

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **THROPTON VILLAGE FIRST SCHOOL**

Thropton, Morpeth

LEA area: Northumberland

Unique reference number: 122229

Headteacher: Mrs Wendy Wheldon

Lead inspector: Mrs Lesley Traves

Dates of inspection: 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2003

Inspection number: 262988

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
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	3 – 9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	44
School address:	Thropton Morpeth Northumberland
Postcode:	NE65 7JD
Telephone number:	01669 620297
Fax number:	01669 621235
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs D Anderson
Date of previous inspection:	June 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Thropton is a small village First School in rural Northumberland. The 44 pupils on roll (25 boys and 16 girls) come from the village itself, surrounding villages and farms and the nearby small town of Rothbury. Pupils' social circumstances are mixed, with a significant number coming from farming families. All are white and speak English. There are currently 6 pupils attending part-time in the nursery. Their skills are broadly as expected for their age. The other pupils are taught in two mixed-age classes, with reception and Year 1 pupils being taught as one class and Years 2, 3 and 4 as the other, by the headteacher. The number of pupils having free school meals (2.6 per cent) is below average. An average number of pupils (18.9 per cent) have special educational needs, with 2 pupils having statements. These mostly relate to learning difficulties. The school formerly held Grant Maintained status. In the last two years it has suffered a period of turbulence, with the absence of the previous headteacher and staffing instability. The current headteacher was appointed in September after a period as class teacher and acting headteacher. She has a teaching commitment of 90 per cent.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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13723	Mrs J Overend	Lay inspector	
30594	Mr B Ashcroft	Team inspector	Mathematics Science Art and design Design and technology Music Physical education Special educational needs

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is a good school**, which is improving rapidly under the very effective leadership of the new headteacher. Teaching is good, overall and often exciting and challenging, particularly in the class taught by the headteacher. As a result, most pupils achieve well and reach good standards. The school is well managed and gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils' achievements are particularly strong in reading, speaking, mathematics, history and religious education;
- The leadership of the headteacher is very good and is transforming the school;
- Pupils get off to a good start in the nursery;
- The school provides high quality support for pupils with special educational needs (SEN);
- The rich range of learning experiences provided, coupled with teaching which is of high quality inspires pupils to learn and makes them keen to attend;
- More opportunities could be planned for pupils to use their writing skills in other subjects and for reception pupils to 'have a go' at writing for themselves;
- Pupils' handwriting and presentation of work could be better;
- The workload of managing subjects needs to be shared more equitably.

Improvement since the last inspection has been good overall. It has accelerated strongly in the past 18 months and the issues identified last time have been dealt with. The planning of work and assessment of pupils' progress are now good, there is a very thorough development plan, which underpins the work of the school effectively and links with parents are now good. Teaching and standards have also improved.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Please note: this is a very small school and the number of pupils taking the tests is always few. In 2003 there were only 5 pupils, so each accounted for 20% of the total. These results must be treated with caution.*

**Pupils achieve well.** In the nursery, pupils make a good start and build on this steadily in the reception year. As a result, they are on course to reach the standards expected for children of this age when they move to Year 1. Some will exceed these, particularly in reading and mathematics. However, children could make more rapid progress in writing. Throughout the school, achievement is accelerating and standards are rising. Progress is particularly strong in reading, speaking and mathematics throughout the school and pupils also do well in history and religious education. However, pupils do not use their writing skills frequently enough in other subjects. The current Year 2 pupils are on course to reach above average standards in the national tests for 7-year-olds. Year 4 pupils are quickly making up for lost time, as a result of past staffing instability and most are also now on course to exceed the standards expected for their age. Pupils with SEN achieve well and sometimes very well in relation to their abilities.

**Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good.** Pupils enjoy their lessons, work hard and are keen to learn. They behave well, although they are sometimes over boisterous on the playground. Attendance is very good and has a strong impact on learning.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching is good, overall.** It is consistently good in the nursery and gets children off to a strong start. There are, however, occasions when teaching for reception pupils is more ordinary, particularly in writing. Teaching in the Year 2, 3 and 4 class is very good, overall and sometimes excellent. It is vibrant and inspiring. Pupils with SEN are provided with high quality, sensitive support and as a result, achieve well. The curriculum is good. It is very effectively enriched through the wide range of visits, visitors, and out of school clubs on offer. Pupils benefit from the many 'first-hand' experiences provided. Staff know the pupils very well and take good care of them.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are good.** The headteacher's leadership is very good and is moving the school forward rapidly. However, the management of subjects needs to be shared more equitably because currently, the workload of the headteacher is very high. The governing body is committed to supporting the school. It is playing a growing part in evaluating its work and contributing to school improvement. Governors carry out the vast majority of their responsibilities well, but need to ensure they provide all the required information for parents.

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

Parents think highly of the school and are especially pleased with the leadership of the new headteacher. They would like more information about their children's progress. Pupils enjoy school and the range of different activities they undertake. However, some children are concerned about over boisterous behaviour on the playground.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to use their writing skills in other subjects, for reception pupils to 'have a go' at writing themselves and to teach handwriting and presentation skills more effectively;
- Develop the skills of the newly appointed teacher to play a stronger, more effective part in leading and managing subjects and evaluating the school's work;

and ensure the following statutory requirements are met:

- Include all the required information in the Governors' Annual Report to Parents.

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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

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

Pupils achieve well overall. They get off to a good start in nursery and build on this steadily in reception to reach the standards expected by the end of the Foundation Stage. Pupils in Years 2 - 4 make the best progress. The current Year 2 and Year 4 pupils are on course to reach better than expected standards in reading, speaking and mathematics.

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

- Standards and achievement are improving rapidly;
- Pupils achieve particularly well in reading, speaking, mathematics, history and religious education;
- Pupils get off to a good start in the nursery;
- Pupils with SEN achieve well in relation to their abilities;
- Reception pupils could achieve more in writing.

#### **Commentary**

1. The number of pupils taking the national tests at the age of 7 varies from year-to-year, but is always low. Consequently, test results must be treated with caution, as one child can represent a high percentage. For example, in 2003, there were only 5 pupils in the Year 2 class, so each child represented 25 per cent. However, there are some important factors to take into consideration. Results declined slightly in all subjects in 2001 and took a very sharp dive in 2002. The school experienced a period of turbulence during this time, due to instability in staffing and the absence of the previous headteacher. School management had taken the decision not to implement the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. As a result, pupils were not building quickly enough on their skills in these subjects and were not reaching the standards of which they were capable. Few procedures were in place for checking on pupils' progress, which resulted in teacher assessments being based on unreliable evidence. These factors had a significant impact on pupils' achievement and the 2002 Year 2 pupils had a particularly poor deal. However, high quality, dynamic teaching is redressing the balance for these pupils, who are now in Year 4. The implementation of the literacy strategy has sharpened pupils' reading and mental mathematics skills, in particular.
2. Results in the national tests in 2003 show a strong upturn and are well above average in reading and writing and in the top 5 per cent in the country in mathematics, when compared to all schools nationally. When compared to similar schools, the picture is also a strong one, with reading results being well above average, writing above and mathematics in the top 6 per cent. Inspection findings confirm the school's own data for the current Year 2 and Year 4 pupils, indicating that they are now achieving well and on course to reach above average standards.
3. Improvements have been brought about through the hard work and commitment of the current headteacher, who took over as acting head in March 2002 and was appointed on a permanent basis in September this year. Introduction of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy and of highly effective procedures for tracking pupils' progress, have ensured that they build on their knowledge and skills systematically and are challenged appropriately. Close analysis of test data ensures that gaps in teaching and learning are identified and dealt with. For example, the headteacher identified that throughout the school, pupils were not



achieving as well in writing as they were in reading and mathematics, particularly at the higher levels. This became a priority for action and the measures taken have resulted in significant improvements, although the school is aware that there is still more to be done to give pupils planned opportunities to write in other subjects. The headteacher currently takes the Year 2, 3 and 4 class and her teaching is very good and sometimes excellent. This has injected excitement, pace and challenge into lessons and provides a very good example for the recently appointed reception/Year 1 teacher, who was unavoidably absent during the inspection.

4. Pupils get off to a good start in the nursery and build on this steadily in the reception class. The vast majority are on course to reach the expected goals in all areas of learning by the end of the reception year and a significant number will exceed these in reading and mathematics, where they make the best progress and benefit from being taught alongside the Year 1 pupils. In writing, progress is slower because children have to few opportunities to explore writing for themselves.
5. Highly effective systems for identifying and supporting pupils with special educational needs are ensuring that they make at least good and often very good progress in relation to their abilities. Some of these pupils do really well to achieve average levels in the tests for 7-year-olds. Work in English and mathematics is well matched to their needs and special programmes are designed to boost their skills and help them reach their targets. Sensitive support and good quality planning ensures that they are fully included in lessons. This raises their self-esteem and develops their confidence.
6. Pupils achieve well in history and religious education and reach standards, which are better than usually seen at the ages of 7 and 9. This is a result of the exciting, practical range of learning experiences provided, which fire their imaginations and deepen their understanding. In information and communication technology (ICT), Year 2 pupils achieve well because they are challenged through working alongside the older pupils.

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

Attendance is very good and punctuality is good. Pupils' attitudes and their behaviour are good. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school has very good attendance rates;
- The school effectively stimulates pupils' desire to learn and to attend;
- The staff work very hard to ensure positive relationships throughout the school;
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is actively promoted.

### **Attendance**

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

Authorised absence	
School data	4.2
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.0
National data	0.4

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

## Commentary

7. Pupils like the school and say they enjoy both work and play. Their keenness is reflected in the very high attendance rate. The school day gets off to a good start, with most pupils being on time. Pupils are happy and secure in school. They express their opinions confidently and say their teachers are kind and give them lots of interesting things to do. Older pupils were keen to talk of recent work about the life story of Roald Dahl and the younger children were thrilled by work they had undertaken in physical education, with a parachute.
8. Pupils work hard in lessons and show good concentration skills. They respond particularly well in lessons where there is rapid pace and challenge and when there are practical tasks to reinforce the learning. This was seen in a Year 2, 3 and 4 religious education lesson where the children were studying Hanukkah. There were cards and decorations to make, food to cook and games to play. The pupils worked very industriously and the room was a hive of activity and enjoyment. The lesson helped pupils to catch something of the Jewish people's excitement at the celebration of Hanukkah and relate this to how they themselves feel in preparing for Christmas.
9. Behaviour in the school is good overall and supports learning well in class. Parents report that they are very happy with the standards of behaviour. However, in pupil questionnaires and in their interviews, behaviour on the playground was the one area that gave them concern. They felt that it could become rough at times. During the inspection, outdoor play observed did, at times, become over boisterous and for a few children could become more aggressive, if unchecked. In the majority of cases, staff were quick to redirect play, so that problems were averted.
10. Children with SEN are very well supported and have good attitudes to their learning. They are fully included in all activities, including playtimes, by the other children. Throughout the school, older children are encouraged to look after younger ones, for example, at the lunch tables and they carry this responsibility well. They are given plenty of chances to work together collaboratively, for example in class groups, where younger and older pupils work together for support and in pairs with 'talking partners' and 'reading partners'. They show very good relationships in these sessions.
11. Pupils' spiritual development is promoted effectively through well taught religious education lessons, assemblies that allow time for reflection and in Circle Time, where pupils can discuss their feelings, values and beliefs. Pupils are helped to understand themselves and others through these sessions. They are also supported in understanding their academic progress through the sharing of targets, evaluation of their own work and marking. Moral discussions are encouraged in various curriculum areas, as for example in history, when learning about World War 2, pupils considered food rationing and also related this to the work they had done on healthy eating. Citizenship is promoted effectively. For example, pupils receive citizenship awards for their contributions to school life. Involvement in the 'Eco School' and 'Growing School' initiatives are developing care and concern for the environment both at school and beyond. These have, for example, involved pupils in creating a recycling project for the village.
12. The school and the local area lack a diversity of cultural backgrounds. However, staff work hard to ensure the children are made aware of and can empathise with people of other faiths and cultures, both around the world and in Britain. Many subjects of the curriculum are used to promote this understanding and staff encourage a positive image of people with different beliefs and ideas. An example of this is the 'Living in a Diverse World' project undertaken by the whole school. Their own local culture receives a high profile through visits, such as theatre trips and through good use of the local environment and facilities.

## Exclusions

### *Ethnic background of pupils*

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	44	0	0

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good, overall and at their best in the Year 2, 3 and 4 class. The curriculum has also improved. It is now good, with a very good range of enrichment activities provided. Staff know pupils very well and take good care of them. Links with parents have improved and are now good.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching is good, overall. It is almost always very good and sometimes excellent in the Year 2, 3 and 4 class and results in rapid learning and a high level of challenge. This is a significant improvement since the time of the last inspection.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching in the Year 2, 3 and 4 class is exciting, challenging and innovative and is accelerating learning;
- Literacy and numeracy lessons are particularly well planned and taught to meet the learning needs of all pupils; however, teachers could provide more opportunities for children to write in other subjects;
- Teaching in the nursery is consistently good and ensures pupils make good progress;
- Teachers provide a wide range of practical, 'first-hand' experiences which enrich learning;
- Pupils with SEN are very well supported;
- The teaching of writing in the reception class could be improved.

### Commentary

#### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 15 lessons*

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

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

13. Teaching in the nursery is consistently good. All the areas of learning are planned for effectively and good links are made between them. Pupils achieve well because the wide range of practical, 'hands-on' activities they are provided with stimulate their interest and curiosity. As a result, they are keen to learn. Teaching for the reception pupils is satisfactory, overall, but it is good in reading and in mathematical development. In these areas, children benefit from the challenge of working with the Year 1 children and they rise to this. This does not work so well in writing, because teaching does not ensure enough opportunities for children to 'have a go' at writing for themselves. As a result, they lack confidence and

- become constrained by thinking that they need to spell words correctly. In role play, for example, they shy away from writing lists and notices because of this.
14. In the best lessons, teachers' explanations are very clear and pupils are involved in setting the 'success criteria' by which they and the teacher will judge their work. This focuses pupils on the task in hand very well and as a result, they work productively and show a mature understanding of what they have achieved. The pace is sharp and pupils are continually challenged through expert questioning to think more deeply and explain their answers more fully. This stretches them and helps them build rapidly on their previous learning. In literacy and numeracy lessons, all ability levels are challenged and supported appropriately. In guided reading and writing sessions, staff cut across age ranges and group pupils of similar ability levels together, so that teaching can be closely directed to meet pupils' needs. In the Year 2, 3 and 4 class, this is having a particularly strong impact on achievement at all levels. Time at the end of lessons is used very well to check back on what has been learned, involve the pupils in evaluating their own performance and that of others and decide what might be done next.
  15. Throughout the school, teachers provide a wide range of interesting, practical experiences for pupils. These often require them to apply skills learned in one subject to another. For example, in a religious education lesson, pupils were using cutting and folding skills learned in design and technology and word processing skills, as they made cards to celebrate the Jewish festival of Hanukkah. In a history lesson, pupils were absorbed in examining a very good range of artefacts relating to World War 2 and deciding what they were for. They learned a tremendous amount about people's lives back then, because of the 'first-hand' experience provided. In Year 1, pupils' understanding of sound was developed as they used the instruments they had created themselves to carry out experiments. However, although a good range of opportunities are provided for children to write in literacy lessons, teachers do not always give them scope to develop their writing skills through other subjects. This limits progress, somewhat.
  16. Pupils with SEN receive very good support from both teaching and support staff. Teaching assistants have high levels of expertise and support these pupils very effectively to ensure they are fully included in lessons. For example, they often reinforce teaching points in shared sessions and sensitively encourage pupils to contribute to the discussion. In one lesson, a boy beamed with pride as the teacher praised his good answer and he was spurred on to make further contributions.
  17. Pupils' work in English and mathematics is thoroughly assessed and their progress closely tracked. The information is used well to plan the next steps in learning for groups and individuals. As a result, pupils are challenged effectively with appropriate work and achievement is accelerating. Increasing use is being made of pupil targets in these subjects. Targets are written in 'child friendly' language so that pupils have a clear idea of what they are trying to achieve. The best examples of marking not only celebrate what pupils have achieved, but point the way towards improvements. New procedures have been put into place to track progress in science and ICT more closely. However, these have yet to be fully implemented.

## **The curriculum**

The curriculum is good. It is planned effectively to meet the needs of all pupils. Very good use is made of visits, visitors and 'first-hand' experiences to enrich learning. There is a very good range of after school activities, for such a small school. The accommodation and resources are good.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good;

- The breadth of curricular opportunities has improved since the previous inspection;
- Links between subjects provide good opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of their work;
- The curriculum is enriched by the many visitors and visits to places of interest;
- The accommodation, particularly the provision for outdoor play and resources support the learning well;
- Throughout the school, pupils need more opportunities to use their writing skills in subjects other than English.

## Commentary

18. Curriculum provision has improved since the previous inspection. All the subjects of the National Curriculum, including provision for religious education, are effectively planned for. The school ensures that all pupils are included in what it has to offer.
19. The Foundation Stage curriculum is well planned to cover all areas of learning for children of this age. However, in practice this works better in the nursery than it does for the reception age pupils in the mixed reception/Year 1 class. This is because opportunities for reception pupils to explore for themselves are more limited. For example, although pupils have satisfactory opportunities to experience sand and water and play with wheeled toys, these are not provided on a regular, daily ongoing basis as they are in the nursery. However, the balance is redressed somewhat through the benefits gained from the reception pupils working alongside the older children. More opportunities could also be provided for pupils in reception to 'have a go' at writing for themselves in the different areas of learning. Writing tasks are often teacher directed and require children to copy from sheets or the teacher's work.
20. The recent introduction of the national strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy has resulted in a rapid improvement in standards because pupils are able to build more systematically on their skills. These and other subjects are carefully planned to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of the pupils in the mixed-age classes. Ample opportunities are given to pupils to develop their research and enquiry skills in both mathematics and science. Good links between subjects help pupils to make connections and deepen their understanding. For example, infant pupils made musical instruments in design and technology. These instruments were then used when they were studying sound in their science work and also played in their music lesson. However, too few opportunities are given for pupils to use their writing skills in subjects other than English.
21. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The SEN co-ordinator (the headteacher) works very closely with parents, support staff and teaching staff to ensure pupils are effectively supported. Individual education plans have clear targets, which are linked to national curriculum levels and precisely address the needs of the pupils. The activities planned for pupils help them to achieve well and experience success. Pupils are fully included in lessons and all other aspects of the curriculum.
22. The school makes very good use of visits and visitors to enrich learning. Pupils visit a wide range of places of historical, geographical and scientific interest, such as Hadrian's Wall, the National Park and the Life Centre in Newcastle to support their work. Visitors have included authors, sports coaches actors and artists. These opportunities provide the pupils with good quality first hand experiences, which catch their interest and fire their enthusiasm for learning. The wide range of after school clubs open to all pupils helps them, in particular, to develop their musical and sporting skills. Taking part in initiatives, such as 'Eco-School', 'Growing School' and 'Healthy School' add greatly to pupils' learning, for example, in science and geography and to their personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE).

23. The accommodation is good. The building provides an attractive and stimulating learning environment. It is well maintained and the ICT suite is well used. The school hall, although small, is adequate for floor work in physical education and staff arrange lessons so that small groups are taken to use the apparatus. The outdoor facilities provide pupils with a very stimulating environment, for example to develop their climbing and balancing skills on the adventure playground and to enjoy the space for quieter activities. Good learning resources ensure that pupils have all that they need to support their learning in every subject

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

The provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is good. The school provides good support, advice and guidance. The involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good procedures are in place to support children with SEN;
- Effective procedures are in place to ensure pupil welfare, health and safety;
- Pupils have access to good support, advice and guidance;
- All pupils have very good, trusting relationships with adults in the school.

### **Commentary**

24. Staff know the pupils very well and have very good relationships with them. They provide a high standard of care for all pupils. As a result, the vast majority are happy and secure in school and the pupil questionnaires showed that they are confident that if they have a problem, someone will listen and take them seriously.
25. The period of staff instability and turbulence in the school led to a deterioration of behaviour for some pupils. The school has worked hard to implement a new behaviour policy, consulting and informing parents and pupils and training all staff. Pupils are very clear about the system of rewards and sanctions in place and know what is expected of them. They particularly like the rewards and work hard to achieve these. The procedures work well, particularly in lessons and around school. Occasionally on the playground, a few pupils' play becomes too boisterous and can start to be aggressive, if unchecked. Staff clamp down on this quickly, however, in most cases. The school has an effective policy for promoting racial harmony.
26. The headteacher and staff ensure that all regulations and guidelines relating to health and safety and child protection are complied with. For example, the child protection co-ordinator has ensured that staff understand and implement the correct procedures. There are good risk assessments in place and the headteacher is giving staff regular training to ensure best practice is adhered to. Pupils say they are regularly taught about safety including fireworks and road safety. Initiatives such as the 'Healthy Schools' Award' support pupils in making healthy lifestyle choices. Outside agencies are used appropriately for advice, for example, on child protection issues or, as in the recent LEA health and safety audit, which has been used as a springboard for improvement.
27. Pupils are given appropriate opportunities to make their opinions known through informal discussions and through Circle Time or other lessons. There is no formal system for gathering pupil views, but pupils are confident that these are listened to and are valued.

28. Staff have a good knowledge of pupils' academic needs through the close eye they keep on progress, particularly in English and mathematics. This ensures pupils receive extra help if they need it, or are stretched further. Target setting is being used effectively to involve pupils in understanding what is expected of them and how they can improve. Teachers and the teaching assistants work together very well to ensure pupils with SEN can gain as much from each lesson as the other pupils.
29. The extended induction programme for the youngest children as they start school is effective in ensuring new children settle quickly and are able to make the most of their time in school. Parents are able to stay in the classroom at the start of the day and work with their children. This helps both children and parents to feel comfortable and enables the effective exchange of information between the school and parents and builds good relationships.

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

Links with parents are good and have improved since the last inspection. Links with the community are also good. The links with other schools are satisfactory and improving.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is an improving rapport with parents;
- Good links with the community impact well on the children's learning;
- There are good transition arrangements with the middle school and improving links with other schools.

### **Commentary**

30. Parents think highly of the school and the new headteacher. Trusting and supportive links are being forged, which is an improvement since the time of the last inspection. The only area of concern from the parents' questionnaires was in relation to the information they receive about their child's progress. However, inspection findings judge this to be good. The school produces good quality, informative end of year reports, although these were not to a consistent format in the last school year. They receive good information about what children are learning through curriculum and parents' meetings. Their children's targets are shared with them so that they can support them at home. Regular letters and news letters inform parents of events and the school holds parents' workshops to show parents what their children are learning and what they are capable of achieving. Parents are consulted and encouraged to become involved. They report that they feel comfortable approaching the school with any concerns and these are dealt with sensitively. They are very clear about the homework policy, which was an issue in the previous report. The Governors' Annual Report to Parents did not fully meet statutory requirements last year, but measures have already been put into place to address this.
31. The school has beneficial links with the community. Local residents visit to talk about their experiences, for example, to support history and some regularly work with small groups of pupils. Pupils join in with community events, such as the village show and the 'Christingle' service at the local church. The school is particularly grateful for the work of the Friends Association, which includes both members of the community and parents. As well as impacting on the learning through fund raising for equipment, the Friends offer huge support for the school through their regular practical help with events throughout the year. The school is also used by the community on a weekly basis by toddler and play groups.
32. The school is outward looking and seeking actively to build up its links with other schools, having been unable to have any links for a significant period of time. It has joined with a

cluster of schools for events such as singing days to extend children's learning opportunities. Links with the middle school are good and allow the transition process to go smoothly. Year 4 pupils report that they are looking forward to their move and are not afraid because they feel they already know lots of people at their new school.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership and management of the school are good and have improved since the time of the last inspection. The headteacher's leadership is very strong and effective. She has moved the school forward at a very sharp pace in a short space of time. Management is good overall, with very good systems in place. However, the workload of managing subjects needs to be shared more equitably to ensure that the headteacher is not overburdened. Governance of the school is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The highly effective leadership of the headteacher;
- There is a strong commitment to improving the school;
- Governors support the school effectively in planning for and financing initiatives;
- The leadership and management skills of the newly appointed teacher need to be developed to enable the workload of managing subjects to be shared more equitably.

### **Commentary**

33. The very strong and highly effective leadership of the headteacher has been the key to the school moving quickly forward. In a very short time, she has stabilised the school and set it on an even keel. She has worked particularly hard to ensure that the school caught up with important national initiatives, such as the literacy and numeracy strategies and performance management, which are now working very effectively and having a strong impact on standards. Planning, assessment and the arrangements for pupils with special educational needs have all been completely overhauled and as a result, pupils of all abilities are making much better progress. Much of this work was undertaken when the headteacher was in the role of 'acting head', against a background of staffing and financial instability and alongside her duties as a full-time class teacher. Parents, staff and governors are strongly supportive of the improvements made and the direction in which the school is going.
34. The impact of the headteacher's high quality skills as a class teacher has also been very strong. Last year she taught the reception/Year1/Year 2 class and the school achieved some of its best ever results in the national tests for 7-year-olds. She currently teaches the Year 2, 3, 4 class and all pupils are achieving well and often very well in response to the exciting teaching they experience. She is providing a very good example for the recently appointed reception/Year 1 teacher. Standards are also rising quickly because of the close monitoring of pupils' performance in lessons and in the tests. Much work has been undertaken to improve writing, for example, as a result of this.
35. Effective systems have been put into place to ensure that the work of the school is checked on and the right priorities for action identified. The school development plan is a very thorough and useful document for guiding improvements. Governors are involved in this process and use information gained from their monitoring visits to guide their decision making. For example, it was identified during the course of governors observing literacy lessons that an increase in support staff time would be beneficial to meet the needs of pupils in the mixed-age classes. This led to governors deciding that the area was a priority for funding. The headteacher is directly responsible for the leadership and management of literacy, numeracy and special educational needs, in addition to a raft of other subjects, class teaching and whole-school management and administrative duties. Much of this work



is carried out in her own time, because it has not been possible financially to free her for more than 10 per cent of her teaching commitment. She is also currently working alongside the new member of staff to ensure other subjects are managed effectively. This puts great pressure on the headteacher's time and energy. There is an urgent need for the subject leadership and management skills of the newly appointed teacher to be developed in order that the workload can be shared more equitably and effectively. This would enable some of the school's priorities for improvement being dealt with at an even faster rate.

36. The governing body supports the school well. They have a good range of expertise to bring to bear in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities. For example, the chair is a former headteacher of another school and her expertise has been invaluable in the monitoring and decision making process. Governors have strong community links and this gives them a good insight into how the school and the community can support each other and how the school is perceived in the village and beyond. They are then able to make decisions in the light of this. For example, the local toddler group uses the school premises on certain mornings of the week. Governors have a clear idea of the school's strengths and how they see it developing further, based on their own analysis and the very good quality information they receive from the headteacher. However, both the governors and the headteacher report that they do not simply act as a 'rubber stamp', but question closely, for example, when appointing new staff and challenge where appropriate. Finances are now well managed and linked appropriately to key priorities. The school has headed off a potential deficit and has balanced this year's budget through good management and taking important decisions regarding staffing. The school administrator keeps very good day-to-day control of all finances. She carries out her role very effectively and efficiently, ensuring minimum disturbance to the headteacher during lesson time. The Annual Report to Parents had some minor omissions last year, but the governing body has identified this and is currently addressing the situation in this year's report.
37. The school has come a long way in a short space of time. It has the commitment and the capacity to rapidly develop even further.

## Financial information

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

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	141,000
Total expenditure	150,793
Expenditure per pupil	3,350

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	11,650
Balance carried forward to the next	1,865

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

### AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall. It is good in the nursery and satisfactory for reception pupils.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils get off to a good start in nursery;
- Reception pupils achieve well in reading and mathematics; they benefit from being taught alongside the older pupils;
- Opportunities are missed to develop reception pupils' writing skills and their progress is slower, as a result;
- Reception pupils could have more opportunities in some areas of learning to choose their own activities and follow their own lines of enquiry.

#### Commentary

38. When children join the nursery, their attainment overall is as expected for their age, although this varies from year to year. The six nursery pupils are taught by an experienced nursery nurse, under the supervision of the teacher of the mixed reception/Year 1 class. This is a new arrangement since the start of the school year. During the inspection, the reception/Year 1 teacher was absent and the class was taught by a supply teacher. The work of both groups is planned appropriately to cover all the required areas of learning and care is taken to ensure that learning experiences are matched to children's needs and abilities. In practice, arrangements work better in the nursery because there is space for all areas of learning to be catered for simultaneously and pupils have more opportunities to choose for themselves. For example, sand and water are always available and pupils can choose to paint and make models without staff direction. However, the reception pupils benefit in many lessons from being taught alongside the older pupils. For example, in mathematics, a significant number are already working on national curriculum activities alongside Year 1 pupils.
39. Children in the nursery settle well and are happy and secure. In the reception class, children are confident and eager to learn. They are on course to reach the expected goals in their **personal, social and emotional development**. Most pupils in the nursery are already showing good levels of independence and the ability to concentrate for a sustained length of time when carrying out activities, such as making Christmas cards. Parents are invited to take part in an activity with their child each morning and this develops their confidence well and ensures they settle quickly. Reception pupils are keen to take part in activities. They join in well with question and answer sessions on the carpet, knowing they must put up their hand and wait their turn to speak. They work well together when they are carrying out activities such as sharing a book.
40. Pupils achieve well in all aspects of **communication, language and literacy** in the nursery. Staff take every opportunity to engage the children in conversation and are very skilled at developing vocabulary and encouraging response. Very effective use is made of role-play to develop both spoken language skills and writing. Children have plenty of opportunities to enjoy stories, rhymes and songs. However, there is no quiet, comfortable area where children can sit to read and enjoy the books they choose. In reception, pupils achieve well in reading and speaking and listening and many are likely to exceed the expected goals in

these areas. They benefit from sharing literacy sessions with the older pupils, particularly in developing reading strategies. Most already recognise a good range of familiar words. However, their writing skills do not develop as well. Opportunities are missed, particularly through play, to encourage children to 'have a go' at writing for themselves and not enough real purposes are provided to entice them. As a result, they lack confidence and some do not want to write unless they can copy what an adult has already written. Too much emphasis is also given to filling in commercially produced worksheets, which further limits independence. As a result, progress is slower than it could be and not as many children are likely to reach the expected goals in writing as in reading.

41. Pupils achieve well in their **mathematical development**. In nursery, they develop their knowledge and skills well through the wide range of practical activities provided and the links made between mathematics and other areas of learning. For example, pupils used their manual skills well as they cut out triangles. They were able to recognise that a triangle had three corners. They were delighted to discover that when you joined two together in a certain way, it made a star shape and this had six corners. The stars were then used in the 'Christmas Story' role play to guide people to Bethlehem. In reception, pupils benefit from daily numeracy sessions with the older pupils. They work confidently with numbers 1-10 and some go beyond this.
42. Pupils in nursery achieve well in their **knowledge and understanding of the world** because they are provided with a wide range of interesting and practical activities. For example, they learn about 'journeys' and the different forms of transport people use. In the classroom, they play with a range of toy vehicles in the sand, using the digger and tipper lorry and making 'hills' for vehicles to travel up and down. Outside, they draw pathways and travel these, imagining themselves to be different vehicles or using the wheeled toys. In Reception, pupils build steadily on their skills as they learn about the different types of homes people live in and festivals of light in different cultures. However, children have fewer opportunities to explore and follow their own lines of enquiry. Computer skills develop steadily in both classes. Children can use the mouse appropriately to click on icons and drag and drop objects on screen.
43. Children achieve well in their **creative development** in nursery. They have particularly good opportunities to develop their imagination through role play. Children thoroughly enjoyed acting out the Christmas story in the role-play stable, dressing up and taking on different roles. The 'innkeeper' was delighted to announce, 'There is room at the inn today!' when 'Mary' arrived on her donkey. Children also have good opportunities for painting, cutting and sticking, modelling and printing, using a wide range of materials and media. In Reception, children achieved well in the lesson seen, showing good observational skills and attention to detail as they used crayons and pastels to draw self-portraits. However, more regular opportunities could be provided for children to choose activities for themselves. Although opportunities are provided for role play, for example, in the class 'sandwich shop', there is too little intervention from adults and as a result, play lacks focus.
44. Achievement is satisfactory in **physical development**. Nursery pupils have daily planned opportunities for play outdoors, for example, using wheeled toys. The Reception pupils benefit from being taught alongside the older pupils, for example, when following their example in a yoga session taught by a visiting expert. However, they have too few regular opportunities to explore their physical limits and develop their skills, for example, through riding bikes, pushing prams and scrambling and climbing. A wide range of opportunities are provided in both classes for children to develop their manipulative skills appropriately through using tools, such as scissors, paintbrushes and pencils. They also have regular access to jigsaws, construction kits and modelling materials.

## SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

### ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and sometimes excellent in Years 2 – 4;
- Leadership and management are very strong;
- Achievement is particularly good in reading and speaking and very good opportunities are provided for pupils to use these skills across the curriculum;
- Achievement in writing is improving rapidly, but more opportunities could be provided for pupils to write in other subjects;
- Pupils with SEN are very well supported and make good progress;
- Handwriting is not as good as it should be.

#### Commentary

45. The very small numbers of pupils in each year group make it difficult to draw reliable conclusions from the results in the national tests in Year 2. One pupil can make the difference between well above average and well below average results. In 2003, results in both reading and writing were well above the national average. The school's own data shows that most of these pupils achieved very well in relation to their starting points and exceeded their projected targets. The current Year 2 pupils are set to do even better. The present Year 4 pupils had a turbulent time in Year 3, with staffing instability disrupting learning. In addition, these pupils have suffered from the fact that the school did not implement the national literacy strategy until just over a year ago. As a result, pupils were not building on their skills quickly enough and standards were starting to decline. However, the very strong teaching they are now receiving in the daily literacy lessons is accelerating progress considerably and if pupils continue to achieve at the current rate, they, too, are likely to reach above average standards.
46. Over several years, pupils have not achieved as well in writing as they have in reading. Very strong subject leadership is reversing this trend. The new headteacher, who is also the subject leader, identified writing as a priority for improvement based on close analysis of results and has implemented a very comprehensive action plan to bring about improvements. The school has made very good use of the support, advice and training provided by the local education authority to develop staff skills. A comprehensive system for tracking pupils' progress in writing has been implemented and is enabling the next steps in learning to be clearly identified. Very effective use is being made of guided writing sessions to provide highly focused teaching for small groups of pupils, tailored expertly to meet their needs. As a result, pupils of all abilities in both classes are being challenged effectively and are now achieving well. Pupils in the Year 1 can write instructions clearly. They understand the importance of each step being set out precisely for the reader to follow. The most able can independently change their instructions into the past tense to make a storybook, like the one they have been reading in class, called 'The Big Sandwich'. Their spelling and punctuation skills are above average for their age. Year 2 pupils make particularly rapid progress because they are taught alongside the Year 3 and 4 pupils and this often increases the level of challenge. They demonstrate good understanding, for example, of the structure of play scripts and can interweave dialogue and stage directions well. The most able Year 4 pupils can write a story in the first person and are adept at extending their sentences through the use of interesting joining words and phrases. Throughout Years 2, 3 and 4 spelling and punctuation are secure. They plan and draft their work well. However, in all year groups

standards of handwriting are below average. Pupils often form and join letters poorly and are careless about sitting writing on the lines. This makes work untidy. The school has identified this and has introduced a new teaching programme in response. However, as yet, it is having little impact and teachers do not always set their expectations in this area as clearly as they do in others.

47. Standards in reading are above average at Year 2 and Year 4. Year 2 pupils read confidently, with very good expression, taking appropriate account of punctuation. They can predict what might come next in the story and can talk about the characters and main events of the books they are reading. More able Year 3 and 4 pupils can 'read between the lines' to identify characters' feelings and motives. Reading skills develop particularly well because of high quality teaching. Extremely good links are made between reading and writing in the daily literacy sessions and pupils of all abilities are constantly challenged to engage with the text they are working on in the shared reading sessions. For example, they are encouraged to identify the verbs and adjectives that make a story more interesting, or to identify the key features, for example, of instructional writing from a given text. Such activities stretch them to the limit and ensure they bring all their reading strategies to bear to achieve success. Guided group reading is used very effectively to reinforce and extend skills.
48. Standards in speaking are above average in Year 2 and Year 4. Pupils answer questions confidently and explain their ideas thoughtfully and with precision. They use technical vocabulary related both to English and other subjects with a high degree of accuracy. Good use is made of 'talking partners' for example, to rehearse and share ideas prior to writing. Staff place a strong emphasis on developing spoken language from the earliest stages. They give pupils time and space to think through their answers and respond and all responses are valued. However, teachers often push pupils to extend their answers or to express themselves more clearly and this accelerates progress. Listening skills develop appropriately and have a beneficial impact on pupils' ability to remember what they have learned.
49. Pupils with SEN achieve well because they receive high quality support from the adults who work with them. Teaching programmes are closely linked to their individual targets and learning is broken into small steps to help them achieve and increase their self-esteem. As a result, a significant number achieve broadly average results, particularly in reading.
50. Teaching is very good in the Year 2, 3 and 4 class taught by the headteacher. It is good for Year 1 pupils. The best lessons are conducted at a sharp pace and a great deal is expected of pupils. Objectives for the lesson are set with the pupils, in the form of success criteria and these are always checked on at the end. As a result, they know exactly what they are aiming for and remain focused on the task in hand.

*An excellent example of a writing lesson was observed in the year 2, 3 and 4 class, relating to writing report writing and instructional texts:*

The lesson starts with a brisk re-cap of the key features of report writing. The teacher skilfully questions pupils to draw the information from them. She scribes a list on the whiteboard and excellent use is made of this to form 'success criteria' by which the pupils will judge their own reports. The pupils have used their reading skills very effectively to research information on penguins as a basis for their reports. Excellent links are made to work in geography on habitats, as pupils give precise oral accounts of what they have found out. Pupils produce very clear plans for their reports and use their notes very effectively; they know exactly how to do this because the process has been modelled expertly by the teacher. A 'model' paragraph using suggestions from the class is used as a first draft to be improved. Pupils are challenged to work with their 'talking partners' to 'think, rehearse and write', in order to change the simple sentences of the 'model' into more interesting, extended sentences. The pace remains sharp because the teacher constantly challenges pupils to develop their ideas. They remain totally focused and engaged because they are stretched to the limit. In response, a Year 2 pupil writes, 'Penguins spend most of their time in the sea, but they lay their eggs in the sand to keep them safe.' Pupils evaluate each other's work giving 'two stars and a wish' – two strengths and one development point. Their criticisms are constructive and show a really mature understanding of what they are trying to achieve. For example, one child says of his partner's work, 'I feel he uses

technical vocabulary and connectives well.' The lesson is rounded off by pupils checking their work against the success criteria to evaluate how well they have done. Not a moment has been wasted and pupils end the lesson, bubbling and energised by their achievements.

## Language and literacy across the curriculum

51. Pupils' reading and speaking skills are developed very effectively across the curriculum. Time is built into all lessons for pupils to give feedback on what they have learned and many opportunities are provided for children to use their reading skills to research information. Good links are made with ICT for word processing and research. However, although there are some good opportunities provided for pupils to use their writing skills in other subjects, these are not yet planned sufficiently well. An overuse of worksheets limits the chances for children to write in different formats, for example in geography.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well throughout the school and standards are above average;
- Teaching is good overall with very good teaching in the Year 2/3/4 class;
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together;
- Pupils' numeracy skills are developing well because of the strong focus on number;
- Leadership and management are very good;
- Pupils' presentation of work could be improved;
- The challenge for some higher attaining pupils in the infant class could be better.

### Commentary

52. Since the previous inspection, standards in mathematics have improved. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well over time. In 2002, results were very low in comparison to all schools nationally and to similar schools. However, there are reasons to explain this. The particular cohort had had their education severely disrupted due to a succession of many different supply teachers. The results for 2003 saw a dramatic rise and placed the school in the top 5 per cent both nationally and against similar schools. The number of pupils reaching the higher level (Level 3) was very high. The work in the pupils' books throughout the school reflects this improvement. Discussions with pupils during lessons and an analysis of the school's detailed tracking and assessment procedures, indicate that standards throughout the school are now above average and that these standards are likely to continue.
53. The National Numeracy Strategy has now been implemented successfully and is having a very positive impact on standards and the quality of teaching and learning. Increased opportunities are given in Years 2/3/4 for the pupils to develop their number skills, especially in the mental arithmetic part of the lesson. Opportunities are given for pupils to explain how they calculate their answers. This reinforces their knowledge and understanding. Throughout the school there is now a strong emphasis on practical problem solving and this has helped to improve achievement.
54. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together, particularly to support those with SEN. Teaching assistants are involved in the planning and are very skilful in supporting individuals

and groups in lessons. This results in all pupils being able to take an active part in the lessons.

55. High quality teaching and learning was observed in the Year 2/3/4 class. It is characterised by the following:
- the teacher has very good subject knowledge and understanding of the content of the lesson;
  - very good questioning keeps the pupils 'on their toes'. Questions are differentiated so that all the pupils, no matter what age or ability, have to think carefully before answering;
  - time is used very well and not a moment is wasted;
  - the learning objectives are clear, the activities interesting and all the pupils are keen to be involved;
  - the time at the end of the lesson was used well to help the pupils reflect on what they had learned.
56. Occasionally, the level of challenge for the higher attaining pupils in Year 1 does not help them to move their learning forward as far as they could because they complete tasks that are too easy for them. For example, in the lesson seen, taught by a supply teacher, the higher attaining pupils were completing addition number bonds within ten when they could have tackled higher numbers. Throughout the school, pupils' presentation of work could be improved.
57. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. Work and test results are analysed to see where improvements can be made. The co-ordinator (the headteacher) has delivered training for the other staff. Through her influence standards are improving.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

58. Pupils are given opportunities to use their knowledge and skills in other subjects. In science, pupils produce graphs and charts. They use computer programs to reinforce their number skills and measure in design and technology. Their knowledge of turns and compass directions helps to support their map work in geography

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

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

- Teaching and learning are good overall, and very good in the lesson observed in Y2/3/4;
- Pupils achieve well in lessons;
- Many opportunities are now offered to pupils to develop their skills to investigate and experiment practically;
- Only one pupil reached a higher than average level by the end of Key Stage 1 in 2003.

#### **Commentary**

59. Teacher assessments for 7-year-olds in 2003 indicate that standards were well below the national average and those of similar schools. However, because of the small number of pupils in Year 2, care should be taken when analysing these results. For example, if one more pupil had achieved an average level then the results would have been well above the national average. However, only one pupil achieved the higher level (Level 3). Inspection findings and the school's own data indicate that more are on course to reach the higher level this year because of better teaching.



60. The school uses nationally recommended subject guidelines that have been adapted to meet the needs of the school. There is a programme of topics based on a two-year cycle to accommodate the mixed age classes and ensure that all elements of the science curriculum are taught. An improvement since the last inspection is that there are now more opportunities given to pupils to complete their own investigations. Consequently, all pupils are now developing good scientific enquiry skills. Evidence for this was seen in the work that had been completed both this year and last year in the pupils' books and also in the two lessons observed.
61. In the two lessons seen, all pupils, including those with SEN, achieved well. Very good support enabled pupils with SEN to take a full part in the lesson and achieve the same results as others. For example, a child who had a statement for special educational needs was heard to say, 'I have found out that metals let electricity go through my circuit!'
62. In the lesson seen in Year 1, pupils made good progress making and recording observations of how different sounds are made from different instruments. They then went on to categorise the instruments into different groups. The lesson was successful because all the pupils were using their own instruments that they had made previously. This made the lesson relevant and interesting for them.
63. In the very good lesson observed in the other class, pupils were experimenting with the conductivity of different materials. They worked very enthusiastically in small groups to organise their investigations. The lesson had very good pace and moved swiftly from one activity to the next, constantly challenging all the pupils to think at all times. The teacher had very good subject knowledge. She effectively built upon what the pupils had learned in previous lessons. Her skilful, targeted questioning and explanations ensured that all the pupils, whatever their age or abilities, achieved very well in the lesson.
64. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The co-ordinator is new to the school. Until this year, science has not been a main focus. Plans are now in hand for more rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning that should take the subject forward. However, there is a need for the co-ordinator to develop the necessary skills to undertake this task with less reliance on the headteacher. There is a good selection of resources to support learning for all the topics.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in ICT is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- ICT is used well in most other areas of the curriculum;
- Year 2 pupils reach high standards;
- Good use is made of the Internet and CD-ROMs for research.

### **Commentary**

65. Standards are above those expected for pupils in Year 2 and in line at Year 4. A real strength of ICT is the way in which it is used to support learning in other subjects and the ease with which pupils apply their skills in different contexts.
66. Year 2 pupils can use word processing functions with ease. They can change the font, size and colour of the text they type to create interesting effects. They choose and use appropriate tools from the tool bar, using a 'paint and draw' program, for example, to create

their own abstract pictures. They can move objects on the screen, for example to dress a bear in the appropriate clothing for winter, and use a range of computer based learning games independently. Year 4 pupils are able to take this further, combining text and paint and draw functions to create road safety posters. They can also import pictures into their text. Pupils have made good use of the digital camera; in one instance, they took different viewpoints of the playground to use to create pictures in the style of Henri Matisse.

67. Pupils effectively use the functions of a music program to compose their own tunes to make a CD and change tunes already composed. Those in Year 2, 3 and 4 can access the Internet independently, choosing an appropriate search engine for example, to research facts about World War 2. They have also written programs to enable a 'screen turtle' to draw shapes, such as squares and rectangles, and have used a database to collect information and produce graphs.
68. No lessons in ICT were observed, but teachers and support staff were observed routinely supporting and instructing pupils as they worked on computers as part of their other lessons. This and the range of activities planned shows that teachers have good levels of expertise and confidence. They encourage pupils to use computers independently, as part of their daily learning, for example, when making Hanukkah cards and researching festivals of light.
69. Management of the subject is currently satisfactory. The co-ordinator has only been in post a few weeks and needs training to develop her leadership and management skills. However, the headteacher has implemented a strong plan of action to ensure the subject continues to develop.

#### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum.**

70. Many good quality opportunities are planned for pupils to use ICT across the curriculum. Good use is made of programs in literacy and numeracy to reinforce pupils' basic skills, for example, in spelling and calculation. Effective use is made of the Internet to research topics in art, history, religious education and geography. Pupils are also given good opportunities to use computers creatively for art and design and music.

#### **HUMANITIES**

71. No teaching was observed in **geography** because it is taught as part of a cycle with history and was not being taught during this term. No secure judgement can therefore be made on provision, teaching or standards. A limited amount of work from last year and teachers' planning was analysed. This demonstrates that an appropriate range of topics is covered in sufficient depth and pupils achieve steadily. Pupils study their own local area, with its richness of landscape, the fictional island of Struay and a village in India. They compare and contrast different lifestyles and examine the way in which the environment affects the way in which people live and work. Whole school, ongoing topics include 'Where in the World is Barnaby Bear'. Staff and pupils take the toy bear, Barnaby on holiday and he writes and takes pictures of his experiences of different places. A strength in geography is the study of the environment. This is closely linked with the 'Eco-school' and 'Growing School' projects, which have involved the school, for example, in recycling, improving the grounds and studying the weather. Good use is made of the local area for pupils to carry out fieldwork and effective links have been made with history, such as when pupils study the development of settlements.

## History

Only one lesson was observed in this subject, but added to the weight of other evidence, there is sufficient to say that provision in history is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well and reach above average standards;
- Their imaginations are caught by the range of exciting, practical experiences on offer;
- Good use is made of discussion to develop pupils' thinking skills;
- Visits and visitors enrich learning;
- More opportunities could be provided for pupils to use their writing skills.

### Commentary

72. Standards are above those usually seen at the ages of 7 and 9. This is a direct result of the high quality teaching pupils receive. A scrutiny of work suggests that, over time, pupils cover an appropriate range of topics and achieve well. In the history lesson observed in the Year 2, 3, 4, class, teaching was very good and children learned particularly well because the teacher's enthusiasm and knowledge sparked their interest. A strong emphasis on discussion ensures the pupils have very good opportunities to express their opinions and listen to the views of others. In this way, they learn that history is as much about interpretation of the evidence we collect as it is about learning facts. A very good example was seen when pupils were discussing aspects of World War 2 in their groups. A Year 4 boy hypothesised, 'Food would have to be rationed to provide extra for the soldiers. They would need to be fit to fight. If you were at home, you wouldn't need to be as fit'. A Year 2 girl in the group said, 'Yes, but also ships carrying food would be bombed, so rationing would help save food so that there was enough to go round.' Pupils were really thinking hard and applying their knowledge in this session.
73. Effective use of resources catches pupils' interest, fires their imaginations and helps them empathise with people in the past. For example, when studying artefacts from World War 2, they were able to make much more informed comments about how people would feel about having to wear a gas mask. Throughout the school, pupils' learning is enriched through visits to places of historical interest and visitors to school. Pupils have visited nearby Walltown and Segedunum to experience life as a Roman soldier on Hadrian's Wall, through dramatic reconstruction and have listened to a visitor explaining about his experiences as a soldier on D-Day. Practical, 'hands on' experiences such as making biscuits from a war time recipe add to pupils' understanding and enjoyment.
74. Good use is made of computers in history for research. Pupils use the Internet and CD-ROMs to find information on the various topics studied. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to record their work. Although a start has been made and children have, for example, written letters in the role of evacuees, such opportunities are not as regular as they could be. Often, worksheets are used which do not require as much of pupils as the discussions and other tasks they undertake.

## Religious Education

Only one lesson was observed in this subject, but added to the weight of other evidence, there is sufficient to say that provision in religious education is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well and standards are good;
  - Learning is exciting because of the rich range of experiences provided;
  - Good links are made with other subjects, such as art and design and ICT, but more opportunities could be provided for writing.
75. Standards are better than usually seen at the ages of 7 and 9 and exceed the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. Very good teaching and an interesting and varied range of learning experiences ensure pupils throughout the school achieve well. This is an improvement from the time of the last inspection. Pupils study Christianity and a range of other faiths in good depth. By the age of 7, they know that people of different faiths celebrate festivals of light and can explain similarities and differences between them. They know a good range of Bible stories. By the age of 9, pupils understand that light is a common symbol in world religions and can describe, for example, what the different parts of a 'Christingle' symbolise. They can also describe the symbolism of the Menorah and its history. Year 2 pupils extend their learning through being taught alongside the older pupils and joining in with discussions that stretch and challenge them.
76. One very good lesson was observed in the Year 2, 3 and 4 class. The teacher had very high expectations of pupils' involvement in discussion and they rose to the challenge. Questioning was used very skilfully to draw out what the children had learned in previous sessions about the Jewish religion. The teacher subtly directed the questions to pupils of different abilities, challenging the more able and stretching them to explain in more depth. However, at the same time, she ensured that pupils with special educational needs were fully included and were highly praised for their responses. Tasks undertaken were practical and entailed pupils using their design and technology and ICT skills to make Hanukkah cards and games, their art and design skills to create 'Menorah' pictures from string; they also baked potato latkis. The lesson culminated in a class Hanukkah party, which deepened their understanding not only of how Jewish people celebrate, but also to experience the enjoyment 'first-hand'.
77. A scrutiny of pupils' work throughout the school shows that more opportunities for pupils to use their writing skills could be provided. Worksheets are often used, which do not encourage pupils to write at length or record in different ways. They do not encourage good standards of handwriting and presentation and are often untidy. Subject leadership and management are good. The headteacher is currently the co-ordinator. She has a high level of subject expertise and has organised the curriculum well.

## CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

78. During the inspection, these subjects were sampled but not examined in detail. Pupils' work was analysed and discussions took place with staff and pupils. One lesson was seen in art and design and in music and two in physical education, which were taught by a visiting coach. No lessons were seen in design and technology. It is, therefore, not possible to make an overall judgement about the provision in these subjects. However, the curriculum is satisfactory and pupils' achievement is as expected for their age.
79. In **art and design**, pupils use an appropriate range of techniques and materials and build steadily on their skills. In the good lesson seen, Year 1 pupils were drawing their own self-

portraits using a range of media. They worked with care and concentration to produce pleasing results. Pupils have sufficient opportunities to study the work of famous artists and develop their own skills and techniques in response. For example, older pupils studied the work of the artist Paul Klee and have enjoyed creating paintings in a similar style, inspired by the colours they have seen in their own village of Thropton. They have made good use of the digital camera to capture such images and use them as a basis for their own work.

80. In **design and technology**, pupils are gaining experience of working with a range of materials and techniques to design and make a variety of products. Younger pupils explained how they had designed musical instruments. Older pupils made Diva lamps and Hanukkah candles as part of their work in religious education. There are regular opportunities provided for food technology, for example in designing healthy sandwiches and baking potato latkis.
81. In **music**, pupils are given the opportunity to sing in productions such as the Harvest celebration and Christingle service in the village. They have opportunities to learn musical instruments such as the keyboard and guitar. Many pupils in Years 2/3/4 play the recorder. In the lesson seen, the pupils were learning how various percussion instruments could be used to describe various part of a story.
82. In **physical education**, the school overcomes the lack of space in the hall very well. When large apparatus is needed for a lesson, classes are split so that there is enough space for the small number of pupils to use the equipment. Other lessons are taken outside whenever possible. Opportunities are given for pupils to join in sporting activities with other schools. Specialist physical education coaches come to school to give pupils 'tasters' of different sports. In the good lessons seen, a specialist yoga teacher gave the pupils good opportunities to develop their physical skills. The lesson was the last in a sequence of lessons as part of the school's 'Healthy Schools' Initiative'.

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

### **Commentary**

83. The provision for PSHCE is very good. The school has a very strong focus on developing pupils' personal qualities through lessons and other actives, such as Circle Time (when pupils share their ideas and concerns). Pupils have the opportunities to discuss their feelings and values and tackle issues such as caring for the environment and how to eat healthily. The school has taken this a step further involving the children in the 'Eco School' and 'Healthy School' initiatives. This means the children get to put their beliefs into practice; so for example they are learning to compost and to recycle waste to save resources. There are half termly prizes for citizenship but also the pupils can win stickers and prizes for bringing in paper for the paper collection so setting up good habits and producing responsible citizens for the future.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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