

INSPECTION REPORT

ST HELEN'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

Bluntisham, Huntingdon

LEA area: Cambridgeshire

Unique reference number: 110888

Headteacher: Mrs W Harknett

Lead inspector: Mr T Neat

Dates of inspection: 8 - 11 December 2003

Inspection number: 260684

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	287
School address:	Colne Road Bluntisham Huntingdon
Postcode:	PE28 3NY
Telephone number:	01487 841468
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Tim Berry
Date of previous inspection:	5 October 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Helen's Primary is a larger than average village school. The socio-economic circumstances of most pupils are above average. The attainment of children starting in the reception classes varies and at the time of the inspection was broadly average. With the exception of the reception year, pupils are taught in classes that contain two year groups – Years 1 and 2, or Years 3 and 4 or Years 5 and 6. Less than five per cent of pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds. There are none for whom the use of English poses a significant impediment to learning. A higher than average proportion of pupils start in the reception classes and stay to receive all their primary education at the school. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs is below average. Their needs are wide-ranging and include profound and multiple learning difficulties and multi-sensory impairment. The proportion with Statements of Special Educational Needs is also below average. The school has just emerged from a period of high teacher turnover. It has been awarded Investors in People status.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20007	Mr T Neat	Lead inspector	English Information and communication technology Design and technology Physical education Special educational needs
9009	Mrs V Bradley	Lay inspector	
8839	Mr J M Egerton	Team inspector	Science Art and design Music Foundation stage
20380	Mr J N Pinkney	Team inspector	Mathematics Geography History Religious education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

St Helen's Primary is a **good school**. Pupils attain high standards and achieve well throughout the school as a result of very good leadership and management, very good governance and good quality teaching and learning. Pupils' good achievement is also helped by their very good levels of personal development. Unit costs per pupil are lower than average and the school gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils achieve well and attain high standards.
- The clear focus on raising standards and making the best provision for pupils.
- The very good leadership and management.
- The strong support of governors based on their detailed knowledge of the school.
- A purposeful, supportive and inclusive ethos.
- Good quality teaching and learning.
- The achievement of some pupils has been adversely affected by a high level of teacher turnover.

The school has improved well since the last inspection and the issues raised in the last report have been addressed effectively. In the case of using assessment data, great strides have been made and this aspect of the school's work contributes very strongly to raising standards.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Pupils achieve well throughout the school. Most children currently in the reception classes arrived with broadly average abilities and are on course to exceed the goals set for this age group. Typical standards are above average at the end of Year 2. Standards at the end of Year 6 rose in 2003 to the highest level in recent years. Very effective leadership has ensured that following a period of very high teacher turnover results have improved rapidly. They are overall well above average compared to all schools nationally and above average in relation to similar schools. Boys and girls achieve broadly as well as each other. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Standards are above average in art, religious education and history by the time pupils leave school.

Pupils' personal qualities are **developed very well**. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good** overall. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Attendance rates are **good**.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is **good**. The high quality of care and support for pupils and the good teaching and learning are particular strengths, which make a considerable contribution to pupils' achievements.

Teaching and learning are **good throughout the school**. In the reception classes teaching is consistently good. Teaching and learning are good in Years 1 and 2. The teaching of Years 3 to 6 is good, with some excellent lessons seen.

- Teachers encourage and engage pupils very well.
- Pupils of different abilities are challenged and given very good opportunities to succeed.
- Teachers do not always make enough demands on pupils to present their work carefully.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are **very good**. The quality of leadership by the headteacher is excellent. The quality of management is very good. The quality of governance is very good. Governors work effectively to ensure that statutory requirements are met very well.

The high quality of leadership and management and the very strong performance of the headteacher are the principal reasons why standards are high and the school has recovered quickly from the effects of the recent very high levels of teacher turnover. One of the strengths of senior management is the very effective review it makes regularly of the school's performance. Within this, the use of information about pupils' attainment is a key element. The results gained in the national tests are scrutinised very closely and very effective action is taken to address any weaknesses found. A prime example of this is the work to correct the relatively weak results in science in the recent past. The focus last year on ensuring that skills of science investigation are taught well resulted in a significant improvement in the 2003 national tests.

The governing body ensures that the school fulfils its statutory duties very well, including promoting policies of social inclusion. Governors have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have played a full part in moving the school forward.

Many of the subject co-ordinators are new to their posts and to the school. Consequently, they are still evaluating the provision in their subjects.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Pupils generally have good opinions of the school. A survey of the views of all pupils revealed that the majority like attending, find other children friendly and feel they can turn to adults at the school if they are worried about something. Some found that lessons were not always as interesting as they might be. The majority of parents are very supportive of the school. Most feel that the school enables their children to make good progress and are happy that their children enjoy coming to school. A few parents raised concerns about how well they are informed about how their child is doing. Some felt that the school did not seek their views enough nor respond well to their suggestions and concerns. The inspection team considers that the information supplied to parents is of good quality and that overall the school's partnership with parents is good.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The inspection team has not identified any major areas of concern which the school should address, and statutory requirements are met:

The governors should prepare an action plan which includes the following minor issues:

- (a) measures to increase consistency in the quality of teaching and learning.
- (b) improvement in the presentation of pupils' work.
- (c) continuing to build the best possible relationship with parents.
- (e) redouble efforts to bring pupils into contact with people from ethnic minority cultures.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Throughout the school, **pupils achieve well**. By the time they leave the school pupils' attain **above average standards**, overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well in the reception classes.
- Typical standards are well above average at the end of Year 2.
- Pupils achieve well throughout the school.
- High levels of teacher turnover have had an adverse effect on achievement in mathematics and science.
- Above average standards are attained in some foundation subjects.

Commentary

1. Children in the reception classes achieve well and most progress beyond the levels expected in all areas of learning by the time they start Year 1. Standards are particularly high in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, physical development and creative development. The attainment of children joining the classes has fallen over the last few years. Those currently in the reception classes and in Years 1 and 2 entered with average levels of attainment.
2. The standards attained by pupils at the end of Year 2 for the period 2000 to 2002 were above or more often well above the national average for all schools in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2000 and 2002 standards in writing were in the top five per cent in the country. Compared with schools with similar proportions of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals ('similar schools'), performance in these areas was also more often than not, well above average. Results in 2003 were much lower, due to a significant increase in the percentage of pupils with special educational needs. Inspection evidence indicates that the pupils currently in Year 2 are on course to attain high standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	15.9 [18.0]	15.7 [15.8]
writing	14.4 [17.1]	14.6 [14.4]
mathematics	15.7 [17.2]	16.3 [16.5]

There were 43 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve well and many do very well. Typically, children enter the reception classes with above average levels of attainment and their results in the national tests (SATs) are well above average in reading and writing. In recent years achievement in mathematics has lagged behind English. During the period of high teacher turnover, the quality of teaching in mathematics was not as good as it is now. Inspection evidence confirms that achievement in this subject is at least satisfactory.
4. Standards at the end of Year 6 in 2003 were the highest achieved in the last four years. The recently established stability in staffing has contributed significantly to the overall results in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science being well above average compared to all schools nationally. Judged against the results of similar schools, standards were above

average. The results of pupils leaving the school over the last few years have been adversely affected by staffing difficulties. Strong leadership and management have helped to mitigate the effects of these problems on standards, which have had a greater impact on the pupils in Years 3 to 6.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	29.8 [27.8]	26.8 [27.0]
mathematics	28.3 [28.0]	26.8 [26.7]
science	29.8 [27.6]	28.6 [28.3]

There were 39 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- Pupils in Years 3 to 6 achieve well. Achievement in English is good, due in part to the very good leadership and management of this subject. Closely focused inspection work indicates that in mathematics and science earlier weaknesses in teaching have resulted in achievement being lower than in English. However, inspection evidence shows that currently pupils in Years 3 to 6 achieve well in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science.
- Boys and girls achieve broadly as well as each other. The results attained by boys lag behind those attained by the girls to a greater extent than the national picture. However, inspectors focused closely on the factors affecting boys' achievement and found that the considerably higher proportion of boys having special educational needs and receiving additional help with learning through intervention strategies such as additional literacy support accounted for differences in results. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their prior attainment, thanks to the good provision made for them. The good work of teaching assistants contributes strongly to pupils' achievements.
- Standards are above average in art and history by the time pupils leave school. In religious education in both Years 2 and 6, standards are above the levels expected in the locally agreed syllabus for the subject. In design and technology there is insufficient evidence to judge standards overall, but the attainment of pupils in Year 2 is above average in the design element of their work. Standards are average in geography and information and communication technology in Year 2 and Year 6 and in history in Year 2. Although the school makes appropriate provision to teach music and physical education there is insufficient inspection evidence to judge standards.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes to school are very good. They behave very well in lessons and around the school. Pupils enjoy coming to school and form very good relationships with each other. The provision for the moral and social development of pupils is very good. The provision for their spiritual development is good. Although the provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory, this area remains underdeveloped. Attendance is well above the national average. Unauthorised absence is above the average for all schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have very positive attitudes to school and learning.
- Personal development of pupils is very good.
- Pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school.
- Relationships between pupils are very good.
- Pupils have very good relationships with all the adults who work in the school.
- Provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good.
- Attendance is well above the national average.

- Unauthorised absence is slightly above the national average because the school has decided not to authorise holidays taken in term-time.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	3.2	School data	0.5
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

Exclusions

There were no exclusions during the last academic year.

Commentary

- Relationships within the school are very good, promoting very good attitudes, values and personal development of most pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated within classrooms and within friendship groups. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds relate well to each other; they mix freely with their peers. There is little evidence of any racial tensions. The attitude of pupils to learning is very good throughout the school. Behaviour in lessons is very good. Pupils know what is expected of them, and respond well to the praise and encouragement given to them. This promotes a positive, friendly ethos, which provides a very good environment for learning.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. They confidently express their opinions, knowing that their contributions will be listened to and valued. They take pleasure in their own and others' achievements. This was especially evident during the celebration assembly observed. Pupils respect the views of others, and listen well when other children are describing their work.
- Most pupils consistently behave very well, and respond very positively to the school's high expectations of good behaviour. The few pupils who have difficulties with concentration and behaviour are supported well, through a well-planned and structured framework that ensures consistency of approach and support, together with very effective personal counselling. The inclusion co-ordinator and her team draw up, in conjunction with parents and the pupils themselves, individual behaviour plans for those who require them. These are very effective in helping those pupils to learn and in minimising disruption to the learning of other pupils. Their effectiveness has made a major contribution to the lack of exclusions for several years.
- Pupils, including those with special educational needs, persevere and concentrate well. They are eager to learn and try to do their best. Where opportunities are given for pupils to organise their own work and to take responsibility, they respond very well. Pupils are interested in their work and concentrate very well. They recognise the difference between right and wrong, and appreciate the effect of their actions on others and the environment. Pupils have respect for their surroundings, using equipment and resources with appropriate care. They work well together in pairs and in groups.
- Pupils' personal development is supported very well when personal targets are set for them on a regular basis, for example, in literacy. There are good opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own progress towards these targets.
- Attendance levels are well above the national average; the attendance record of most pupils is very good. Unauthorised absence is above the national average. This is because the school

has decided that all holidays taken in term-time should be classified as unauthorised absence. Apart from holidays, there is minimal unauthorised absence.

14. The school works effectively to encourage good attendance, and to improve the attendance of those pupils who do not attend regularly. There is effective liaison with the educational welfare officer when necessary. However, a number of parents do not recognise the detrimental effect of holidays taken in term-time on their children's achievement and progress.
15. Most pupils arrive punctually at school. However, there are a few pupils who regularly arrive late. The school monitors these late arrivals, and actively encourages parents to appreciate the importance of children arriving at school on time.
16. The provision for pupils' moral education is very good. All children are taught the difference between right and wrong from an early age. Pupils are very aware, from their arrival in school, that their behaviour affects others and show developing self-discipline. Warm, friendly members of staff provide strong role models; this helps to promote honesty, fairness and respect for others.
17. Provision for the social development of pupils is very good. Relationships between all members of the school community are very good. Boys and girls of all ages co-operate well in lessons. At lunchtimes and on the playground pupils of all ages play together well. Older pupils organise play activities for younger pupils, and there is obvious enjoyment for both age groups concerned. Pupils respond very positively to the good range of opportunities to take responsibility. They readily volunteer to do classroom duties.
18. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. Teachers receive and value pupils' ideas and encourage them to develop feelings of self worth. Collective worship meets statutory requirements fully. The programme of assemblies shows a good balance between spiritual, moral and social elements, together with the celebration of pupils' achievements. The school has visits from musicians and theatre groups, and pupils visit theatres.
19. The school includes cultural development within its medium-term planning, and is currently carrying out an audit of where and how cultural development is currently being encouraged within the curriculum for younger children. The school is aware of the need to continue its efforts to establish closer links with people from different cultural heritages, despite the lack of such communities locally. It recognizes the need to extend the opportunities for pupils to appreciate cultures other than their own, particularly through art and music.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is **good**. The high quality of care and support for pupils and the good teaching and learning are particular strengths, which make a considerable contribution to pupils' achievements.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. In the reception classes teaching is consistently **good**. Teaching and learning are **good** in Years 1 and 2. The teaching of Years 3 to 6 is **good**, with some **excellent** lessons seen.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection.
- There is excellent practice that can be used to develop overall performance.
- Teachers encourage and engage pupils very well.
- Pupils of different abilities are challenged and given very good opportunities to succeed.
- Teachers do not always make enough demands on pupils to present their work carefully.

Commentary

20. The excellent leadership of the headteacher, especially the high expectations she has of all members of the school community, have resulted in the quality of teaching and learning improving since the last inspection. Despite the very large turnover of staff, the unsatisfactory teaching identified in the previous report has been eradicated and the proportion of very good lessons increased.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 31 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3 (10%)	8 (26%)	16 (52%)	4 (13%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

21. The scrutiny of pupils' work, discussions with them and the observation of lessons show that teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6 are good. However, of the eight lessons observed in Year 3/4 classes, three were excellent, four were very good and one was good.

The main features of the excellent lessons are:

(a) high expectations of the teacher, resulting in pupils rising very well to the challenges presented. The level of demand on pupils was evident from the outset in a mathematics lesson about handling data. The use of mathematical language and the effectiveness of questioning –“What is the inverse of that operation?” or “Tell me in correct mathematical terms, why this denominator is.....” - were clear indicators that working hard was the order of the day, and

(b) a cracking pace is generated. This, together with the excellent management of pupils, leads to very high levels of engagement with the tasks they are set.

Senior managers have worked consistently to improve the quality of teaching and the teachers of the excellent lessons provide invaluable exemplars to assist further development.

22. Throughout the school, pupils engage very well with the teaching. A number of factors bring this about:

- the adults working with the pupils in lessons relate very well to them,
- lessons are often conducted at a good pace,
- the purposeful learning atmosphere, and
- the capacity of the pupils to work independently and when required, collaboratively.

The most effective teachers occasionally use humour very well to increase the involvement of pupils.

23. The system of teaching groups of pupils of similar ability in English and mathematics lessons from Year 1 onwards results in them having equal opportunities to make progress. The successful and careful selection of tasks to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities within these ability groupings helps to ensure that most are challenged effectively. This has a beneficial effect on the standards that pupils attain. Teachers work hard to include all pupils in lessons and use their knowledge of how well they are learning to adapt their lesson plans very effectively. This enhances learning very well. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well in lessons.

24. The scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that there is inconsistency in the extent to which they are expected to record and set it out carefully. As a result, the appearance of the content of some pupils' books is sometimes unsatisfactory. The observation of lessons shows that opportunities are missed to make demands on pupils to do their best work. Often, at the important stage in the lesson when pupils are about to start their written tasks, no reminders are given, for example, about handwriting or setting work out neatly.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **good**, with **very good** provision for extra-curricular activities.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- a good range of learning opportunities contributes well to pupils' achievements.
- the curriculum is enriched well by visits and visitors.
- good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs.
- very good provision of extra-curricular activities gives pupils further learning opportunities.
- the good accommodation and staffing support learning well.

Commentary

25. The school's curriculum is broad and balanced, contains all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education, and appropriate time is allocated to each subject area. In English and mathematics pupils are taught in ability groups from Year 1 onwards. The curriculum in English and mathematics fully reflects the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. In the other subjects pupils are taught in their mixed-ability class groups. In the summer term all pupils have two lessons per week using the school's swimming pool. Good policy documents and schemes of work are in place for all subjects and these are regularly reviewed by the governing body. The school has a good programme for pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education, and teachers have been appropriately trained in its delivery. Within this programme there are effective arrangements for sex education and raising pupils' awareness of the dangers of drug misuse. Parents are informed of the contents of the relevant lessons.
26. The curriculum is enriched with a good range of visits and visitors. Young pupils explore the local area to develop early awareness of geography. Visits to local museums, churches and places of local interest are used well to create empathy with historic periods and develop knowledge and understanding of the community. Visitors from a nearby quarry and the local council provide valuable insights into local environmental issues. Pupils in Year 5 visit Grafham Activity Centre to participate in a variety of outdoor activities and those in Year 6 make a residential visit to the north Norfolk coast. Homework is planned well for older pupils to reinforce and extend the work done in lessons.
27. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. A strong feature is the identification in teachers' plans of what they expect these pupils to learn. The clear and well-chosen targets set in individual education plans and the efforts made by teachers and their assistants to include pupils, including those with complex needs as fully as possible, significantly enhance their achievements.
28. The range of extra-curricular activities provided by the school is very good and many of the clubs are over-subscribed. The drama and art clubs have to be rotated to accommodate the numbers of pupils wishing to participate. There is an extensive range of sporting opportunities and parents are involved in training the various successful football teams. Access to sport is open to all pupils and girl footballers have recently proved very successful, several being invited to join coaching in Peterborough. The school also has links with Cambridge United Football Club. Netball, cross-country and hockey are also strong in the school. Pupils receive musical tuition in brass, violin, viola, cello, recorder and guitar, and the school choir participates in the Peterborough Festival.
29. The school has sufficient teachers to amply meet the demands of the curriculum, and each curriculum subject has a designated co-ordinator. Teachers are supported well by well-qualified and experienced teacher assistants. Newly qualified teachers receive good induction into the school. The school's accommodation is good and there are extensive hard playing surfaces and

a large playing field. All the facilities are maintained to a high standard. Resources for teaching and learning are generally satisfactory. The library is currently being refurbished.

Care, guidance and support

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships are very good and staff know the pupils very well.
- The headteacher, assistant headteacher, teachers and teaching assistants provide thoughtful and caring support for pupils.
- Each pupil has a good and trusting relationship with at least one, and usually more than one, adult in the school.
- There are good levels of high quality support in class and for groups from teaching assistants.
- There is very good support for pupils whose behaviour is sometimes inappropriate.
- The school uses its very good assessment data to ensure very effective monitoring and tracking of pupils' achievement and progress.
- The school has very effective induction arrangements for pupils.

Commentary

30. The school works hard to promote the care of all its pupils. It takes effective steps to provide them with a very clean, safe and secure environment in which they are happy and can learn. Parents confirm that most are happy with the support and guidance offered to their children, and feel that the school helps their children to become mature and responsible.
31. Relationships within the school are very good. The headteacher, assistant headteacher, teachers and all support staff provide very caring and thoughtful support to pupils; they are accessible and responsive to pupils' pastoral needs. The very good relationships throughout the school create a very good learning environment and have a very positive impact on pupils' learning. Regular weekly assemblies provide good opportunities for celebrating pupils' work, effort and good behaviour.
32. Pupils' academic progress is monitored closely through the very good assessment data available, and the very effective, closely-targeted support provided if pupils do not appear to be making the progress expected. The school carefully identifies the particular problem a pupil is experiencing, and has set up a wide range of intervention groups to address them. Teaching assistants play a valuable role in the various intervention groups. Pupils' social development is informally, but effectively, monitored.
33. When pupils are experiencing difficulty in meeting the high standards of behaviour expected of them, there is very appropriate intervention by the inclusion co-ordinator, who plays a valuable role in establishing links with parents and suitable external agencies to provide a high level of effective support for pupils and their families. The creation of this post by the headteacher has had a very positive effect on this aspect of the school's provision.
34. Child protection procedures are securely in place. The headteacher is the designated teacher with overall responsibility. Both she and the assistant headteacher, together with another member of staff, have been suitably trained. There is regular update training for all members of staff, and child protection is included in the induction process of all staff and parents who help in school.

35. Very good induction arrangements ensure that the youngest children settle quickly and well into the reception classes.
36. Pupils have been given the opportunity to put forward their views, through the school council, on a wide range of issues. In addition, surveys have been conducted to establish pupils' views. As part of the reviews of individual education plans, pupils with special educational needs are encouraged to comment on their progress and difficulties since the last review.
37. The school gives appropriately high priority to pupils' health and safety. Regular safety assessments are carried out, and equipment is checked at appropriate intervals. Health education, including drugs awareness, is appropriately included within the well-organised programme of personal, social and health education.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Overall the partnership with parents is **good**. Links with the local community are **good**. Links with other schools are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The majority of parents hold the school in high regard.
- Information for parents is good.
- Information for parents in annual reports about pupils' progress is good.
- The parent teacher association provides additional funds for the school very effectively.
- Sporting links with other schools are very good.
- A number of parents continue to take family holidays in term-time.

Commentary

38. The school continues its efforts to improve its partnership with parents. The majority of parents are very supportive of the school. They value the work staff do, and feel that they have their children's interests at heart. They appreciate the time given by staff to meet them formally and informally to discuss any issues that may arise. Most parents feel that any problems raised are listened to, and appropriate support is quickly given.
39. Most feel that the school enables their children to make good progress. Parents are happy that their children enjoy coming to school. They value the school's emphasis on encouraging their children to work hard and do their best.
40. A number of parents raised concerns regarding how well they are informed as to how their child is doing. Some parents felt that the school was not sufficiently approachable and that the school did not respond well to their suggestions and concerns. Some parents were unsure whether the school is led and managed well. The inspection team considers that the school is very well led and managed.
41. There are good arrangements to inform parents regarding the curriculum, and evening meetings are held to explain aspects of the curriculum to parents and carers. In particular, a booklet explaining the mathematics areas of study and expected levels of achievement is very informative. Although attendance at parents' evenings is high, fewer parents attend the curriculum evenings. Regular newsletters keep parents well informed about areas of work to be covered, school events and successes. Parents are effectively encouraged to support their child's learning at home. Homework is set on a regular basis.
42. The majority of parents feel that they are informed well about the progress their child is making. Home-school communication through reading records is used effectively. Records are kept of contact at parents' evenings, with previously raised concerns followed up and progress reported. Most parents feel that the annual written reports give them good levels of information. Reports

give indications of what pupils know and can do, with information about progress made, and targets to provide guidance as to the next step forward.

43. The school is very approachable, and there are many avenues through which contact may be made. Records are kept of any items raised as a concern by parents, together with the action taken. For example, if a parent raises a concern regarding behaviour in the playground, discreet and recorded monitoring is carried out. Parents' views are regularly sought on a range of issues, which have included recently a study of "Safe routes to school". A zebra crossing has recently been installed outside the school entrance.
44. The school works hard to convince parents of the detrimental effect on their children's education when holidays are taken in term-time. However, not all of them listen to this advice, and continue to take such holidays, despite the school designating these as unauthorised absences.
45. The induction arrangements for new pupils, particularly those starting in the reception classes, are very good and are appreciated by parents.
46. Links with the local community are good, for example through the school's annual carnival. Pupils are able to take advantage of a range of educational visits, including those to Muslim and Sikh temples. A good range of visitors to the school, such as musical and theatre groups, support pupils' learning and development well.
47. Pupils benefit greatly from the work of the parent teacher association (Friends of St Helen's - FOSH) which works hard to raise funds that are used to purchase specific resources to enhance pupils' learning and personal development. Parents support fundraising and other events well.
48. The school maintains very good links with other schools, particularly through sporting activities. Links with the secondary school to which most pupils transfer are strong, with some good curricular liaison. For example, an agreed project is carried out by Year 6 pupils which is then built upon during the early weeks at the secondary school.
49. A number of parents help in the classroom on a regular basis. They have the benefit of a structured programme of training before they start work in the school, which includes awareness of child protection procedures. Valuable contributions to the range of extra-curricular activities available for pupils are made by parents. For example, parents provide coaching assistance to the football club. Parents also assist as well with administrative tasks, educational visits and swimming. Their help is valued and appreciated by the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are **very good**. The quality of leadership by the headteacher is **excellent**. The quality of management is **very good**. The quality of governance is **very good**. Governors work effectively to ensure that statutory requirements are met.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides the school with excellent leadership.
- There is a strong determination to raise standards and provide the highest quality education.
- The governing body knows the school intimately and plays a significant role in shaping its future.
- Finances are managed very well.
- The school improvement plan does not identify the key priorities clearly enough.

Commentary

50. The headteacher has steered the school through a period of considerable staffing change with almost all the present staff having been appointed since the time she arrived. Throughout this period of time she has not only maintained the stability of the school, but also emerged with a

strong team of teachers all working together for the good of the pupils. With the loyal support of the governing body the school is moving forward with a clear vision for the future, in an environment which is exciting and where pupils are cared for and keen to learn. The headteacher has a strong commitment to the pupils, all members of staff and to making the school a centre of excellence from which pupils leave with a genuine love of learning and a care for the welfare of each other. In all her work she is very ably supported by an extremely capable assistant headteacher. The full impact of the work of the headteacher and the assistant headteacher on standards and provision has yet to be realised because of the problems generated by the period of very high teacher turnover.

51. As a result of this strong commitment to succeed, pupils' standards in all areas of the curriculum are rising and improvement since the time of the last inspection has been good. This improvement is driven very effectively by a rigorous process of self-review, based very securely on the analysis of information about pupils' attainment. The outcomes of this process result in targeted action to address weaknesses in pupils' performance. For example, when it was seen that too few pupils were attaining the higher levels in writing at the end of Year 2, extra provision was made to address this. As a result, pupils' attainment improved considerably. In the 2002 tests performance at the higher Level 3 was well above average.
52. The school's mission statement underpins everything that happens in the school and high standards are promoted vigorously in every aspect of the life of the school. All members of staff recognise the importance of raising standards, but know that this can only be achieved in a school where personal development and care for pupils is a high priority. The establishment of teams of staff who work very closely together means that daily procedures run smoothly and management systems are effective.
53. The governing body has played a central role in moving the school forward. The governors have a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school; for example, they recognise that skills in speaking and listening need to be developed. At the same time, however, they are justifiably proud of the good communication with parents, the extra-curricular activities and the close relationship with the headteacher and senior management team. The very good knowledge they have of the school and their positive relationships with the staff place them in a strong position to both support and challenge decisions that are taken, and to work with the headteacher and senior management team to identify strategies to improve teaching and learning. Governors work very effectively to ensure that statutory requirements are met and that all pupils are given equal opportunities to be involved in school life and to succeed.
54. Development planning is extensive and thorough. The governing body is fully involved in its preparation and receives detailed reports on progress in the different aspects of the plan. Co-ordinators contribute targets from all the curriculum areas and these are then refined and put into the plan with time scales and costings. Performance management targets focus on improving teaching and learning and link effectively with the school improvement plan. This helps to ensure that all members of staff feel that they are fully involved in the school's development. However, by embracing all the targets the school would like to achieve, the school improvement plan has become a rather wordy document and it is difficult to access the key points. Major priorities are not clearly identified but bound up with others which are important but less urgent. The plan needs to be more explicit in stating its main objectives so that they can be more clearly evaluated.
55. The very good personal development of pupils, the hard work and commitment of the staff and governors, the quality of leadership and management and the highly effective self-review process combine to promote learning well. The high level of staffing changes and the relative inexperience of new and younger teachers currently restrict the pace of improvement. The subject co-ordinators are very enthusiastic and keen to develop the curriculum. However, many are new to their posts and are still evaluating the provision in their subject. Through a programme of training they are acquiring the skills they need to begin to monitor teaching and learning in their particular subjects and evaluate more thoroughly the work pupils produce.

56. Financial management is very good and funds are administered very efficiently. The school has a tight budget with little room for manoeuvre and it is to the credit of the headteacher and governors that the school maintains a good level of staffing and manages to avoid incurring a deficit. The principles of best value are applied consistently to all aspects of the school and to the use of resources.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	731,741
Total expenditure	723,273
Expenditure per pupil	2,520

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	25,502
Balance carried forward to the next	8,468

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

When they enter the school, the majority of children have knowledge and skills that are average in comparison with children of a similar age. They achieve well and the majority of children progress beyond the levels expected in all the areas of learning by the end of the reception classes. Standards are particularly high in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, physical development and creative development.

Children with special educational needs make good progress.

The quality of teaching is consistently good across all the areas of learning and the support provided by the teaching assistants makes a strong contribution to the quality of learning. The teachers' planning is good, takes close account of the children's needs and identifies clear links between the different areas of learning. All members of staff work well together to ensure that the learning and well-being of the children and the management of provision for the Foundation Stage is good. Assessment procedures are thorough and help monitor the progress of every child and inform the teachers about what they need to plan next in order to meet the needs of the children. The quality of leadership in the Foundation Stage is very good and has led to significant improvements in provision.

Personal, social and emotional development

Provision for children's personal, social and emotional development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers place great emphasis on children's personal development.
- Relationships between adults and children are very good.
- Children play and work well together.

Commentary

57. Teachers promote children's personal development very well in all the different areas of learning. Children quickly adopt the well-established routines of the classroom and become independent in their day-to-day activities such as organising themselves into groups or finding a piece of equipment they need for a particular task. They learn to follow instructions and they understand clearly the difference between right and wrong. Teachers and other staff are good role models for the children. They involve themselves in the children's activities and help them to share and play together. The teachers use praise and encouragement in everything the children do. This raises their self-esteem and motivates them to want to learn and to try new experiences. As a result, children behave well, understand what is expected of them and gain much from working in a calm and settled environment.

Communication, language and literacy

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's skills in speaking and listening are developed well.
- Early reading and writing skills are developing well through play activities.

Commentary

58. Teachers and their assistants constantly talk to the children during their activities and expect them to listen carefully and to respond with properly constructed sentences. For instance, the children observed in a group making bubble pictures were encouraged to describe what was happening or what they thought would happen when they mixed two colours together. Teachers put great emphasis on children recognising the names and sounds of letters to enable them to write independently. Children write in their play in the writing corner and often send messages to friends sealed up in an envelope with a make-believe address on the front. The children have many opportunities to practise their writing skills and because of this, by the end of the Foundation Stage, most children will be trying to write simple sentences. Teachers tell and read stories to the children regularly and as a result of this the children learn to enjoy books and handle them with care. They talk about the characters in stories and are keen to know what happens to them next. The children produce their own class books on Hickory Dickory Dock and a baking activity in role-play area is chosen carefully to link with part of the reading scheme. All these experiences extend the children's vocabulary and give them a keen interest in reading.

Mathematical development

Provision for mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers plan a wide range of practical activities to develop children's confidence and knowledge of number, money and shape.
- the children have a good understanding of numbers up to ten.

Commentary

59. Teachers develop the children's understanding of number, shape and measurement through carefully planned practical activities. For example, on the second day of looking at coin recognition the children were buying and selling toys at the shop and having to decide which combination of coins to use to get the correct money. Teachers use every opportunity to use mathematics or mathematical language in stories, games and imaginary play. They constantly ask questions such as "How many?" or "Can you put them in the correct order?" to keep the children thinking. Activities such as number rhymes and counting games give children an early understanding of addition and subtraction and make them confident with numbers.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

Provision for developing children's knowledge and understanding of the world is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- teachers plan challenging activities.
- activities are often linked to other areas of learning.

Commentary

60. Through carefully planned practical activities the children learn about the world around them. When looking at how we use electricity they have to create two sets of pictures; one set showing the things they know use electricity and a second set showing those things that don't. This is a challenging task for children of this age. Again, links are made across areas of learning so that as well as playing musical instruments as part of their creative development, they also have to investigate them and find out how they work. During sessions the computer is in regular use and the children are confident in operating it.

Physical development

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children quickly acquire the skills needed for writing, painting and using small tools correctly and safely.
- Outdoor provision is excellent.
- The range of activities is very good.

Commentary

61. Children's achievement in the use of small tools is very good. A group seen cutting out irregular shapes used scissors with great accuracy and confidence. A writing group was producing good letter shapes and already showing their awareness of how to space the letters and get them to be the same size. The outdoor play area offers an amazing range of activities from wheeled toys that become imaginary police cars or fire engines to tunnels the children can crawl through. There are books to read, whiteboards to write on and materials to draw with. Imaginative and physical activities come together in this area and provide many rich opportunities for development. Staff are continually interacting with the children and developing their play.

Creative development

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Role-play is planned well in attractive areas.
- The range of creative activities is very good.
- Activities strongly support personal and social development.

Commentary

62. Children enjoy a wide range of activities such as painting, collage, pattern making and enjoy using different textures and shapes. A sequence of high quality paintings show how a character in the children's reading books made a cake; the paint is applied with confidence and imaginatively. As well as using the percussion instruments, the children make their own shakers and use these to create their own music. At the time of the inspection the role-play area was a bakery where children develop their work with money by buying items from the shopkeeper. The majority of creative activities involve the children in working in groups and this makes an important contribution to developing their social skills as they learn to share and co-operate with each other.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

The provision for English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- The assessment of pupils' progress and subject performance are very effective.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very strong.
- A minority of pupils does not speak confidently.

63. The standards of pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 are above average and they achieve well overall. The high standards noted in the last report have been maintained. The majority of pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 who took the national tests in 2003 entered the reception classes with attainment above the levels normally found. The results of the tests last year showed that standards were well above average. Those currently in Years 2 and 6 are on course to do broadly as well. Those with special educational needs achieve well in relation to the targets set for them. Boys achieve as well as girls when progress is measured against prior attainment.
64. Standards in speaking and listening are average in both Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils in Year 2 usually listen attentively and respond appropriately to questions from adults. Those in Year 6 listen confidently and with good levels of concentration. Most adapt what they say to suit the purpose, but a minority speaks too quietly. Others use too many unhelpful, superfluous words, such as 'like' or 'something'. This detracts from the effectiveness of their performance.
65. Reading standards are good. Pupils in Year 2 read confidently, recognize their mistakes and correct them. They have a suitable range of ways of dealing with unfamiliar words. Higher attaining Year 2 pupils read well, but sometimes go too fast and miss out connectives such as 'and'. Year 6 pupils generally read accurately and like to discuss their preferences. They identify favourite authors, such as C S Lewis and know how to use libraries to gain information. Most understand techniques of scanning or skimming for information.
66. Writing standards are above average. In Year 2 pupils' prose is lively and in pieces such as "The School Bell" holds the reader's attention well. Spellings are usually accurate or phonetically sound. Handwriting is largely above average, with joined script developing well, although some pupils still write the capital form for given letters such as 'K'. Writing is punctuated well overall. The use of capital letters and full-stops is established and apostrophes are starting to be employed, for example, in contractions. Year 6 pupils organize their ideas for writing well and include interesting words in their work. One wrote about "...thunderous and furious games of rugby..." In prose such as "The Faulty Microlight Crashes" pupils begin to use speech marks accurately. Standards in spelling are above average overall, with most pupils able to recognize the correct versions of words because of their visual patterns. Handwriting is adequately developed, but the impact of the disruption caused by staffing changes is evident in the lack of fluency. The spelling of some pupils has also been affected, with straightforward words such as 'went' and 'attraction' being written wrongly.
67. Teaching and learning are of good quality. Teachers insist on very good standards of behaviour. Consequently, pupils concentrate and apply themselves well. Levels of engagement are high, thanks to the very good use of praise to encourage pupils and the purposeful ethos in lessons. Teachers make good demands on pupils and plan effectively to give all pupils equal opportunities to succeed. Many teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to practise their speaking and listening skills. However, too few give enough guidance to pupils about their performance to raise standards. In one of the lessons observed, answers to questions were inaudible or contained too little standard English, but the teacher made no comment.
68. The leadership and management of the subject are of high quality. The very effective work of the subject co-ordinator has contributed strongly to the maintenance of the high standards usually attained in Year 2 and the rapid rise in the results attained recently by pupils in Year 6. The clear emphasis placed on developing systems for assessing the progress made by pupils and analyzing the performance of the school in English are key features of the efforts to raise standards.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

69. Pupils' literacy skills are developed satisfactorily in work in other subjects and they are used effectively to support work across the curriculum. Writing tasks, especially in the humanities, provide appropriate opportunities for practising different forms of writing, including the recording of reports in science lessons and the composition of simple prayers in religious education.

MATHEMATICS

The provision for mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 6 are above average and pupils achieve well in Years 3 to 6.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- Pupils' attainment and progress are monitored well.
- Teachers are not consistent in insisting on high standards of presentation of pupils' work.

Commentary

70. Pupils in Year 2 are reaching average standards. They have a sound understanding of number, recognise a range of number patterns and have basic competence in carrying out a range of simple computations. Higher attaining pupils quickly carry out mental calculations. Pupils generally achieve satisfactorily in Years 1 and 2. Standards reached by pupils in Year 6 are above average. They are confident and competent in carrying out a range of mental strategies and have good understanding of more complex mathematical concepts, such as symmetry, probability and simple algebra. Pupils achieve well, particularly in Years 5 and 6 where they gain significantly in self-confidence and respond well to the challenge of the higher level work. They are more analytical in their work and data-handling skills develop well.
71. The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers plan lessons well to meet the needs of all pupils, and tasks are suitably modified to challenge appropriately the ability range within the different teaching groups. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are supported well by teachers and their assistants. Higher attaining pupils are challenged well and extension work for them is planned well. Pupils' learning is particularly good where there are high expectations, challenge and brisk pace in lessons. Learning objectives are clearly identified and each lesson starts with a brisk session of mental work. Pupils respond positively to their lessons. They are attentive, eager to participate, settle quickly to their tasks and maintain a good work ethos. Teachers plan a good range of activities for the set tasks, but they do not always insist on high standards in the presentation of work. Homework is used well to develop the work done in class and pupils' work is generally marked well, with helpful comments on its quality and how it can be improved.
72. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The co-ordinator has a good overview of the subject and has identified areas where more needs to be done to further raise standards. Pupils are assessed regularly and the data collected from school and national tests is used well to inform the planning of lessons, set targets for pupils and to monitor their progress. Monitoring of the subject throughout the school is very effective. Pupils are efficient in the use of calculators and computers are used well to develop skills in data-handling exercises.
73. Since the previous inspection standards have been maintained at a good level, the quality of teaching has improved and opportunities for pupils to apply and use mathematics have been more effectively incorporated into the scheme of work.

MATHEMATICS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

74. Numeracy skills are promoted effectively in subjects such as science and geography. The collection and interpretation of data gathered from the Internet provides good opportunities to develop mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average by the end of Year 6.
- Skills in investigation are developed well.
- Teaching and learning are good
- Pupils enjoy their work in science.
- Assessment is good.
- Presentation of pupils' work in their books could be improved.

Commentary

75. Pupils' performance in the national tests at the end of Year 6 was above the national average and this represents a good level of achievement for pupils in Years 3 to 6.
76. By Year 6, most pupils have the knowledge expected for their age and show a good level of understanding of the key ideas of science. Pupils absorb information quickly and readily and retain it very well. For example, during discussions with the older pupils they could clearly recall work they had done on circulation in the human body and could talk about the work of the heart and lungs and how our pulse can be increased during exercise. A recent target in science has been to improve pupils' enquiry skills and to enable them to carry out their own investigations. The school has been very successful in improving this aspect of science. Pupils in Year 6 studying pitch were challenged to find out what the factors were that brought about the change in pitch of a sound. When asked how they were going to do this they clearly knew how to carry out a fair test and how to record the results of their experiment in a variety of different ways. By the way in which they set about the task it was obvious they now have a very secure understanding of investigation in their science work.
77. The scrutiny of pupils' work, teachers planning and the observation of lessons show that the quality of teaching and learning are good. Very good quality planning boosts pupils' learning in Years 5 and 6. Teachers provide a good range of activities, with a strong emphasis on practical activities, especially in Years 3 and 4. As a result of the good teaching, pupils of all ages clearly enjoy their work in science. During the inspection, pupils in Year 2 discussed with the teacher things that reflect light and those things that are sources of light. During the discussion, it was obvious that they have developed a keen interest in science and that they spend time talking about their studies when they are at home.
78. Assessment procedures are thorough and help teachers to check progression through each year group. The co-ordinator is well-qualified in science and has a clear understanding of the need to keep assessment under review to ensure that it produces useful information that will enable teachers to set clear targets for individual pupils and at the same time inform the future planning of lessons.
79. The scrutiny of pupils' work shows that there is a need to pay more attention to how the pupils set out the work they do. In many cases, even for the most able, work is untidy and poorly presented. Attention to this aspect would not only produce work of a higher standard but would also give the pupils more pride in what they do.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Many improvements have been made since the last inspection.
- Both teachers and pupils are confident and keen.
- The subject is led and managed very well indeed.

Commentary

80. At the time of the previous inspection, little information and communication technology was taught. The level of provision of computers and other equipment was of a low order. Since then a great number of developments have taken place, which include:
- the upgrading of computers to PC specification and a significant increase in their number;
 - the creation of a computer room capable of accommodating whole classes;
 - the development and implementation of rigorous action planning;
 - the use of perceptive self-assessment of provision; and
 - a great increase in the confidence and involvement of teachers.
81. The result of these improvements has been that standards are at least average, despite a considerable increase in what pupils are expected to achieve nationally. The scrutiny of pupils' work, discussions with them and observation of the use of information and communication technology in a range of lessons shows that both pupils and teachers are confident in their skills, knowledge, understanding and use of computers. Those pupils spoken to were very keen on working with computers in school.
82. Year 2 pupils achieve well in importing images into texts, for example, about snakes, which they compose on screen. Pupils in Year 6 show above average ability in word processing and those aspects of attainment found wanting at the time of the last inspection, including control, are now at least satisfactory. Those with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their prior attainment, thanks to the good work of teaching assistants and the use of a specially adapted program for those with co-ordination difficulties.
83. Although the school makes proper provision for teaching information and communication technology it was only possible to observe one lesson. However, evidence from a range of sources including teachers' planning and discussions with pupils, suggests that the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory. In the teaching observed, clear instructions and well-focused interventions helped to move learning forward well. The use of written or visual prompts to enable pupils to recall the processes they work through without waiting for the teacher to remind them is not yet established. This reduces the progress that some pupils make and limits their independence. Despite the considerable improvements made, the ratio of pupils to computers is still not in line with that currently recommended. This reduces the effectiveness of the efforts to raise standards.
84. The work of the co-ordinator and the very good leadership of the headteacher have been instrumental in most of the improvements. Planning for improvement, support for colleagues and the monitoring of planning to ensure the use of information and communication technology skills across the curriculum are particular strengths of the co-ordinator's work. The implementation of self-assessment by pupils has assisted teachers in their evaluations and given pupils more understanding of their learning. These measures and many others put in place by the co-ordinator, including her teaching of model lessons, have clear potential for helping to raise standards.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

85. The very clear stress placed on the development of computer skills in as many subjects as possible is manifest in the vision statement of the strategic plan for the subject: "ICT is a conduit for learning.....in any area." Discussions with pupils revealed a good range of experience in other subjects, including English, mathematics, geography, art and science. However, the observation of lessons shows that teachers sometimes miss opportunities to use computers in lessons.

HUMANITIES

Too few lessons were observed to make a secure judgement about the quality of provision in the humanities.

Geography

It is not possible to judge the provision in geography as it was only possible to observe one lesson in the subject during the inspection.

Commentary

86. On the basis of scrutiny of pupils' work, displays and the work in the lesson, standards are broadly average in Years 2 and 6. Pupils in Year 2 have a sound awareness of the location of the school in the community, and of the village in relation to England and the British Isles. They construct simple maps and record the weather. Pupils in Year 6 have a sound range of geographical skills. They are competent in the use of a variety of maps. Work in comparing communities in other countries is of a good standard. Pupils access and use information from Internet sites to compare climate data for Cambridge and a village community in South India. They use photographs well to build up a picture of daily life in the Indian village. However, pupils' experience of fieldwork is limited. Pupils generally achieve satisfactorily in geography.
87. In the lesson observed groups of pupils were very fully engaged in producing travel brochures about India and presenting their information to the class. The work was organised well, a good range of resources was used and there was good co-operation between pupils in the various groups. Pupils responded well to questions from their peers after their presentations, demonstrating a sound understanding of their researches.
88. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory. The co-ordinator is new to the post and is carrying out a thorough audit of the curriculum, standards and resources. Curriculum planning is good and promotes effectively the progressive acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding through a two year cycle of topics. The scheme of work includes opportunities for assessment of pupils' progress at the end of each topic. Assessment is still in its early stages of development and a portfolio of assessed work is being developed to assist teachers in the accurate assessment of standards. Resources are generally satisfactory although there is a need to up-grade the stock of atlases in the school and to increase the range of computer software.

History

It is not possible to judge the provision in history as only one lesson in the subject was observed during the inspection.

Commentary

89. Based on the scrutiny of pupils' work, displays and the work seen in one lesson, standards are broadly average in Year 2 and above average in Year 6. Pupils in Year 2 readily understand how things were different in former times. They use pictures and photographs to compare modern and older houses. They are familiar with a range of appliances used in modern kitchens and can recognise the use of artefacts from kitchens of former times. Pupils in Year 6 display a mature understanding of the periods of history studied. They have good understanding of the structure of society in Roman and Tudor times. They write diaries and newspaper articles from different points of view on events, such as Boudicca's revolt, and the life of slaves in Roman society. Pupils achieve well in Years 3 to 6. They use information from Internet sites to extend their knowledge of a period, such as the structure of the Roman army and crime and punishment in Tudor times.

90. In the lesson observed groups of pupils were enthusiastically mimicking the work of archaeologists and sifting through a large sand-filled box containing items 'discovered' in various locations in and around a Roman villa. They shared ideas and made sound speculations about the objects found, relating them well to the location of the discovery and to their knowledge of life in a Roman villa. Some pupils even tried to interpret the inscriptions on Roman coins in an attempt to identify the Emperor depicted on them. All the pupils gained much from this imaginative experience.
91. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory. The co-ordinator is new to the post and leadership of the subject has been fragmented in recent years. A full curriculum audit is underway with a view, in particular, to the development of further enrichment activities. Procedures for assessment are still in the early stages of development and a portfolio of assessed work is available to assist teachers in this area. The range of visits to local places of historic interest is limited, but does contribute well to pupils' understanding of the period. Resources are satisfactory and the school makes good use of museum loan schemes to provide a stimulating range of artefacts for use in lessons.

Religious education

As it was only possible to observe one lesson in the subject during the inspection, it is not possible to judge the school's overall provision for religious education.

Commentary

92. Judgements on the standards achieved by pupils are based on the scrutiny of their work, displays and the work done in the lesson observed. Standards are above the levels expected by the Cambridgeshire Agreed Syllabus in Years 2 and 6. Pupils in Year 2 visit local churches and learn about them as places of worship and of ceremonies such as baptism that take place there. They have sound understanding of the nature of Christian festivals, such as Harvest, and write their own simple prayers. Pupils in Year 6 have a broad view of the basic beliefs, symbols, patterns of worship and festivals of a range of faiths. They compare creation stories from Christianity and Hinduism, and also learn about the "Big Bang" theory of creation. Pupils produce good free writing on a variety of topics, such as the Jewish Barmitzva. They use the Internet well to research information about traditional Japanese wedding ceremonies.
93. In the lesson observed, pupils were learning about the Islamic festival of Id-ul-Fitr at the end of Ramadan. Pupils demonstrated good understanding of this occasion as a very special day in the Islamic year. They enjoyed acting out the Islamic greeting and discussing the story of an Islamic girl's reaction to the festival and identified many features of Islamic customs in examining a large picture of children celebrating Id.
94. The subject is led well. The curriculum is planned well around the Cambridge Agreed Syllabus and the two year cycle of topics facilitates good progression in pupils' development of skills, knowledge and understanding in the subject. The whole-school staff were taken on a visit to a Hindu temple and a mosque to develop their understanding of aspects of worship in these faiths. However, the school has not yet developed links that would provide pupils with similar opportunities to learn at firsthand about other faiths. The school has good links with the local churches and visitors from these churches regularly take part in lessons. Assessment of pupils' attainment is still in the early stages of development. The school has a good range of artefacts to illustrate the different faiths studied and these are good aids to pupils' learning.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Too few lessons were observed to make a secure judgement about the quality of provision in these subjects.

Art

No lessons were observed during the inspection, so it is not possible to form an overall judgement of the provision the school makes in this subject.

Commentary

95. Examples of pupils' work throughout the school and samples of their work in folders indicate that by Year 6 attainment is above average.
96. Work in art is often linked to other areas of the curriculum thereby giving their developing skills a real purpose. In Year 3 pupils listen to the piece of music called 'Aquarium' and then use their pastels to draw what they feel it is saying. In the same year group adjectives are discussed that would describe a lion and then these are used as the basis for their pictures of this animal. The oldest pupils have been looking at perspective and using white pencil on black paper. They have produced some very good work looking at perspective from a single point. Displays show the use of a wide range of materials and skills all resulting in work of a good standard. The work of great artists provides not only stimulating examples but also reference points for the pupils own work. The art club makes a substantial contribution to the development of art and the piece of work in the school hall based on the work of Jackson Pollock is remarkable. The highly enthusiastic co-ordinator is leading the development of art extremely well.

Design and technology

It is not possible to judge the provision in this subject as only one lesson was observed during the inspection.

Commentary

97. Since the last inspection, the programme of work has been thoroughly revised and as a result, the weaknesses identified at the time of the last inspection, in food and control technology have been addressed successfully. Most of the products made by pupils had been taken home, so it is not possible to make secure judgement about standards in this aspect of their work. However, limited evidence from the scrutiny of pupils' recorded work suggests that the standards in designing are above average in Year 2. These pupils produce detailed plans for making moving vehicles, which identify and illustrate step by step how they will proceed. They already show attention to the purpose/function of their product. One wrote, "This car is for five people." They also evaluate their work.
98. A fleeting visit to a lesson in design and technology indicated that pupils in Years 5 and 6 are very keen on this subject. They talked animatedly about their making of vehicles powered by an electric motor. The few products examined showed standards of making that were at least in line with expectations, but too few were seen to form secure judgements.
99. The role of the co-ordinator, in monitoring planning and providing training for teachers and their assistants, has a positive impact on standards. The contribution of visitors such as a local tradesman, who showed pupils how to lay bricks and work with wood, enriches the subject curriculum and has a very positive effect on attitudes to design and technology.

Music

Only one lesson was observed during the time of the inspection so it is not possible to form an overall judgement of the provision the school makes or the standards attained. Examples of planning indicate that the curriculum in music is broad and balanced and includes all the necessary aspects.

Commentary

100. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 made a brilliant start to their singing lesson by humming to a graphic score. They tried really hard to keep to the correct pitch, but at the same time it was obvious how much they enjoy their music. The lesson was planned well and involved the pupils in singing a Christmas song without any accompaniment. The pupils sang in tune and recalled all the words. After singing the song they were challenged to think of different sounds they could accompany the song with and suggestions included tapping or stroking the body. They then began to work in two groups, a rhythm group lead by one of the pupils and a singing group. There were two marked features of this activity, one was the confidence of the pupils in leading the rhythm group and the second was how hard the pupils concentrated and tried to get it right. The lesson ended with the robust singing of other songs.
101. The Wednesday lunchtime recorder club makes a valuable contribution to music and the co-ordinator is justifiably proud of the range of music taking place in the school. Not only do pupils have the opportunity to learn a range of instruments, but the school also boasts a choir and a band that participate in many events.

Physical education

It is not possible to judge the provision or the standards that pupils attain in physical education since only one lesson was observed.

Commentary

102. The enthusiastic and knowledgeable co-ordinator has worked very hard and very effectively to raise the profile of the subject and to raise standards. As a result, the achievement and participation of pupils in sporting events is of a high order. There is an excellent range of extra-curricular activities (many led by the co-ordinator herself) and competitive opportunities for pupils to take part in. The school works very well to spot talented pupils and promote their development. Parents are contacted to alert them to the possibility of their child receiving extra coaching and are sent information to help them make contact with the appropriate person. More able pupils achieve well and the school has gained many successes in local and county championships, notably in soccer and cross country.
103. Links with local schools, clubs and parents considerably enrich provision. Parent helpers assist in gymnastics, netball, football and athletics activities. The school competes with other schools in a wide range of events and plays a full part in hosting different competitions.
104. The weaknesses in provision identified in the last report have been addressed successfully.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

It is not possible to judge the provision or the standards that pupils attain in this subject since only one lesson was observed.

Commentary

105. This subject is led well by the co-ordinator. She is well-qualified and particularly knowledgeable about health education. Her experience of leading and managing personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) in another school has helped her to improve the provision at St Helen's and to produce a good programme of work. Citizenship is integrated well with other elements of the programme. The election of pupils from each year group to a school council adds considerable relevance to this aspect of the subject.
106. Parents are informed well about a number of aspects of PSHCE. There is usually an input at the curriculum evenings arranged by the school for parents and newsletters tell them about the content of sex education lessons and their right to withdraw their children from these.

Information about awards to promote and celebrate pupils' social accomplishments appears regularly in newsletters. Visitors from the community support the school's work in PSHCE well. Their contribution includes emphasizing the need for care of the environment and for recycling waste materials.

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	2
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
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	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	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	2

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