

## INSPECTION REPORT

**RISHTON METHODIST (VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED)  
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Blackburn

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119396

Headteacher: Mrs D Hufferdine

Lead inspector: Mrs L J Traves

Dates of inspection: 12<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> January 2004

Inspection number: 263827

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils:	5 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	219
School address:	George Street Rishton Blackburn Lancashire
Postcode:	BB1 4JF
Telephone number:	01254 887223
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr I Kitchin
Date of previous inspection:	November 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Rishton Methodist Primary School is situated in the village of Rishton, close to Blackburn in Lancashire. It has close links with the church, although pupils do not have to be Methodists to attend. It is average in size with 219 pupils on roll, who mainly live nearby. The vast majority are white and speak English as their first language; 2 pupils have English as an additional language, but are not in the early stages of language learning. The family circumstances of a significant number of pupils reflect the increasing levels of social and economic need in the area and the number who take free school meals is slightly above average (23 per cent). The number of pupils identified as having special educational needs (34 per cent) is above average. These relate mainly to learning and behavioural difficulties. This figure has risen in recent years. There are 4 pupils with statements. A small number of pupils are identified as gifted and talented. Pupils' attainments on entry to school show a wide spread of ability. However, the majority have skills which are below those expected for their age, particularly in their personal and social development. The number of pupils entering the school has declined over the past few years because of the changing nature of the area. The school has won awards from the DfES in 2001 and 2002 for its good results in the National Curriculum tests. It has also achieved the Investors in People Award. Since the last inspection, staff turnover has been high as a result, for example, of retirements and promotions. Many of the current staff are recently qualified or in the early stages of their careers.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
24039	Mrs L Traves	Lead inspector	Geography History Science The Foundation Stage English as an additional language
8988	Dr J Cross	Lay inspector	
32347	Mrs J Brighthouse	Team inspector	English Music Physical education
18370	Mr K Johnson	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Art and design Design technology Special educational needs

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is a good school.** It creates a very warm, secure yet purposeful environment, which nurtures pupils' personal growth as well as their learning. Pupils throughout the school achieve well in many areas, in response to good teaching and the extra activities provided for them. The school is led and managed well. The headteacher, staff and governors work together effectively as a team to provide a good quality of education. It provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher leads and manages the school very well;
- Good teaching enables children to achieve well and as a result, standards have risen;
- The school provides a high standard of care and support for its pupils;
- The school's commitment to pupils' personal development and the very strong relationships staff create with them are reflected in their good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning;
- Pupils' learning is enriched by very productive links with the church and local community and by the wide range of out of school activities on offer;
- The leadership and management of the non-core subjects needs to be developed;
- More planned opportunities could be provided for children to use their information and communication technology (ICT) and numeracy skills in other subjects and to learn about life in a multicultural society;
- Attendance needs improvement.

Improvement since the last inspection has been good overall, and areas of strength have been maintained. Issues highlighted at the time, such as behaviour and personal development are now strengths and standards in science and ICT have significantly improved. Teaching is also much stronger and more able pupils are better provided for.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average  
Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 6.*

**Pupils achieve well.** Since the last inspection, results in the national tests for 7 and 11-year-olds have risen faster at Rishton than in the rest of the country, despite the fact that pupils' attainments when they enter the school have declined year on year. Pupils do particularly well in relation to similar schools. The poor result in English last year did not reflect the pupils' true abilities. In the reception class, children achieve well and the majority are on course to reach the standards they should when they move to Year 1. However, there are a significant number who are unlikely to achieve the expected goals, despite the good progress they are making. In the infant and junior classes, pupils continue to do well in English, mathematics and science. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in relation to their abilities, as do those with English as an additional language. More able pupils are effectively challenged in most lessons.

**Pupils' personal qualities, including their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, are strong.** Pupils have good attitudes to school, work hard and behave well in response to the very good relationships they develop with staff and a high emphasis on moral development. Attendance is below average and the school is working hard to improve this. More attention needs to be paid to preparing pupils for life in a multicultural society.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The school provides a good quality of education for pupils and teaching is good overall.**

There are examples of very good teaching in some classes. Teaching is strongest in Years 3, 5 and 6, where expectations are particularly high and pupils are challenged very well. Pupils are involved in evaluating their own learning and as a result, particularly in Years 3 to 6, they have a clear idea of what they are aiming for. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in all classes.

The curriculum is good in the reception class and satisfactory in Years 1 to 6. More planned opportunities could be provided for pupils to use their ICT and numeracy skills in other subjects and some topics could be taught in more depth, for example, in geography. However, the curriculum is strongly enriched through the wide range of out of school activities, theme weeks and the very effective links with the church and local community. Staff take very good care of the pupils, support them well and have their best interests firmly at heart.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**The leadership and management of the school are good.** The headteacher gives very good leadership and has managed the many changes the school has had to deal with particularly well. Senior staff make a good contribution to moving the school forward and the deputy head has had a particularly strong impact on developing teaching and the induction of new staff. Leadership and management of some of the non-core subjects are not fully effective because many co-ordinators are new to their roles and lack experience. Governance is good. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and are fully involved in planning for improvement.

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

Parents think well of the school and are pleased that their children are expected to work hard. They have some concerns over behaviour. Pupils are enthusiastic about school and united in the view that the teachers are kind and caring.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Develop the skills of co-ordinators of the non-core subjects and provide sufficient time for them to check on standards, ensure consistency and secure improvement;
- Provide more planned opportunities for pupils to use their ICT and numeracy skills to support work in other subjects and to develop their understanding of life in a multicultural society;
- Raise parental awareness of the benefits of good attendance and develop strategies to achieve this;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure the prospectus and governors' annual report contain all the required information.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

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

Pupils achieve well overall. Children in the reception class make good progress, often from starting points that are lower than expected for their age. Approximately two-thirds are likely to meet the standards expected by the end of the Foundation Stage. Throughout Years 1 - 6, pupils also achieve well and the oldest pupils are on course to reach average standards by the age of 11 in most subjects. No differences were noted during the inspection between the achievement of boys and girls.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have improved at a faster rate than nationally at both Key Stages 1 and 2;
- A very high percentage of pupils attained above average levels in writing and mathematics at Key Stage 1 and in science at Key Stage 2 in the 2003 national tests;
- Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, achieve well;
- Standards in science and ICT, have improved significantly since the time of the last inspection;
- Opportunities for pupils to use their literacy skills in other subjects are having a good impact on standards in English;
- Pupils could achieve even more in ICT and numeracy with better opportunities to practise these skills in other subjects.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.0 (14.9)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	16.2 (13.8)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	17.3 (15.2)	16.3 (16.5)

*There were 37 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	25.3 (28.4)	26.8 (27)
mathematics	27.0 (26.5)	26.8 (26.7)
science	30.1 (30.3)	28.6 (28.3)

*There were 32 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

#### Commentary

1. There has been an upward trend, overall, in results in the national tests for 7 and 11-year-olds, since the last inspection. Results in the national tests in 2003 for 7-year-olds show a strong upturn from the previous year and were average in reading, well above average in writing and above average in mathematics, when compared to all schools nationally. In writing and mathematics, pupils performed exceptionally well, with results for those reaching the higher level (Level 3) being in the top 5 per cent in the country. When compared to similar schools, the picture is also a strong one, with results being well above average in all



three areas. Inspection findings confirm the school's own data for the current Year 2 pupils, which suggests that standards are likely to be average in the 2004 tests because the class has a higher percentage of pupils with special educational needs. Teacher assessments in science show that although most pupils reached average levels, none reached the higher levels. The school has identified this as an area to focus on this year and there are already indications that some of the current Year 2 pupils are on course to reach the higher level.

2. In the tests for 11-year-olds in 2003, results show improvement in mathematics and science, but a downturn in English. Results were average in mathematics and well above average in science when compared to all schools nationally. However, in English they were well below average. When compared to similar schools, results were well above average in mathematics and science and below average in English. In science, the number of pupils reaching the higher level (Level 5) was particularly good. Inspection evidence confirms the schools own assessment, of the English results, based on good evidence, that they were not a true reflection of the pupils' capabilities in the subject. The current Year 6 is on course to reach average standards. School records and inspection findings indicate that there are fewer in the current class who are capable of achieving the higher level and more with special educational needs than in 2003.
3. Improvements have been brought about through the hard work and commitment of the headteacher and deputy head, who have managed the many changes that have taken place in recent years very effectively. The pleasing results have been achieved against a background of staff turbulence. There have been many staff changes in the intervening years since the last inspection. A high proportion of staff joining the school have been newly qualified and very good induction arrangements have ensured that disruptions to pupils' learning have been minimal. A strong emphasis on teaching and learning in English and mathematics has also brought about improvements in standards. The curriculum is now more effectively planned and better use is made of assessment to ensure that most pupils are challenged at the appropriate level. Good use has also been made of the expertise and advice of the local education authority advisory staff, particularly in mathematics and the impact of this can be clearly seen in the improved standards achieved.
4. In addition, to staff changes, the profile of pupils entering the school has also changed. When children start in the reception class, their skills are now below those expected for their age. Pupils get off to a good start in the reception class and they make good progress in most areas of learning. The majority are on course to reach the expected standards by the end of the reception year. However, despite good progress, a significant number will still have a significant amount of ground to make up when they enter Year 1.
5. Effective systems for supporting pupils with special educational needs are ensuring that they achieve well in relation to their abilities. Work in English and mathematics is well matched to their needs and good quality support from teachers and support assistants helps them reach their targets. The very small number of pupils with English as an additional language also achieve well, because teachers are sensitive to their needs.
6. Pupils now achieve well in both science and ICT, which were issues identified at the last inspection and standards are now in line with those of most schools. In science, a strong emphasis on investigative work, good leadership and management and greater staff expertise have brought about improvements. In ICT, hardware and software provision has improved and staff have more confidence in teaching the subject. The new ICT suite has ensured greater opportunities for whole class teaching of skills. However, standards could rise even further if pupils had more opportunities to use their ICT skills to support work in other subjects. Similarly, more planned opportunities could be provided for pupils to use their numeracy skills in other areas. By contrast, literacy skills are used well in many other subjects and this has a good impact, particularly on speaking and listening and writing.

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

Pupils have positive attitudes towards learning and they behave well in lessons and around the school. Provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, but not enough is done to prepare pupils for life in a multicultural society. Attendance is unsatisfactory. Almost all pupils are usually punctual.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils are keen to achieve the many rewards that encourage good work and effort;
- Pupils are taught traditional values that help them to behave acceptably and think about the needs of others;
- Pupils get on very well together and form very good relationships with the staff;
- Multicultural education is weak;
- Attendance is below the national average but showing signs of improvement.

## **Commentary**

7. At the time of the last inspection, pupils' personal development was unsatisfactory, largely because staff were not providing enough opportunities for them to develop their independent study, research and investigative skills. Since then the school has wisely invested considerable time and energy in devising effective ways to tackle this and to strengthen its provision for pupils' social and moral development. These measures are reaping benefits that are key to pupils' good academic and personal achievements.
8. The number of pupils entering the school with poor personal and social skills is rising. Many find it hard at first to take turns, to listen and to take heed of instructions. Staff have to work hard to develop these skills so that the pupils can learn effectively. They nurture the pupils within the strongly spiritual, all-embracing, very supportive school family. This builds very strong relationships and helps them to become compliant. They firmly and fairly apply a wide range of sought-after rewards, and disliked penalties, to bring home to pupils the expected standard of effort and conduct. The pupils enjoy striving to achieve the rewards, which successfully boost their performance and make them feel good about themselves. They mature into well-adjusted, open and friendly, thoughtful individuals who are proud of their school and are good ambassadors for it. One parent at the meeting commented on pupils' good manners and behaviour and said they were 'a shining light' in the local area.
9. Behaviour in lessons has improved since the last inspection. It is rare now for pupils' behaviour to prevent others from learning. In the playground boys and girls play happily together, many organising skipping, tag, draughts and other games that keep them occupied. Some parents and a handful of pupils expressed concerns about bullying. The school works hard to deal with incidents that arise and has effective ways of helping victims to cope and bullies to understand the impact of their actions. Racism and aggression are also not tolerated. Recurrent poor behaviour results in detention and this is a deterrent to almost all pupils. There were two fixed period exclusions last year.

## Exclusions

### *Ethnic background of pupils*

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani
Black or Black British – African
Chinese

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
210	2	
2		
3		
1		
1		
2		

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

10. Pupils have many more opportunities to take on responsibilities than at the time of the last inspection. There are more monitors throughout the school and older pupils act as 'buddies' who sensibly look after younger ones and befriend them during their free time. The school council offers pupils from Year 1 upwards the chance to stand for election to represent their classmates. They are justifiably proud of their achievements in improving facilities in the toilets.
11. Provision for pupils' cultural development remains satisfactory overall. However, they do not have enough opportunities to learn about cultures other than their own. The school understands the need to broaden pupils' awareness of ethnic diversity because they live in a virtually all white community. Its plans to extend its links with a Methodist school of greater ethnic mix are a step in the right direction towards further strengthening pupils' personal development. The school has adopted the local authority's race equality policy but has not sufficiently personalised it to reflect the school's circumstances and mission. The policy has not been reviewed recently to ensure it is fully effective.

## Attendance

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.8%	School data	0.6%

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

12. Attendance took a sharp fall from the national average a couple of years ago, largely due to absence that parents condone, but the gap lessened considerably last year due to the school's efforts to redress this. Unauthorised absence is above the national average. Some parents keep their children at home when they should be in school and some take holidays in term time without the school's permission. The local education authority is piloting a project that is helping to raise awareness of the importance of regular and punctual attendance. The project and education welfare officers are working particularly closely with a small number of families whose children's poor attendance hugely limits their achievement and badly impacts upon the school's overall attendance figures.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

### Teaching and learning

#### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 41 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0 (0%)	6 (15%)	28 (68%)	7 (17%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

Teaching is good throughout the school, with some very good teaching also observed, particularly in English, mathematics and personal, social and health education and citizenship (PSHCE). The strongest teaching was seen in Years 3, 5 and 6, where it was never less than good and sometimes very good. This is a significant improvement from the time of the last inspection and the learning for the more able pupils is more challenging than it was then. Pupils' work is thoroughly assessed throughout the school.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very strong relationships underpin learning;
- The best lessons have sharp pace and a high level of challenge for all;
- Teachers manage behaviour well to minimise disruptions;
- Good subject knowledge results in well focused learning objectives, clear explanations and probing questions;
- There are some inconsistencies in teaching to be ironed out.

#### Commentary

13. Teaching in the reception class is good overall. All adults have a clear idea of what they want children to achieve and a good understanding of their various abilities. As a result, the work planned challenges them appropriately. Staff achieve a good balance between activities that the children choose themselves and those directed by adults. However, on some occasions, adults need to give more direction to role play activities to ensure learning remains purposeful.
14. In all classes, relationships between staff and pupils are very strong and this underpins learning particularly well. Pupils respect and like their teachers and want to please them. As a result, they work hard and learn effectively. Staff also manage behaviour well. Not all pupils in the school are naturally compliant and a significant number have behavioural difficulties; however, learning is rarely disrupted because of the effective strategies teachers employ. They make good use of the rewards and sanctions systems to motivate and encourage, but also to ensure pupils know exactly what it is they are aiming for.
15. In the majority of lessons, teachers set out clearly what they want pupils to learn and share this with them. This focuses their attention on the task in hand. This is a particularly strong feature of English and mathematics lessons. Teachers' explanations are clear and often supported by well-chosen resources that engage pupils' interest. A good example of this was seen in a Year 1 history lesson, where the teacher had brought in a bag of toys suitable for children of different ages. The children's interest was immediately caught and they made sensible observations about how the toys should be arranged on a time line. Teachers work hard to make learning practical and 'hands-on', giving good attention to the different learning

- styles that motivate pupils. In the best lessons, the pace is fast, pupils are stretched and challenged and they learn rapidly, in response.
16. Teachers make good use of questions to draw out pupils' previous learning, probe their understanding and challenge them further. This is a particularly strong feature of lessons in Years 3, 5 and 6 and throughout the school in English, mathematics and science. For example, in a Year 3 PSHCE lesson, the teacher used questioning subtly and sensitively to challenge the assumption that everyone in the world would feel they had a right to know Jesus. As a result, the pupil changed the statement to, 'to know their God'.
  17. Where teaching is satisfactory, it is sometimes because teachers do not set out quite as clearly what they want children to achieve. As a result, learning is not as focused as it might be and children do not achieve as well. In a few instances, teachers are not as confident with the subject matter and this slows the pace. The occasional lesson lacks sparkle and does not engage the children's interest from the start. Teachers then have to work hard to involve and motivate them and the pace of learning dips.
  18. Pupils with special educational needs and those with statements are taught and supported well. Their learning is guided appropriately by good quality individual educational plans, which set out clear targets. These are used effectively by support staff and teachers, particularly in English and mathematics lessons, to ensure their needs are met. Learning support staff have a strong impact on the achievement of these pupils, supporting them sensitively and enabling them to make good progress towards their targets. Pupils identified as being gifted and talented are also supported well through a programme of very well taught small group sessions, which develop their thinking skills. These sessions stretch them to the limit. The small number with English as an additional language are confident speakers of the language. Teachers and support staff ensure that any difficulties are anticipated and dealt with sensitively so that the pupils are fully included in lessons.

## **Assessment**

19. Pupils' work in English, mathematics, science and ICT is thoroughly assessed and the next steps in learning clearly identified. In English and mathematics, procedures are very effective and are enabling precise individual learning targets to be set and shared with children and their parents. This ensures that the junior pupils in particular have a good understanding of how they might improve and are closely involved in evaluating their progress. In the majority of classes, marking adds to this understanding and older pupils strive hard to achieve 'A' grades. In many of the non-core subjects, pupils' progress is evaluated against key objectives at the end of a unit of work. Good quality assessment is ensuring that in most English, mathematics and science lessons, work is set at the appropriate level of challenge for pupils, which is an improvement from the time of the last inspection.

## **The curriculum**

The curriculum for pupils in the Foundation Stage is good. In the rest of the school, it is satisfactory. There are good opportunities for enrichment, including wide extra-curricular provision. Resources and accommodation are sound overall, but good in the Foundation Stage.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The curriculum provision, resources and accommodation in the reception class are good;
- There are many opportunities for pupils to take part in extra-curricular activities;
- The curriculum is enriched by special events both in school and with the wider community;
- There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs;
- Homework is good and impacts strongly on the children's learning;
- PSHCE is a strong feature of the curriculum;

- In some subjects, for example, art and design and geography, the coverage of topics lacks depth.

## Commentary

20. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and all the subjects of the national curriculum are taught, including religious education and collective worship, which have been inspected separately. Equality of access and opportunity is good for all pupils. This is a similar picture to the time of the last inspection. However, planning has improved since then and the school uses the most up to date national guidelines in many subjects to ensure pupils can build appropriately on their skills from year-to-year. All aspects of PSHCE are effectively provided for, both as separate lessons and integrated across other subjects. This area is further enhanced by the recent introduction of the 'emotional literacy' project which is already having a strong impact on how well pupils understand their own feelings and those of others.
21. Children in the Foundation Stage are well provided for. A wide range of relevant learning experiences are planned for them and good links are made between the different areas, which strengthens their understanding. Many of the activities are practical and 'hands on', which effectively engages their interest. A good balance is provided between the activities that children choose themselves and those led by adults. Good use is made of the outdoor play area, which is attractive and well resourced, to support work and play in all areas of learning.
22. A strength of the school is the wide range of additional learning opportunities provided which greatly enrich pupils' experiences, fire their enthusiasm and develop their skills. For example, pupils have good access to musical experiences through visiting teachers for brass, guitar and violin and through the opportunity to perform regularly for others. The many sporting opportunities on offer, such as football, cricket, netball and rounders for older pupils and the games club for infants all make a valuable contribution to pupils' enjoyment, as well as to their learning. In addition, pupils may choose, for example, to practise dance, enhance their ICT skills, or learn a foreign language through the clubs on offer. Good use is made of the expertise of specialist coaches, as well as the skills and interests of staff, parents and governors. Pupils report that they thoroughly enjoy all the activities they take part in.
23. Other exciting events are regularly planned to broaden pupils' experiences, for example, of the arts. A 'theme week' incorporating music, art and drama takes place each year and involves all pupils. This has been further extended to incorporate other local schools and the wider community. Numerous visitors are invited into school throughout the year, to support learning. A 'visitors' week' also takes place, in which a wide range of skills are shared with the pupils. Pupils in all year groups also have the benefit of educational visits that are relevant to the work they are doing in school. For example, pupils visit Ribchester to deepen their understanding of life in Roman Britain. Both Year 5 and Year 6 pupils have the opportunity to attend a residential trip. Year 6 visit Tower Wood in the Lake District in the summer term, where they take part in activities, such as canoeing, rock climbing and orienteering. The current Year 6 pupils say that they are looking forward to their turn to visit.
24. Good quality additional opportunities for learning are provided through specific teaching of smaller groups of pupils, both those with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented. Homework is well planned and relevant to lessons in school. The structured system for all pupils and the well-matched activities mean that it has a strong impact on children's learning. Parents state that they are highly satisfied with these arrangements.

25. The premises have been significantly improved in recent years. Extra classroom space has been created, the playground has been improved and a dedicated outdoor area for reception pupils has been made. This has enhanced the space and opportunities for learning. The addition of an ICT suite has also provided a beneficial, additional resource. Library provision, however, is not strong and the siting of books around the school does not give good access for pupils. Teachers work hard to compensate for this by ensuring that a wide range of topic related books are available for classroom research, but this does not provide sufficient opportunity for children, for example, to use cataloguing systems. The school has obtained a large amount of funding to rectify this and plans for a new library are about to come to fruition. The area will be completed in the next academic year.
26. There is a comprehensive framework for each subject which sets out in good detail what should be taught and when, to ensure that learning is progressive. However, some subjects, such as art and design and geography, lack depth in their coverage in some classes. Pupils do not always build on their skills as well as they could, despite the comprehensive plans. This is because teaching and learning have not been checked rigorously enough and inconsistencies have crept in. The school has identified this as a priority for action.

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

The staff take very good care of the pupils and support and guide them effectively. They involve the pupils well in the development of the school by seeking, valuing and acting upon their views.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pastoral care and support for pupils and their families is very strong;
- Staff get to know the pupils very well and keep a good check on their progress;
- Staff place a very high emphasis on pupils' welfare, health and safety;
- Very good relationships throughout the school enable pupils to talk openly about their difficulties and anxieties;
- The school council gives pupils a good say in its future.

### **Commentary**

27. Staff care deeply about the pupils and work hard to meet their personal and academic needs. They make good arrangements to ensure that children settle in effectively when they first start school and these are much appreciated by parents. They are very good at finding time to listen to the pupils which helps staff to understand their concerns and sensitivities and provide the right support. The pupils value highly the trusting relationships that they establish with the staff and their kindness. They particularly appreciate having an adult that they can turn to in school if they have any worries. One pupil perfectly encapsulated the essence of the school's ethos when writing 'the staff and my friends are all around me when I need them'. The reassurance that stems from this successfully enables pupils to feel safe and secure and able to concentrate on their learning.
28. The school provides much well tailored support for the pupils and their families. It suitably enlists the help of outside agencies, such as the education welfare service, educational psychologists and hearing-impaired service, where appropriate. Pupils with special educational needs and those with statements benefit from personal support and the 'emotional literacy' sessions which they share as a class. Individual targets are reviewed regularly to ensure specific needs are continually met.
29. Some parents who find it hard to get their children to school on time are helped by their child's 'buddy' calling round to collect them. A breakfast club runs daily before school which provides nourishment for pupils in a relaxed social setting that gets the day off to a good start

and on time for them. The Methodist Church, to which the school is affiliated, provides additional pastoral care for families when needed. The minister, for example, gave vital support to staff and families following the recent death of a teacher.

30. Pupils' academic and personal progress is monitored effectively by regularly assessing how well they are getting on and noting their special achievements and difficulties. Those with special educational needs are given suitable extra help so that they achieve as well as the rest.
31. Relationships are considerably strengthened through the success of the rewards system. Team points and merits, for example, spur positive attitudes and behaviour. The pupils particularly love 'golden time,' the minutes of free choice activities, which they earn as a class throughout the week. Older pupils expressed the view that behaviour would not be so good without these incentives.
32. The school has many ways of encouraging pupils to express their feelings in class discussions or in private. Pupils in Years 3 to 6, for example, are regularly given time to fill in their personal log books which record anything that matters to them. Class teachers pick up on concerns well and follow them up suitably.
33. The staff treat health and safety issues and matters related to child protection very seriously. The school's work towards gaining 'healthy school' status is proving very beneficial for the pupils and their understanding of how to make appropriate lifestyle choices.
34. Staff are good at taking on board pupils' views and giving them good opportunities, through the school council, for example, to make a real difference to the school. They also actively involve pupils in devising their class rules and setting personal targets. As a result, they understand what is expected of them and what they are aiming for, both personally and academically.

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

The school has maintained its good partnership with parents and with other schools in the area. Its links with the local community have improved since the last inspection and are now very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school provides good quality information for parents;
- Parents are supportive of the school's work;
- Very strong links with the church and wider community enrich pupils' learning;
- Shared activities with other schools bring benefits for pupils and staff;
- There are minor omissions in information that the school has a statutory duty to provide.

### **Commentary**

35. Parents' views about the school's life and work are positive overall. Some have reservations about pupils' behaviour and information about their children's progress. These are largely unfounded. Behaviour is good in school because of the high expectations that staff have of pupils' conduct and their consistent approach to reinforcing these standards. Parents have good opportunities to find out how well their child is getting on through termly formal meetings, well explained annual reports on their progress, and informal chats with class teachers, which they are welcome to arrange at any time.
36. The parents of new entrants successfully help the reception teacher to complete profiles about their child's development, which helps get them off to a good start. Parents throughout the school support their children well at much enjoyed school performances, weekly



celebration assemblies and services to mark Christian festivals. They effectively encourage the return of homework and reasonable numbers attend the meetings at the start of the year that explain expectations and tell them about forthcoming topics. Informative 'Parents as Educators' courses successfully help some parents to get more involved in their children's learning and also develop their own skills.

37. Volunteer helpers are welcomed with open arms. Few parents assist in lessons on a regular basis but the 'Friends' association is well supported. They successfully generate substantial funds for the benefit of the pupils and act as a sounding board for approval of new and revised school policies. Greater opportunities for all parents to cross the threshold into school more regularly would further strengthen relationships.
38. The governors' annual report to parents is very attractively presented and provides snippets of pertinent information about the school in reader-friendly language. This document, and the prospectus, clearly explain to parents how well the pupils performed in national tests in relation to targets set by the local education authority. In representing the data with such clarity, however, some of the reporting elements have been missed. These need to be added in order to fully meet statutory requirements.
39. Links with the church have strengthened over recent years and are very beneficial. The minister provides considerable pastoral support for families. He leads collective worship weekly and has regularly helped the staff to coach extra-curricular football for many years. The school uses church premises effectively to promote pupils' personal development. Visitors to school, such as community police, nurses, the fire service, theatre groups, musicians and those taking part in the annual 'visitors week', successfully enliven the curriculum. A local supermarket has sponsored the school's new outdoor play area for reception children. Educational visits take pupils into the wider community. The school's profile in the area has also been raised, for example, by pupils taking part in the local horticultural society's geranium growing competition and by displaying pupils' work on health issues in the clinic.
40. Local primary schools join together successfully for sports tournaments and 'MAD week', an extravaganza of music, art and drama which broadens pupils' learning effectively. Staff share training sessions and good practice. Links with nursery providers, and the high schools to which Year 6 pupils transfer, ensure that transitions are smooth.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher's leadership is very strong. She has managed the many changes the school has faced in recent years very effectively, with good support from the deputy head, whilst ensuring that the school moves forward. Governance is also good. Governors play an important role in decision making and understand the needs of the school well.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The highly effective leadership of the headteacher;
- The management of change is undertaken very well;
- The school has a very clear view of its strengths and weaknesses and takes appropriate action towards improvement;
- Staff training and support are central to the school's work;
- Governors carry out their role as 'critical friend' effectively;
- The role of co-ordinators in the non-core subjects needs to be extended and their skills developed.

## Commentary

41. The very good leadership and management skills of the headteacher have been an important factor in moving the school forward since the last inspection. She has worked particularly hard to ensure the school's continued development in key areas, despite many staff changes. There are very few staff remaining at the school who were in post last time and constant changes have required a high degree of flexibility and astute strategic planning. The headteacher, deputy head and governors have demonstrated great skill in retaining the trust and confidence of parents and pupils during this time, whilst successfully pursuing the school's agenda for improvement. A key factor in the school's success has been the implementation of high quality induction procedures by the deputy head. These ensure that the needs of new staff are fully met and that they are quickly assimilated into the life and work of the school. After the induction process, the school's effective systems for professional development come into play, to continue to meet staff needs, in the context of whole-school development. The school has also responded well to the changing profile of its pupil intake, through innovations, such as the emotional literacy project and the emphasis on positive behaviour systems, both of which are having a positive impact on personal development and learning.
42. Another strong feature in the school development is the headteacher's skill in evaluating its work. She has a very good grasp of what the school does well and where it needs to go next, which she communicates clearly to staff and governors. Effective systems are in place to ensure that the work of the school is checked on and the right priorities for action identified. For example, the headteacher identified the need for a strong focus on teaching and learning to 'get things right in the classrooms', in response to the high number of newly qualified staff and others in the early stages of their careers. The impact of the work undertaken can be seen in the overall quality and consistency of teaching across the school and the particular strengths in the teaching of literacy and numeracy. Good systems are in place for monitoring pupils' performance and identifying gaps in their learning. Close analysis of progress in and results of tests helps to identify where changes need to be made to teaching and the curriculum and has been a contributing factor to the rise in standards. For example, no stone was left unturned in identifying the reasons for the dip in the 2003 English test results for 11-year-olds.
43. In order to ensure stability in the leadership and management of key subjects and ensure an overview of others, staff have been shrewdly deployed. More experienced teachers have been designated 'phase leaders' for Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 and staff with particular subject expertise have been deployed to ensure good co-ordination of English, mathematics and science, in particular. Phase leaders effectively co-ordinate their teams and ensure close liaison between the various key stages, in order to facilitate planning and assessment. They regularly check on planning and coverage of the curriculum. This has been particularly successful in the Foundation Stage, where the deputy head is phase leader and has used her considerable expertise of this stage to support less experienced colleagues. Special educational needs is led and managed well. The co-ordinator works closely with colleagues and appropriate outside agencies to ensure good quality provision is maintained. However, she does not have sufficient opportunity to observe staff and pupils at work in classrooms, for example, to suggest alternative methods of working, based on her own expertise. Many co-ordinators of non-core subjects are new to their roles and lack experience and expertise. To some degree, an overview is kept through the work of the phase leaders and through regular, joint staff evaluation meetings. However, because a high priority has not been given to some areas, for example, art and design and geography, inconsistencies in the depth of coverage and the development of pupils' skills have crept in. The school has identified the need to develop staff skills of subject leadership and management and this is a priority for action. However, the school should also consider how extra time could be provided for staff to undertake their roles more effectively.

44. The governing body supports the school well. Governors have a good range of expertise to bring to bear and a balance of experience and 'new blood'. They fulfil their roles and responsibilities well and are not afraid to ask searching questions of the headteacher and staff, for example in relation to the 2003 English test results. Governors have strong community and church links. This gives them a good insight into how the church, school and community can support each other. A valuable piece of work the governors have recently undertaken was the 'Futures' questionnaire, which was sent out to parents to canvas their views on what they want the school to provide for their children. This has provided the school with valuable information to inform future developments.
45. Finances are managed well. Falling rolls in recent years due to changes in the local area have required the governing body to keep a firm handle on finances. They have managed budgets prudently and plan strategically to take account of the fluctuating pupil numbers. Governors have striven hard and done well to ensure adequate staffing levels, resourcing and improvements to the accommodation. They have had to make difficult staffing decisions in recent years in order to balance the books. Governors have also become adept at working effectively with the headteacher to draw in funding from as many sources as possible. The funding obtained for the new library is a good example of this. The school administrator keeps very good day-to-day control of all finances and provides governors with the detailed information they need to assist with decision making.

## Financial information

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

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	559,970
Total expenditure	523,196
Expenditure per pupil	2,170

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	36,774
Balance carried forward to the next	25,774

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

## AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Teaching and provision are good in all areas of learning in the Foundation Stage. All 3 staff are new to the reception class. They have worked hard to build a strong team and make adjustments to planning and organisation. The learning curve for them has been steep. However, very good leadership from the deputy head, working in conjunction with the class teacher and strong support from the headteacher and local authority advisory staff has ensured rapid development. Staff demonstrate a positive approach and a willingness to adapt and move forward. The majority of pupils have had some form of pre-school experience before starting in the reception class, but there are also a significant number who have not. When children enter reception, their attainments overall are below those expected for their age, although there is a very wide spread of ability. A significant number of the current class demonstrate immaturity in their personal and social development.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and strong teamwork ensure continuous evaluation, leading to improvement;
- Staff provide a high standard of care for the children and place a strong emphasis on their personal, social and emotional development;
- Teaching is good and children achieve well, as a result;
- Planning and assessment are thorough and effective;
- The learning environment is well organised and provides a wide range of good quality experiences in all areas of learning;
- Good links are made between the different areas of learning, which reinforces the children's understanding well;
- Children's play is not always as purposeful as it might be;
- On occasions, too many activities are planned within a session.

### Commentary

46. Children achieve well in their **personal, social and emotional development** because of the high emphasis staff place on it. However, although the majority are on course to achieve the standards expected by the end of the reception year, a significant number are likely to have some way to go. Some pupils come into school with poor skills in this area and staff rightly make it a priority. A warm, secure atmosphere is created in which children are happy and settled. Staff work hard to instil the classroom 'rules' and routines, but a significant number need constant reinforcement and encouragement and their concentration skills are limited. However, the majority show interest and enjoyment in their work and play and have good relationships with the staff. An increasing number are showing growing independence and an ability to work with others, although one or two find it difficult to take turns. Some pupils also find it difficult to play for more than a short time without input from an adult. On occasions, play is not as purposeful as it might be, because adult support is closely focused in other areas and children find their tasks hard to sustain.
47. A significant number of children have skills which are lower than expected for their age in the area of **communication, language and literacy** on entry to school. Good teaching ensures that pupils achieve well and two-thirds are on course to meet the expected standards by Year 1. However, despite their good progress, a significant number will still have a lot of ground to make up. A rich range of experiences are provided for children and through all of these, staff work hard to introduce new vocabulary and engage pupils in discussion. As a

result, most children are developing confidence and are keen to communicate, even though some find expressing themselves difficult. All enjoy listening to stories and looking at books. They are beginning to be able to retell familiar stories, with support and put some of the events in the right order. Staff work hard at using drama and role play to reinforce their skills. The more able children are beginning to recognise a growing range of familiar words and the majority can identify initial sounds, as a result of systematic phonic teaching. Children are given a good range of opportunities for mark making and early writing. These are often linked closely to the stories they are reading. As a result, they enjoy 'writing' and choose writing activities readily. A growing number are able to write their name unaided and many see the purpose of writing, as, for example, they independently fill out forms in the 'post office' and make lists in the 'greengrocer's shop'. Most children are now forming some recognisable letters and words, for example, when writing letters to the giant from 'Jack and the Beanstalk'. However, some are still at the stage of making random marks. Occasionally, too many focused activities are planned for children to undertake in a session and staff rush to complete them and move on to the next group. When this happens, children do not always consolidate their learning as well as they could.

48. Children achieve well in their **mathematical development**, often from starting points that are below those expected for their age. As a result, two-thirds are likely to achieve the standards expected of them by the time they enter Year 1. Assessment is used well to move children on quickly to the next steps in learning and provide them with activities that are accurately matched to their needs. For example, in one session children were ordering numbers to 5, 10, 20 and beyond, according to their abilities. They loved to use the giant egg timer to see if they could make their number lines before the sand ran out. Such activities ensure they enjoy mathematics as well as providing challenge. A good range of practical activities is provided. Children explore and develop their understanding of shape through printing repeating patterns using different shapes, they thread beads on string, making patterns and count how many steps the floor robot needs to take before it reaches its destination, having estimated first. They have sorted different types of autumn leaves into groups and made a 'pictogram' chart from them. Staff work hard to reinforce the basic skills of counting, often through physical activities, such as hopping and jumping as they count or through action rhymes. This engages the pupils' interest and consequently, they concentrate for longer periods. Staff also place strong emphasis on developing mathematical vocabulary such as big, bigger, small, smallest. Good use is made of role-play activities to move children on in their learning. For example, in the class shop, pupils buy fruit and vegetables, adding 'one more' to their baskets and taking items away. Mathematical activities are always available for children to choose freely and this ensures they can explore for themselves.
49. Children are achieving well in their **knowledge and understanding of the world**, in response to good teaching and the wide range of activities provided to enrich their learning. As in the above areas, two-thirds are on course to meet the expected goals by the end of their time in the reception class. Activities are planned and provided in a way that ensures different areas of learning are linked. This reinforces learning well. For example, as part of a theme on journeys, children took a walk in the school grounds, identifying and recording environmental features on the way. They also made their own journeys, using the wheeled toys outside, negotiating paths and zebra crossings. The story of Noah provided further opportunities to discuss the theme. Carrot tops and seeds have been planted and their growth observed and recorded to link with the story of 'Jack and the Beanstalk'. Children's experiences are further enriched through visitors to school, such as the mum who brought in her new baby. The computer is available both for free choice and adult supported activities. Children are developing confidence and skill at using both the mouse and the keyboard, for example, to write their names and create pictures.

50. Most children are likely to meet expectations in the area of **physical development**. A good range of opportunities is provided for them to develop their physical skills, both indoors and outside. An attractive outdoor play area has been created and is well resourced. It is used continuously to enrich children's experiences in all areas of learning. For example, children acted out Jack's journey. This culminated in them climbing the 'beanstalk' and building the giant's castle out of large blocks. Plenty of opportunities are planned for children to use a range of wheeled toys, games and low-level climbing equipment to develop their physical skills and their ability to work with others. The most productive of these sessions are those which are overseen by an adult who sensitively observes and supports the activities to develop learning, whilst allowing pupils the opportunity to explore and find things out for themselves. A number of children find it difficult to sustain tasks independently for more than a few minutes and on some occasions; the focus of their play is lost when they work independently for too long. Children develop control of their movements, an awareness of space and the needs of others through regular dance and gymnastics sessions in the school hall. Overall, pupils' manipulative skills are not as strong as their other physical skills when they start school. However, good opportunities are provided for pupils to develop these skills through using tools such as scissors, paintbrushes and crayons. As a result, many are making rapid progress. Regular opportunities are provided for children to use construction kits, jigsaws and 'small world' toys, which also develop their manual dexterity. Children often concentrate well on these practical activities. For example, 2 boys worked independently for a good length of time building boats from kits, painstakingly following the picture instructions on a card.
51. A wide range of good quality experiences are provided to develop pupils' **creative skills**. As a result, they achieve well and the majority are on course to reach the expected standards by the time they enter Year 1. Painting, role-play, 'small world' and construction materials are just some of the activities continuously on offer. These are changed and added to regularly. Many of the displays in the classroom are the result of children painting, printing, drawing and making collages, using a variety of tools, materials and techniques. Good opportunities are provided for imaginative role play both indoors and out.

## **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2**

### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is **good**.

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

- Achievement in English is good;
- Standards in writing are particularly good and have improved since the last inspection;
- The quality of teaching is good overall;
- There are good opportunities for pupils to develop skills in speaking and listening;
- The co-ordinator has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject and how to address them;
- Standards in reading for the younger children are not as strong as in writing;
- There are some weaknesses in resource provision.

#### **Commentary**

52. Standards in English have risen since the last inspection. This is due to the school's strong focus on improvement in the subject. National test results reflect this picture. The Year 6 test results in 2003, however, showed a dip in standards for 11-year-olds. Work observed and analysed during the inspection, both in lessons and children's books, in addition to the school's very stringent analysis of the tests and their strong tracking systems, suggest that

this was not typical for those children or for the school. In the current Year 2 class, the majority of pupils are reaching average standards in both reading and writing and some are exceeding these. The current Year 6 pupils are also reaching average levels in both reading and writing, with some more able pupils working at the higher level (Level 5). This represents good progress from their starting points. Children with special educational needs, including those with statements are well catered for and supported well by extra adults in the classroom and in small groups. As a result, they make good progress towards the targets set for them and achieve well in relation to their abilities. The small number of pupils with English as an additional language also achieve well, as a result of good teaching and support.

53. Pupils achieve well in speaking and listening and standards overall are average. Most pupils speak confidently and their skills are developed effectively through good teaching and a wide range of opportunities provided both in literacy lessons and across the curriculum. For example, a Year 1 group performed particularly well when asked to act out scenes from 'The Gingerbread Man' and take the 'hot seat' as one of the characters. Similarly, in a very good Year 5 PSHCE lesson on choosing hobbies and interests, pupils confidently fed back to the whole class from their group work and were obviously accustomed to taking part in this type of activity. Teachers encourage pupils to extend their answers through subtle questioning and value all responses. They give pupils time to think before they answer. This instils confidence, and as a result, most are keen to share their thoughts and ideas with their classmates.
54. Pupils achieve well in reading because a structured approach to teaching enables them to build effectively on their early skills. Good assessment strategies ensure that pupils are set appropriate targets. Regular homework and advice enables parents to be involved in supporting their children at home. Those in the junior classes read with good fluency and accuracy and the more able pupils demonstrate a good understanding of what they have read. This has a strong impact on work in other subjects, for example, when researching topics in history. Comprehension skills are developed effectively. For example, in a Year 3 lesson, the teacher used questioning particularly well to encourage pupils to 'read between the lines' and identify character traits. The tasks that followed were well designed to ensure pupils could practise these skills in relation to other texts. However, a wider range of resources would be beneficial for this type of work to increase variety and challenge. Younger pupils express their enjoyment of reading. The majority are developing expression and growing fluency. They can retell a range of familiar tales, such as 'The Gingerbread Man' with accuracy. More able pupils in Year 2 confidently identify the contents and index pages and understand their purpose. Less able pupils struggle with strategies to deal with unknown and new words. However, the school makes good use of 'catch up' programmes and extra adult support to boost their skills. The school has acknowledged that standards in reading are not as high as in writing at Key Stage 1 and has planned training for staff in further developing children's reading strategies. Skills in using the library are not as well developed as they could be because the books are not currently stored in a central location or catalogued appropriately. Firm plans and funding are in place to develop a new library area in the very near future.
55. Pupils achieve very well overall in writing because teaching is at least good and expectations are high. Assessment is also good and as in reading, the pupils are set individual targets for their work which are regularly reviewed and which give them clear indication of how to improve. Writing tasks are relevant, varied and interesting and there are good opportunities for pupils to write at length and develop their ideas. For example, pupils write character sketches, letters, poems and instructions, as well as stories. Most classrooms offer a literacy rich environment, with children's writing supported well through prompts and examples. In particular, in the Year 3 classroom many such supports for writing are evident and writing strategies are taught particularly well. In response pupils have, for example, written winter poems that clearly demonstrate their confidence with the writing process and

the high standards they achieve. For example, one pupil when describing 'What is winter?' used the phrase 'Crunchy, white, jewellery ice'. Presentation and handwriting are given a high profile and consequently, pupils achieve well and reach standards that are at least average and sometimes better, by the time they leave. Pupils' writing is celebrated in appropriate displays.

56. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in English is good. Lessons are well planned and resourced with clear objectives, which are communicated to pupils. Teachers use questioning well to build on prior learning and challenge pupils appropriately, in relation to their abilities. In most lessons, tasks are also set which appropriately challenge different ability groups. Support staff are deployed effectively and their sensitive interventions and good quality input have a significant impact on the achievement of those with special educational needs and the more challenging pupils. ICT is used appropriately to support work in English, through opportunities for research on the Internet and CD-ROM and for word processing. However, there is scope to provide more opportunities in some classes.
57. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The co-ordinator has good expertise and a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject. She has closely analysed standards and identified areas for improvement. Good procedures are in place for checking teachers' planning and the standards of work pupils' produce. As yet, the co-ordinator has had few opportunities to observe lessons. Literacy has been a major focus for school improvement and senior management have undertaken observations of teaching. This joint approach has contributed well to improvements.

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

58. Overall, the opportunities to use literacy skills in other subjects are good. In subjects, such as science, history and geography pupils are practising many of the writing and research skills learnt in literacy. Good speaking and listening opportunities are also evident in many lessons, and in particular in PSHCE.

### **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

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

- The subject is led and managed very well;
- Standards are improving;
- Teaching is good and sometimes very good;
- Pupils achieve well;
- There are too few planned opportunities for pupils to use ICT and to use their numeracy skills in other subjects.

#### **Commentary**

59. National test results show standards have risen over time, at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Work seen during the inspection indicates that standards are likely to be maintained in line with national averages. In the 2003 national tests pupils in Year 2 achieved results above the national average because of the proportion who gained the higher level (Level 3) in the tests. This meant that they also achieved better results than similar schools. In Year 6, pupils achieved average levels in relation to all schools nationally and well above average in relation to similar schools. Although national test data shows some fluctuation between girls' and boys' performance there is no consistent pattern. The school's analysis suggests that there is no significant difference, overall and inspection evidence confirms this. Given their levels



of attainment when they start school, pupils achieve well. They develop good attitudes to work showing enthusiasm, perseverance and an eagerness to learn.

60. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 1 and 2 and frequently very good in Years 3 to 6. Lessons are characterised by clear learning objectives and high expectations. These are shared with pupils so they are certain about what is expected of them. Pupils have individual targets to work to, so they know what they are aiming for. Teachers establish very good relationships with pupils and value the contributions they make to lessons. Consequently, pupils gain in confidence and are more willing to share ideas and persevere with problems. Personal development is promoted well, so pupils collaborate well, show concern for others and willingly and sensibly share resources. Teachers take care to match work to the different needs of pupils. Those who have additional learning needs are well supported by the way teachers plan work based on individual learning programmes. Classroom assistants and special educational needs assistants work effectively with groups, helping pupils to progress towards their individual learning targets. Work for other groups provides sufficient challenge because of the way teachers use their assessments of pupil progress to ensure new learning is approached systematically. In a Year 3 lesson, for example, after pupils learned how to solve problems using symbols for unknown numbers, the teacher increased the challenge by introducing the idea of equations in a simplified form. Pupils achieved good levels of understanding when they subsequently learned to solve problems such as  $32 - \# = 14 + \#$ .
61. Teachers use their good subject knowledge well to demonstrate methods of working out, and to introduce exciting challenges in lessons. In Year 5, for example, clear, systematic teaching helped pupils understand methods of multiplying numbers with more than three digits. In Year 6, a vigorously fought mathematics game between two teams proved to be a successful method of improving pupils' knowledge of multiplication and division tables and their mental agility.
62. Although there are no major weaknesses in teaching, the school has identified some areas for improvement. The use of ICT, for example, to support learning is not consistently planned into all lessons, so opportunities for pupils to improve knowledge and skills are sometimes missed. Pupils have ample opportunities to carry out practical, investigative work in mathematics lessons. However, there is scope for more open-ended, problem solving activities to be planned across the curriculum. Inconsistencies in individual lessons occasionally reduce the pace of learning. For example, in one lesson, more suitable practical resources would have been of benefit to a lower attaining group to help their understanding of the 'difference' between numbers.
63. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The co-ordinator (the deputy head) has very successfully identified development needs, initiated the right action and brought about good improvements in standards and teaching quality. The support from local education authority advisory staff has been utilised well. The mathematics curriculum is well planned and monitored to ensure that it is delivered effectively. Staff work very well as a team and all benefit from the mutual support which is generated.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

64. Mathematical skills are applied in some subjects, such as science, where pupils read and record measurements and collect and handle data and also in some design and technology topics where measure is required. Overall, however, planned opportunities to apply skills do not feature strongly enough across the curriculum.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well as a result of good teaching;
- Standards have significantly improved;
- Good opportunities are provided for investigative work;
- Literacy skills are used effectively to support learning;
- More use could be made of ICT;
- The older, most able pupils could be given more opportunities to plan their work independently and follow their own lines of enquiry.

### Commentary

65. Standards for the present Year 2 and Year 6 pupils are average. Throughout the school, pupils achieve well and there is good evidence that standards are rising lower down the school. For example, the current Year 5 class is on course to reach above average standards next year. In recent years, Year 6 pupils have performed significantly better in the national tests than other pupils in the country and in similar schools. In 2003, more than half the class achieved the higher level (Level 5). The majority of the present Year 6 class are likely to achieve the average level in the tests (Level 4), but fewer than last year are on course to reach the higher level. This is because the profile of the class is different, with more children with special educational needs and fewer of higher ability than in 2003. In Year 2, more pupils are likely to achieve the higher level (Level 3) this year, than in the past few years. The school identified this as an issue and is currently working to develop and extend the skills of the more able pupils.
66. There has been significant improvement since the last inspection, when science was judged to be unsatisfactory and standards were below average. Improvements have been brought about through a well planned curriculum, better assessment arrangements and stronger teaching. The subject is well led and managed by the co-ordinator, with the firm backing of the senior management team. She has considerable expertise in the subject and a clear vision of what good science teaching looks like. She has worked hard to develop staff expertise, for example, through giving colleagues support in developing practical and investigative work throughout the school. This has been particularly successful and pupils now have many good opportunities to investigate and experiment. Pupils questioned during the inspection often said that science was one of their favourite subjects. When asked why, a group of older children enthused, 'we love doing investigations and finding things out!'
67. The quality of teaching is consistently good at both key stages. Lessons are well focused and planned to challenge all abilities. Tasks are interesting and stretch pupils. In the Year 2 class, for example, children had to concentrate very hard to identify which movements were 'pushes' and which were 'pulls' when putting on a pair of socks. They were challenged to explain the movements they made and refine these explanations. As a result, they could make observations such as, 'Your fingers push together to grip the socks'. A more able child concluded, 'Your elbow has to pivot as you pull the socks on'. Pupils with special educational needs were enabled to carry out the same task, with good quality support from the teaching assistant. Year 6 pupils devised their own 'fair test' in groups, when investigating light and shadows. They used their prior knowledge to form hypotheses and decide which factors should stay the same and which variables they would change. The class then decided which of the groups' experiments they should carry out. The practical nature of this work deepened their understanding and as a result, they were able to draw appropriate conclusions from their investigations. However, the activity could have provided even greater opportunities for

learning had pupils been able to carry out their own group's ideas and compare findings. In all lessons observed, pupils were given good opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills through explaining their ideas and presenting their findings to others. Good opportunities are also provided for pupils to record their work in a wide variety of ways. For example, they draw charts, tables and diagrams, construct graphs, and write reports. Often, they are challenged to use their writing skills independently, for example, to write up experiments. Year 6 pupils demonstrated good application of mathematics skills as they constructed a line graph to present their findings on shadows. However, opportunities to use ICT to support work in science are often missed and could be planned into topics more systematically. There is also some scope for the most able children in Years 5 and 6, to be challenged more frequently to pose their own scientific questions and follow their own lines of enquiry, rather than those suggested by the teacher.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards have improved significantly;
- There are better resources than previously seen;
- Teaching is consistently good;
- ICT is not used sufficiently to support all subjects.

### **Commentary**

68. Standards are now broadly in line with those expected by the end of Years 2 and 6 and pupils achieve well. This is a significant improvement from the time of the last inspection, when standards and provision in the subject were judged to be unsatisfactory. The school has improved its ICT resources considerably since then. The ICT suite, supplemented by laptop computers to use in classrooms has had a positive impact on learning. Teachers are more confident and have greater expertise in the subject and planning has improved. The ICT curriculum, which is based on national guidance, provides appropriate opportunities for all pupils to build up their skills systematically. Given that pupils' skills were limited prior to the influx of resources into the school, older pupils especially have made considerable progress in achieving their current levels. Most now demonstrate appropriate word processing skills, are adept at using spreadsheets and are becoming skilled at multimedia presentation and the use of email and the Internet. Standards are rising quickly lower down the school. Pupils in Year 2, for example, use digital cameras to record their work and computers to save and edit their writing.
69. The quality of teaching and learning seen during the inspection was consistently good and consequently pupils improve their skills quickly. Lessons are well planned and teachers ensure that all pupils are engaged either by using a computer or completing an appropriately related task. A good example of this was seen when Years 3 and 4 applied good logical thinking skills to work out a simple line of enquiry, which prepared them well to construct databases afterwards. Teachers' subject knowledge and skills are secure, so lessons proceed at a good pace and pupils are kept on task. Similarly, teaching assistants work confidently with pupils and this contributes well to the pace of learning. For example, while some pupils were learning history in the classroom, the assistant took others to the computer suite to evaluate the quality of information provided by the history websites and CD-ROM. This provided a good link between history and the pupils' multimedia skills. Teachers promote pupils' personal development very well so they learn to collaborate and work responsibly. Year 2 pupils had to choose their own working partners when they shared the task of amending some text they had typed into their computers. During the lesson they

shared the use of the keyboard and helped each other with spellings, resulting in a lot of independent hard work and good progress. There is, however, scope for pupils to develop and refine their skills further by using them more often to help learning in other subjects.

70. The recently appointed co-ordinator provides satisfactory leadership and management of the subject. Resources have been enhanced under her direction, so the school is now better placed to plan more effectively for a wider use of ICT in the classroom. For example, a computer-controlled microscope has recently been purchased, which will extend opportunities in science. A realistic action plan is developing which focuses on further training and improving standards. However, as yet, she has not had sufficient time to monitor standards of teaching and learning, to identify any specific issues to be dealt with.

### **ICT across the curriculum**

71. The school has made some headway in using ICT to support learning in other subjects. There is some evidence, for example, of pupils using computers to consolidate basic number skills, improve writing and to carry out research, for example, in history. However, in other subjects, such as science, art and design and music, there is little evidence of computers being used regularly. Opportunities for ICT need to be planned more systematically through all subjects.

### **HUMANITIES**

72. Very little teaching was observed in **geography** because it is taught as part of a cycle with history and most classes were studying history during the inspection period. It is not possible, therefore to make secure judgements on provision, teaching or standards. Work from last term and teachers' planning was analysed and discussions were held with staff and pupils. This demonstrates that an appropriate range of topics is covered, although not always in sufficient depth and there is a greater emphasis on teaching geographical facts, than on skills. Pupils achieve steadily, when for example, they study their own local area, 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 how people live. Junior pupils were able to talk knowledgeably about Chembakolli, a village in India and describe the way of life of its people. Good use is made of the school grounds and local area for pupils to carry out fieldwork, such as traffic surveys and effective links have been made with history, for example, when pupils study the development of settlements. Residential visits for Year 5 and 6 pupils give appropriate opportunities to experience a contrasting locality at first hand and to undertake environmental topics. Ongoing studies of the weather and world news keep geography alive in some classes, when the particular focus for the period is history. There is some evidence that pupils use computers to research topics in geography. For example, pupils have used the Internet to study weather in different parts of the world. However, there is little evidence of ICT being used to present findings or collect data.
73. The co-ordinator has only recently taken over the leadership and management of the subject. She has made a satisfactory start on getting to grips with the curriculum and resources. However, as yet, she has had insufficient time to evaluate standards and needs to develop expertise in this area. The subject has not been a high priority for development in recent years. Although staff jointly evaluate coverage of the curriculum on a regular basis, inconsistencies in delivery have crept in.

## History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- A good range of topics are studied in sufficient depth;
  - Teachers make activities practical, wherever possible;
  - There are good links between history and literacy;
  - Pupils record their work in an interesting variety of ways;
  - The subject currently lacks leadership;
  - More use could be made of ICT.
74. Standards at the end of both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 are similar to those seen in most schools. Pupils achieve well, overall, and the best progress is made in Years 3, and 5, where a lot of ground is covered and expectations are particularly high.
75. Pupils cover a wide range of topics, based on the latest national guidance. There is a good balance between teaching the skills of historical investigation and the facts about history. Pupils develop a sound understanding of chronology, through constructing time lines and placing events in order. They learn about famous people, such as Boudica and King Henry VIII. In Year 3, pupils learn about how archaeologists uncover the past. They carry out their own research through examining 'first-hand' evidence, such as paintings. Work is recorded in a wide variety of ways, such as through reports, lists, letters and charts. Many valuable opportunities are provided for pupils to practice their writing skills independently. This benefits the oldest, more able pupils particularly well. For example, older pupils have written their own Greek myths and legends. However, good use is also made of worksheets to help less able and special educational needs pupils to shape their ideas. Appropriate links are made between history and geography, with pupils studying their local area, past and present. History is also linked well to citizenship, as pupils discuss life in Ancient Greece and the influences on our society today. However, although some use is made of ICT, for example to research topics on the Internet, this could be planned more systematically.
76. Two lessons were observed in Key Stage 1, one, which was good, and one, which was satisfactory. A scrutiny of work from all classes suggests similarly that teaching is satisfactory in some classes and good in others. There is currently no history co-ordinator and as a result, despite the best efforts of the phase leaders to keep a check on planning and coverage, there are some inconsistencies in delivery. On balance, however, there is enough good teaching to ensure that overall, pupils achieve well. Where teaching is at its best, pupils are challenged to think, through answering questions such as, 'Why would I like to live in Ancient Greece?' and to make links between life then and now, for example, through writing their own rules in response to learning about Greek social systems. However, more opportunities could be provided for pupils in Key Stage 2 to pose their own questions. In all classes, teachers ensure a good degree of practical work, which pupils say they enjoy and which catches their interest. For example, in the good lesson seen in Year 1, pupils were looking at 'toys, old and new', making decisions about whether certain toys were suitable for babies, toddlers, 5-year-olds or 10-year-olds and making a time line in the form of a toy catalogue. The task really interested them and led them to make thoughtful observations, such as, 'This (trolley with bricks) would be for a toddler, because a baby wouldn't be able to walk and push it.'

## CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

77. Few lessons were seen in art and design, design and technology and music and in physical education, only games lessons were observed. No judgement on overall provision can therefore be made in these subjects. Other evidence has been drawn from scrutinising planning and work on display and from discussions with pupils and teachers.
78. A very small amount of work was available in **art and design and design and technology** and only one lesson was seen. Therefore, no judgement on standards or teaching quality can be reliably made. The subject is taught in alternating half termly blocks and much of the work last half term had been related to Christmas and had been taken home. From talking to pupils and sampling the small amount of work displayed, it is clear that pupils are given a satisfactory range of experiences in design and technology. For example, they design and make slippers, use cutting and folding techniques to make moving pictures and study the design of different types of shelters. In art and design, pupils' work on display mainly shows examples of painting and drawing, and a small amount of clay work. There are some links made between art and other subjects, for example, in history, pupils have drawn their own creatures from Greek mythology and coloured them with pastels and to link with literacy, pupils have created pictures to illustrate their descriptions of the seasons. The lesson seen in Year 3 was well taught, due to the expertise of the teacher. Pupils used pasta shapes and pulses to create interesting pictures. However, art and design in the upper juniors does not have a high enough profile. Little evidence was seen of ICT being used to support work in art and design and only a small amount was seen in design and technology. Since the last inspection, much work has gone into planning a structured curriculum, based on the most recent national guidelines. However, leadership and management in both subjects have been inconsistent because of staff changes. This has resulted in slower than expected progress in fully implementing the schemes and progressively developing pupils' art and design skills. There is good enrichment of the curriculum, however, in the theme weeks the school undertakes. For example, during MAD week and 'Visitors' Week', the pupils have had the opportunity to work with others on large projects.
79. A wide range of experiences is offered to pupils in **music**, both in the taught curriculum and through extra-curricular activities. Teachers who come in to take brass, guitar and violin lessons contribute to the richness of provision as do the music, art and drama weeks held every year. Productions undertaken during the year, for example, at Christmas, Harvest and Easter are enthusiastically talked about by pupils and make a valuable contribution to the music curriculum. The teaching observed was good and in both lessons, learning was developed by well chosen activities. In Year 4 pupils' responses bore out their understanding of 'mood' when one child wrote 'It makes me happy and want to jump around'. In Year 2, children were encouraged to recognise and explore how sounds can be made and changed and were successful in choosing and creating their own sounds using a variety of instruments. Children obviously enjoy singing and in hymn practise they sang tunefully, noting melody and rhythm and quickly improving their own performance, as they grew more familiar with the song. Leadership and management of music are satisfactory. The co-ordinator has good expertise in the subject and has developed a clear curriculum framework, which enables pupils to build appropriately on their skills from year-to-year. As yet, however, she has had little opportunity to check on teaching and learning in the subject or work alongside staff to develop their skills, where necessary.
80. In **physical education**, standards in games are similar to those found in most schools at the end of both key stages and pupils' achievement is at least satisfactory. Records show that the majority of pupils also reach the required standard in swimming by the age of 11. In the four lessons seen, teaching was mainly good. Pupils were learning and practising a wide range of ball skills pertaining to striking, fielding and invasion games. Good relationships and high expectations of behaviour contributed well to the pupils' development. Teachers have appropriate regard for health and safety and ensure that pupils are aware of the

requirements. The subject has been soundly led and managed in recent times. A structured planning framework has been put into place and ensures that all aspects of physical education are covered during the year. The curriculum is enriched by a variety of extra-curricular activities, such as dance, football, netball, cricket and games club offered to both infant and junior pupils. These have a positive impact on learning. The current co-ordinator is new to the post. She has a high level of personal expertise in dance and gymnastics and sensible ideas for moving the subject forward. However, she has not been able as yet to have an impact on the development of the subject.

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

Provision in PSHCE is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Discussion times are well established as a means of sharing concerns and issues;
- Pupils are effectively taught how to keep safe and well;
- The school council gives pupils a real taste of democracy.

### **Commentary**

81. The school's provision in PSHCE has improved since the last inspection. Staff have wisely put a lot of work into devising ways to strengthen pupils' personal and social skills, including strategies to enable them to share their problems and become good citizens. Regular opportunities for discussions in lessons, coupled with the trusting relationships that are established, successfully build pupils' confidence to express their feelings and share their worries. Sex and relationships education is sensibly being taught by the nurse a year earlier than in the past because pupils are maturing sooner. The school's involvement in the 'Healthy Schools' initiative is very beneficial for the pupils. A much enjoyed visit of the Life Education caravan, for example, has successfully raised pupils' awareness of choices that might face them regarding drugs. All but the reception class pupils can choose a candidate for election to the school council by producing manifestos and delivering election speeches. Those voted in by their classmates proudly gather their ideas and represent them in decision making processes.

## 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	3
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>4</b>
Pupils' achievement	3
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>3</b>
Attendance	5
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	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

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