

INSPECTION REPORT

ROCKCLIFFE FIRST SCHOOL

Whitley Bay, Tyne and Wear

LEA area: North Tyneside

Unique reference number: 108583

Headteacher: Ms S Colpitts-Elliott

Lead inspector: Mrs L P A Clark

Dates of inspection: 20 – 22 October 2003

Inspection number: 261412

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	191
School address:	Grafton Road Whitley Bay Tyne and Wear
Postcode:	NE26 2NR
Telephone number:	0191 200 8799
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs T Tofield
Date of previous inspection:	28 September 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Rockcliffe First School is about the same size as other first schools. The majority of pupils come from the local area. Twenty-five to thirty per cent of pupils from the reception year onwards are transient, joining and leaving school at times other than the usual. Half the children who attend the nursery leave to attend a nearby 5 -11 primary school and a small number of pupils also transfer there at the end of Year 2. Pupils come from a mix of rented, temporary bed and breakfast accommodation and owner-occupied housing. A small number is housed in the local women's refuge. Overall, the school's socio-economic context is well below average. The majority of pupils are of White British ethnic background; a small proportion of pupils are of Asian ethnic origin. There are 13 pupils (7 per cent) whose mother tongue is not English (an above-average proportion), four of whom are only just beginning to learn the language. When children first start in the reception class their attainment is well below that expected. Fifty-two pupils (27 per cent) are on the register of special educational needs, which is higher than average; the proportion of pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Needs is lower than average. Many of the pupils receiving additional help have moderate learning difficulties; a significant proportion have behavioural difficulties or speech problems. The school has had a temporary teacher in Year 4 for most of this term and more recently a supply teacher in Year 3. In the last year the school has received the Artsmark Award, the Ecoschool's Bronze Award and the Artsworks Award.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
25431	Lesley Clark	Lead inspector	Foundation stage Science Art and design Music
8922	Brenda McIntosh	Lay inspector	
18344	David Earley	Team inspector	Special educational needs English Information and communication technology Design and technology Physical education
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **very good** school in which pupils attain well above average standards by Year 2 because they are very well taught. The school is very well led and well managed by the headteacher and senior management team who play a key role in ensuring that pupils achieve very well. The school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- standards are well above average in English, mathematics and science by Year 2 because the teaching is very good
- standards are also well above average in art by the end of Year 2 because of the school's very good curriculum and the wide range of extra-curricular activities
- there is a strong commitment to the inclusion of all pupils in all aspects of the school's provision. Consequently, pupils achieve very well
- monitoring the progress of different groups of pupils could be improved
- very good provision for pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, leads to responsible pupils who have very good attitudes towards learning
- leadership is very good and enthuses pupils and adults to work together as a team
- information and communication technology (ICT) is not used as widely in other subjects as it should be
- attendance levels are below the national average and the school's procedures to encourage good attendance are not effective enough

The school has made very good improvement since the last inspection.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
Reading	C	C	A	A*
Writing	A	B	A	A
mathematics	B	B	A	A

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 **very well**. In the nursery and reception classes, children achieve very well. They enter the nursery with skills well below average but are on course to reach the goals they are expected to reach by the end of the reception year in all areas of learning. In personal, social and emotional development they are likely to exceed them. In Years 1 and 2, standards are well above average in reading, writing and mathematics both nationally and compared with similar schools. Reading was particularly strong in this year's national tests for pupils in Year 2, with results in the top 5 per cent of those in similar schools. Standards are high because all pupils, including those with special educational needs, those who are learning English as an additional language and pupils who have only been at the school a short time, attain at least the standards expected of their age, and over a third of pupils exceed those levels. Pupils from ethnic minority groups also achieve very well. By the end of Year 4, standards are above rather than well above average. This reflects the composition of this particular group of pupils, over half of whom have learning difficulties. This means that, while the majority attains expected standards, a smaller proportion attains more highly than in other year groups. Year 3 pupils are continuing to make good progress and achieve well in lessons. Overall, pupils do well in art, science and history and in some aspects of information and

communication technology (ICT) and attain standards similar to those in other schools in religious education. Not enough lessons in music, geography or physical education (PE) were seen to be able to make a judgement.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral social and cultural development, is **very good**. Pupils are very keen to learn, enjoy their lessons and take on very responsible and influential roles such as school councillors and playground buddies. They behave well. Pupils new to the school and those from ethnic minority groups are happily integrated into activities both in lessons and in the playground. Pupils understand and fulfil the responsibilities of living in a community very well. Attendance is well below average. Despite recent improvements in the attendance rate, the school's systems to monitor attendance could be better.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is **very good**. Teaching is very good in English, mathematics, science, art and design, and in the nursery and reception classes where the teaching has real flair. Resources are used very well and pupils learn independently, showing a high degree of maturity. The emphasis on developing pupils' skills in speaking and listening through drama and discussion is very good indeed and its impact can be seen on the very good achievement of pupils with special educational needs and those who are acquiring English as a second language. Literacy and numeracy are used very well in other subjects. ICT is used less effectively across the curriculum in most classes. Teaching is good in Years 3 and 4 where there are temporary teachers at present and where pupils have had some unavoidable disruption to their learning.

This is a very caring school where teachers know their pupils well and have their best interests at heart. The very good curriculum, with its focus on the creative arts, and the very good provision for extra-curricular activities at lunch-times, enrich pupils' learning. Home/school links are very good and parents and carers make a very good contribution to their children's learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the school is **very good** and the school is **well managed**. A strong sense of teamwork and an enthusiastic approach to developing new ways of teaching and learning has resulted in a well-ordered and stimulating environment in which pupils attain high standards. The headteacher is relatively new but has made her mark on the school, particularly in encouraging the imaginative and creative potential of pupils through art, dance and drama. The monitoring of standards, teaching and learning is very strong, involving governors as well as subject leaders. The governors organise their work effectively and make a good contribution to school improvement.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents think this is a very good school because every child is made to feel special and important. They receive good quality information about what goes on in school and about how well their children are doing. The pupils really enjoy coming to school and like the responsibility they are given.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- improve the use of ICT in other subjects
- improve the levels of attendance
- improve the assessment and monitoring of different groups of pupils

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is **very good**, particularly in the nursery, reception classes and Years 1 and 2. It is good at the present time in Years 3 and 4 where pupils are taught by temporary teachers. Standards are **well above average**, overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- children make very good progress in a very short time in both the nursery and the reception classes
- standards are well above average by the end of Year 2; they are above average in Year 4
- achievement is very good, overall, because pupils are very well taught, lessons are very well planned and assessment is good
- pupils achieve very well, including those with special educational needs, those learning English as an additional language, higher-attaining pupils, ethnic minority groups and those who have only been in the school for a short time, because their individual needs are very well catered for
- standards are good in most other subjects, particularly in art and science

Commentary

1. Children enter the nursery with levels of attainment that are well below average and leave at the end of the year with attainment that is broadly in line, particularly in personal, social and emotional development and creative development. They make very good progress, learning through finding out for themselves as they undertake challenging, interesting and stimulating activities. About half the children transfer at this point to other schools. The detailed assessment records kept by both the nursery and reception class teachers show that over 75 per cent of the children who stay on at this school are lower attainers, those who have special educational needs (particularly in speech and language acquisition), pupils who are transient and pupils who are acquiring English as an additional language. Their attainment on entry to the reception year is well below average except in their personal, social and emotional development and their creative development, which are close to the levels expected of their age. The excellent provision in the nursery has prepared them well for learning and they are now sufficiently mature to be receptive learners. Very good records from the nursery are passed on to reception teachers so they know exactly what needs to be done to enable the children to make rapid progress. Children achieve very well in the reception year in response to very good teaching and most are on course to attain average standards by the end of the year.
2. Standards in Year 2 are well above average in writing and mathematics, both nationally and when compared with similar schools. Standards in reading are well above average nationally and in the top 5 per cent of results attained in similar schools. Reading has improved steadily over the past two years. Standards in writing have been high for some time, as have those in mathematics, apart from a slight dip in 2001 when the year group had a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs than usual. The marked improvement in reading is the result of the school's focus on developing reading to bring standards up to those in writing and mathematics.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	18.0 (15.6)	15.9 (15.8)
writing	16.2 (15.2)	14.8 (14.4)
mathematics	17.5 (17.4)	16.4 (16.5)

There were 33 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- Standards at the end of Year 4 are above rather than well above average. This reflects the composition of this particular year group, as half have special educational needs because of behaviour, concentration or learning difficulties. Although these pupils are attaining close to expected levels for their age, a smaller proportion than in other year groups is currently attaining more highly. Test results at the end of Years 3 and 4 in English, mathematics and science show that pupils' learning continues to progress at a good rate, but more slowly than in Years 1 and 2. This is partly because of a history of staff absences on medical grounds. Although the school arranges good quality temporary teaching, there is inevitably some loss of continuity in learning. For example, at the time of the inspection, supply teachers were taking both the Year 3 and the Year 4 classes. Sometimes, expectations of what pupils can achieve and the match of work to their varied capabilities are not always good enough and the unsatisfactory behaviour of a few pupils occasionally delays learning because staff have to spend teaching time dealing with it.
- That their achievement continues to be good, overall, reflects the very good systems the school has in place for planning lessons, using language, literacy and numeracy in other subjects and the very good curriculum. Disruption to their learning has been minimised as far as possible but inevitably very good achievement has not been maintained at this time.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well. By the end of Year 2 most of these pupils reach standards which are in line with national expectations in English and mathematics. This represents very good progress from a low base on entry and very high achievement. By the end of Year 4 most pupils make good progress and achieve well to reach near average standards. The achievement of pupils for whom English is a second language is very good. Nearly all reach at least the standards expected for their ages even though they use English only at school. The high quality of the support they receive from teachers and other classroom staff is the main reason for this very good progress. Pupils who have been in the school for only a short time make very good progress because their individual needs are very well catered for. Additional support from a specialist teacher for transient pupils means that work is very well matched to their particular needs. The homework club for those who live in temporary accommodation or in the women's refuge gives pupils quiet time in which to consolidate what they learn in school.
- Standards are well above average in science and art by the end of Year 2 and above average by the end of Year 4. Pupils achieve well, responding in part to enthusiastic and skilled teaching as well as the many opportunities they have to learn through finding out for themselves, through carrying out investigations or working together to produce large-scale works of art, for instance. Standards are above average in history and in those aspects of ICT seen during the inspection. Standards are broadly average in religious education throughout the school but with particular strengths in pupils' ability to talk about what they know and to learn through discussing ideas. Too few lessons were seen in music, design and technology and PE to be able to judge standards and achievement, overall.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils have **very good** attitudes to learning; their behaviour is good and the school makes **very good** provision for their personal development. The school's overall provision for developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also **very good**. Attendance is **unsatisfactory** but punctuality is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- the school provides a bright and stimulating environment which inspires pupils to learn. Pupils develop self-confidence and enjoy all aspects of school life
- the development of pupils' social skills and their understanding of right from wrong are very good. As a result, pupils behave well in lessons and around school
- the development of pupils' spiritual and cultural awareness is very good

Commentary

8. In the playground and around school, pupils are welcoming and friendly to adults and one another. They are confident and keen to talk to visitors and tell them about their school. Quite a number of pupils have been to several schools and they are all overwhelmingly positive about this school and how friendly it is. One pupil said 'it is the best school in the whole universe.' Others said it was the best school they had ever been to. Boys and girls both say how much they love the school and think that lessons are fun. There is a high level of interest in extra-curricular and other additional activities and events such as the 'Big Arts Week'. Pupils show much enthusiasm for school life. In lessons, pupils are very well motivated by the teachers' enthusiastic and encouraging approach. They have a high work rate and know how well they are doing and what to do to improve. Pupils for whom English is a second language have very good attitudes to learning. They behave very well, are interested in new work and are keen to contribute.
9. Parents feel that their children behave well and, if any bullying occurs, the staff are quick to respond and deal with problems effectively. Pupils behave well and enjoy their work because there is a shared sense of purpose and pride and this creates a good learning atmosphere in school. The school has very good systems for encouraging good behaviour and pupils gain a good understanding of what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Staff lead by example and treat the pupils fairly and this leads to high mutual respect between adults and pupils. Teachers and other adults in school elect to sit and have their lunch with the pupils, which adds to the very good development of pupils' social skills. As a result, pupils are well-behaved and are quite used to making conversation with adults by asking questions politely and freely volunteering information so that the conversation flows. Older pupils look after the younger ones very well. Pupils are enterprising and willing to assume the responsibilities that they are given. For example, they take on very responsible and influential roles such as school councillors and playground buddies. Pupils understand and fulfil their responsibility of living in a community very well. This is done very well through their involvement in the many 'Eco sub-committees' in school where they consider issues such as energy, recycling, transport and litter. In lessons, teachers challenge pupils well to work collaboratively, either in pairs or in small groups, to talk things through and to learn from each other.
10. Pupils' spiritual and cultural awareness is extremely well developed through various aspects of the curriculum and school life. Pupils gain a very good understanding and respect for the life and culture of others through the study of major world faiths. They are very successfully encouraged to reflect on the wonders of the world and their place in it. They experience a spiritual and cultural dimension through art, religious education, music, history and geography. Pupils' self-esteem is actively promoted by all staff and achievements of all kinds are celebrated. This helps pupils to concentrate on their learning and achieve well. They respond very well to the trust that their teachers place in them.

Attendance

Attendance is **unsatisfactory** and punctuality is satisfactory

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.4	School data	0.0
National data	5.4	National data	0.5

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

11. Attendance is unsatisfactory and well below the national average. The school has worked hard to promote good attendance and to monitor absences closely. This has resulted in a reduction in the number of absences during the last year. Many absences are due to children moving away from the area and remaining on the registers until the school is certain they are being educated elsewhere. The school uses a manual system for registration that is leading to an inefficient use of the headteacher's time in monitoring and tracking attendance. There is a high number of transient pupils and, at present, it is difficult to track and monitor the attendance of these children as a group using the manual system.

Exclusions

There have been no exclusions during the last year.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides **very good quality** education.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is **very good**, overall, with good teaching in Years 3 and 4 and very good teaching in the nursery and reception classes and in Years 1 and 2.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- the quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection and continues to be a strength of the school
- teachers use a wide range of methods to meet the varied needs of all groups and individuals. This stimulates enthusiastic learning in most lessons
- by the end of Year 2 the school gives pupils a very strong foundation in English, mathematics and science on which to build their future learning
- the rate of learning slows down in Years 3 and 4 where there are fewer high quality lessons
- although the school generally uses assessment well, it could be used more extensively to raise standards further

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 35 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4 (11%)	15 (44%)	11 (31%)	4 (11%)	1 (3%)	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.

Commentary

12. The very good leadership of the headteacher and key staff has significantly improved teaching since the last inspection five years ago. The school has also met the key issues of ensuring challenge for more able pupils and achieving consistency in the quality of teaching in Years 1 and 2. The proportion of very good or outstanding lessons has more than doubled. Very effective management of training, the implementation of new national strategies and the monitoring of lessons have considerably developed teachers' expertise. For example, teachers have introduced and implemented the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies very effectively. They have also made good use of the latest national plans and guidance to improve the quality of learning in other subjects.
13. The success of their new approaches to teaching children under five is a good example of such innovation. The very good quality of teaching in the nursery and reception classes prepares pupils securely for their work on the National Curriculum at the beginning of Year 1. Much of the teaching in the nursery is outstanding. The excitement, enthusiasm and energy evident in the teaching and learning enable the nursery children to make very rapid progress, often from a very low starting point. Three and four-year-olds have a good grasp of language and number because of the varied and stimulating ways in which they learn. These include drama, poetry, dressing-up, action songs, music and building a tree house. Learning is also very effective because of teachers' skills in switching from teaching the whole class to helping individuals.
14. In most lessons, very good understanding of how pupils learn best enables teachers to provide exciting and challenging activities which pupils enjoy. Nearly all pupils say that they have to work hard in lessons and these are interesting and fun. In most lessons, teachers also match work very sensitively to the varied learning styles of boys and girls, pupils with special educational needs, those for whom English is a second language, and slower and faster learners. They also expect all pupils to behave very well, concentrate well and keep working hard all the time.
15. The quality of teaching is at least very good in two-thirds of the lessons for pupils in Years 1 and 2. This is because teachers study, plan, resource, and prepare lessons very thoroughly so that pupils are very interested in new work, practise conscientiously and learn a lot in the time available. As a result of such sustained hard work and very good achievement, Year 2 pupils' standards in the national tests in English and mathematics in 2003 were much higher than those in most schools and very much higher than those in schools like Rockcliffe.
16. Test results at the end of Years 3 and 4 in English, mathematics and science show that teaching is less effective than in Years 1 and 2 but it is none the less good. Pupils' learning continues to progress, but more slowly than in Years 1 and 2. This is partly because expectations of what pupils can achieve and the match of work to their varied capabilities are not always good enough. It is also because of a history of staff absences on medical grounds. Although the school arranges good quality temporary teaching, there is inevitably some loss of continuity in learning. For example, at the time of the inspection, supply teachers were taking both the Year 3 and the Year 4 classes. Moreover, the unsatisfactory behaviour of a few pupils occasionally delays learning because staff have to spend teaching time dealing with it.
17. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils for whom English is a second language is very good up to Year 2 and good in Years 3 and 4. The strengths of teaching for these pupils include teachers' expertise in bilingual learning and their good understanding of the stages of pupils' language development. This was the case, for example, in an outstanding lesson in the nursery. As the children tried new activities, the teacher helping children with English as an additional language followed them around talking all the while as their interpreter so that they had the same understanding and freedom of choice as other children. Support staff for slower learners and those with special educational needs also make very important contributions to these pupils' very good progress, particularly in English and mathematics. By explaining simply

to pupils what the teacher has said, they help those who are finding learning difficult to contribute fully to lessons and to understand what to do. Teachers match work very precisely to these pupils' achievements and are skilled in encouraging them to work by themselves as soon as they can.

18. Teachers use and develop pupils' speaking and listening very successfully in most subjects and lessons. They often do this through exciting or challenging stimuli and by encouraging pupils to talk through their ideas in pairs and as they work together in groups. Very attentive listening is the foundation for teaching in nearly all lessons. These strategies put speech at the centre of pupils' learning and account for its very good development. Teachers' development of pupils' reading, writing, and number skills in other subjects is good, overall. In history, teachers use and develop these skills well; imaginative writing evidently deepens pupils' understanding of the past and calculation helps their understanding of chronology. The use of ICT in other subjects is limited, however, and remains an area for development.
19. Good assessment arrangements make significant contributions to pupils' progress, but could be even more effective. Rigorous marking celebrates successes but also shows pupils immediate steps for improvement. The school carefully analyses a wealth of assessment data in detail to identify learning needs and to guide teaching. However, assessment focuses on measuring standards rather than progress, and systems to set pupils' individual targets and to track progress towards them are not in place.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **very good**. The school provides a very broad and very rich curriculum. Accommodation and resources are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- the curriculum is very well planned to meet the needs of all pupils
- literacy and numeracy are used very well in other subjects to raise standards but ICT could be used more effectively
- there is a very good range of extra-curricular activities as well as a special emphasis on the creative arts which serves to enrich the curriculum
- provision for special educational needs, for transient pupils and for pupils for whom English is a second language is very good
- the accommodation and resources are good

Commentary

20. The curriculum is very good. It is broad and balanced with a decided leaning towards the creative arts, including dance and drama. Although the school places great emphasis on basic skills in literacy and numeracy, the curriculum as a whole is rich and offers pupils a wealth of opportunities to develop skills in other subjects too. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and those of the agreed syllabus for religious education. Statutory requirements for daily collective worship are also met. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The curriculum for the nursery and reception classes is also very good, offering children a rich and wide variety of learning experiences, designed to stimulate their wish to find things out for themselves. The curriculum has blossomed this year with its highly effective provision for the arts, earning it national awards. In addition, through its extra-curricular lunch-time clubs, the school caters for a wide range of interests among pupils of all ages. Pupils are very enthusiastic about what their school has to offer. The school council's decision to provide interesting playground equipment is also successful at extending pupils' physical skills as they have ample opportunity to skip and to play different types of ball games.

21. The school makes very good use of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies to help pupils build securely on work that has gone before and to experience a wide range of challenging activities that help to raise standards. Literacy and numeracy are also used very well in other subjects of the curriculum. This helps to give a relevance to pupils' work and deepens their understanding of other subjects. For example, in religious education, pupils wrote about the story of David and Goliath and in history, they used their mathematical skills in understanding time-lines when studying the life of Florence Nightingale. However, the school does not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to use ICT in other subjects of the curriculum. This results in missed opportunities to extend pupils' skills and to deepen their understanding of other subjects.
22. The school is very successful in enriching the curriculum through its very strong focus on the visual arts, drama and dance. In events such as Arts Week, visits from storytellers, musicians, dancers, drama groups and visits to places of educational interest, pupils' experience is widened and deepened. This helps to extend their speaking, reading, writing and communication skills across all subjects of the curriculum and to raise standards. The curriculum is further enriched by an impressive range of extra-curricular activities. Staff, parents and friends of the school help to ensure that these provide for a wide variety of interests and aptitudes. They include sporting and musical activities, a teatime club (which usually meets at the allotment), art, craft, line-dancing and French clubs.
23. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and for those for whom English is a second language is very good. The school is very careful to ensure that these pupils have equal access to the curriculum and an equal opportunity to succeed. The high quality teaching and support in most lessons gives pupils for whom English is a second language the same opportunities and access to the curriculum as those of other pupils. Where necessary, individual education plans indicate manageable targets for improvement and pupils are very well supported by the special educational needs co-ordinator, the ethnic minorities support teacher and the well-trained and experienced teaching assistants. This is why these pupils, including those from ethnic minority groups, generally achieve very well.
24. The school is a very colourful, well-cared for and stimulating place in which to work. Pupils' work is celebrated in a very wide range of interesting and attractive displays. The school makes good use of its accommodation and its good range of resources to support learning.

Care, guidance and support

Arrangements for ensuring pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are **very good**. The school provides pupils with very good support, advice and guidance and involves them very well in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- the school provides a secure and happy environment in which all pupils are very well cared for and valued as individuals and this helps them to enjoy their learning
- very well targeted academic support and high quality personal support and guidance make a significant contribution to pupils' achievement
- pupils are provided with genuine opportunities to influence all aspects of school life that affect them directly and to make decisions about what should be improved

Commentary

25. The school takes very good care of its pupils. The steps taken to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety are very good. Regular inspections of the building and equipment are undertaken and appropriate records are maintained. The arrangements for child protection are very good and staff are aware of what to do if concerns arise about the children in their care. There is due regard for the security of pupils and a good number of staff are trained in first aid. The

school has an appropriate policy for the safe use of the Internet that has been shared with the pupils. Pupils are always well supervised, particularly at lunch-times when the supervisory staff follow well planned routines to look after the children to support their social and personal development.

26. Pupils feel that if they have any problems or are worried about anything there is an adult in whom they can confide. They say their teachers are 'really nice and helpful' and that they love coming to school. Parents particularly like the way that every child is considered to be special and important. The school promotes a healthy life style and is working towards the Healthy Schools Award. Water breaks are used effectively to help improve concentration and avoid dehydration. Pupils are well supported as they move through school from one year group to the next and are well prepared for their transfer to the middle school. 'Playground buddies' provide effective support for other pupils during playtimes. They look out for those pupils who may be feeling sad or have no one to play with and encourage them to join in the activities. There is no racial tension in the playground as a result. Pupils are inspired and encouraged by the staff to do their best and this boosts their confidence and self-esteem so that they achieve very well.
27. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are very well supported in class and this helps them to take a full and active part in lessons. Information about pupils' academic achievements is used effectively to set targets and to provide additional support for individuals or groups of pupils who would benefit from extra help. Pupils' involvement in the assessment of their own work is good. They have a good understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve and this helps them to achieve very well. Pupils with special educational needs are fully involved in contributing to their individual educational plans. There is very good support and involvement from external support staff and agencies and this makes a significant contribution to pupils' achievement. For example, the liaison with the transient pupils' teacher is very thorough and effective and ensures that pupils settle swiftly and happily into school. The arrangements for caring and supporting pupils with low self-esteem and behavioural difficulties are very effective. The school's positive approach to inclusion ensures that all groups of pupils are fully integrated into the school community and they all achieve very well.
28. Pupils are valued as thinking individuals and their views and suggestions are gathered effectively. All pupils have opportunities to express their suggestions or concerns to the class councillors and these in turn are discussed with the headteacher at the council meetings. The school councillors understand their role very well and say they are proud to represent their class. Pupils feel that the school listens to them and acts upon their suggestions where possible. For example, the pupil council was responsible for suggesting the planters, benches and playground equipment.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The partnership with parents is **very good**. The school works very effectively with parents to support pupils' learning. Links with the community and other schools are **good**. They enhance the range of learning opportunities for pupils and help them to achieve very well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- the school has very good relationships with parents. Parental involvement in the life of the school makes a good contribution to pupils' learning
- very good communication keeps parents well informed about the school and their children's progress
- the school has developed good links with other schools to support induction and transfer arrangements
- the school sees the community as a rich resource to strengthen and enliven pupils' learning experiences

Commentary

29. Parents make a very good contribution to pupils' learning and to the life of the school and what it achieves. They accompany school visits, support concerts and other school events and are very effective fund raisers. A good number of parents and volunteers make a regular commitment to help in the classrooms or with other specific tasks and activities. They offer their expertise to support pupils' learning in a range of subjects. For example, they help support artwork, run the library, assist in the home-school reading scheme and run the 'teatime club'. The friends' association is very successful, organising social and fund-raising events that support the school very well. The school values this support, while the funds raised assist in the purchase of resources such as playground equipment. The school's good links with the parents of pupils for whom English is a second language make a significant contribution to their progress.
30. The school communicates very well with parents through an impressive range of information about the school and their children's progress. As a result of parental requests, the school now sends out all weekly letters in the 'Thursday Envelopes', which enable parents to keep track of all correspondence. The 'Rockcliffe Reporter', produced by pupils, is excellent and provides information about recent achievements and developments in school. The office staff provide a positive and friendly first introduction to the school for both parents and visitors. The website is excellent and provides a wealth of information about the school, its organisation and the curriculum. There is a regular sharing of information about pupils' progress through termly parents' meetings, written reports and reviews of progress for pupils with special educational needs. Annual reports are of very good quality and give a clear picture of how well pupils are progressing, as well as setting targets for future learning. The regular curriculum and topic information helps parents support their children's learning at home. Parents find that the headteacher and staff are approachable and accessible at any time for formal or informal discussions. Where there are concerns or problems, these are swiftly dealt with.
31. The school capitalises well on the expertise and resources in the community to improve pupils' learning. The Anglican and Methodist churches are used well as venues for events, as religious education resources and as a source of assembly leaders. Visits to local museums and places of interest bring a sense of relevance to work in subjects such as history and geography. Pupils take part in various local events such as the St Nicholas Festival and a performance of the 'Happy Prince' with other schools at the Playhouse. The beach is very well used for artwork and pupils make sculptures with pebbles, sand and seaweed. The school has good links with the local press who have introduced pupils to the world of work and have assisted them with editing and printing the 'Rockcliffe Reporter'.
32. The school works closely with the middle school to which pupils transfer and other local first schools. There are regular opportunities for sharing curricular issues and staff expertise. A series of well-planned meetings with the middle school and a local pre-school ensure effective and supportive transition and induction arrangements for pupils.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **very good**, overall. The school is particularly well led; management is **good** and has some very good features. The governance of the school is also good and has some strong features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- leadership is very good and has created a very good climate for learning in which pupils flourish both academically and personally
- pupils of all races, abilities and backgrounds are fully included in the life of the school because leadership and management are very effective

- monitoring of teaching and learning is very effective and is a major contributory factor to the high standards; monitoring trends in the progress of different groups of pupils is being developed
- governors contribute well to the running of the school and play a key part in monitoring its standards

Commentary

33. The leadership of the headteacher is very good and in a short time she has injected the school with new life and vigour. Her ability to delegate effectively, and her own enthusiastic approach, have given staff the opportunity to develop their roles and to take on more responsibility. The school is now run by an extremely competent senior management team, whose interests and expertise complement each other and fulfil the needs of the school very well. The deputy headteacher, who led the school for a term as acting headteacher just over a year ago, has undergone training for headship which has strengthened her role considerably. This is an improvement since the last inspection when the roles and responsibilities of the senior management team were underdeveloped and that of the deputy headteacher very limited. Between them, the senior managers have a strategic overview of the school. Staff are agreed that the new structure works very well and that it gives greater flexibility to leadership as there is a lot more questioning, challenge and debate. There have been several important developments as a consequence, such as the new policy for teaching and learning and a shared approach to in-service training. For example, most of the staff received training for teaching young children of nursery and reception age so that everyone would understand the principles underlying the new curriculum and be able to build on this in their own teaching. These measures have had a noticeable impact on standards. The leadership has successfully motivated staff to work as a team and the shared commitment to high achievement manifests itself in the school's very good environment for learning.
34. A very strong feature of the management of the school is the way in which all groups, including ethnic minorities, are catered for equally well. The local education authority's visiting teacher for transient pupils comes into school each week for half a day to work with pupils and liaise with staff. Certain common problems such as pupils' low self-esteem and anger were identified. Accordingly, the school introduced discussion times (known as 'circle time') when pupils are encouraged to discuss their views on matters such as friendship or why people should listen to what they say. The school council was also set up and is representative of all pupils. In addition, 'playground buddies' do a good job of befriending those who are isolated. Pupils who have been to as many as six other schools were adamant that this one is the best and several said that they had refused to move from the school when their families moved on.
35. The leadership and management of provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language are very good. The school deploys bilingual staff and special resources to very good effect. In addition, some teachers have undertaken training so they are better able to understand how to develop pupils' acquisition of language. Similarly, the management of special educational needs is very effective. The special educational needs co-ordinator makes a very significant contribution to the high achievement of pupils. She ensures that there is close liaison with class teachers, pupils, parents, teaching assistants and outside agencies. Consequently, individual pupils and their needs are well known and are very well provided for, and individual progress is monitored effectively. At present, however, the school is aware that its assessment system does not provide a sufficiently clear overview of different groups of pupils to allow it to provide instant information through tracking trends in achievement. The school tracks individual progress, however, very well and this, together with the strong focus on meeting those needs, leads to very good achievement.
36. Financial management is sound and priorities in the school improvement plan are linked appropriately to finance. The school's decision to dip into its resources to fund additional support staff and to keep classes small or of a single age group is educationally desirable. Performance management is conducted appropriately and individual training needs are suitably linked to the school's requirements. The school measures its progress against others

but, despite its good results, it continues to lose pupils at the end of the nursery year and a small number at the end of Year 2 because parents have the choice of whether to send their children to a middle school at this age. The school improvement plan is better than at the time of the last inspection. It now states clear time-scales and cost implications, and provides success criteria and evaluation procedures for all short-, medium- and long-term targets.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	505,720	Balance from previous year	50,556
Total expenditure	491,381	Balance carried forward to the next	64,895
Expenditure per pupil	2,592		

37. The monitoring of teaching and learning is a considerable strength of the school and is a notable improvement since the last inspection. Monitoring is very well thought out to provide an overview of what works and what needs improving. Monitoring of lessons has a specific focus such as the types of questions that teachers use or how teachers structure the last ten minutes of a lesson to check what pupils have learnt.

EXAMPLES OF OUTSTANDING PRACTICE

Example of outstanding practice

The way in which monitoring and evaluation is carried out is unusually effective because it involves the co-ordinator and class teachers in similar roles.

Pairs of lessons are planned by the class teacher and then one is taught by the co-ordinator with the class teacher assisting and the second lesson is taught with the roles reversed. It is very much a shared experience: the co-ordinator is expected to be a good role-model and this expertise is then used to develop the class teacher's skills further. From this, much discussion emerges as to what makes effective teaching and learning. The points for improvement that are noted down in these formal observations indicate the very high standards the school sets itself. This has clearly helped pupils to achieve very well. It also means that planning and assessment has to be very clear so that another teacher can teach from them. The effectiveness of this system can be seen in Years 3 and 4 where supply teachers have been able to slot easily into the school's ways, teach well and in a similar vein to the rest of the staff. The governors' monitoring role has been dovetailed rather ingeniously into that of the school as a whole. Thus a governor with specific responsibility for a subject also observes one of the pair of lessons undertaken by the class teacher and the subject co-ordinator. The observation therefore is put into a wider context. Governors, in particular, note down the pupils' reactions and so this is very helpful when the observation is fed back to the teacher and the co-ordinator in the context of how well pupils learn.

38. The role of the governors has improved considerably since the last inspection. Their overview and links with the curricular provision of the school have been greatly strengthened since then. They are now closely involved in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. The team of governors is well-organised and all come regularly into school, often to help with specific events such as 'Art Day' or to offer individual expertise, such as taking creative dance lessons or working with classes to produce three-dimensional sculptures. Governors have also been very active in health and safety issues, beginning to make the building more accessible to the needs of different groups of pupils. The governors are fully involved in school life. They contribute very well to the school's underlying philosophy that children should have the right to become creative and curious individuals who think for themselves.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for children in the nursery and reception classes is very good, overall, and has improved since the last inspection. Provision in the nursery is excellent. The accommodation both inside and outdoors is good and the space is used by the nursery and reception staff extremely creatively for imaginative play. Reception and nursery staff work very well together to plan a wide range of relevant and interesting activities that are very well-matched to the children's needs. Assessment is used particularly well to chart children's progress and to determine what to teach next.

Children enter the nursery in the September before they are four, attending either in the mornings or afternoons. Their attainment is well below average on entry. They are extremely well taught, often in two separate groups according to their age and maturity, by a very experienced teacher and a nursery nurse who work together most effectively. The children achieve very well in a short space of time, particularly in personal, social and emotional development and in creative development. About a third of the children are above average in the other areas of learning by the end of the year. Just over half the children transfer from the nursery to join reception classes in local primary schools which educate children up to the age of 11 rather than nine as in this school. The very detailed records of children's attainment that teachers keep show that the children who stay on at this school are, by and large, the lower attainers and those with special educational needs, or those with unsettled backgrounds. Most of their learning needs are concerned with delayed speech or language development as well as physical and social immaturity. A very small number of children join the school at the start of reception with no previous nursery experience, including some of those learning English as an additional language. This means that there is little correlation between standards attained at the end of the nursery and those at the start of the reception year.

When children enter the reception classes at the start of the September in which they are five, their overall attainment is well below average. They achieve very well because the excellent provision for their personal, social and emotional development and their creative development in the nursery means that they are now ready and mature enough to start learning. They make very good progress in this year in response to very good teaching. A small group of older or more mature reception children are taught alongside pupils in Year 1. The small classes mean that children get lots of individual attention. Consequently, they forge ahead and at the end of the year are on course to reach average standards in all areas of learning. There is a very good ratio of adults to children, ensuring that the needs of those who have special educational needs are well met. Individual help is also given to children who are learning English as an additional language and they too learn rapidly.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- excellent nursery provision means that children become receptive learners
- very good teaching in the reception classes develops children's confidence and maturity

Commentary

39. In the nursery, children are involved in making decisions that matter to them, such as how to organise the painting of the tree house they had made. A higher attainer suggested making it bigger so that they could all paint at the same time. A lower attainer suggested, obscurely, "Paint it. Two." With the teacher's skilful questioning, he made himself understood: "two paint it first", which they did. One child helped the others with their aprons – she had brought them and took the responsibility for seeing that they were worn. Routines are very well understood

even at this early stage of the school year. Children know what to expect and, with as many as 18 different activities to busy themselves, are totally absorbed in doing something interesting. They know they have to listen at certain times. Even though they find it hard, they learn to take turns, largely because they are skilfully managed. The teaching is excellent. Children know where things are and what to do. For example, when one child soaked her tee-shirt, she dried it off with a paper towel, deposited it in a bin and then found an adult to ask for a change of clothes. Because children's curiosity is constantly aroused, they are very receptive to learning.

40. Teaching in the reception classes is quite ambitious because children have been so well prepared in the nursery. Routines such as listening, learning what to do, and working independently before coming back together to talk about what they have learnt are an established part of their experience. Teachers take time in the initial weeks to foster children's independence. For example, getting changed for physical education involves delightful games such as counting forwards and backwards or singing the alphabet song. This is necessary because a third of the children are unused to dressing themselves at home. Time is set aside for children to talk about important things; for example, why they should listen to others. Snack-time is a very sociable occasion. Children get their own drinks and talk about how the music makes them feel. At one point, two girls held hands and danced gently in circles in time to the music. Such moments are quite magical and contribute greatly to the children's spiritual development as well as to their personal, social and emotional development. Children's attainment in this area is likely to be in line with the level expected by the end of the year.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- in the nursery, children of all abilities achieve very well
- reception children make very good progress in response to very good teaching. They are likely to reach expected standards at the end of the year

Commentary

41. The quality of teaching in the nursery is very good. Activities are planned in minute detail. Opportunities for developing children's communication skills are very well planned. The adults are very skilled at talking to children and developing conversations. The children mirror this when they talk to visitors: for example, children explained "This is the writing corner" and pointed out the different sizes and types of pens on the table and the different colours and shapes of paper hung up for them to select. Higher attainers were very busy writing recognisable letters among a continuous flow of 'writing'. By the end of the year, average and higher attainers can write their names, but very few of those who transfer into the reception classes can. Children who are learning English as an additional language learn new vocabulary very well as the specialist teacher follows the children around, chatting and pointing out words. Adults write observations each day on selected activities, focusing on what children know and can do, so they keep track of their progress. As well as sharing stories, nursery children help to tell stories. In one instance, a piece of rose-coloured quartz was handed round to stimulate discussion. The teacher noted that this was much more successful. Even the youngest managed description, then discussed and acted out where the quartz came from, while higher attainers went on to write the story.

42. Children are well placed to make very good progress in the reception classes and are ready to respond to a more formal approach to developing their skills in communication, language and literacy. Because there are additional adults to help children with special educational needs and those who are learning English as an additional language, children are often taught in very small groups. This means that activities can be very finely tuned to their needs, and constant talk and reinforcement from adults enables them to make rapid progress, particularly those whose speech acquisition is slower. After just a few weeks in reception, the small group of higher attainers were recognising simple words and, with help, putting them into sentences, while lower attainers were beginning to learn the names and sounds of letters of the alphabet. Children love reading large print books and as their teacher pointed out the words so higher attainers began to recognise them. Teaching assistants are very good at helping lower attainers, using many different resources to aid word and letter recognition. Consequently, children learn very well. Because the teaching challenges all children, they begin to blossom. They discover that they can have fun with rhyming words. Children in one class were enthralled by the teacher's imaginative retelling of a story and they chanted interesting words like 'stumble trip' with great gusto as they demonstrated the new words they had learnt. Further opportunities are given to children to communicate by talking to a partner. For example, they discussed which bits of 'The Bear Hunt' they liked best and why. Although at this early stage of the year many children do not talk in full sentences, most could quote phrases such as 'gloomy cave' while the teacher helped them speak at greater length.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- children achieve very well in the nursery
- standards are likely to be in line with those expected at the end of the reception year because children are taught very well and so they achieve very well

Commentary

43. In the nursery, children's mathematical development seems almost imperceptible as the very good teaching includes numeracy and learning about shapes and measures in a huge variety of activities. Children learn about different shapes through tactile activities such as pressing leaves or pine cones into soft dough. Teaching generates great enthusiasm for numbers through acting out rhymes or helping children to see patterns. Yet all is done seamlessly so that, at any one time, children are engrossed in many different yet similarly purposeful activities with a mathematical slant to them. Higher attainers begin to recognise and understand the numbers one to three, and teaching enables children to practise mathematical vocabulary such as 'up and down', 'bigger' and 'smaller'. Children are very aware of how well they are learning. "I'm super, Topsy", said one boy to the puppet who helps them with their numbers, as he correctly pointed out that there were three buns left.
44. Even though the majority of children have limited understanding and recognition of number and shape when they enter reception, they are ready to learn because they have experienced these in the nursery in a tactile way appropriate to their stage of development. The quality of teaching is very good and activities are matched exactly to children's needs. Thus lower attainers learn to count and recognise numbers up to five, average attainers work on grouping objects up to 10 and higher attainers confidently and accurately sort numbers up to 20. There are high expectations of all children and challenging activities for when they have finished their tasks. Teaching encourages children to ask questions and this helps those with special needs or those who are learning English as an additional language. It was noticeable how much vocabulary these children absorbed just by asking and then repeating words. As in the

nursery, children's learning appears to be very flexible as they move from one activity to the next. Very good planning and assessment mean that teaching is very precisely targeted at what children need to learn.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- children achieve very well, learning much in a short time
- the very good teaching in both the nursery and reception is highly imaginative

Commentary

45. In all three nursery and reception classes, children's knowledge and understanding develops rapidly as they explore their world through imaginative play. In the nursery, children discover that wet sand is different from dry sand and that it is much harder to sweep up. They search for toy animals hidden in straw and learn that tools make it easier to drill and screw into wood. The quality of teaching in the nursery is very good as, in each activity; children learn something that startles their curiosity into finding out more. Constant conversation with adults feeds them vocabulary, which enables them to become articulate over the course of the year. A similar approach is adopted in the reception classes. Here, children are also stimulated by imaginative activities. For example, pupils felt and talked about a pair of hands made out of ice as they melted during the afternoon. This developed their understanding of an important scientific concept as well as helping them to learn and to use the appropriate vocabulary. Children have many different tasks to choose from. These are very well planned to lead to specific learning objectives that dovetail very well with work they will be doing in Year 1.
46. Children achieve very well and are on course to reach the goals expected at the end of the reception year. They are taught how to record what they see, smell, touch and hear as they use their senses in a wide range of activities. The role-play area, for example, currently set up as an opticians, has many pairs of glasses for children to try on, as well as some to design and make for themselves. An example of how such activities develop children's understanding was seen when a child learning English as an additional language clarified for herself that she was learning about 'the sense of looking'. Activities are very well matched to the differing needs and maturity of children in each class. The quality of teaching is very good.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- the accommodation and resources, both indoors and outdoors, are good
- using the computer is a particular strength in the reception classes

Commentary

47. Wet weather meant that the children could not use the outdoor equipment as much as usual during the inspection and only one physical education lesson was observed. Insufficient teaching was seen to make a judgement. However, it is clear that children are agile and physically confident for their age and that teaching is at least good. In the nursery, children climbed up and down the steps of the tree house and demonstrated that they had a good sense of balance. In the hall, reception children showed how well they could hop and jump and

respond to instructions when, for example, balancing using two hands and one leg. Standards are in line with expectations.

48. In all classes, children had many opportunities to use small play equipment to construct buildings and to use implements such as scissors and screwdrivers, paintbrushes and pencils. Their physical development is in line with expectations. The same qualities of teaching observed in other areas of learning are clearly evident. Children in the nursery become familiar with using computers and listening stations. In the reception year, children's attainment is likely to be well above average in this aspect of physical development as access to individual computers, with a technician on hand to help them, means that they are making rapid progress. Higher attainers remember the function of different tools and even those whose skills are at the stage of scribbling rather than drawing none the less succeeded in creating specific effects, using the mouse with increasing dexterity.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- most activities in the nursery are very well designed to develop children's creativity
- pupils achieve very well in the reception classes because they are very well taught

Commentary

49. Underpinning the excellent teaching in this area of learning is very good planning which, by giving an imaginative twist to tasks, makes learning intensely interesting. Puppets are used extremely well to give another dimension to instructions. Children explore colour through mixing their own paints and, even after just a month in the nursery, are capable of stating definite preferences for a particular size of paintbrush, knowing what will suit their purpose. A wide array of musical instruments is available for children to explore, and children can often be found 'making music' together, singing songs they have learnt or made up on the spur of the moment. Adults use music to develop children's skills in painting, explaining, for example, "I want to see if your paintbrush can dance across the paper when you hear the music." As a result, children's work is highly imaginative and they achieve very well.

EXAMPLES OF OUTSTANDING PRACTICE

Example of outstanding practice

Nursery children helped design and make a tree house, which then became the focus for different activities.

At the side of the room, a large three-sided structure made out of cardboard, with opening windows and holes, towered above the children's heads. They had spent some time constructing this the previous week. Branches, bearing individual leaves that they had made, overspread the top. Children organised who would begin painting first. Some brought newspapers which they carefully laid round the edge and others helped to stir the large pots of brown paint and sorted aprons and brushes of different sizes. The children were very eager to start painting but knew they had to take turns and so helped organise a rota. Demanding children were exceptionally well managed. By the end of the morning, all who wanted to join in had had a turn. Children who attended in the afternoon were given an equally interesting task – to stick on leaves using whatever means they thought best. As the week progressed, the treehouse became more elaborate and a focus for much imaginative play. All areas of learning were incorporated and mathematical discussions were noteworthy as size and scale became crucial.

50. Very good teaching in the reception classes builds on this approach but with a noticeable drive towards individual high achievement. Activities are more directed; very occasionally, over-directed. Colour-mixing, such as the formulae for making orange or purple, is carefully taught. Children are ready for this because their 'dabblings' in nursery have prepared them well. They learn how painting using the computer is different from 'real life' painting. Teachers have very high expectations. Imaginative links are made between literacy and

creative development. So, for example, children make plum pies like those in the story, incorporating all areas of learning as they talk, measure, explore texture and create something new out of diverse ingredients.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- standards are well above average by the end of Year 2 and above average in Year 4
- the National Literacy Strategy is used exceptionally well and pupils make very good progress
- the teaching of basic skills is very good but pupils' handwriting could be better
- pupils of different abilities achieve equally well
- the subject is very well led and managed

Commentary

51. By the end of Year 2, standards in speaking and listening, reading and writing are well above average. This is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection and in line with the National Curriculum tests in 2003. When pupils leave the school, standards are above average. An important feature of the standards in the current Year 4 is that there is a significant proportion of pupils with special educational needs and there have been staffing disruptions during Years 3 and 4. By the end of Year 2, most pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is a second language, make very good progress and achieve very well. By the end of Year 4, most pupils make good progress and achieve well.
52. A significant factor encouraging very high achievement is the very good quality of teaching, particularly in Years 1 and 2 where the pace of lessons and the management of pupils are very good and teachers have very high expectations. Teachers assess pupils' work very carefully and comprehensively. This enables them to adjust their planning and to set targets for improvement. The school makes very good use of the National Literacy Strategy in its planning so that pupils build securely on previous work. Pupils are provided with many interesting opportunities to encourage them to listen, speak, read and write. They visit and perform in a local theatre, storytellers come into school, and pupils write and perform their own puppet plays. Pupils visit a local newspaper office and produce their own newspaper using ICT skills. They visit places of educational interest and the school is full of displays which encourage reading and celebrate writing. Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills. Because relationships are very good and pupils know that their efforts are valued, they speak confidently and articulately. The very good progress most pupils make in speaking and listening helps to form a very secure foundation for reading and writing.
53. Teachers have a good command of the subject and teach basic skills very well. This enables pupils in Year 2, for example, to make very good use of a range of strategies such as sounding letters, using pictures and the meaning of texts when they meet new or unfamiliar words. Higher achieving children in Year 2 use the index and contents when locating information and make good use of inferential and deductive skills to "read between the lines". Because teachers share their lesson objectives with pupils and return to these at the end of lessons to check if they have been achieved, and because pupils know their targets for improvement, most pupils have a good understanding of their own learning. This is enhanced by the helpful comments teachers provide when they mark pupils' work. However, teachers do not ensure

that pupils transfer their handwriting skills from practice exercises to their independent work, so the presentation of their work is inconsistent.

54. Teachers plan work that is very carefully suited to different levels of ability so pupils of all abilities are challenged. In Year 2, for example, the understanding of verb endings by lower ability children was deepened because they were given work with an appropriate degree of challenge. Pupils with special educational needs achieve highly because they have manageable targets in their individual education plans and they, together with class teachers and support assistants, know clearly what these are. In Year 2, classes are small, while pupils in the rest of the school are well supported by classroom support assistants. Teachers and pupils throughout the school are given very good assistance by the special educational needs co-ordinator. Similarly, pupils with English as a second language are well supported by the ethnic minorities support teacher.
55. The subject is very well led. The co-ordinator has very good subject knowledge and works very hard to support colleagues in raising standards. She checks teaching and learning closely in order to make improvements and has a clear understanding of how the subject should develop in order to raise standards further.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

56. Language and literacy are used very well in other subjects to promote learning. Pupils write confidently and use their skills well to note down results, for example, in scientific investigations. They then consult these notes before feeding back their findings to the class. Pupils' skills in reading help them to learn much better in other subjects and, by Year 4, they find out information competently for themselves from books.

MATHEMATICS

Provision is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- pupils reach well above average standards by the end of Year 2
- teachers' very effective use of the National Numeracy Strategy results in very good achievement in most lessons in Years 1 and 2
- in Years 3 and 4, the quality of teaching is good, overall, but the rate of progress slows down
- very effective leadership and management of the subject ensure pupils' high achievement

Commentary

57. The quality of teaching in Years 1 and 2 has improved from satisfactory to very good since the last inspection. Effective training and monitoring have resulted in highly effective implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy. As a result, standards in the national tests at the end of Year 2 have gone from average to well above average over the last three years. Very high expectations of what pupils can achieve, excellent planning and resourcing, and continuous challenge generate very good achievement. Teachers show great skill in engaging pupils of all capabilities and backgrounds in mathematical thought and language. Much of the teaching in Year 2 is outstanding. In these lessons, explanations are exceptionally clear. Cards, bearing appropriate mathematical terms are used to emphasise each point so that pupils who are learning English as an additional language, or those new to the school, benefit from seeing the example or explanation as well as hearing it. Lessons are extremely well planned and the wide variety of activities involves pupils fully. In the final review on what they had learnt in a lesson on odd and even numbers, pupils had a lot to say about what they had discovered, making suggestions and raising questions.

58. In Years 3 and 4, teaching and learning are good, overall. Pupils are achieving well and are on course to reach above average standards by the end of Year 4. Number work remains the strongest aspect, although teachers ensure a balance in the coverage of calculation, problems, data handling and understanding of shape, space and measures. In most lessons, good expertise informs teachers' clear explanations and effective questioning. They establish good levels of listening, enabling pupils to learn well from one another's descriptions of methods. Very good quality resources, such as sets of varied three-dimensional shapes, help pupils to keep concentrating and to learn through investigation. In a few lessons, teaching and learning, although satisfactory, overall, are less effective. This is mainly because of changes of teachers at short notice, lower expectations, occasional inappropriate behaviour, and inconsistencies in the use of the National Numeracy Strategy and in the match of work to pupils' capabilities.
59. Effective assessment makes an important contribution to pupils' very good progress in mathematics. Careful marking shows a good balance of encouragement and guidance. Teachers also consistently assess the overall picture of learning in each lesson so as to modify future teaching. The co-ordinator carefully analyses test results to identify and meet learning needs. Leadership and management of the subject are extremely good and ensure that pupils achieve very well throughout their time in school.

Mathematics across the curriculum

60. There is good use of mathematics in other subjects. For example, history work in Years 1 to 4 supports effectively a growing understanding of the past, sequencing and time. Counting, tallying and graph work improve understanding and recording of findings in science. Drawing and colouring in art and design and in religious education enrich pupils' understanding of shape, symmetry and pattern.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- standards are well above average by the end of Year 2 and above average in Year 4
- pupils are very well taught and so their achievement is very good
- there are very good opportunities for pupils to apply what they learn
- the subject is very well led and managed and this ensures consistency in pupils' learning throughout the school

Commentary

61. Standards are well above average by the end of Year 2. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers' assessments for last year show that all pupils attained at least the level expected of their age and over a third exceeded this. Standards are equally high this year. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers expect high standards, lessons are very well planned and pupils learn very well through investigative activities. Standards are above average at the end of Year 4 because of the larger proportion of pupils with special educational needs in this year group. Although pupils reach the expected standards for their age, a smaller proportion exceed these compared with other year groups. Pupils achieve very well throughout the school.
62. Some of the teaching is quite innovative. Teachers have the knack of slanting the learning objectives so that pupils instantly understand them at their own level. For example, the more abstract concepts of waterproofing and durability were made very pertinent to pupils in Year 1 when they were discussing how to test different materials to make a coat for 'Pink', a large pink animal who lives in their classroom. The pupils took this task very seriously. They knew

exactly what to do and had the responsibility for determining how many times to rub different materials over sandpaper to test whether they would stand up to 'Pink' sliding down rough paths. Similarly, in Year 2, pupils began to examine why certain materials were used for different purposes. The teaching skilfully includes literacy and numeracy and the pupils are so used to this that they are on the look out for it, pointing out, for instance, that the 'jar' they were categorising had the 'ar' sound of the morning's lesson. Teachers' questioning is very skilful, enabling those who are learning English as an additional language to practise new words. Pupils with special educational needs often work in groups alongside higher attainers, so their learning is accelerated as they strive to keep up with the others. Classroom support assistants target individuals who need additional help.

63. Pupils are encouraged to talk about what they have learnt and to clarify misconceptions through discussion. In Year 1, for example, each group sat on chairs facing the class to explain what they had found out and to field questions and comments. Their explanations were clear and when questioned as to why they thought that netting was hard wearing they were able to respond convincingly. Pupils were then asked to make evaluative but kind comments on the presentation. One stood up to volunteer that 'The children looked at things very carefully'. Discussions are also a lot of fun: as in Year 2, when, having considered carefully what different kitchen and classroom objects were made of, pupils began to consider whether Cinderella's glass slippers were a good idea or not. This led on to a hilarious discussion about other unsuitable materials such as chairs made out of chalk and a wax measuring jug which would melt when you poured hot liquid into it. Pupils' achievement in lessons such as these is very good as they apply what they have learnt.
64. The subject is very well led and managed. Much thought has been given as to how to develop scientific thinking and efficient ways of recording observations so as not to slow down the learning of those who record more slowly. Pupils are encouraged to ask questions and to talk about what they have learnt. Much of the work undertaken by younger pupils is based on investigations, whereas older pupils have more of a balance between acquiring knowledge, finding out information for themselves and then testing ideas through investigation. The subject leader has ensured, by closely monitoring the work throughout the school, that teachers have a common approach. Monitoring is carried out thoughtfully to include specific areas such as questioning techniques and ways in which the objects of the lessons are made clear and how pupils' learning is assessed at the end. In some instances, the subject leader has taught alongside others and has also taught lessons based on another's planning to check its effectiveness.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- standards are above average by the end of Year 2 in those aspects of ICT seen during the inspection
- good quality resources and the assistance of technology support staff help pupils to make good progress
- teachers are knowledgeable and have good expertise because they have been well trained
- there is no system to show how pupils are building up skills progressively

Commentary

65. During the inspection, a limited amount of work was seen at both key stages. Standards in this work are above average and pupils achieve well. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 1 is good. Because no lessons were seen at Key Stage 2, it is not possible to make a judgement on the quality of teaching.

66. The school has worked very hard since the previous inspection to improve and extend its ICT resources. This has helped to raise standards. The school now has a well-used computer suite, lap top computers and a suitable range of software and ancillary equipment. Its provision is further enhanced by the services of a technician who supports staff with technical issues and is available during lessons, alongside teachers, to help pupils to increase their skills.
67. The school has developed a well-planned programme of training for teachers and support staff. They are knowledgeable and confident in teaching the subject. This is why, for example, pupils are confident by Year 4 to combine text, photographs and graphics. They know how to cut, paste, highlight and modify fonts for emphasis and effect. Teachers present work that is interesting and captures the imagination. For example, older pupils combine their literacy and ICT skills to produce an attractive and very well-finished school newspaper. In Year 2, pupils insert line breaks and make lists using numbers or bullet points. This is because teachers make good use of computers and projector links in order to demonstrate keyboard skills. Teachers manage pupils very well so that they use computers sensibly and collaborate well with their peers. They have high expectations so that, for example, pupils in Year 1 worked very well independently to produce well-finished patterns and pictures.
68. Leadership and management are sound. The temporary co-ordinator organises the subject effectively. She is aware of the need to improve systems of assessment in order to check pupils' progress and to help plan future targets. She has a clear understanding of how the subject should develop in order to raise standards.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

69. The use of ICT in other subjects of the curriculum is underdeveloped. Although ICT is used in specific instances, as in geography to produce graphs showing different ways of travelling to school, ICT is not used in all classes to extend pupils' skills and to deepen their knowledge of other subjects. Opportunities are missed, for example, for older pupils to use ICT to research extensively or to work independently.

HUMANITIES

Two lessons in religious education were seen, two in history and one in geography. Evidence in geography apart from this lesson was limited and so no overall judgements on standards, leadership and management, pupils' achievements or the quality of teaching and learning have been made in that subject. Pupils were learning satisfactorily and pupils could identify and describe where places were on a map.

Religious education

Provision is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- religious education lessons make an important contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Commentary

70. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, overall. Sound leadership and management have helped teachers maintain the satisfactory standards reported at the last inspection. Provision for religious education is due for review during the next school year.

71. Conversations with pupils in Years 3 and 4 show that their knowledge and understanding meets the standards described in the locally agreed syllabus at the end of Year 2, and they are on course to meet those expected by the end of Year 4. Conversations with pupils also showed satisfactory recall of key knowledge of the Christian and Jewish religions. Lessons seen during the inspection had due regard to the three areas of study specified in the syllabus: religious communities; values and morality; and ultimate questions.
72. Lessons give pupils good opportunities to draw on their own experiences and to reflect on new learning. For example, very sensitive teaching enabled Year 1 pupils to follow an animal story describing the death of a wise old badger. Their close engagement with the story allowed them to reflect on its developing meaning. The teacher's thoughtful questioning encouraged them to describe their feelings about the story. Several pupils were moved to tell the teacher their feelings following the deaths of members of their own families or their pets.
73. Careful planning enables teachers to use religious education work to enrich pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, a good Year 2 lesson on Diwali broadened pupils' understanding and experience of different cultures and religions. Following a clear reminder about listening to one another's ideas, there was a great deal of thoughtful listening and discussion on light and darkness. Pupils were very keen to retell their own experiences of the dark. In the second half of the lesson they greatly enjoyed colouring Rangoli patterns in the hope that they would bring good luck to the classroom.

History

Provision is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- teachers give pupils good opportunities to learn from direct experience, observation and research
- chronology is well taught

Commentary

74. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Effective leadership and management have improved provision since the last inspection through the introduction of a new curriculum, following the latest national guidance. Standards by the end of Year 2 have also improved and are now higher than those seen in many schools. The school has maintained the good standards reported at the last inspection at the end of Year 4 and has improved pupils' opportunities for independent research. This was evident in local history work. Year 4 pupils made very careful drawings of Victorian houses in the local area. Under each drawing, they wrote sentences describing the families living in the houses in 1881 and 1891, according to the census data for those years. In a lesson on Victorian schools, they researched school rules, classrooms and children's clothes. Conversations with pupils show the effectiveness of their learning through finding out for themselves, observational drawing, role-play and visits to Jarrow, Beamish and a local museum.
75. Teachers develop pupils' understanding of chronology very effectively through drawing on and widening their mathematical learning. For example, Year 2 pupils' chronology work on Florence Nightingale used three time-lines and an investigative homework. First, the teacher helped them to make a time-line of kings and queens during the last two centuries. Beside these they created time lines of Queen Victoria's reign and the life of Florence Nightingale. To personalise their understanding of time, they discussed with their families key events they remembered and then made time-lines of their own lives.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Three lessons were seen in art and design and one in design and technology. The physical education lessons during the inspection were largely dance, taken by a visiting dance company. Only one lesson was seen in music.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- standards are well above average by the end of Year 2 and in Year 4 because teaching is very good and highly imaginative
- the subject is very well led and managed and this helps pupils to see art in a wider context

Commentary

76. Standards are well above average at the end of Year 2 because of the very good quality of teaching, the high expectations of what pupils can learn, and an imaginative approach that allows pupils the freedom to express themselves through a wide variety of media. They are above average in Year 4. From an early age, pupils are expected to choose which width of brush or pencil they prefer and to exercise some choice in the materials they use. Teachers plan lessons very well and there are plenty of resources to support pupils' learning. In one lesson, for example, pupils of all abilities produced high quality paintings, filling large sheets of paper with subtle shades of colour to convey an impressionistic effect of water lilies. The shades of green they had mixed were subtle, and thick and thin brushes were used discriminatingly. This worked very well because the pupils had studied some of Monet's paintings and had previously painted water lilies to achieve specific effects. Pupils were able to explain what they were doing and talked about the different paintings on display. Teachers use imaginative ideas, such as different ways to depict sunrise and sunset as if through a camera lens, using thinly applied water colours or torn strips of coloured tissue paper. This combined very well with some weaving they had done – again, using colourful strips to give an overall impression of light and texture.
77. The subject is very well led and managed. Sometimes the whole school is involved in a massive project, which is then used to assess progression of skills from one year to the next. For example, a still-life was set up in a room and, each day, different groups came to draw what they saw. There was clear development in their skills which teachers then used to refine their teaching to different age groups. During the week of the inspection, a visiting artist gave a skilled demonstration, to pupils in Years 2 and 4, of how to paint using a stick, and then turned her attention to working with a small group to construct a 'wishing tree' out of different materials such as wood, card and rolls of thin crepe. The pupils worked very well together. The idea stimulated creativity and productivity as pupils worked swiftly to create a tree with wishes for themselves, someone they cared for and for the world. The twig paintings of trees were very effective. One pupil explained "You have to keep twisting it round". The level of discussion between adults and pupils was very good.
78. The good quality of artwork is immediately striking on entering the school and the emphasis that the school places on the creative arts is evident throughout. Visiting artists from the local community, art galleries and the university come into school to do workshops with the pupils or they invite them to use their facilities elsewhere. Lunch-time clubs are used well to give pupils the chance to develop their skills further.
79. **In design and technology**, scrutiny of the limited amount of work available, of photographs of work from last year and of evidence from the one lesson seen, indicates that, in both key

stages, pupils use a variety of tools and techniques to produce pleasing models. They work in a satisfactory range of materials and tasks, including food technology, textiles and construction kits. As they move through the school pupils learn to work from designs and plans. Standards of work are slightly above average.

80. **In physical education**, Year 2 pupils show reasonable skills when they push balls along using hockey sticks, and, in Year 3, pupils express themselves well in response to music in dance. The curriculum is enriched by extra-curricular sporting activities and by visits from dance groups and coaches in such sports as rugby, gymnastics and tennis.
81. **In music**, younger pupils are developing a very good understanding of length and quality of sounds and they begin to understand how notes played loudly or softly can indicate different moods. They begin to appreciate the difference between a march and a lullaby, for example, knowing that, with the latter “if it is too loud the babies won’t get to sleep”. The quality of teaching in the one lesson seen was excellent.

EXAMPLES OF OUTSTANDING PRACTICE

Example of outstanding practice

In this music lesson, pupils learnt a great deal about different types of sounds in a very short time.

Pupils in Year 1 sat in a large circle, totally engrossed as they sang ‘Take the hat, pass it round, stop, let’s find a sound’. At this point, the pupil holding the hat, carefully opened it and extracted a card with a simple word on it such as ‘long’ or ‘fast’. Most pupils were able to read the words but a classroom assistant was on hand to help those with learning difficulties or who were learning English as an additional language so they could be fully included. With alacrity, the pupils went into the middle of the circle, selected an instrument which would best suit the sound and played it accordingly, while the others had to guess what it was. The teacher talked about the quality of the sounds and invited others to comment, so pupils learnt terms such as ‘mood, tone, speed’ to explain what they were doing. What made the lesson so outstanding was the use of song throughout, which was clearly part of a well-loved routine. At the end of the lesson, when the teacher tapped out five ascending notes on the glockenspiel, pupils were ready to respond to the closing part of the lesson which was to follow her singing ‘Goodbye’ plus someone’s name. The way each was sung was slightly different, so the pupils had to really concentrate to mirror the tone, mood and speed exactly. The lesson ended beautifully on the merest whisper of sound.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal, social, health education and citizenship is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- pupils achieve very well because the school makes very good provision for this aspect of their education

Commentary

82. Provision for personal, social and health education is very good. This is because the school provides a very wide range of activities to extend personal development. Opportunities are provided for pupils to increase their confidence and self-esteem in the daily life of the school and, on occasions, when the whole class comes together and when pupils work with partners to discuss issues. This is complemented by opportunities for pupils to participate in the school council, the Ecoschools committee and in Philosophy for Children lessons. This means that pupils are encouraged to reflect from a very early age and to see work in school in a much wider context.

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	5
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
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	3
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	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	3

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