

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MICHAEL'S CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Alkrington

LEA area: Rochdale

Unique reference number: 105822

Headteacher: Mr Stuart Ford

Lead inspector: Dr Brian Male

Dates of inspection: 10 - 12 March 2004

Inspection number: 270729

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:	CE Aided
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	240
School address:	Boardman Fold Road Alkrington Middleton Manchester
Postcode:	M24 1GD
Telephone number:	0161 643 8393
Fax number:	0161 654 6504
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Rev G Joyce
Date of previous inspection:	October 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This average sized Church of England aided primary school takes pupils from four to 11 years old, and is administered within the Rochdale Local Education Authority. At the time of the inspection there were 240 full-time pupils in eight classes. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is very low. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs is well below the national average. There are very few pupils from ethnic minorities and none requiring extra support for learning English.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
14806	Dr Brian Male	Lead inspector	English, History, Geography, Special educational needs
19419	Mrs Sue Boyle	Lay inspector	
24027	Mrs Malli Kutty	Team Inspector	Foundation Stage, Art and design, Design and technology, Music, Physical education
23548	Mr Clive Whittington	Team Inspector	Mathematics, Science, Information and communication technology

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	8
Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	10
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	14
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS	16
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	25

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **very good school** where pupils achieve very well. There is a very good overall quality of educational provision and the school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards of attainment are well above average in English, mathematics and science.
- Pupils' attitudes are very good and behaviour is excellent.
- Very good teaching and the school's very positive ethos ensures that pupils achieve very well.
- There is an excellent system of setting targets with individual pupils.
- The curriculum is enriched by a very wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- The school's very good partnership with parents enhances learning.
- The headteacher provides extremely clear leadership and excellent management for the school.
- The good range of outdoor learning in the reception class could be used much more frequently.

The school has made very good progress since the previous inspection. Standards of attainment are significantly higher, especially in mathematics and science. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour have improved. Teaching is significantly better. The management of the curriculum has improved significantly, and overall leadership and management is now much more effective. All of the key issues have been addressed.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	A	A	B	B
Mathematics	A	A	A	A*
Science	B	B	A	A

Key: A* - top five per cent; A – well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average

Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.

Pupils' achievement is very good overall. Standards are higher in Year 6 this year than in 2003, particularly in English. Standards are well above the national average in English, mathematics and science. Standards in Year 2 are well above the national average in reading, writing and science, and above average in mathematics. In both Years 2 and 6, standards are well above average in Information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils make good progress through reception classes, and most exceed the nationally expected goals by the time they move into Year 1. There is good support for pupils with special educational needs, and they make good progress.

Overall, these standards represent very good overall achievement for the pupils, and there is a continuing trend of well above average standards. These standards are promoted by the very good quality of the teaching, the pupils' very positive attitudes to learning, and the very positive ethos of the school.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good. Pupils' behaviour is excellent in class and around the school. Pupils have very positive attitudes to school and are confident learners. Their personal qualities such as relationships and concern for others are very good. The rate of attendance is high, and most pupils arrive promptly for school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is very good overall. The quality of teaching is very good overall and particularly strong for the oldest pupils. Some teaching is excellent. Teachers have very high expectations and involve pupils in a very good range of learning experiences that promote very good achievement. Lessons are very well focused on clear learning objectives that are shared with the pupils, and this enhances learning significantly. Teachers have a particularly good commitment to the school and to their pupils. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to learning.

There is a broad and balanced curriculum enhanced by a very good programme of extra-curricular activities. There are very good arrangements for pupils' support and guidance. The system of target setting with individual pupils is excellent. The school's programme for personal, social and citizenship education is at an early stage, and further development will be valuable. The school is very well staffed, and resources and accommodation are good, although the computer suite is too small and some library books need renewing.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are very good overall. The headteacher provides extremely clear leadership and excellent management for the school. Senior staff lead their areas very effectively. The governors are very active in shaping the direction of the school and provide effective governance.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very supportive of the school, and there is no area where a significant number would like to see improvement. The school is very popular, and is over-subscribed. Pupils are also very positive about the school, although a number of older pupils have reservations about elements of the school uniform.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The school is already making very good provision and continuing to improve, so the improvements needed are relatively minor: to make more use of the good range of outdoor learning facilities in the reception class.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Pupils' achievement is very good. This is promoted by very good teaching, particularly for the oldest pupils whose progress is very rapid. Standards are much higher than at the time of the previous inspection, especially in mathematics, science and ICT.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in English, mathematics, science and ICT are well above the national average.
- There is some very good work in other subjects such as art and music.

Commentary

1. Many children enter the reception class with standards of attainment already above those usually found. By the time pupils leave the school in Year 6, standards of attainment are well above the national average. Overall standards at the end of Year 6 are also generally well above those of similar schools. This is very good achievement, and is promoted by the very good quality of the teaching and the pupils' very positive attitudes to work. The school's very positive ethos and the support children receive from their parents are also important contributory factors to the very good achievement. Standards are much higher than those found by the previous inspection.
2. Most children leave the reception classes having exceeded the nationally expected 'Early Learning Goals' for children of this age. This is promoted by the good quality of the teaching they receive and the positive ethos that encourages confidence. Children's achievement is good overall, and very good in the creative aspect of development where provision is very good.
3. By the end of Year 2, standards are well above the national average in reading, science and ICT, and above average in writing and mathematics. These standards are higher than 2003 in reading, slightly lower in writing and similar in mathematics. The changes are within the expected fluctuations from year to year. The standards continue the trend of above average to well-above average standards over the last three years, and represent good achievement for the pupils. Standards are generally higher than those in similar schools.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.8 (17.6)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	16.5 (15.4)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	17.2 (17.4)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 35 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

4. By the end of Year 6, standards are well above the national average in English, mathematics, science and ICT. These standards are promoted by the very good teaching, and the particularly close focus on learning objectives, especially for the oldest pupils. The standards represent very good achievement and continue a long trend of mostly well above average standards. Standards are very good in terms of pupils' prior attainment and in relation to similar schools.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.7 (28.8)	26.8 (27.0)
Mathematics	29.7 (29.1)	26.8 (26.7)
Science	30.6 (29.6)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 35 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. As other subjects (history, geography, art, music, physical education and design and technology) were only sampled, there is no formal judgement about attainment in these, but standards overall are generally above average at the end of both Years 2 and 6. There is some very good work in music, art and physical education. There could be more focus on the higher expectations of geography and history, but standards are generally above those usually found.
6. There are very few pupils in the school with special educational needs. They receive good support and make good progress. Very few pupils fail to attain the expected levels at the end of Year 2 or Year 6. There are also very few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, and none at an early stage of learning English. Their attainment is in line with other pupils.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes are very good, and their behaviour is excellent. Pupils' personal development including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Attendance is excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils like school and enjoy their lessons.
- Pupils develop very good work habits and confidence in learning.
- Pupils' behaviour is excellent.

Commentary

7. Pupils are happy at school. They respond very well to the school's high expectations of behaviour and of work. Pupils enjoy their learning and work hard. They know they achieve well, and are confident in tackling new learning. These very good attitudes come from their parents' positive views of the school, and the very good relationships between teachers and pupils.
8. In lessons and around the school, pupils behaviour is invariably exemplary. This is because pupils are very clear about the expectations for behaviour. Pupils move around the school in an orderly way, and are very well mannered. There have never been any exclusions.
9. The school's ethos is very caring and supportive, with clear expectations that support pupils' personal development very well. Teachers are very good role models for respecting others, and relationships between teachers and pupils are very good. This informs pupils' spiritual development effectively by giving pupils ways of relating to others that are respectful, and as a consequence pupils form effective relationships with each other. The strong emphasis on music and the feelings inspired by music contribute significantly to pupils' spiritual development by enabling pupils to explore their feelings, and in so doing to begin to know themselves, and from this they can think about how others might feel.
10. Provision for social development is particularly effective for older pupils who learn about citizenship by volunteering for responsibilities such as acting as the school receptionist. Pupils who take on these roles do so conscientiously. Other opportunities for social development, again particularly for older pupils, are through extra-curricular and residential visits. The good

range of play equipment benefits the infant children who learn about working and playing together.

11. Rules are clearly displayed throughout the school. Pupils are very clear about how they should behave, and this is evident in the behaviour in the school and the way in which they work and play together so well. Pupils do fall out with each other from time to time, as might be expected in the normal course of relationships, but it is extremely rare for these incidents to be anything more than of a very minor nature. Parents and pupils are very satisfied that if incidents of a more serious nature do occur they are dealt with well.
12. Provision for cultural development is particularly strong in art and music, with a good emphasis on poetry. There is scope to extend multicultural education, and the range and number of visitors and visits. There are some instances, such as the allocation of jobs, where the school needs to ensure that it avoids gender stereotyping.
13. Attendance has been consistently well above the national average. Most pupils arrive punctually at the start of the day, although quite a number arrive just as or just after the bell rings.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	3.1
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.0
National data	0.4

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is very good, and has improved in almost all aspects since the previous inspection.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are very good overall, particularly for the oldest pupils. The school has very good procedures for assessment. The quality of teaching is much higher than at the time of the previous inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are high expectations and very good support that enables pupils to meet these.
- Teachers use a good range of methods across the school.
- There are very clear learning objectives which are shared with the pupils.
- There is very good use of assessment to support learning, and excellent arrangements for target setting with individual pupils.
- Teachers have a particularly good commitment to the school and to their pupils.
- More use could be made of the outdoor environment in the reception classes.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 46 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3 (6%)	17 (38%)	22 (48%)	4 (8%)	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.

14. Teachers have a particularly strong commitment to the school and to their pupils. They are very thorough in the planning and preparation of their lessons and have very good knowledge of the subjects they teach. They give generously of their time to the school and to its very good range of extra-curricular activities. There are very good relationships across the school, and pupils feel very well supported by their teachers. There is some very effective use of specialist teaching, particularly of English writing, and teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to learning.
15. Teaching is good, and sometimes very good, in the reception classes in all of the six expected areas of learning, although much more time needs to be given for pupils to learn in the outdoor environment. The quality of teaching enables children to make good progress so that almost all attain the nationally expected 'Early Learning Goals', and most exceed these by the time they move to Year 1. There is good provision for learning in the outdoor environment, but at the moment it is not used sufficiently frequently. The national 'Foundation Stage Curriculum' sees learning in the outdoor environment as an important element of reception class education, and most schools arrange for daily, or even continuous, access. There is very good teaching within the creative aspect of development.
16. Teaching is good overall in Years 1 to 6, and often very good. Teaching is particularly strong for the oldest pupils. Teaching is very good overall in English, mathematics, science and ICT. No overall judgement was made about other subjects.
17. Where teaching is best, expectations are very high and some very helpful learning methods. For example, an excellent Year 6 mathematics lesson that challenged pupils to work out some very difficult ratios is described in the box below. There were also very high expectations in excellent Year 5 English writing lesson where pupils were describing an underwater scene. The tone had been set by music, exciting vocabulary was discussed and a very effective structure was created for the writing. There was particularly good use of pupils' writing, some from previous years, to provide models and set expectations, and pupils were given very good scope to develop their own ideas. There was excellent teaching of music to Years 1 and 2 combined, with a focus on tone, rhythm and part-singing. These were very high expectations to which the pupils responded with great enthusiasm and enjoyment, because of the very clear teaching.

Example of outstanding practice

A particularly effective method was used in a Year 6 maths lesson to help pupils to understand the concept of ratio.

The teacher used varying proportions of blackcurrant cordial and water in a line of glasses to demonstrate the notion of ratio. The concept was very clearly underpinned by the gradually changing colour of the liquid. Pupils could see (and taste) the impact that the different ratios had on the drinks, and all were able to translate this into the correct mathematical representation in their books.

18. Pupils are involved in a good range of learning experiences that promote their understanding. There is some very effective use of 'learning partners', where pupils discuss their work in pairs and develop ideas together. Drama, hot-seating (where a pupil or teacher takes the part of a character and responds to pupils' questions), investigations, and the exploration of artefacts are all used to add interest and develop better understanding. These sort of lessons are not only the most enjoyable for the pupils but also tend to promote the best learning. Pupils would

benefit from more opportunities to discuss ideas at length and to explain their work and thoughts to others.

19. Teachers are particularly effective in setting very clear learning objectives and sharing them with the pupils. This helps pupils to understand what they need to do to succeed. Lessons often return to these objectives in the final, plenary, session and reinforce the learning. The objectives themselves are often derived from the school's very good assessment data that enables teaching to be very well focused on individuals and groups. In the best lessons, teachers amend the lesson structure as they go along, in response to the way in which pupils are learning.
20. There is good teaching of pupils with special educational needs, and good support for them from teaching assistants. Individual education plans set helpful targets for children, but in some cases could be clearer about the nature of the special educational need.
21. The arrangements for target setting with individual pupils are excellent and are set out in the box below.

Example of outstanding practice

The school arranges for teachers to spend time with individual pupils reviewing their progress and setting future targets.

The outstanding feature of the arrangements is the way in which teachers take pupils verbally or practically through the steps necessary to comply with the targets in order to check that they have been attained. This makes the assessment very secure, and the requirements very clear to the pupils. These then underpin the discussion of what the next steps should be so that the pupil are involved in the target setting process and understands clearly what needs to be accomplished. The time given to this is used very valuably.

The curriculum

The overall quality of the curriculum throughout the school is very good. There is very good enrichment of the curriculum enrichment through a range of extra-curricular activities, visits for the pupils and visitors to the school. Overall, the range and quality of resources and accommodation are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good commitment to curriculum development and innovation.
- There is good provision for the arts and sports.
- There is a very good range of opportunities for learning outside the school day, although few of these are for the younger pupils.
- The computer suite is too small and the stock of library books needs refreshing.

Commentary

22. The school's curriculum is broad and balanced giving good emphasis to the arts and sports as well as to the academic subjects. The curriculum is based on nationally recommended schemes, many of which the school has adapted effectively to suit their own needs. The curriculum meets all statutory requirements. The quality and range of learning opportunities provided are very good. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are used very effectively to teach English and mathematics. The key issues for action following the previous inspection, to improve schemes of work and to provide more able pupils with a more challenging curriculum, have been addressed fully. The progress the school has made in this area demonstrates its commitment to curriculum development and innovation.
23. The curriculum is greatly enriched by the large number of sporting, arts and other activities provided for the pupils. These include running, dance, football, netball, chess, art and computer clubs. An appropriate range of visits and visitors are used effectively to enhance the curriculum

and provide a wide range of learning opportunities. All pupils benefit from these. These include educational visits to places of interest (including residential visits for pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6) and visits to the school by theatre groups, a poet, a 'Roman soldier', and parents.

24. The teachers and learning-support staff in all parts of the school are experienced and work effectively together to support the pupils' learning and contribute to their very good achievement over time. The quantity and quality of resources are generally good, and in many cases very good. Good use is made of the accommodation, although the computer suite is too small for whole-class teaching and there is no way to demonstrate skills to a large group. Many of the school library books are old and some are in poor condition. The attractive and interesting displays around the school reward effort and enhance learning.

Care, guidance and support

The care, welfare, health and safety for pupils is good. Provision of support, advice and guidance based on monitoring is excellent. Involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Support for pupils' learning through target setting is outstanding.
- There are very good arrangements for pupils' health and safety.
- Induction and transfer arrangements for pupils are good.

Commentary

25. There is a very positive ethos, and the school is very concerned for pupils' welfare. There is a very thorough policy for health and safety. Risk assessment is comprehensive and assessments are reviewed very regularly. There is good monitoring for health and safety with fire and safety checks carried out and recorded routinely. All staff have had some form of first-aid training and are clear about procedures. The school follows the local guidance for child protection, and procedures are well established and known to staff. Pupils feel that they can go to a member of staff with a concern. There are some very good examples of care for pupils in some classes, such as, a 'worry box' in which pupils write concerns, which are then discussed as a class or, if more appropriate, in confidence with the class teachers.
26. The infant playground has been developed well and there is much for pupils to do. There is less in the junior playground, but there are plans to develop this area. Both playgrounds lack an area where pupils can sit quietly; the school has plans to address this.
27. Pupils are extremely well supported in their learning. The individual target-setting arrangements described above are excellent, and are extremely effective in supporting pupils' learning.
28. The school listens to pupils. A school council has only very recently been started to put this on a more formal footing. However, this is still at a developmental stage, and it is important to ensure that it is truly valuing, by ensuring that councillors and officers are elected by peers, and that all the suggestions from pupils are considered carefully by the school.
29. Parents are very happy with induction procedures for children starting at school. Staff liaise well with local nurseries, and the visits for children and their parents before starting mean that staff get to know children, and children are helped to settle. Parents and children are involved well in assessment procedures, and there is good curriculum information for parents that enables them to support their child's learning. However, there is not an enclosed area for children in the reception class, and although staff support children well during the lunch period, some children find the playground daunting, and this means that not all settle quite as quickly as they might.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's partnership with parents is very good. There are sound links with the community and links with other schools and colleges are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are extremely positive in their views of the school.
- There is scope to give parents more information about the curriculum.

Commentary

30. The school is very popular, and parents are very pleased with the standard of education and the care and support it gives. They find the school open and approachable, and are comfortable about going to the school with a concern. Parents give very good support to the school. The parent-teacher association is very active, organising social as well as fund-raising events. The numbers helping in school are not large, but those that are able to help feel very welcomed and valued, and make a valuable contribution. Attendance at open evenings and parent teacher consultation evenings is always extremely high, and parents are keen for their children to do well and help them with their homework. There is some curriculum information to enable parents to do this effectively, particularly for parents of children in the reception classes, but there is scope to extend this further throughout the school.

31. The school maintains its links with the parish through pupils visiting the church and organisations connected to the church. Other links include local community workers such as the police and school nurse whose expertise is used to support the curriculum. People from the community also help in classrooms.

32. The links with other schools and colleges have long been established, and are developing well, with schools getting together to share resources and expertise. Transfer arrangements are difficult, with pupils going on to very many different secondary schools, many of which take pupils from a huge number of primary schools. The school is very aware of the problem, and ensures that records are transferred and that pupils attend taster days for the school of their choice.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good overall. The headteacher provides extremely clear leadership and excellent management for the school. Senior staff lead their areas very effectively. The governors provide effective governance.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the school has created a climate of very high aspirations.
- There is a particularly good commitment to staff development and performance management.
- The school has been extremely effective in obtaining a range of extra funding for special projects.
- Extremely good financial management and strategic planning have enabled the school to enhance its provision significantly.
- Very effective teams have been created to lead and manage aspects of the school's provision within a very clear structure.

Commentary

33. The headteacher sets a particularly good tone for the school, and has been very successful indeed in creating a climate of high aspirations. There have been significant improvements since the previous inspection in standards of attainment, attitudes and behaviour, the quality of

teaching and arrangements for the curriculum. All staff share high expectations and a commitment to development. Although the school has high standards, it is not complacent. This comes from the headteacher's lead.

34. There is a particularly good commitment to staff development built into the school's development plan. New staff are inducted very well, there is very good support for them, and expectations are high. The school has a very good record of staff moving on to higher positions within the profession.
35. The headteacher has created a very effective management structure that enables senior staff to play a significant part in the running of the school. The curriculum leaders are very effective in their roles, and other areas such as special educational needs are led well. The deputy headteacher gives very effective support and makes a significant contribution, particularly through his specialist teaching which provides a good model of the use of a range of collaborative learning methods.
36. Financial management has been extremely effective. Although the school's basic income is fairly low, the school has been extremely successful in obtaining extra grants for specific projects. These have allowed the building and outside environment to be developed very well, and for a range of resources to be obtained. This, in turn, has allowed the school's basic funding to be used for other areas of expenditure such as staffing. Class sizes are fairly high in Years 3 to 6, but this is compensated for by a good number of teaching assistants and an extra teacher who is able to provide specialist support and release class teachers for the very valuable target setting work. This arrangement is very valuable. Taking account of its fairly low income but very good provision, the school provides very good value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	443,478
Total expenditure	451,522
Expenditure per pupil	1,874

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	27,844
Balance carried forward to the next	19,800

37. The governing body provides good governance, and is very active in shaping the direction of the school. Governors are actively involved in the life and work of the school and make a significant contribution to its many activities.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

38. Provision for the children in the Foundation Stage is good and offers them a good start to their education. Most children enter the reception classes with standards that are above those expected of their age in most areas of learning but especially in their communication, personal and social skills and in their knowledge about numbers. Good teaching helps them to achieve well in all areas of learning. There is a good balance between adult-directed and child-initiated activities. Children are offered two afternoons a week free access to outdoor play along with other planned adult-directed activities at other times which they enjoy very much. This is much less than usual, and daily access to the well-planned outdoor area would further enhance children's opportunities to follow their interests and develop their skills.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good relationships help children to become confident learners.
- The well organised learning environment and routines promote children's learning.
- Staff set high expectations of behaviour and children respond well.

Commentary

39. Children enter the reception classes with well-developed personal, social and emotional skills. The carefully planned activities and the support they receive from staff help them to gain confidence to try things out for themselves. They contribute confidently to whole class and small group situations. Activities such as 'hot seating' builds children's confidence. Staff set high expectations of behaviour to which children respond very well. Children show interests in what they are doing, and sustain their concentration even when not directly supervised by the adults. Through carefully planned learning opportunities such as looking after the class teddy bear at home, children are gaining a growing understanding of caring for and respecting the needs of others. The good teaching and learning help children to achieve well and they are set to exceed the Early Learning Goals by the time they leave the reception classes.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The well-thought-out activities help children to enjoy using language.
- Children enjoy handling books and listening to stories and make good progress starting to read and write.

Commentary

40. Standards in communication, language and literacy exceed expectations for children's age, with many already working towards the first level of the National Curriculum in their speaking and listening skills. Children confidently join in with shared reading and respond to teachers' questions thoughtfully and intelligently; for example on why Daisy Duck was frightened, or why Handa was surprised to see the tangerines in the basket. In the hot-seating activity children could take on the roles very confidently and ask very sophisticated questions showing great imagination. These sessions add enjoyment to learning, and extend their thinking. Most children recognise the initial letter sounds and use this effectively in their reading and writing.

The higher attaining children are beginning to work out initial and final letter blends. Most of them are beginning to read simple sentences and can identify the general features such as the author, the title and the illustrator. Computer programmes are used well to develop children's reading and listening skills. Their writing is progressing well, with many using words and knowledge about initial sounds to begin to write simple sentences. Although children are learning to write for different purposes through the role-play and 'mark-making' areas, there is less evidence of specifically focused activities where children are given opportunities to write for different situations. Children are taught how to form letters correctly, and their handwriting is of a high standard. Teaching in this area is good, and children achieve well.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers plan a wide range of activities to promote learning and children achieve well.
- The standards in number and calculation are well above those usually found.

Commentary

41. Children enter reception classes with above average standards, especially in counting and in their knowledge about numbers. These are developed effectively through interesting activities and as a result children achieve well. A significant number of children are already working towards Level 1 of the National Curriculum in number and calculation. Most children can count up to 20 and beyond and order the numerals in the correct way. They can add and subtract using mathematical aids. The higher attaining children are beginning to use their knowledge about number facts to ten effectively to work out answers mentally. Teachers use different practical activities to make the learning of numbers exciting for young children. Children show a good understanding of shapes and they can identify the patterns in the environment and use this information to make their own pattern using different shapes and colours. The higher attaining children are not always sufficiently challenged in these aspects of mathematical development, and this slows down the progress they make in the aspects of shape, space and measure. However, most children are well on their way exceeding the Early Learning Goals by the time they leave the reception classes. The teaching is good overall and children achieve well.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children have good understanding of the world around them.
- There are good opportunities to develop children's early ICT skills.
- Daily access to the well planned outdoor area would further enhance the opportunities.

Commentary

42. Children in both reception classes are confident to explore the area around them. Through the newly developed outdoor area and the bug garden, children are developing their early scientific skills on investigation and exploration. They observe the nature of the different surfaces such as the tyres and the brick wall as they investigate the patterns around their playground. Daily access to the outdoor area would further enhance the opportunities they have to explore and investigate the area around them more freely. Teachers use stories and visits very well to extend children's understanding of the world around them. For example, children can talk about some of the buildings they have observed on their way to the post office, and compare the similarities and differences between old and new toys and house-hold items. However, children have very few opportunities to learn about other cultures. There is systematic development of

children's skills in ICT. Their pictures of themselves, the African mask are of high quality. The well organised resources help children to choose the materials and tools they need to create their models for a specific purpose; for example, two children making models with recycling materials decided that they could use the beads and sequins to make their musical instrument, whereas another group decided they needed more bricks to make the patterns of the road to their castle. The good teaching and learning in this area help children to achieve well.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are well co-ordinated and move about confidently.
- They learn to use small tools and pencils very well.
- Opportunities to use the outdoor area more freely would further enhance the good provision for developing physical skills.

Commentary

43. Children's physical development exceeds the expectations of the Early Learning Goals by the time they leave the reception class. Children show growing confidence as they move around the school and in physical education lessons. They are learning how to carry equipment such as mats safely. They use space well as they use the wheeled toys and other equipment outside. They can move around safely and stop and balance in response to the teacher's instructions. They show increasing control and co-ordination in throwing, catching and kicking the ball and using the climbing frame. Opportunities to use the outdoor area more freely would further enhance the good teaching and learning that is already happening in this area of learning. They use small tools with increasing control to cut and join things as they make their models and pictures. Their pencil control is very good because they are taught how to use pencils correctly in a systematic way. The teaching and learning in this area of learning are good and children achieve well.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children enjoy music and their singing is of a high standard for their age.
- Teachers use well-thought-out activities to develop children's imagination.

Commentary

44. Children sing enthusiastically and enjoy the opportunities to do so, such as in assemblies, in specific singing lessons with the Year 1 and 2 pupils, and in class. The higher-attaining children can confidently tell the teacher how the music is made with specific instruments. They can follow visual prompts and interpret them effectively by showing actions and singing as appropriate. They can use the resources available in the role-play areas very well to develop a theme to their play, whether it is helping the policemen to find the 'naughty people' or looking after the child who is unwell and counting the dinner money as they pretend to be the school's office staff. They can take on the role of Mother Duck and ask Daisy Duck questions confidently. They use their observational skills well to draw and paint things they have observed. Teachers offer children appropriate guidance and support in developing their skills, and children are confident in using the appropriate colours and methods they need to develop their pictures. Children achieve very well and they are set to exceed the standards set by the Early Learning Goals.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

English

Provision in English is **very good** overall. By the end of Year 6, standards are well above the national average in all aspects of the subject.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good overall, and particularly strong for the oldest pupils.
- The subject is very well led and assessment is used effectively to track and support progress.
- There is some particularly well focused teaching of writing.
- Standards represent very good achievement for the pupils.
- Opportunities for pupils to speak and explain ideas could be extended.

Commentary

45. Very good teaching and a particularly good focus on specific skills within writing enable pupils to achieve very well. The school has been concerned about a slight fall in national test scores for Year 6 in 2003, especially for boys, but the fall was slight and the well above average standards give no reason for concern. Standards of boys' writing are well above that of boys nationally. There is evidence that standards of writing were higher last year than the national test scores suggest. The subject leader has focused approaches very well on aspects of pupils' skills that need development and his own teaching provides a good model for a creative approach. The great deal of thought that has been given to test scores could be widened into the quality of pupils' writing generally.

Speaking and listening

46. Most pupils start school with already well developed speaking and listening skills. These are developed as pupils move through the school, and most pupils in Year 6 have a good vocabulary and are able to express ideas clearly, but standards, generally, are not as high as in reading or writing. There are good opportunities in some lessons for pupils to discuss things in pairs and small groups, and they respond to these well. Such opportunities are a very positive feature of the specialist teaching of writing. Discussion in many lessons is confined to pupils answering teachers' questions, and there are relatively few occasions where pupils are called upon to speak at length or explain more complex ideas. Such opportunities would extend speaking skills and also develop understanding. There are some good opportunities across the school for pupils to read poems aloud, both individually and chorally, and some pupils read poems on assembly with great confidence.

Reading

47. Standards of reading are well above the national average across the school. This is very good achievement for the pupils. There is very good use of the national Literacy Strategy to develop reading skills, and there are good opportunities for pupils to read individually and in groups. Good support from parents also makes a significant contribution to learning in this area. Expectations are high and, within the reading sessions, teachers and other adults focus very well on demanding skills, so that pupils are enabled to understand literary features and appreciate the way in which authors create their effects. As a result, a very high number of older pupils attains the higher expected level (Level 5) where they begin to understand meanings beyond the literal. There is a good carry-over of the literary features appreciated in reading into pupils' writing.

Writing

48. Standards of attainment are above average in Year 2 and well above average in Year 6. The particularly strong focus on writing for the oldest pupils, and specialist teaching through Years 3-6 enable pupils to achieve very well overall. By the end of Year 2, most pupils attain the expected level (Level 2) where they write accurately in sentences, and a good number attain the higher expected level. By Year 6, significant numbers attain the higher expected level (Level 5). An excellent Year 5 lesson has already been described in paragraph 13 above, and the very good teaching of older pupils is characterised by a very thorough analysis of the required features of writing, with good illustrations from authors' work and a very close focus on the skills required. At times, the focus is so intense that some pupils could benefit from more freedom to develop their own styles and express their own ideas. This was what made the Year 5 lesson so successful; there was a balance between focus and time to develop. The quality of some pupils' writing, particularly some descriptive writing by Year 5, is of a very high quality indeed.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

49. There is some good use of history and geography for pupils to practise reading and writing skills. There are also some opportunities in science for pupils to write accounts of their investigations. There is some good use of paired and groups discussion in many subjects which develop pupils' speaking and listening skills as well as developing their understanding, but these opportunities could be extended in most subjects.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching promotes well above average standards and very good achievement for the pupils.
- The quality of assessment is very good and it is used very effectively to set targets and plan work.
- There is a very good balance of different activities within the mathematics curriculum.
- The subject leader is very effective.

Commentary

50. Standards in mathematics at the end of Year 2 are above the national average and are well above average by the end of Year 6. This matches the test results of 2003, which showed a similar picture. All pupils achieve very well within their different ability levels throughout the school. Pupils have a very good understanding of number concepts across the school and are quick and accurate in their calculations. Pupils also have a very good understanding of other mathematical concepts such as shape, space and measures. Data handling skills are very well developed.
51. The standard of teaching is generally very good, and one Year 6 lesson seen was excellent. (This was described in paragraph 17 above.) In most lessons observed, all pupils were given work that was planned effectively to ensure very good progress in their learning. Many lessons are imaginative and exciting. In most lessons, no opportunity for learning is missed because teachers use a variety of methods, have high expectations and value the different strategies the pupils find. As a result, pupils become confident learners and work at a high level. The overall quality of assessment is very good. School, class, group and individual targets are set to ensure that all pupils know what they must do to improve, and these are highly effective in enhancing learning. Classroom environments contribute well to learning, and there are interesting numeracy displays in all classrooms which reinforce concepts learned.

52. Pupils' attitudes are generally very good, and in many lessons they are excellent. Because of the very high quality of teaching, they are interested in the subject and try hard. They co-operate and work constructively together, sharing ideas and learning from each other.
53. The subject co-ordinator is very effective and works very hard to ensure the very high standards. The quality and quantity of resources are good and these are used very effectively to raise standards. Good links are made with ICT, and there are plans to develop these links further.

Mathematics across the curriculum

54. Numeracy has been developed well in other subjects. In science, for example, pupils use a variety of graphs to present information. In geography they learn about co-ordinates and they use time-lines in history. Data handling skills are well developed in ICT and symmetry in art and design.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching ensures that standards are well above average throughout the school, and that all pupils achieve very well.
- Scientific enquiry is developing well.
- The subject is led very effectively.

Commentary

55. Standards in science are well above average for pupils in both Year 2 and Year 6. This was also the case in the 2003 tests. Pupils achieve very well throughout the school.
56. Standards of attainment are well above average in all areas of the curriculum. This represents very good achievement for most pupils. This is because of the very good teaching, the pupils' very positive attitudes to science, and their enjoyment of the subject.
57. This generally very good teaching across the school ensures that the pupils' scientific knowledge and understanding are developed very effectively through a wide range of interesting and relevant tasks. Opportunities for investigations and practical tasks make learning more enjoyable and this results in the high level of enthusiasm seen in all lessons. There is a very good focus within lessons on specific skills and knowledge, and this contributes to the very good achievement. The school's very good assessment of pupils' knowledge and understanding in relation to National Curriculum requirements is used very effectively to shape this focus.
58. The best teaching occurs in those lessons where pupils have the opportunity to take part in first-hand investigations. In most lessons, pupils are invited to discuss what they are doing and share their ideas. They contribute to whole group sessions through very well-targeted questions. The pace of lessons is brisk and the variety of tasks provided maintain the pupils' interest. Lessons and resources are prepared very effectively. Each year a 'science fair' is organised, giving all pupils the opportunity to work on different topics. Last year the subject was 'forces'. The use of ICT within the subject is developing well. The subject leader makes a very positive contribution to the subject. The quality and quantity of resources are good and they are used very effectively in lessons.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The overall quality of teaching is very good, ensuring that all pupils achieve very well.
- Very good use is made of ICT in other subjects.
- The subject is co-ordinated very effectively.
- The ICT suite is too small for whole-class teaching and there is no means of demonstrating skills to a large group of pupils.

Commentary

59. At the time of the last inspection, there were weaknesses in this subject. Progress was “uneven” and ICT was underused across the curriculum. Since then, there has been very considerable improvement, and standards in ICT are now well above the national expectations throughout the school. This represents very good achievement in the subject, and is a considerable improvement since the previous inspection.
60. The quality of teaching is generally very good and teaching assistants provide good support. Pupils are involved in a very good range of work and given good opportunities to practise the skills they learn. Lessons are very well focused on specific skills and enable pupils to develop confidence as well as knowledge. Links with a local technology centre, and a computer club enhance learning.
61. Teachers use the ICT suite as well as possible to ensure that all pupils gain a good knowledge of the subject, but it is too small to accommodate a whole class, and there is no way for the teacher to demonstrate skills to more than a few pupils at a time. Good use is made of individual computers within classes.
62. There is a highly effective subject leader, who has built up the resources very well to enable all staff to use ICT within their subjects, and runs regular training sessions for the staff and parents. Assessment sheets have been devised for all areas and all levels, and staff use these effectively to record progress and plan the next steps in learning. Much of the improvement in this subject is due to the subject leader’s enthusiasm for ICT.

Information communication technology across the curriculum

63. There are many examples of ICT within other areas of the curriculum, such as word-processing in literacy and using the Internet to find out information. In mathematics and science, pupils use a variety of graphs to present information. Pupils create patterns and pictures in art and compose their own tunes in music. Most classrooms have relevant displays which illustrate the different ways in which ICT is used.

HUMANITIES

64. History and geography were only sampled and are, therefore, not reported in detail. As this is a Church of England aided school, there is a separate report on religious education, and it is not included in this section. Standards of attainment in both history and geography are above those usually found across the school. Teaching was good overall in the lessons seen in both subjects, and the work in pupils’ books indicated that they cover the expected range of topics to a good level.
65. In **geography**, Year 2 pupils are able to describe the geographical features of their locality and the places they have visited, and they have a good memory for things they have learned. They were able to talk about features of their environment, such as roads, in terms of their impact, and suggest ways in which they could be improved. By Year 6, pupils have a good understanding of the relevant themes and topics they have studied. Many have developed a good understanding of the geographical patterns that underpin many concepts. For example, Year 6 pupils were able to talk about the physical features of the rivers they were studying and understood that

rivers were likely to be more fast-flowing and narrow near the source, and slow and meandering towards the mouth.

66. In **history**, pupils enjoy the topics they have studied and understand about differences between different periods. For example, pupils in Year 1 were able to talk about the difference between a Victorian washday and modern methods, and some older pupils could see the impact that had on people's lives. Year 3 pupils are knowledgeable about the Roman period they are studying, and were given good opportunities to handle artefacts and try their hand at mosaics to gain an appreciation of Roman art. Older pupils have gained a good understanding of the characteristic features of the periods they have studied and have some understanding of the changes between periods.
67. The subjects are well led, and the curriculum is enhanced by a good programme of visits and visitors. The next step for the school would be to apply the same focus of expectations to these subjects that is given to English, mathematics and science, where teachers have very detailed expectations of attainment and progress. However, standards are already above average and pupils enjoy both subjects.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

68. Only a few lessons were observed in these subjects. No lesson was observed in art and design. Therefore it is not possible to make an overall judgement about the provision in any of these subjects.
69. The **art and design** work around the school and the work in the portfolio indicate that there is a systematic development of skills throughout the school. Some of the art work around the school, such as the Year 3 pupils' work on landscape using water colours, and Year 6 pupils' pencil sketches of people's faces are of a high standard. Pupils are given opportunities to work with different media and techniques. Pupils across the school are given opportunities to use computer graphics to create pictures and backgrounds. The art club enables pupils to develop their interests in art and the work produced is of high quality. Although there is some evidence of art from other cultures such as the Year 4 pupils' work on Aboriginal art, this area is less well developed.
70. There were only few examples of pupils' work in **design and technology**. Discussion with pupils and evidence from the lessons indicate that they have gained experience of using different materials like papier-mâché, textiles, wood and other materials in designing and making different products. Year 2 pupils' work on designing and making the technicolour coats shows how they used their design to make the models. It also shows that pupils are given opportunities to evaluate their products. Year 1 pupils' model of the playground shows how they used photographs and pictures to generate their ideas. They used different ways of folding, cutting and joining the cards to create the effect. One of the special features of the lesson observed in Year 5 was how the teacher has used a step by step approach to develop pupils' skills. Pupils can measure, cut and join different materials to develop their products. They can talk about what went wrong with their prototype and how they are modifying them. Discussion with Year 6 pupils indicate that they worked on a similar project earlier on in the autumn term. They have already started collecting design ideas for their next project. This is an improvement since the previous inspection.
71. In **music**, the only lessons seen were singing with groups of classes. Standards in singing are well above those usually found. Pupils sing with confidence and expression showing a good awareness of pitch control and rhythm. In one of the excellent singing lessons run by the subject leader for younger pupils, her enthusiasm and expertise in music enthused pupils to sing with such passion and expression that it made a very special occasion for all concerned. Pupils are given opportunities to compose and create music. The school choir and the instrumental music lessons they receive from the specialist teacher further enhance the provision. The school has maintained the high profile in music reported in the last inspection.

72. In **physical education**, pupils were observed in only one lesson which was in Year 5. In this lesson, pupils learned how to create different movements both on the floor and using apparatus. The school provides very good opportunities to develop pupils' skills in different sports and games through out of school clubs. They also participate in inter-school competitions, and during the inspection, the school won an inter-school running competition. The facilities to develop pupils' skills in physical education are very good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL, HEALTH AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION (PSHCE)

73. The school is currently developing its provision for PSHCE and was at a transition phase at the time of the inspection. Some teachers had just had training on a 'Circle Time' approach but this had not yet been implemented as a regular aspect of provision throughout the school. It is important that this valuable development is now fully implemented, and that the PSHCE element is not lost among administrative matters at the end of the day, or subsumed into religious education which should be a separate subject.

74. A school council had been very recently set up as an aspect of citizenship education. At the moment, its members and officers have been selected by teachers. This is very unusual, and for the council to function effectively it is important for pupils to be responsible for electing their representatives, and the council for electing its officers. The management of the school needs to take account of the points raised by pupils through their council.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	1
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	2
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	1
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	1

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