to understand what they need to be able to do to improve.

The school is as effective as it was at the time of the last inspection. The falling standards in national tests are largely due to the steep decline in pupils' levels of attainment on entry to the school, especially in the skills needed for learning to read and to write. The whole-school approach to teaching and learning through the lively curriculum is already having an impact on pupils' achievement. Arrangements for the performance management of all staff are clearly linked to raising standards and achievement. Examples of good teaching were seen in all year groups. The school responded well to most of the issues from the previous 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	C	D	D	E
writing	B	D	E	E*
mathematics	B	E	E	E

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average;*

*E\* - lowest five per cent*

*Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals.*

**Pupils' overall achievement is now satisfactory.** The 2003 national test results show attainment in Year 2 to be well below the national average. This is lower than at the time of the previous inspection. However, 2003 results relate to a cohort of pupils whose mobility was above average; a large percentage of those moving into the school had special educational needs and a significant number moved into the school shortly before the national tests were taken. The effect of this is that the test results for 2003 do not fully reflect the school's good teaching and learning policy. The current inspection findings are that standards are significantly higher in Year 2 than last year, although they remain below the national average. Current standards show that pupils in the present Year 2 are achieving well and making good progress, having entered the school with standards that

were well below expectations and leaving with standards that are below average, a clear gain in learning. Much progress is made in the reception classes, though most children will not reach the learning goals in communication, language and literacy by the time they enter Year 1.

**Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.** Their cultural development is sound, though not enough is done to prepare them for life in a multicultural society. They have very positive attitudes to work, and the vast majority behave very well both in and out of lessons as a result of the good care provided for them. Attendance is good.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education is sound.** The good teaching in the reception classes, together with a good range of learning opportunities, enables children to achieve well. This also applies to the Year 1 pupils taught alongside reception children. Teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2 are satisfactory. Examples of good teaching were seen in both year groups, and one of very good teaching in Year 2, all of which enabled pupils to achieve well. In two lessons teaching was unsatisfactory and so pupils did not achieve as well as they could. The good curriculum is well planned to develop pupils' learning across all subjects, especially their personal, social and health education. Pupils do not have individual targets to help them know what they need to achieve next. The very good care given to pupils, the good support and guidance provided for them, the good partnership with parents and the good links with the community make important contributions to learning.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**The school's leadership and management are good overall.** The clarity of vision, sense of purpose and high aspirations of the headteacher, ably supported by her deputy and all staff, underpin the management of the school. The management of subjects by individual members of staff is good. The governance of the school is satisfactory. Many of the governors are newly appointed but have an increasingly clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are beginning to play an important role in planning future developments.

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

**Parents and pupils have very positive views of the school.** Parents are pleased that their children attend the school. They know that children are expected to work hard and that they make good progress. Parents feel that the school plays a big part in the community and works in partnership with them. They appreciate the care that all staff give the children and say that staff know the families well. Pupils like to come to school, enjoy learning and like the activities that help them to learn.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- raise standards throughout to ensure that all pupils reach the level of which they are capable, especially in reading, writing and mathematics.
- improve the amount of good and better teaching throughout the school so that all pupils can achieve well in all lessons.
- set effective individual targets for pupils so that they know what they are trying to achieve.

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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects**

Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are well below the national average at the end of Year 2 in national tests. However, pupils' achievement is now satisfactory as they move through the school and attainment is below the national average in lessons for reading, writing and mathematics. Children in the reception classes achieve well, although, by the time they enter Year 1, most will not reach the Early Learning Goals in important areas of communication, language and literacy, and some will not reach them in mathematical development.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils do not reach the national averages in national tests at the end of Year 2.
- Children in the reception classes are given a good start to their education.
- Pupils' achievement in lessons is generally good, though over time it is satisfactory.
- The teaching and learning strategies to help pupils become more involved in their learning and so make better progress have been in place for the past two academic years and are beginning to make a positive impact on standards achieved.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	14.9 (15.0)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	12.6 (13.9)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	15.1 (14.6)	16.3 (16.5)

*There were 34 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

1. In the current Year 2, standards are below average in reading, writing and mathematics, which represents a significant improvement since the tests in 2003 when attainment was well below the average for similar schools in reading and mathematics and in the bottom five per cent in writing. The results in that year were adversely affected by both the mobility of the pupils and the proportion who had SEN, both of which were above average.
2. By the end of Year 2 standards in science and information and communication technology (ICT) meet expectations. Standards in religious education are below those expected in the locally agreed syllabus. Timetabling arrangements meant that it was not possible to make an overall judgement on standards in art and design, design and technology, history, geography, physical education and music.
3. Children enter the reception classes with levels of attainment that are well below those expected nationally for their age. The consistently good teaching coupled with the lively curriculum enables children to achieve well. By the time they enter Year 1 they will meet the Early Learning Goals expected for their age in physical and creative development. The majority will meet the goals expected in some areas of knowledge and understanding of the world and mathematical development. About half of them will reach the expected goals in communication, language and literacy, with many that are still well below those levels. About three-quarters of the children will reach the goals for personal, social and emotional development. Overall standards are below expectations when children enter Year 1.
4. The achievement of pupils with SEN is satisfactory overall, although some individuals make good or even very good progress.

5. The extremely small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language attain standards comparable to those of their peers. Their achievement is satisfactory.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils have good attitudes to their work and the majority are very well behaved in lessons and around the school. Their personal, spiritual, moral and social development is good. Their cultural development is sound. Attendance and punctuality are good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils like to come to school and their attendance is good.
- Most pupils behave very well in lessons, so that they achieve well.
- The very few pupils who occasionally behave badly are handled well by adults, but at times other pupils' learning is disrupted.
- Assemblies contribute well to pupils' spiritual and moral development.
- Social development is very well supported through the curriculum for social, personal and creative education (SPACE\*)<sup>1</sup>, with many opportunities for pupils to develop independent and co-operative skills.
- Pupils' cultural development is supported through the curriculum for history, geography and religious education, but not enough is done to promote multicultural education throughout the school.

### **Commentary**

6. All adults in the school work hard to maintain a positive ethos and a very caring environment so that all pupils, regardless of ability or social background, can flourish. Children settle quickly into school when they join the reception classes and this good start is built on as they move through the school. However, because they arrive with levels of personal, social and emotional development that are well below those expected, most do not reach the early learning goals by the time they enter year 1. Pupils know that they will be listened to in an atmosphere of trust and this underpins the good relationships that exist throughout the school. As a result most pupils listen to their teachers and try very hard to do their best.
7. Overall, pupils' behaviour is very good in and out of lessons, and exemplary in assemblies and during lunchtime.
8. Over the past two academic years the school has reviewed and developed a strategy to help pupils participate actively in their own learning. The time built into the school day for this SPACE is well spent and helps pupils to learn to think for themselves and to work productively on unsupervised activities. This curriculum has altered the attitudes pupils have towards learning. They are now more positive about learning and show enthusiasm for academic tasks. Consequently their achievement has improved and they make more progress in lessons than previously.
9. Pupils with special educational needs tackle their work confidently and relate well to one another and to their teachers. There are a minority of pupils with emotional or behavioural difficulties who have difficulty in sustaining concentration. These are well supported by withdrawal to a nurture group that runs for half of each morning. Some attend every session while others attend two or three. Pupils make progress towards the personal and social targets in their individual education plans, though this can be erratic. Sometimes the behaviour of these individuals is very

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<sup>1</sup> The National Curriculum subjects of art and design, design and technology, history, geography, personal, social and health education and the Foundation Stage areas of learning of personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development are taught within this curriculum. During the time allocated pupils choose from the prescribed activities, planning when they will do them and with whom. They move from one activity to another, sometimes working with adults, sometimes with their peers. During these sessions they develop their skills in speaking, listening, concentration and thinking through the content of the prescribed curriculum.

challenging and it requires great skill and patience from the teachers and teaching assistants to manage them and to ensure that the learning of the majority of pupils is not disrupted. These pupils do not always make sufficient progress in academic areas for them to reach the standards expected of pupils of their age and consequently their attainment in national tests is well below that expected.

10. Pupils' moral and social development is well supported by the good examples set by the adults, who show them tolerance and understanding, and encourage them to respect the needs and views of others. This is reinforced during assemblies when themes such as *friendship* and *differences* are explored. Not enough is done to provide pupils with more understanding of life in a multicultural society.

### Attendance

Attendance is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' good attendance
- Unauthorised absence is in line with national averages.

### Commentary

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

Authorised absence	
School data	5.1
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.4
National data	0.4

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

11. Attendance overall is above the national average; there is a very low rate of unauthorised absence. Parents receive very clear information on attendance procedures, are left in no doubt of the school's expectations, and respond effectively. Pupils like to come to school and parents support them by bringing them regularly and on time.

### Exclusions

There were no permanent exclusions in the last academic year.

#### **Ethnic background of pupils**

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

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British

No of pupils on roll
118.5

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
2	0

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

12. Pupils' generally very good behaviour in lessons, in assemblies, around the school and at playtimes and lunchtimes is reflected in the low rate of exclusions.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

### Teaching and learning

13. The school provides a sound education for all its pupils. For children in the reception classes teaching and learning are good. For pupils in Year 1 and 2 classes teaching and learning are satisfactory. The curriculum is good and is enriched by the first-hand experiences given to the pupils through visits and visitors. Pupils' learning is also enhanced through the good support and guidance provided by the school, the good links with parents and the community and the very good care they receive. Assessment procedures are satisfactory.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The consistently good teaching in the reception classes enables children to achieve well.
- Good teaching was seen in all year groups so pupils made good progress in those lessons.
- Teachers manage their classes well and create a good learning partnership with their pupils so that they want to learn and try hard.
- Teaching assistants work well with teachers to support pupils' learning, especially those with SEN.
- Assessment arrangements are satisfactory, though target setting for individual pupils is not sufficiently developed to help them know what they need to do.
- Interesting homework, especially in mathematics, extends and reinforces the teaching and learning in lessons.
- Unsatisfactory teaching is sometimes due to teachers' lack of understanding of the concept to be taught, and inappropriate tasks.

### Commentary

#### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 16 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	1	9	4	2	0	0

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

14. Teaching in the reception classes is good and so children achieve well. From a very low starting point some attain, and others nearly reach, the expected standards when they transfer to Year 1. Teaching assistants are used well in these classes; they are clear about what they are expected to do and what pupils should achieve, and this helps accelerate children's progress. Work is well planned for each of the six areas of learning, ensuring that children are taught the basic skills they need within interesting learning situations. All adults have high expectations of children's work and behaviour that are mostly met.
15. Teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2 are satisfactory overall, with some good teaching seen in both year groups in English and mathematics. One very good English lesson was seen in Year 2. Teachers usually plan activities that are well matched to the needs of different groups of pupils. Many of the support assistants have well-developed questioning skills and are a great asset to the teacher, as they often have a keen eye when it comes to observing and assessing what pupils can do. This provides further useful information for the teacher about how well pupils are learning. Pupils mostly make good progress in acquiring knowledge and skills during lessons.
16. Teachers and other staff all have very good relationships with the pupils; as a result, pupils feel valued, have positive attitudes towards learning and try hard, even when they may find the learning difficult. This means that they make at least satisfactory progress. Overall, though, planning and provision result in pupils making satisfactory progress over time and achieving satisfactorily. Work is always set within a context that they understand and to which they can

relate. For example, during the inspection all work in SPACE was related to the 'Teddy Bear' topic and so pupils were able to make good progress in acquiring knowledge and skills across a broad curriculum within an appropriate theme. Much of the learning in all subjects is done through practical activities that require the active involvement of the pupils. This is the key to the better progress that pupils are now making.

17. Recent improvements in assessment procedures are a key to ensuring that pupils achieve as well as they can. Assessments are used well to ensure that the work planned for pupils is pitched at the correct level. However, marking does not always help them to know what they have done well and why. It is inconsistent across the school. Also, pupils do not have effective individual targets so they do not know what they should achieve. This means that the active involvement of the pupils, encouraged in the curriculum, is not continued through into their knowledge of how they can improve.
18. In the one lesson where the teacher's subject knowledge was inaccurate, teaching was unsatisfactory because pupils were muddled by unclear explanations and so did not achieve well. Time had to be spent in successive lessons to clarify pupils' learning so progress was too slow and achievement was not good enough. In another lesson the recording task given to the pupils did not help them reach the learning outcomes of the lesson and so they did not achieve as well as they could.
19. Pupils with SEN are supported well in lessons. Teaching assistants provide good support. However, there are now insufficient numbers of assistants to provide support for SEN pupils, for example in literacy or spelling. This has had a significant impact on the progress that these pupils make and means that fewer reach the standards expected of pupils of their age in national tests.

### **The curriculum**

20. The curriculum for all pupils is broad and balanced, and is enhanced by the innovative programme for SPACE through which many of the foundation subjects (art and design, design and technology, history and geography) are taught. A well-planned programme of visits and visitors also enriches the curriculum. The school's accommodation and resources support the curriculum well.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The SPACE curriculum enables the pupils to become involved in their own learning and develop good thinking skills.
- Pupils' experiences are widened through a good range of visits and visitors connected to the topics being taught.

### **Commentary**

21. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is good, with suitable planning to ensure that all six areas of learning are covered. The curriculum for pupils in Years 1 and 2 meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and religious education. There are schemes of work for all subjects which support teachers' planning and provide continuity across the school. Sufficient time is given to each subject. Provision for sex education and relationships curriculum is made within the whole curriculum when pupils ask questions.
22. The curriculum time allocated to SPACE provides for pupils to learn to share and take turns while playing and learning together, to have some control over their own learning and to develop the ability to work as a team. During these times they choose from the prescribed activities, planning when they will do them and with whom. They move from one activity to another, sometimes working with adults, sometimes with their peers. They are always fully involved, working hard at the tasks and taking pride in their accomplishments. During these sessions they develop their skills in speaking, listening, presentation, concentration and thinking. They reinforce, practise and apply skills taught in a variety of contexts, set themselves challenges and become self-motivated.

These lessons are one of the reasons why they become active learners and achieve well. Therefore they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

23. The development of the curriculum has a high priority within the School Development Plan. The management is to undertake a curriculum audit in the near future with the aim of introducing more cross-curricular links.
24. The curriculum is enriched through a range of visits and visitors. Walks round the local area support the development of pupils' knowledge about their own traditions. Visits to the school by people who talk about their work in the community bring a wealth of knowledge of the wider world to these young pupils and support their personal development.
25. Generally resources are good. The accommodation is spacious and well used, supports the school's positive ethos and enhances pupils' learning. The library is situated in a central space that is used very effectively during and outside lesson time.
26. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. They have individual education plans (IEPs) that are reviewed four times a year. The provision within lessons is good, and teachers and assistants try to provide work that will help pupils reach the targets in their IEPs. However, it is currently not possible to run any specific programmes on a one-to-one or group basis for pupils with particular difficulties. Pupils who attend the nurture group complete work similar to that which their classmates do, though the emphasis is on the development of their social and personal skills.

### **Care, guidance and support**

The care, guidance, and support provided for pupils are **good**. Health and the safety of the environment are **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- All the adults who work in the school provide very well for the overall care, safety and welfare of pupils so that pupils feel able to concentrate on learning.
- Effective support and guidance for all pupils enhance their personal development.
- Good liaison with other agencies supports pupils with a range of SEN.
- Good induction arrangements for all pupils enable them to settle quickly and happily into school.
- Marking and target setting do not give enough guidance to pupils about their attainment.

### **Commentary**

27. The procedures for pupils' safety and welfare are very good and well established. The day-to-day awareness of health and safety is very good, with systems that are well known to all staff and pupils. The governing body and the caretaker enforce the health and safety policy. Risk assessment procedures are well established and the school monitors and reviews safe working procedures.
28. There are very effective child-protection procedures in the school that meet statutory requirements. The policy is agreed by the governing body and is well known to all staff. First-aid provision is very good; pupils are confident about seeking help and are well cared for.
29. The school has good procedures for the educational and personal support of pupils. They are confident that they have good support and, particularly by Year 2, are making their voices heard. Year 2 pupils' questionnaire responses predominantly say teachers are kind and helpful; pupils' wishes and opinions are carefully considered by the school and mostly acted on; and parents are pleased with the support provided, particularly through the nurture groups. Pupils in Year 2 have been consulted about their views through class teacher interviews and an attitudes survey; other year groups have had circle-time discussions. Pupils are not yet able to assess their own achievements, or have a good understanding of how they can improve, because marking and

target setting are undeveloped across the school. Pupils with SEN are helped to meet the targets in their individual education plans. There are good procedures for the induction of pupils to reception classes, and a programme of support is also in place for pupils who join the school during term-time.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools, and the community**

The school has **good** links with parents, the community and other schools.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents are happy with the progress their children make.
- The partnership with parents is consistent from pre-school to Year 2.
- The school's links with parents are generally effective.
- Good links between the school and the community enhance the learning and the environment for the pupils.
- There are good links with other schools through the Portchester Partnership.

### **Commentary**

30. The school's partnership with parents is good and the high degree of support provided by them is beneficial to pupils' progress. They feel that the school contributes well to community life, and the majority are pleased that their children attend the school. They feel that their children are making good progress and that staff expect them to work hard and achieve to the best of their ability. Parents feel that there is a sense of community and that staff know pupils and younger siblings well, this helps younger children when they reach the reception class.
31. The school provides a good range of information, both written and verbal, to ensure that parents are well informed about pupils' progress. Full curriculum plans are provided at the beginning of the school year, supported by termly information about the curriculum. Reports are considered helpful and of good quality, and parents are impressed by the opportunities pupils have to take responsibility for what they plan to learn.
32. Parents feel that the Home-link book helps extend information, particularly in Year 2, when they feel there is less daily communication with the teacher. This enables home-school learning to make progress.
33. The small Friends of the School Association has been instrumental in raising good amounts of money to support the school. This has benefited all areas of learning in the last year and is very much appreciated and valued by the headteacher, staff and governors.
34. The school constantly works to improve its links with the community, which already have a good impact on pupils' learning, for example the Porchester Environmental Education Project, to develop the woodland areas around the school grounds.
35. The links with other schools and colleges are good. Pupils are well supported before and at their transfer to junior school. A number of initiatives with other schools, colleges and the local education authority enrich the school's curriculum and broaden staff experience.
36. Progress towards the achievement of targets set for pupils with SEN is regularly reviewed and accurate records are kept. Class teachers are responsible for writing the individual education plans for these pupils and, although their quality is satisfactory overall, there are examples of targets being too ambitious. Some pupils need targets that recognise the smaller steps they make in their learning so that that can feel a sense of achievement when they meet them.
37. There are satisfactory links with parents of pupils with SEN. However, apart from informal contact at the time of the reviews of pupils' education plans, there are no extra meetings arranged apart from the normal parent consultation evenings. Due to the very small amount of time the SEN co-

ordinator has to fulfil her responsibilities parents tend to have most of their contact with the class teachers.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and key staff is **good**. Management is **good**. Governance is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The clarity of vision and sense of purpose of the headteacher, deputy headteacher and key staff are very good.
- Leaders create very effective teams.
- Governors' knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school is good.
- Strategic long-term planning is very good but does not focus sufficiently upon achievement in the short to medium term.

### Commentary

38. The school has gone through a period of significant change over the last few years due to:

- the number of pupils on roll falling as a result of demographic changes.
- the attainment on entry of the pupils declining, with a consequent decline in standards as measured by national tests.
- the implementation of national initiatives.

39. The headteacher showed good leadership throughout this stressful period and has begun to reverse the downward trend in standards. She has done this by a careful analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses and of the learning needs of the pupils. She has established a new vision for the school with an emphasis upon pupils taking an active part in their learning. Part of the process of moving towards this new vision has been systematic professional development. The deputy headteacher and other key staff have played a very valuable role in this. As a result of all this the united vision of the different teams within the school is striking. Teachers and support staff work remarkably well together, with a common understanding of the kinds of opportunities they wish to provide for the pupils so that they become active independent learners.

40. Governors have been very well informed about this whole process by the regular high-quality written reports they receive from the headteacher and by visits to the school. The governing body is very supportive of the headteacher and staff, although many of its members are fairly new and so it is still learning to help shape the direction of the school. The governors support the headteacher's view that the new approach adopted by the school is the best one to raise and maintain standards in the long term.

41. The strategic planning led by the headteacher and deputy headteacher maps out very clearly the route the school is taking towards achieving its vision and establishing its agreed core values. An appropriate attempt has been made to maintain action aimed at improving achievement in the shorter term by having separate action plans for English and mathematics. Although these are rather too narrow in their scope, strategic planning is satisfactory overall. Nevertheless opportunities have been missed to make short-term achievement a priority. Not enough is done to:

- monitor pupils' work.
- spread good teaching practice.
- make the assessment, marking and recording of pupils' progress more consistent.
- make sure that pupils know what they have to do to succeed.

42. Through the school's performance-management systems individual members of staff are acting upon some of these points. This is a very positive aspect of the school in which every member of staff is engaged.

**Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003**

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	390, 741
Total expenditure	398,566
Expenditure per pupil	3,406

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	21,343
Balance carried forward to the next	13,518

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

## AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

The overall provision for children in the Foundation Stage is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is lively and based on first-hand experiences, so children enjoy learning and achieve well.
- Teaching is always good because the curriculum is well planned and teachers and support staff work well together.
- Children achieve well in all areas of the curriculum and very well in personal, social and emotional development.
- The leadership of the stage is very good.
- Overall, many children have not reached the Early Learning Goals when they enter Year 1.

### Commentary

43. Assessments made when children enter the reception class show that they come to school with levels of attainment that are well below those expected for their age in all areas of learning. At the time of the previous inspection attainment was in line with expected levels. Children make good progress but enter Year 1 with overall standards below those expected:

- Most children reach the Early Learning Goals in physical and creative development.
- The majority reach the goals expected in many areas of knowledge and understanding of the world and in mathematical development.
- About half reach the goals in communication, language and literacy because they enter the school with very little experience of reading and writing.
- About three-quarters reach the goals for personal, social and emotional development.

This is not as good as at the time of the previous inspection, but attainment on entry is now much lower because many children come into school with SEN in the areas of personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy.

44. The leadership of the Foundation Stage is very good. The co-ordinator has a good understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum, and planning makes good provision for all six areas. The classes are appropriately staffed and all staff work well together. Accommodation and resources are good. There is a well-developed programme of home visits for children entering the reception classes. The majority of parents listen to their children read at home and help them with the homework tasks they are given.

45. In **personal, social and emotional development** the children achieve very well. This is because the SPACE curriculum provides many opportunities in this area. Children soon adapt to the systems and routines of school. They feel safe and able to work with a variety of adults. They learn to work in small and large groups with other children, to share and take turns. There are many opportunities for them to develop independence through choosing their own activities and organising themselves during SPACE time. They are able to concentrate for increasing lengths of time without adult intervention, especially during creative activities. They are happy, confident and active learners and many children reach the goals expected in this area of learning before they join Year 1.

46. Children achieve well in **communication, language and literacy** although many will not reach the expected level before they come to the end of the reception year. They make a good start to reading, recognising the title, cover, beginning and end of a book. During the inspection they were learning the sounds *th*, *sh* and *ch*. The teacher's use of a puppet for each sound kept the

children spellbound and by the end of the lesson many could correctly match objects to the puppet with the same initial sound. Exciting lessons such as this engage children's attention and help them achieve well. Children are encouraged to try and praised for their efforts. This raises their self-esteem and makes them want to try again. One or two try to write harder words and manage recognisable attempts such as *tabul* (table). Adults work very hard to extend children's vocabulary because they come to school with limited speech and poor grammar structure. They get them to speak in longer sentences and provide planned opportunities throughout the school day for speaking and listening. This enables them to achieve well in this area of learning.

47. Children achieve well in their **mathematical development** and the majority attain the expected level by the time they join Year 1. The introductory activities are well matched to their abilities and capture their interest. The initial learning is reinforced by the practical tasks later in the lesson. Children enjoy these and work hard to complete them. They are well supported by adults, who allow them time to think out answers for themselves. During the inspection children were sorting objects into sets by one attribute. They made good progress during the lesson. During the discussion, at the end, about three-quarters of them were able to say what a set was and a few could see that some objects could belong to more than one set. The practical activity involved made the learning real to the children and so they retained the knowledge gained.
48. In the area of **knowledge and understanding** of the world children are given interesting activities that they identify with and so they achieve well. They enter school with only a limited knowledge of the world immediately around them. Role-play in *the Teddy Bear Factory* and outdoor play on bicycles help them to identify with other environments. There are many opportunities for them to use a computer throughout the day. They develop good mouse control and can complete such programmes as *Dressing Teddy*. They are beginning to develop ideas of *old* and *new* through their topic on Teddy bears. Some could describe in detail what a bear had to look like to be a valuable Steiff bear.
49. Most children join Year 1 having reached expected levels for their age group in the area of **physical development**. They achieve well because there are opportunities, for most of the day, for them to work outside the classroom. They are able to ride tricycles and scooters to deliver parcels and letters. They can use a variety of spades to dig in the sand and fill buckets carefully. Most use pencils, crayons, glue and scissors accurately and safely.
50. There are many opportunities for children's **creative development** through well planned tasks such as colour mixing and working with clay and dough, and through tasks of their own choosing, such as painting. They enjoy cutting and sticking, making books and finger painting. They matched squares of coloured material to create a collage of bears such as *Paddington* or *Rupert* and were proud of their efforts. As a result of the wide variety of good provision most children attain the goals expected in this area of learning by the time they join Year 1.

## SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 1

### English

Provision for English is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of subject leadership is good.
- Teaching is consistently satisfactory with much that is good or very good.
- Standards in reading and writing, though improving, are below those expected at the end of Year 2.
- Marking does not help pupils understand what they can do to improve their work.
- Not all pupils have effective individual targets to show them what they are trying to achieve.

## Commentary

51. In the current Year 2, standards are below average in reading and writing, which represents a significant improvement since the tests in 2003, when pupils' achievements were well below the average for similar schools in reading and in the bottom five per cent in writing. However, attainment is not as good as at the time of the previous inspection, when it was above the national average for reading and writing. This fall in overall standards is due to the considerable decline in pupils' levels of attainment on entry to the school and to the increased proportion of pupils with SEN. When related to their prior levels of attainment, pupils achieve satisfactorily in most aspects of English.
52. Teaching is consistently satisfactory, and some good and very good teaching was observed. The work in pupils' books shows clear signs of progress as a result of this teaching. Marking is satisfactory but does not always give pupils reasons why their work is marked *good* or otherwise. The school has good assessment systems in place to check regularly the pace of pupils' progress. Effective individual targets are not set, so pupils do not know how well they are attaining and why, and they are too little involved in self-assessment.
53. Those pupils with SEN achieve satisfactorily and often make good progress in lessons. This happens particularly when the work set is rigorously matched to their needs, or when teaching assistants challenge them to do their best.
54. Teachers and teaching assistants frequently provide good models of speaking and listening. Plenty of opportunities for developing these skills are built into the SPACE curriculum as well as the English curriculum. As a result pupils achieve well in this area, their vocabularies broaden and their grammar improves. They are confident about speaking in front of other pupils. In a Year 1 lesson, groups of pupils read aloud the poems they had been reading during guided reading time. They spoke clearly and with evident enjoyment, while others listened and appreciated the humour.
55. Overall attainment in reading is below national averages in national tests. About a quarter of pupils reach the higher Level 3, but about half reach the levels lower than those expected of pupils of this age. Attainment and progress in reading are major priorities for the school, and teachers are knowledgeable about teaching and guiding groups and individuals with their reading, so that pupils achieve as well as they can. Outside the literacy lessons time is given to group reading and handwriting and this is well spent refining pupils' skills. Pupils are able and confident to use a range of techniques when tackling new words and they have a good phonic knowledge. Of the current Year 2 pupils, a significant minority are likely to attain the higher Level 3 by July 2004. However, a fairly large proportion, whilst achieving satisfactorily, are reading at a level below Year 2 expectations. Many of these pupils have identified difficulties with their learning and their parents cannot help them at home. Pupils enjoy books and some of them read regularly at home.
56. Standards of writing are below average. Pupils find it hard to write because they have limited vocabularies and few ideas and so tend only to produce a small amount. However, when subjects really interest them many can write vividly using a good vocabulary. This was seen in a history lesson when Year 2 pupils wrote an imaginary letter from Florence Nightingale, and in work about the Fire of London displayed in the library. Boys are still more reluctant to write than girls and attain less well. Teachers are very aware of the need to improve standards and use a variety of strategies that are beginning to do so. Standards of handwriting are average. Many pupils are able to use a joined, legible cursive style.
57. Leadership and management are good. The subject leader has a good overview of standards. She regularly monitors the quality of teaching, scrutinises planning and pupils' recorded work, and interviews pupils about their work. There are good assessment procedures that are designed to help teachers to track pupils' progress and the development of their skills. Test results show that there has been a decline in attainment in the subject since the last inspection, but there are signs in lessons seen during the inspection that standards are rising. Resources are good, especially

for pupils' guided reading. There is good use of word processing and ICT skills to support the English curriculum.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

58. Speaking and listening skills are satisfactorily used across the curriculum. As there are weaknesses in writing, some pupils do not have the necessary skills to write what they are required to do in other subjects. Pupils' reading skills are mainly sufficient to support work across the curriculum because teachers choose texts that they can read.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision for mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are below average but improving.
- Pupils are achieving well in lessons.
- Subject leadership is good.
- Pupils are encouraged to take an active part in lessons.
- Marking does not help pupils understand what they can do to improve their work.
- Pupils do not have individual targets to show them what they are trying to achieve.
- More consistency across the classes is needed in planning, assessment and record keeping.

### **Commentary**

59. Standards as reflected in national tests, after a period of decline, have begun to rise. Standards of work seen during the inspection confirm that this improvement is being sustained. There are, for example, some areas of mathematics such as the use and presentation of data where standards are at least average and some pupils achieve above expectations. Overall, pupils are currently achieving well in lessons and have made satisfactory progress during their time in school.

60. The current satisfactory achievement is a result of good teaching, several examples of which were observed during the inspection. However, the quality of teaching overall is judged to be satisfactory because the good practice is not consistent throughout the school. In good lessons:

- Pupils are encouraged well.
- Pupils are given tasks well matched to their capabilities.
- Time and resources are used well.
- Teachers manage and organise the class well so that pupils are able to be productive.

61. However, evidence from pupils' books and teachers' planning documents shows that there is room for improvement in some teachers' marking and the planning of pupils' work.

62. The subject leader provides a very good role model for her colleagues and has led the effort to reverse the decline in standards. One of the main thrusts for improvement has been to make the pupils more active in their learning. Teachers are now providing them with lots of practical materials and encouraging them to investigate how to solve problems and present their answers. Other important factors in the process of improvement have been the continuing professional development of staff and the use of assessment information to track the progress of individual pupils.

63. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, especially considering the significant change in the pupil intake. The strategies employed by the school are starting to reap rewards. However, there is a slight imbalance between investigative mathematics and the experiences pupils need in the more formal aspects of the subject. There also remains work to be done to

ensure that the best practice of teaching, assessment and record keeping is spread consistently throughout the school.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

64. This aspect is being developed well. Teachers plan activities within themes. For example, as part of their work about *'The Bear Factory'* Year 1 pupils learn about different ways of sorting bears and, when they make porridge in science (another bear connection), they draw graphs to present their results.

### **SCIENCE**

The provision for science is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve well and achieve standards in line with expectations.
- There is good development of pupils' skills of enquiry and investigation.
- Recording skills are not developed sufficiently in Year 1.
- Inconsistent assessment procedures mean that all pupils are not sufficiently challenged.

#### **Commentary**

65. It was only possible to observe one science lesson during the inspection, so it is not possible to give an overall judgement on the quality of teaching. However, from talking to pupils and looking at their work it is clear that pupils have received some good teaching and are benefiting from the whole-school approach to active learning involving pupils in their own learning. They have knowledge and understanding at least in line with national expectations. Some pupils achieve standards above these expectations. It is also clear that pupils are developing enquiring minds and the confidence to think problems through.
66. Work in their books shows that pupils tackle all new ideas in science by experimenting and testing. This approach is clearly succeeding because pupils can talk confidently not only about recent work but also about ideas they investigated in class some time ago. Both in discussions and in the one lesson observed they demonstrate interest and enthusiasm.
67. The subject leader was not in school for most of the inspection, so it is not possible to make a judgement on her leadership. However, the teaching and learning of science are completely in line with the school's aspirations for its pupils to become independent learners and to foster their natural desire to learn. However, there are inconsistencies in the assessment procedures used by staff and the way in which assessment information is used to ensure that all pupils are sufficiently challenged.
68. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, with standards maintained despite the change in pupil intake. However, whilst Year 2 pupils have recorded the results of their investigations in a number of ways, teachers are not giving the pupils in Year 1 sufficient opportunity and guidance to do this.

### **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision for ICT is **satisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils do not have whole-class ICT lessons to develop their skills.
- Pupils enjoy using the computers.
- The school has a large selection of suitable software to support pupils' learning across the curriculum.

## Commentary

69. Pupils enjoy using computers and are always ready to have an extra turn when they can. They have good mouse control and keyboard skills, though some of the younger pupils find it hard to locate the letter key they need. Few pupils have out of school time. Attainment is in line with expectations at the end of Year 2. This is the same as at the time of the last inspection.
70. Pupils in Year 1 can use a *roamer* well. They are skilled at pressing the correct buttons in the right order to move it forward. They estimated how many moves it would take the *Goldilocks roamer* to move to the three bears' house. They were able to change the program if their estimate was wrong.
71. There are computers in every classroom and three in the central library area. All are used well throughout the school day. However, because there is no ICT suite where whole classes can be taught and work pupils have to wait for their turn to use computers and new skills taught are sometimes forgotten before they have been practised. The leadership of the subject is satisfactory.

## Information and communication technology across the curriculum

72. Computers are used well in lessons. In most English and mathematics classes the computer is loaded with a program to support the learning in that lesson. Many of the programs used make learning fun for the pupils. Word-processing skills are used to support literacy and work in history.

## HUMANITIES

73. It was not possible to observe any lessons in geography and only one in history during the inspection. These subjects were not a focus for the inspection. It is not possible therefore to make a judgement about standards or the quality of teaching. There are examples of work around the school that reflect the topics covered. Examples of good written work in history on the topics of 'Florence Nightingale' and 'The Fire of London' were displayed. No work in geography was seen, but pupils show a sound knowledge of the area local to the school.

## Religious education

The provision for religious education is **satisfactory**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' knowledge and understanding are below expectations.
- Pupils achieve in a satisfactory way.
- The lack of written work in Year 2.

## Commentary

74. It was only possible to observe one lesson during the inspection so that it is not possible to judge the overall quality of teaching. From talking to seven year olds about their work it is clear that, although their achievement is satisfactory, they have not yet acquired the knowledge and understanding typical for their age.
75. The school uses a programme of work based upon the locally agreed syllabus. Most of this programme is stories, discussion, drama and art work. Whilst there are examples of written work from Year 1, there is little evidence of this from Year 2 pupils.
76. Considering the significant change in pupil intake, improvement since the time of the last inspection appears to be satisfactory. The subject coordinator is very well informed about the school's focus on the development of learning and is well placed therefore to lead improvements in the subject.

## **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

77. It was not possible to observe any lessons in art and design, design and technology, physical education or music during the inspection. These subjects were not a focus for the inspection. It is not possible therefore to make a judgement about standards or the quality of teaching. There are examples of work around the school that reflect the importance which the school gives to creativity and the need for pupils to have 'hands on' practical experiences. Often work in one area is linked to another so that in design and technology, pupils in Year 2, for example, made vehicles with axles and wheels whilst they were thinking about forces in their science. Pupils in Year 1 made some wonderfully creative objects when they were thinking about 'What's in the Attic?' in history. Pupils' singing in school assemblies is confident, tuneful and full of joy. No judgement can be made about physical education as no evidence was gathered.

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

Provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The curriculum for personal, social and health education is very good.
- Good links with outside agencies provide well for sex education, drugs awareness and personal safety.

### **Commentary**

78. The development of PSHE is a priority of the school improvement plan. Most of this curriculum is delivered through the time allocated to SPACE. Teaching about drugs awareness, personal safety and healthy living is taught within this context. Good use is made of the local policeman and the school nurse for these issues. Healthy eating and social skills are supported in the school through snack time when pupils sit down together, share fruit and have a drink. Sex education is taught whenever pupils ask questions and in the context of their family lives.

79. All classes have circle time for class discussions, but timetabling arrangements during the inspection meant that none of these were seen. The co-ordinator has worked hard to ensure that the PSHE curriculum is embedded in other curriculum areas such as science and geography.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>4</b>
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	4
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>5</b>
Pupils' achievement	4
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>3</b>
Attendance	3
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>4</b>
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	3
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).*