

INSPECTION REPORT

POPLARS COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Lowestoft

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124639

Headteacher: Mrs Margaret Sneddon

Lead inspector: Pat Kime HMI

Dates of inspection: 16 – 18 March 2004

Inspection number: 264049

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:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 – 9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	363
School address:	St Margaret's Road Lowestoft Suffolk
Postcode:	NR32 4HN
Telephone number:	01502 565757
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Joan Wright
Date of previous inspection:	14 September 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Poplars Community Primary School is a larger than average school serving a mainly disadvantaged area in Lowestoft. The nursery caters for 52 children who attend for mornings or afternoons. In the main school (Reception to Year 4) there are 337 pupils on roll: 176 girls and 161 boys, taught in 15 classes. Around 40 per cent of pupils come from beyond the immediate area. The turnover of older pupils is high and less than two thirds of the pupils in the final year have been all the way through the school. Thirteen pupils are from minority ethnic groups or have dual heritage and five pupils with a home language other than English are at an early stage of learning English.

When children start in nursery, their attainment covers a wide range but is generally below average, with spoken language particularly weak. At 23.4 per cent, the proportion of pupils known to be entitled to free school meals is broadly average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, including those who have a statement, is above average. These needs cover a wide range and nearly half of those with significant needs have social, emotional or behavioural difficulties. The school has established a nurture group to support these pupils.

The school has 'Beacon' status and is involved in a number of national and local initiatives, including the training of teaching assistants and administrative staff. It provides placements for students on school-based initial teacher training.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
25350	Pat Kime HMI	Lead inspector	Mathematics, Music
9173	Sarah McDermott AI	Lay inspector	
20498	Mary Hamby HMI	Team inspector	Science, Religious education
32319	Linda Rockey HMI	Team inspector	English, Special educational needs, English as an additional language
22831	Clive Lewis AI	Team inspector	Information and communication technology, Art and design, Design and technology, Physical education
5531	Janet Croft AI	Team inspector	Foundation Stage, Geography, History

Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) were joined on this inspection by Additional Inspectors (AI) appointed by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Poplars is a very effective school. It is led and managed very well. Pupils are taught well in an exceptionally positive and caring atmosphere and all the adults pull together to do the very best for pupils. Consequently, pupils achieve very well academically and in their personal development. They build well each year on what has gone before so that, by Year 4, standards are above average. The school gives very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher, senior staff, and governors work in a very effective partnership. They lead and manage the school very well, inspiring, supporting and motivating staff and pupils and always looking for ways to improve what the school offers its pupils.
- Standards are above average in English, mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT), art and design, and design and technology. However, in English, speaking and listening are not as strong as reading and writing.
- Teaching is good overall throughout the school, with a significant proportion being very good. As a result, pupils build each year on improved standards so that, overall, they make very good progress. In some subjects not all pupils in Years 3 and 4 are fully challenged.
- Marking of pupils' work, though adequate, could be used more effectively in many classes to show pupils what they could do better and to guide planning and target setting.
- Pastoral care and the provision for pupils' personal development are very good and staff have a high degree of concern for each pupil's well-being.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and the nurture group is very effective, particularly for pupils with significant behavioural difficulties.
- The school's partnership with parents is very good.

Improvement since the last inspection in 1998 has been good. Strengths have been maintained in the standards achieved, the quality of education the school provides and the way it is led and managed.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Pupils achieve very well because at every stage of their careers at Poplars they build well on what has gone before.

- Children in the reception class are on course to reach the national targets for the end of the year in all areas of learning.
- By Year 2 standards are above average in ICT, art and design, design and technology, and music. They are average in English, mathematics, science, religious education, geography and history. Pupils have done well to reach these standards because in this year group there is a high proportion of pupils with significant special educational needs and many with summer birthdays who have had less time in school than most.

- By Year 4 standards are above average in English, mathematics, ICT, art and design, and design and technology. They are average in science, religious education, geography, history and music. Less than two thirds of the pupils in Year 4 have been all the way through the school. For those that have, these standards represent very good progress overall since they started.
- Standards in physical education were not judged because the inspectors did not see enough of this subject.

There are no significant differences in achievement between different groups of pupils. However, in mathematics, some average attaining pupils in Year 4 could be challenged more and in geography, history and religious education work could be more demanding for some of the older and more able pupils in Key Stage 2.

Pupils' personal qualities are developed very well and, taken overall, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils make very good progress in their personal development, particularly in moral and social development and behaviour and attitudes are good. Attendance is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides an education of good quality. Teaching is good, being most effective in Key Stage 1. Particularly strong features of the teaching are behaviour management, the use of teaching assistants, and the specialist teaching in some subjects for the older pupils. There is a broad curriculum with a very good range of activities outside lessons. Provision for pupils' personal development and pastoral care are very good; this underpins the school's ethos and pupils' achievement. The very good partnership with parents enables them to support their children's learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is led and managed very well. It is an innovative and thoughtful community in which all are challenged, valued and supported. Governors fulfil their responsibilities very well. They are strongly committed to the school, provide a very good balance of support and constructive challenge, and are fully involved in planning for the future. The headteacher provides excellent pastoral leadership and very good leadership of the curriculum. She is supported very well by the senior staff. Financial management and planning are of the highest order.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils are overwhelmingly positive about the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things this very effective school should do to improve further are:

- raise standards in speaking and listening; and
- improve the quality and use of marking of pupils' work.
- sharpen the planning of work in geography, history and religious education, and in mathematics in Year 4, to ensure that all pupils are fully challenged.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils' achievement is very good overall. It is the result of good teaching, small classes, a good number of skilled support staff, and the school's extremely positive ethos in which pupils come to see themselves as successful learners. By Year 4 standards are above average in English and mathematics, and several other subjects. This represents very good progress.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The overall achievement of all groups of pupils is very good because each year pupils build well on what they have already learned, particularly in the key skills of literacy and numeracy.
- Standards in Year 4 are above average in English, mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT), art and design, and design and technology.
- In English speaking and listening standards lag behind reading and writing.
- Over the past four years, results in the end of Year 2 tests in reading and writing have gone up faster than the national trend. Standards in Year 2 are above average in ICT, art and design, design and technology, and music.
- Children get a good start and they make particularly good progress in reception.

Commentary

Foundation Stage (nursery and reception)

1. When children start school, their levels of attainment, taken overall, are below average. They do well, especially in the reception year, and they are set to reach average standards in all areas of their learning by the end of reception.

Key Stage 1 (Years 1 and 2)

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.8 (16.6)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	15.7 (15.9)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	16.5 (16.9)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 69 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. The table above shows that pupils did well in the tests. They reached above average standards in reading and writing, and average standards in mathematics. These results represent very good achievement.
3. Standards in the present Year 2 are average in English, mathematics and science and above average in ICT. Pupils' progress is particularly strong in reading and writing. In RE standards meet the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. The work seen in art, music, and design and technology was of an above average standard and in geography and history the standard of work seen was average. No judgement has been made on standards in physical education because the inspectors did not see work in this subject.

4. Pupils make good progress in this key stage. The present Year 2 contains a high proportion of pupils who are young for the year and pupils with significant special educational needs. The standards reached represent good achievement for all pupils.

Key Stage 2 (Years 3 – 4)

5. In this key stage pupils continue to make good progress. However, the standards achieved reflect the significant mobility of pupils. Less than two thirds of the pupils in Year 4 have come all the way through Poplars.
6. Standards in the present Year 4 are above average in English, mathematics and ICT. In English, standards are not so high in speaking and listening as in reading and writing. In science and RE standards are average; pupils' achievement is good in science and satisfactory in RE. In geography and history the standard of work was average and pupils' achievement satisfactory. The work seen in art and design, and design and technology was of an above average standard and pupils achieve well in these subjects. Standards seen in music were satisfactory but pupils are now making good progress because of good specialist teaching. Inspectors saw too little work in physical education to form a judgement on standards.
7. Throughout the school pupils with special educational needs benefit from very good support that enables them to achieve very well in relation to the targets set for them. Pupils for whom English is an additional language develop competency in English rapidly and achieve as well as their classmates.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils are good overall; so is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is promoted very well. Pupils' attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school cultivates personal development very well and pupils make very good progress in this aspect of their learning. This is a major contributory factor to their very good academic achievement.
- Moral and social development are promoted particularly well through the school's positive ethos. All staff accentuate the positive and are very good at raising pupils' self esteem and confidence. The promotion of spiritual and cultural development is good overall but some opportunities are missed.
- Relationships are very good throughout the school. Pupils work and play together well and have confidence and trust in the staff.
- The school manages the growing minority of pupils with significant behavioural difficulties extremely well, but occasionally these pupils aggravate others.
- Despite lively and energetic teaching, a small minority of pupils remain reticent and passive, not putting the effort they could into their learning.

Commentary

8. The very good promotion of personal development, particularly moral and social development, is rooted in the school's ethos which is backed wholeheartedly by staff and governors. Every pupil is nurtured and valued as an individual. In their daily work and relationships with pupils, staff live out the school's firm belief that every pupil has something to give and talents and abilities to be proud of. Staff provide many opportunities for pupils to co-operate and work collaboratively. They encourage pupils and take every opportunity to praise them. Pupils are taught the difference between right and wrong and helped to develop

a sense of personal responsibility. This is done very effectively through many aspects of school life, including thought-provoking assemblies; personal, social and health education lessons; the involvement of pupils in setting class rules; the school council; and the jobs pupils undertake around the school. As a consequence of this high quality provision, pupils grow well in confidence and self-belief and are willing to have a go at work and other activities they might otherwise not consider. Many pupils are very well-behaved and those with behavioural difficulties make very good progress in learning self-control, building constructive relationships and behaviour. The overall standards achieved in personal development represent very good progress because a small but not insignificant minority of pupils have social, emotional or behavioural difficulties.

9. Spiritually, pupils learn to believe in themselves and to empathise with and value others. Their aesthetic appreciation is developed well, through the curriculum and the annual arts fortnight. However, staff sometimes miss opportunities to encourage pupils to reflect on the beauty of the world and to look beyond the tangible. Pupils' cultural development is promoted well, especially through art and music but many pupils have limited knowledge of world religions. This detracts from their understanding of the diversity of religious and cultural traditions around the world and in the United Kingdom.
10. Pupils' enjoyment of school is clearly seen in their cheerful arrival each day, their relationships with teachers and classmates, and the good take-up of activities outside lessons. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the arts fortnight, sports events and other exciting activities. The vast majority try hard and apply themselves to their work; they want to do well. Nevertheless, in lessons and assemblies, some are reluctant to contribute. For example, in assemblies they listen with rapt attention to stories but their singing lacks verve. Pupils are tolerant of the special needs of those with behaviour problems. The school works very effectively to stamp out any form of harassment and promotes race equality successfully; it is a harmonious learning community. The well-trained teaching assistants support pupils with behavioural difficulties in class lessons and the nurture group provides teaching tailored to their needs.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.3	School data	0.1
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

No pupils were excluded during the last school year.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good. Pupils learn well because teaching is good. There is a broad and rich curriculum, pastoral care is very good and the school has a very good partnership with parents.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is good and pupils learn well throughout the school. The cumulative effect of good teaching, combined with the exceptional ethos and very good provision for personal development, is that pupils' overall achievement is very good. There are good arrangements for checking how well pupils are doing.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are taught well; speaking and listening are taught satisfactorily.
- Teachers have very good relationships with their pupils and are very skilled at managing pupils' behaviour positively and sensitively.
- Teaching assistants are used very effectively in class lessons and to support pupils with special educational needs.
- Teaching of several practical subjects in Key Stage 2 makes good use of teachers' expertise to enable pupils to learn at a good rate. In some other subjects learning is less rapid because the work is not as challenging as it might be for the more able older pupils.
- Teaching is particularly effective in Key Stage 1.
- Pupils' progress is monitored effectively through regular tests but in many subjects marking could be used better to help pupils know how to improve.

Commentary

11. Teaching and learning are good overall throughout the school. Both very good and satisfactory teaching was seen in each key stage. A significant amount of teaching is very good and in some classes in reception and Key Stage 1 teaching is very good overall.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 49 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (2%)	14 (29 %)	23 (47%)	11(22%)	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.

12. In the Foundation Stage staff provide a very good range of activities that interest children, stimulate a desire to learn and develop their ability to concentrate and persist with tasks. The early steps of reading and writing are taught well and this good start is built on well as pupils move up the school. In Key Stage 1 reading and writing are taught systematically so pupils acquire a good knowledge of phonics and develop confidence in themselves as readers and writers. In mathematics teachers give good attention to teaching about the number system and pupils learn key number facts, such as multiplication tables, effectively. In ICT teachers expect a lot of the pupils and use their good subject knowledge to create meaningful uses for ICT skills in other subjects. In Key Stage 2 'specialist' teaching in some subjects stretches pupils successfully.
13. Speaking and listening skills, which are weak when pupils start school, are developed satisfactorily but this aspect of English is not planned as systematically as reading and writing. Staff work hard to interest pupils through lively, energetic teaching but, throughout the school teachers sometimes miss opportunities to engage pupils in conversation, to get them to explain their thinking and extend their responses to questions and several pupils remain reticent.
14. Pupils with English as an additional language are taught English well and they rapidly develop competence and go on to achieve as well as the other pupils.
15. A key strength all through the school is the teachers' very good management of pupils, a significant minority of whom have behavioural difficulties. Staff are unfailingly positive and encouraging, classroom routines are well-established, and expectations of behaviour are clearly set. As a result there is an orderly working atmosphere in lessons, which is conducive to learning; pupils try hard and want to achieve well. Very good relationships and a highly supportive atmosphere give pupils the confidence to try and learn from their mistakes.

16. The school's policy of employing an above average number of teaching assistants has paid off handsomely. These assistants are well-trained and teachers brief them well so they know what pupils should learn from their tasks and support them effectively. They work well with pupils of all abilities but make a particularly strong contribution to the achievement of pupils with special educational needs, often by giving them extra help to keep up in class.
17. For pupils with special educational needs, work is carefully planned and broken down into small steps and staff emphasise building self-esteem. Consequently, success at each step motivates pupils; they believe they can achieve and they keep trying. Pupils with complex learning and behavioural needs are very well taught.
18. In Key Stage 2 the school has funded additional staffing and adjusted timetables flexibly in order to split classes in half for lessons in art and design, design and technology, ICT and music and these subjects are taught by teachers who have a particular interest or training in them. This is proving successful. Pupils get plenty of 'hands-on' time in these practical subjects and teachers' enthusiasm and good subject knowledge motivate and challenge them and lead to accelerated progress. Geography, history and RE are also taught by specialists, though not in half classes. All the lessons seen in these subjects were taught well but some older and more able pupils are not taken on as far as they could be.
19. The quality and use of assessment is good overall. Pupils' progress in relation to national expectations is checked regularly in all subjects. In English and mathematics, there is a thorough programme of testing and each pupil's progress is carefully tracked. Test results are used thoughtfully to help determine teaching groups and 'sets' and to identify pupils who need extra help. However, day to day checks on how pupils are getting on and marking of their work are less consistent. In the most effective lessons, teachers were constantly judging how quickly and thoroughly pupils grasped new work and they adjusted the pace of the lessons and the demands of their questions accordingly. As a result, all pupils did as well as they possibly could. These teachers take very good account of their on-going assessments when they plan future lessons. Marking is often helpful in English but in mathematics and science and several other subjects it too rarely helps pupils know what they could do better or sets short-term targets for them.

The curriculum

The school offers pupils a good curriculum which is enriched by a very good range of extra-curricular activities and a good number of visits and visitors. The accommodation and the resources for learning are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has maintained a broad curriculum for all pupils and an innovative approach to curricular development.
- Pupils with special educational needs are provided for very well.
- Provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is very good.
- There are good numbers of teachers and teaching assistants and this has a positive effect on pupils' learning and achievement.
- Learning is enriched by educational visits, especially in the humanities, and activities outside lessons that cover many interests.
- The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is good overall. However, on the half-termly 'integrated' day for children in nursery and reception, activities are not sufficiently closely tuned to all the children's learning needs.

Commentary

20. The carefully-planned curriculum covers all the national requirements and those of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education are covered. Good teamwork between teachers of all the classes for pupils of the same age ensures that they cover the same ground. There is an appropriate emphasis on the acquisition of the skills of literacy and numeracy and pupils benefit from a rich curriculum across the subjects and good opportunities for artistic expression. Pupils have many worthwhile opportunities to apply key skills, including ICT, in other subjects. The good links between subjects and good range of educational visits and visitors provide first-hand experiences that make learning more meaningful for pupils.
21. Teachers continually evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum and take an innovative approach to improving it in order to help pupils achieve as well as possible. For example, ICT suites have been created and pupils are taught ICT and other practical subjects in half classes to increase opportunities for 'hands on' work. Several staff undertook a study visit to Holland to see a new method of teaching mental calculation in action before introducing it at Poplars. However, the planning of work in geography, history and RE has not yet been aligned with changed arrangements for grouping pupils in these subjects and some more able pupils and older pupils in Key Stage 2 therefore do not achieve as well in these subjects as in most others. In the Foundation Stage on one day each half-term mixed groups of nursery and reception children rotate around several activities, each provided by a different adult and repeated for each group. This is organised very efficiently but although it succeeds in enabling the children to mix and to meet more adults, it does not meet their learning needs effectively. This arrangement is due to be reviewed soon.
22. Individual programmes of work for pupils with special educational needs are based on very good analysis of each pupil's needs and they enumerate clearly focused targets for learning, particularly in literacy, numeracy and personal development. These pupils benefit from a good level of additional support from skilled staff who know their needs and, as a result, they make very good progress towards their targets. The provision in the nurture group, for pupils with complex needs and behavioural difficulties, is of a very high quality.
23. Regular lesson time is devoted to a well-planned programme for PSHE which gives attention to aspects such as keeping safe and healthy, and the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse. The provision is enhanced by the school's very good attention to pupils' personal development and the very good opportunities provided for pupils to develop responsibility and to make a valued contribution to the life of the school community.

Care, guidance and support

The care, welfare, health and safety of the pupils are good. The provision of support, advice and guidance is very good. The involvement of pupils in the running of the school is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The support for pupils with social, emotional or behavioural problems is extremely effective.
- Pupils have very trusting relationships with adults in the school.
- Pupils have a strong voice in the school and know that they are listened to.
- The recording of minor accidents is not as rigorous as it should be.

Commentary

24. Staff value every pupil as a special individual. The care of pupils is a top priority for the head teacher and governors and support for personal development is stressed as much as academic progress. Support for pupils' academic progress and the provision for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties have improved since the last inspection.

25. Staff know their pupils extremely well and give each the help and pastoral support they need. Pupils who have social, emotional or behavioural problems are sensitively and positively helped and supported by staff and outside agencies with which the school has built strong partnerships. These pupils are making good progress in learning to believe in themselves, form relationships and trust adults, and to improve their self-discipline. The progress of pupils who are in the care of the local authority is tracked carefully. Pupils with special educational needs, a significant minority, get a very good deal.
26. Right from the start, pupils build up a very trusting rapport with adults in the school. Children are helped to settle quickly into the nursery and reception classes. They gain confidence and independence but are happy to turn to teachers or assistants if they need help. Higher up the school pupils are confident to confide in a range of adults should they have worries or concerns. These excellent relationships form the foundation for pupils' achievements.
27. The school actively seeks pupils' views. It has very effective formal and informal ways to ensure pupils' views are heard and taken into account so pupils know they have a voice and that they make a difference. The school council provides a regular forum for pupils to come up with suggestions or worries. For instance, the recent introduction of the Friendship Bus Stop in the playground was in response to their suggestions. Pupils have a good chance to discuss their class rules at the start of the year and issues of the day are well covered in personal, social and health education lessons. Staff are very perceptive pupils' feelings and all problems are dealt with swiftly and effectively.
28. Health and safety matters are dealt with well, using expert input from knowledgeable governors. All staff are well trained in child protection procedures and pupils who have particular medical needs are very well looked after. Minor accidents are dealt with effectively, but they are not recorded sufficiently clearly to aid effective monitoring.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The partnership with parents is very good and parents think very highly of the school. Links with the community and other schools are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school works unstintingly to involve parents in all aspects of school life and pupils' learning.
- The parents' council gives parents a very valuable forum to air concerns and make suggestions.
- Reports could give parents more information about how much progress their children have made in each subject over the year.
- The school has established very good links with other schools through its Beacon status.
- Good links with the community enliven learning for the pupils.
- Liaison with middle schools, though good on pastoral matters, does not include planning for continuity in the curriculum.

Commentary

29. The school makes parents very welcome, emphasises the importance of involvement in their children's education, helps them to support their children's achievement, and successfully involves them in the educational process. An excellent range of informative meetings and activities are laid on for parents and much information is issued about what is taught. Regular homework provides an opportunity for all parents to help their children. The school maintains a very good level of contact with the parents of pupils with special educational needs.

30. Parents are very appreciative of all the school does for their children and they feel they are valued and their views listened to. They are well-represented on the governing body and the parents and friends school association (PFSA). They also have a forum in the Parents' Council which is made up of elected representative parents from each school year. Attendance at many school events is very high and most parents ensure homework is completed. Parents are proud to be associated with Poplars and this rubs off well on their children's attitudes to school.
31. Links with other schools and the community are good overall. Beacon status has raised morale and the school has made the most of this status to spread good practice among its partner schools and to extend the professional development of its own staff. Pupils are well-prepared for middle school and are confident about moving on, because the transition arrangements allow them to meet their new teachers and become familiar with the new environment. However, projects to ensure smooth transition in the curriculum have lapsed and the Year 4 teachers are unclear how their lessons will fit into those in Year 5. Provision for sports and the arts have been extended by good liaison with primary and middle schools. The school uses facilities in the local community to enrich the curriculum and it contributes to community life. For example, the after school club is housed on the school site and pupils sing carols in the Market Place at Christmas.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is very well led and managed. Leadership, management and governance are all very good. There are some outstanding features and very few weaknesses. The school challenges itself to move forward and has a coherent plan to achieve further improvement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides very good leadership, sets high aspirations, motivates, and, promotes effective teamwork.
- Other key staff are highly committed and innovative. They support the headteacher very well and lead and manage their responsibilities very effectively, with a clear understanding of how each contributes to school improvement.
- The governors identify strongly with the school and they carry out their duties very well.
- Financial planning is robust and administration very efficient.
- There is an outstanding commitment to whole-staff development and training new teachers. Induction procedures for all new staff are highly effective.
- Staff are deployed very effectively to help the school to achieve its aims.
- Oversight of the planning for geography, history and religious education in Key Stage 2, and checking up on marking of work are not as effective as they could be.

Commentary

32. The headteacher is resolutely committed to the pupils and staff and to getting the best for the school. She is the inspiration behind the school's exceptionally positive ethos and is highly regarded by parents, governors, staff and pupils. She empowers her staff and brings out the best in them by nurturing and using their strengths, interests and talents and giving high priority to their continuing professional development. She encourages them to reflect on their work and try new approaches. This has led to numerous successful initiatives which have improved the life and work of the school community.
33. There is very effective delegation of appropriate leadership and management responsibilities and the senior management team, which includes the senior administrative officer, operates very well, providing very good support for the headteacher. The deputy headteacher makes a very significant contribution to establishing the very strong partnership with parents and provides a very good model for other staff. Subject leadership is very good overall with

particular strengths in the core subjects. Teachers willingly take on this responsibility and approach it with a clear understanding of the importance of their contribution to school improvement. They check up on work in their subjects and focus their efforts on improving the quality of teaching and learning and raising achievement. Some of their monitoring is excellent. For instance, in science rigorous monitoring of lessons and pupils' work has led to improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement.

34. Monitoring of subjects has identified that marking could do more to help pupils know how to do better. However, some marking is still ineffective and does not comply with the school's policy. The school has developed provision for the Foundation Stage but responsibility for leading and co-ordinating its work has changed hands and, though effective, it has not yet developed as far as some subject leadership. The curriculum for geography, history and religious education does not help teachers to provide sufficiently demanding work for all pupils.
35. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is organised and led very well and these pupils make very good progress. The teacher responsible works very effectively with class teachers and teaching assistants, helping them to set suitable targets for the pupils and developing their knowledge and understanding of the pupils' needs and their skills in teaching them.
36. The governors are tremendously loyal to the school and very knowledgeable about its life and work, yet still act as critical friends and call the school to account. They have strong links with the subject leaders and many governors visit the school frequently. Governors receive good and coherently presented information which helps them to reach well-founded decisions and ensure that funds are spent wisely to improve the quality of education. For example, they have decided to keep class sizes small and employ additional teaching assistants. The governing body is led very well by the energetic chair who ensures all its duties are carried out effectively and is very active in seeking the views of parents and pupils.
37. The school makes an excellent contribution to the training of new teachers, wholeheartedly embracing its responsibility in this field. The excellent links with training establishments and robust procedures for induction and performance management help recruits to grow in confidence and effectiveness.
38. The school takes very good account of the principles of best value. When budgetary decisions are needed, administrative staff set out clear costings for various options and forecasts. This supports senior staff and governors and enables the school to implement its plans effectively. The very efficient administrative staff support the school's work by ensuring that school routines run smoothly and freeing up the time of teaching staff.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	986,184
Total expenditure	999,504
Expenditure per pupil	2,589

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	15,938
Balance carried forward to the next	19,044

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage (nursery and reception classes) is **good**.

39. Most children enter the nursery at the beginning of the term in which they are four, spend three terms in nursery and then transfer to one of the reception classes for two or three terms. This means that the younger children, who have birthdays in the summer months, have less time in Year 1 than the others. Children's attainment on entry varies from year to year and covers a wide range but taken overall it is below average with weak speaking and listening and, for some, poor personal, social and emotional development. A significant minority need a lot of support to settle into school and benefit from the activities provided.
40. Children achieve well and standards are broadly average with the majority of children on course to reach the goals set for the end of the reception year. Teaching is good in all areas of learning in both nursery and reception. It is strongest in reception where nearly all the lessons seen were at least good and some were very good or excellent. Staff work closely as a team and plan a very good range of interesting activities that meet the children's varied needs well. They organise the classrooms well and mount lively displays that make the learning environment attractive, celebrate children's achievements, and interest them in new learning as well as providing useful information for parents and carers about the children's activities and achievements. Teachers set appropriate learning targets for children and share these with their parents and carers. They assess children's day by day progress efficiently.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff are encouraging and supportive. They build very good relationships with children and help them to adapt to school life and gain independence.
- Children's behaviour is managed sensitively and they are carefully guided so they learn to work and play together successfully.

Commentary

41. Teaching and learning are good and as a result children achieve well. Standards are average. Children who have emotional and behavioural difficulties and those who take time to adapt to school and are initially reluctant to join in the activities make very good progress in this area of learning.
42. The well-thought out activities capture children's interest and motivate them to want to learn. Staff give children lots of praise and encouragement which builds their confidence to try new activities and to contribute in group sessions. There is a good balance between adult led activities and those which children initiate, following their own interests and developing independence. Children are guided and supported very well and, as a result, they learn to build good relationships, take turns and share, and develop acceptable behaviour. Staff foster children's sense of being valued members of a small community, through group and class activities, such as jointly producing large-scale pictures, and by establishing clear routines that help children understand school life. These routines are equally effective in helping children develop self-help skills, such as changing for physical activities.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Early knowledge of letters and the sounds they make (phonics) is taught very well so children get a very good start in reading and writing.
- Enthusiasm for reading is fostered well.
- Children have very good opportunities to develop hand and eye co-ordination and the skills needed for handwriting.
- Talk is not consistently used as well as it might be to develop and extend children's thinking.

Commentary

43. Standards in early reading and writing are average. This good achievement is the result of good teaching and a well-planned and carefully structured programme of work that takes account of children's individual needs and advances their skills progressively and continuously.
44. Children's interest in books and reading is developed well. Adults read stories expressively and ask questions about the characters and events in them and build children's confidence and enjoyment by encouraging them to join in and to re-tell familiar stories. Parents and carers are involved well in supporting and developing their children's reading skills.
45. Interest in writing, an understanding of its importance, and the ability to write independently are developed well. For instance, classrooms are full of labels and captions and many activities develop the hand and eye co-ordination and manual dexterity needed for handwriting. Children write spontaneously using their growing knowledge of letters and sounds. For example, in imaginative play they write notes, messages and lists and the older and more able children write simple sentences about their work.
46. Children learn to listen attentively but their spoken language is not developed as well as it could be. Staff do not always make the most of opportunities available to promote learning in this aspect of communication. For example, too often in conversations with children they do not ask the probing questions that could help them to explain their actions and thoughts more clearly. They tend to repeat and praise children's contributions rather than moving them on.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children benefit from regular and systematic practice in counting, recognising numerals and making simple calculations.
- Activities across the curriculum are well used to develop children's understanding of space, shape and measures.

Commentary

47. Achievement is good and standards, for the majority of children, are average. A significant minority are working at an advanced level for their age.
48. Teaching is good. Staff use practical activities, rhymes, games and stories well to help children understand simple addition and subtraction and they match work well to children's

differing abilities so that all are suitably challenged. They capitalise on the day-to-day opportunities to promote mathematical development, such as taking the register and checking the numbers of children who want a school lunch. Mathematics is an integral part of many classroom activities. For example, the very good 'shop' contains price lists, imitation coins and tills which children use well. Collecting examples of differently shaped objects around the school grounds and at home increases children's ability to recognise simple two-dimensional shapes, such as squares, circles and triangles.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A wide range of interesting activities is used effectively to stimulate children's interest in the world around them.
- ICT provision is very good.
- Staff could do more to encourage children to learn through asking questions.

Commentary

49. Children achieve well and standards are average, even though a significant number of children have limited experience of the world around them when they enter the nursery. Staff provide lots of interesting activities to help children to develop the skills of close observation; to learn about the world around them; for construction; and to find out about a range of cultures and beliefs. For example, children observe changes, in the weather and in materials, for instance when they make pancakes or mix ice with salt, and they celebrate Christian festivals and Chinese New Year. Children take a lively interest in their immediate environment and talk about past events in their lives but staff do not consistently develop children's answers or encourage them to ask pertinent questions. Children have good opportunities to use computers and they develop a good degree of independence using them.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use the playground and grounds well as an 'outdoor room'.
- Children have good opportunities to use a good range of tools and equipment.
- The school has a good focus on healthy eating.

Commentary

50. Children were observed in the classroom, out of doors and at play, and photographic evidence was examined. Standards are average. Children develop manual dexterity because they have good opportunities to develop skill in using tools such as pencils, paintbrushes, scissors and glue spreaders and undertake activities such as threading beads and assembling interlocking puzzles. They learn to use tools competently and safely. Children develop increasing control of their movements and by the end of reception, they climb and balance successfully on large equipment.
51. Staff encourage children to bring healthy snacks to school rather than sweets and fizzy drinks. This is successful and children know and can explain which is better for them.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children have good opportunities to explore a range of media and materials.
- Children's imaginations are developed well and the resources for role-play are very good.
- Children's ability to express in words what they are imagining as they play is not as well developed as it might be.

Commentary

52. Children achieve well and reach average standards. Teachers provide good opportunities for children to freely paint, draw, construct, shape and model and children respond well to these. Their paintings are lively and colourful, with bold strokes and patches of colour spread and mixed spontaneously. Children enjoy developing skills with 'play dough' as they squeeze, roll and shape it with their hands. Specific areas are set aside for children to try out musical instruments and they explore how sounds are made with obvious enthusiasm. They repeat sound patterns and accompany songs which they sing tunefully from memory. In many activities, children use their imaginations well. For example, a child made a 'flying angel car' and told a coherent story about it. There are good opportunities for children to focus on using their senses, for instance by tasting Chinese food and feeling spaghetti in water. Children's drawings show increasing attention to detail and express well their ideas and feelings about their lives and experiences, but their ability to express themselves in words is not as well developed as it might be.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils of all abilities achieve very well and standards in reading and writing are above average by the top of the school.
- Teaching is good and boys and girls are motivated to do well.
- Teaching assistants provide very good support for lower attaining pupils and the needs of those with special educational needs are met very well.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Pupils' speaking and listening skills are average; not as good as reading and writing.

Commentary

53. Three main factors account for pupils' very good achievement. Firstly, well planned, lively and stimulating teaching throughout the school engages and motivates pupils to learn. Secondly, basic skills are taught systematically and work is carefully matched to pupils' needs. Thirdly, pupils make good progress in each key stage, building well on their previous achievement and enhanced standards. Standards vary from year to year reflecting differences in cohorts and the mobility of pupils. In reading and writing standards are average in Year 2 and above average in Year 4.

54. Pupils' overall achievement in reading is very good. Pupils develop positive attitudes to reading because staff develop their confidence and skills from the earliest stages. For example, a pupil in Year 2 proudly explained about his newly acquired phonic skills as he attempted an unfamiliar word. By Year 4, the most able read fluently and with good

expression which reveals good understanding. They discuss the books they are reading sensibly and perceptively and are developing personal preferences. There is a good range of reading materials for pupils to choose from and particular care has been taken to provide books that interest boys so they develop the habit of reading. Indeed, boys in Years 3 and 4 talked excitedly of their enjoyment of non-fiction books. Pupils are encouraged to read at home and parents and teachers regularly record what pupils have read. However, staff could do more to identify how pupils could improve their reading and to guide pupils' personal reading.

55. Pupils' achievement in writing is equally good. Teachers have a good understanding about how to teach writing and this is particularly strong in Key Stage 1. They have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and engage their interest through energetic teaching. Staff provide carefully judged support that challenges pupils and pushes on the development of new skills whilst enabling them to experience success at their written tasks. For instance, in a Year 2 class, the animated acting out of a North American folk tale, together with the good use of a 'story map' resulted in all pupils tackling their own writing confidently. Spelling is taught effectively. Pupils build up a repertoire of known words and are encouraged to be independent in the spelling of new words. They have the confidence to use their knowledge of phonics or use their 'have a go' pads, look up the word in a dictionary or ask a friend. In Key Stage 2 pupils build effectively on their previous achievement. In Year 4 their work reveals good command of a range of types of writing, including reports, instructions, stories and poetry. For instance, pupils wrote poems in the style of Ted Hughes' 'Amulet', using metaphor, onomatopoeia and alliteration and the more able did this confidently. Pupils organise their writing well; the more able are beginning to use paragraphs and many write with some imaginative flair. Handwriting and presentation are of a good standard and spelling is average.
56. When pupils enter school, many lack confidence in speaking and their listening skills are poor. They gain ground but do not reach such high standards as in reading and writing. Standards are below average in Year 2, and average in Year 4. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to talk to each other and to adults and to contribute to discussions in small groups. In the clarity of their questions and explanations they provide a good model for pupils. They give good attention to expanding pupils' vocabulary, for example in Year 2, during the reading of 'Tiger dreams', teacher and pupils discussed, 'What is a veranda?'. However, planning for this aspect of the work is less systematic than for reading and writing and opportunities to promote it are sometimes missed. For instance, in question and answer sessions, teachers sometimes too readily accept very brief answers without encouraging pupils to expand on them and use language more precisely.
57. Teaching is good overall in both key stages. The strengths of the good and very good teaching include teachers' good subject knowledge, high expectations of pupils, very clear objectives for what pupils should learn in each lesson and effective classroom management. Achievement is further supported by the good use of questioning, skilful and positive behaviour management, and regular homework to consolidate learning. Marking is positive and clearly linked to the aim of the lesson. All pupils have writing targets but they are not always sure about how they can improve their work in order to achieve them.
58. The impact of the very good staff training and development is evident in the teaching of reading, phonics, writing and the various intervention groups. Well trained teaching assistants, under the guidance of the teachers, provide well - focused support for the lower attaining pupils. They lead very effective intervention programmes to improve pupils' reading and writing. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well. Their specific and often complex needs are met in a variety of successful ways. These include the very good teaching in the nurture group, additional reading and writing sessions, and the provision of well planned tasks carefully matched to their individual learning needs.

59. The subject is very well led and managed by the very knowledgeable subject leader who maintains a constant focus on raising pupils' achievement. Test results are subject to detailed analysis which is used well to keep track of pupils' progress. The quality of teaching and learning in lessons is monitored very well and the guidance and support provided for teachers, as a result, is of an excellent quality. The relative weakness in speaking and listening has been recognised and plans are in hand to tackle it.
60. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Overall, standards have risen and the more able pupils are achieving higher standards.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

61. Pupils have a good range of well planned opportunities to use their reading and writing skills in other subjects and the integration of teaching these skills within other subjects makes a positive contribution to pupils' achievement. For example, in Year 2 pupils wrote letters to the Prime Minister, in the character of Florence Nightingale, about the dreadful hospital conditions. In Year 3 pupils used word-processing skills to write endings to the story of 'Cinderella' doing so with enthusiasm.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils build well on their previous learning all through the school so that overall their achievement is very good. This is confirmed by records of their progress.
- Standards are a bit above average in Year 4 but some pupils of average ability in this year could do better.
- Teaching is good overall but the marking of pupils' work is a relative weakness. In some of the Key Stage 1 classes teaching is very good.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- There are very good arrangements to keep parents informed about how the subject is taught and how they can best help their children and homework is used very well.

Commentary

62. Pupils' very good achievement is the result of consistently good provision. Throughout the school pupils benefit from good teaching of a well-planned and balanced curriculum and high levels of support in an extremely positive atmosphere. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.
63. Standards in Year 2 are average in all aspects of the subject. Pupils have a confident understanding of numbers and ability to calculate. They understand tens and units and are familiar with larger numbers and most have a basic grasp of multiplication and division. They recognise common two-dimensional shapes and know their properties. In Year 4 the vast majority of pupils are working at least at the level expected for their age. The more able are pushed on well and they are considerably ahead of what is expected for pupils their age. In Key Stage 2 the 'sets' are organised so that the more able are taught together and the other pupils are placed in two parallel sets. This works well for most pupils but those at the top of the two lower sets could achieve more.
64. In both key stages pupils are taught well and learn at a good rate. The most effective teaching observed was characterised by excellent relationships between teachers and pupils, an energetic determination to push learning on as far as possible for all pupils, and a good variety of well-resourced activities to achieve this. In a very good Year 2 lesson about telling

the time using digital and analogue clocks the teacher was constantly checking on pupils' understanding. She adapted the work to take account of the speed of pupils' learning, and matched the demands of her questions and the tasks she set very closely to pupils' individual needs. Where lessons, though satisfactory, were less effective it was because teachers were less successful at maximising learning for all pupils. This was because some pupils were not kept fully involved in sessions of direct teaching or, when they were set to their work, misunderstandings were not spotted and corrected soon enough. In all classes pupils' work is marked regularly but rarely fully effectively, because it does not always tell pupils how they could do better.

65. The subject is led and managed very well with the emphasis strongly on maximising pupils' achievement. Teaching, learning and standards are monitored well and the findings analysed very carefully in order to determine priorities for development. There is good teamwork in a very reflective culture. The school's strategies to bring about improvement, for instance in pupils' ability to calculate speedily in their heads, are innovative but always researched thoroughly before they are introduced. Parents are very well-informed about developments and how to help their children, through written information, workshops and meetings.

Mathematics across the curriculum

66. Pupils have a good range of planned opportunities to use and develop mathematical knowledge in other subjects. For example, in ICT they extend their understanding of shapes and angles. In science they use measurement skills in experimental work and use graphs to record results of experiments.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Two lessons were observed, both in Year 2. Judgements are based on these lessons and a range of other evidence, including discussions with pupils and staff, and examination of pupils' work and records of their progress.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and it enables pupils to achieve well and reach average standards.
- Leadership and management are very effective and strongly focused on improving provision and maximising pupils' achievement.
- Pupils' learning in science links well with other subjects and makes a good contribution to the pupils' personal development.
- In some classes the use of too many worksheets hampers pupils' progress in learning the skills needed to apply their knowledge and understanding to scientific enquiry.
- Marking is not good enough.

Commentary

67. The school does well to enable pupils to reach average standards because their attainment on entry is below average. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection. By Year 2, pupils know how to make a simple circuit and the more able pupils have begun to understand the function of a switch. They know the importance of the safe use of electricity and are taught to use correct terminology, such as *cell* and *insulator*. In Year 4, pupils enjoy investigations and have started to understand how to make a fair test. They make sensible predictions based on their own experience and understand how to use simple scientific equipment properly.

68. The teaching seen was good in one lesson and very good in the other. The work in pupils' books shows that teaching is usually good. In most classes pupils are developing skills in recording their observations and investigations themselves. However, they are sometimes given worksheets which neither encourage them to think about how to record their own work nor to show teachers what they understand. This weakness has been identified by the subject leaders who are both very keen to nurture a love of science and to help pupils make the most progress they can. They help and encourage their colleagues by thorough and well-planned checks on pupils' work and the quality of teaching and learning in lessons. This monitoring is of an outstanding quality.
69. All pupils have full access to the curriculum and additional help is provided in lessons to enable pupils with special educational needs to contribute to discussions and to complete their work on time. Pupils are keen to answer questions and, in the lessons observed, the teachers pitched questions at the right level to help deepen their understanding. Pupils receive useful verbal feedback on their work, and written work is regularly marked. However, some marking does not do enough to help pupils know what to do better.

Science across the curriculum

70. The good links with other subjects mean that pupils are encouraged to use their scientific skills across the curriculum. For example, their understanding of a healthy diet and the safe use of equipment contributes well to personal development. Their understanding of forces and cause and effect helps them to build and evaluate their constructions in design and technology.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well and standards are above average.
- The specialist teaching in Years 3 and 4 is very effective.
- ICT is used well to support learning in other subjects.

Commentary

71. Better provision is leading to improving standards as pupils move up the school. Teachers' confidence and subject knowledge have improved significantly. In the most effective lessons, teachers who are confident in their very good subject knowledge transmit their enthusiasm to pupils and manage their behaviour very well. As a result, these lessons move along at a good pace and pupils work hard on tasks that move their learning on. For example, in a Year 2 lesson pupils produced pictures for Mothers' Day cards. The teacher linked the task very well to pupils' previous learning, explained expectations for learning and behaviour very clearly, and motivated and encouraged pupils very well. This led to a very good response from pupils. They worked confidently and were willing to experiment. They made very good progress in word processing skills, combining text and graphics, and using ICT to achieve the results they wanted.
72. Teaching is good overall and pupils' achievement is enhanced by some very good teaching and high levels of support in Key Stage 2. This was demonstrated in a Year 3 lesson where the group of 17 pupils included several with behavioural difficulties. They were learning to programme a remote controlled toy to follow a route around a maze. Because of the very favourable ratio of skilled adults to pupils, behaviour was very well managed and the teacher was able to get on with the very well-planned and resourced lesson so all the pupils achieved well.

73. Very good leadership and management are evident in continuing improvements in resources; better assessment; the support for and deployment of staff, making the most of subject expertise; effective monitoring; and good plans for further development. A new system for assessing key skills in ICT has been introduced throughout the school. It has not had time to bed in but it has the potential to provide very useful information about individual pupils' progress as they move up the school. Resources have improved and are satisfactory overall. The two ICT suites are used very well so that there is often one computer for each pupil. Since the last inspection above average standards have been maintained and the school has kept up with improvements nationally.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

74. The use of ICT across the curriculum is planned well. Pupils use ICT regularly and confidently to support their work in English, mathematics and science, for research in history and geography, and for projects in art and design.

HUMANITIES

75. Work in **geography and history** was sampled but not inspected in sufficient depth to make overall judgements on the provision. One lesson was seen in geography and three in history. Pupils' work, records of their progress, and other documentation, including the whole-school plans of work were examined.
76. Standards are broadly average in both subjects and pupils progress at a satisfactory rate. Teaching was of a good quality in all the lessons seen. However, in Key Stage2, pupils' achievement does not reflect the quality teaching because of shortcomings in the planning of work.
77. In geography, pupils make sound progress in developing mapping skills, and acquiring geographical vocabulary. By studying a range of locations, including Sedburgh in Cumbria and the Indian village of Chembokoli, they develop satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the similarities and differences between places and how physical features affect people's lives. Teachers use questions well to develop pupils' understanding and research skills.
78. In history, pupils increase their factual knowledge at a satisfactory rate and develop a sound grasp of chronology, changes over time, and the reasons why people in the past acted as they did. For example, pupils in Year 3 showed an understanding of why children were evacuated from cities in wartime and how they might have felt. As in geography, teachers use questions effectively, for instance in Year 4 when one pupil was in the 'hot seat' answering questions as Boudica. Pupils' understanding of the reasons for the events of AD 60 increased as they formulated relevant, probing questions.
79. Links with other subjects are good. For instance, in pupils use their English skills for research and to write accounts of historical events and re-enact them. The curriculum is enriched well with relevant visits and visitors. For example, pupils visit museums and castles and the Sutton Hoo Saxon site and members of the local community talk to them about their wartime memories. However, at times, the pitch of the work in Key Stage 2 is not as demanding as it could be for some of the older and more able pupils. This is because, although pupils are now taught in age-group classes, the plans of work have not been re-aligned to reflect this change of organisation. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 all work on the same historical and geographical topics. The subject leaders are aware of this relative weakness and plans are in hand to evaluate the effectiveness of the current arrangements.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

One lesson was observed, in Year 4; pupils' work was examined and discussions were held with them; documentary evidence of the curriculum, assessment and the quality of leadership and management was examined; and discussions were held with the subject leaders.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well.
- Leadership and management are very good with a strong focus on improvement.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Teaching is good overall but the curriculum for pupils in Key Stage 2 does not provide enough challenge for some more able and older pupils and marking is not good enough.

Commentary

80. Standards are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils in Year 4 understand the special importance of symbols, such as an olive branch as a peace offering, and they know that symbols and rituals have significance for religious believers. Pupils in Year 2 know certain forms of dress are associated with some religions and they have satisfactory knowledge and understanding of Christianity. For example, they know that Jesus performed miracles and was 'a very nice man who looked after people'.
81. Pupils make steady progress through the school and their understanding of religious terms, worship and key figures in religion improves. However, some older and more able pupils in Key Stage 2 could do better, because the level of work is not challenging for them. This is because of shortcomings in the planning of work. A key contributory factor in the good achievement of pupils with special educational needs is that the subject raises their self-esteem as valued members of the school community and this encourages their participation in lessons.
82. The local environment is used well to help pupils appreciate the beauty and wonder of the natural world. For example, when pupils were asked about things they really liked, their responses included 'beautiful daffodils' and 'the smell of the garden when it rains'. Pupils' personal development is strongly promoted, for instance through units of work such as, 'thinking about self and others' and 'actions have consequences'.
83. The enthusiastic and knowledgeable subject leaders have recently taken on responsibility for leading the subject. They are thoughtful and strongly committed to improvement and they support their colleagues well. They have already identified highly appropriate areas for development; as a result of their examination of pupils' work and observation of teaching and they have clear plans to bring about improvement.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Not enough work was seen in any of these subjects to form overall judgements on the provision. Physical education was not inspected.

84. In **art and design** one lesson was observed. Judgements are also based on discussions with pupils; examination of their work in sketchbooks, displayed around the school and photographic evidence; and a range of subject documentation.
85. Pupils do well and standards are above average in all aspects of the subject; much displayed work is of a very good quality.

86. The art and design curriculum is interesting and stimulating and it provides balanced coverage of all strands of the subject, through a wide range of techniques and media. There are two particularly strong features. Firstly, there are very good, unforced links between art and design and many other subjects. For instance, pupils' seasonal 'weather pictures' were produced in response to a musical stimulus and in Year 1 pupils use basic two-dimensional mathematical shapes for collage. Secondly, the innovative system of 'swaps' for practical subjects in Key Stage 2 is having a very positive effect on standards and on the range of work produced in this subject. It provides small teaching groups and teaching by enthusiastic teachers who have good subject knowledge.
87. Assessment systems are good. At the end of each unit of work pupils' attainment is assessed against the levels of the National Curriculum. This system has the potential, in time, to build up into a very useful record of pupils' progress. The accommodation is good, with an 'art room' equipped with a kiln, and it is used well.
88. In **design and technology** one lesson was seen and pupils' work was examined.
89. Standards are above average and this constitutes a clear improvement since the last inspection.
90. In the Year 3 lesson observed pupils were evaluating different snack foods as a prelude to designing their own sandwiches. Teaching was good. It was distinguished by very good planning and resources and very good support for individuals which led to significant gains in learning.
91. As in art and design, provision and standards benefit from the system of 'swaps' in Key Stage 2 and assessment procedures are at a similar stage of development.
92. In **music** two lessons were observed, one in Year 1 and one in Year 4; pupils were heard singing in assemblies; choir practice was observed; and documentary evidence of the curriculum and the quality of leadership and management was examined.
93. Teaching and learning in the lessons observed was very good in Year 1 and good in Year 4. The success of these lively, well-paced lessons was the result of the teachers' strong subject knowledge and high expectations of what pupils could achieve, combined with a good range of activities which included listening to music, performing and composing, and evaluating their own and others' work. Standards are above average in Year 1 and average in Year 4. Pupils made good progress in both the lessons seen but standards in Year 4 do not reflect the quality of teaching because these pupils have benefited from specialist teaching for only a short time.
94. The curriculum is well planned and the arrangements for specialist teaching in Key Stage 2 are a positive innovation which has the potential to raise standards. Pupils work in smaller groups so they have improved opportunities for active participation and more individual help. Pupils have good opportunities to participate in musical activities outside lessons. The subject is led and managed well and the subject leader provides good guidance for non-specialist staff.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

95. There are many positive features in the provision for **personal, social and health education** (PSHE). There is a well-planned programme of PSHE lessons, which covers the nationally recommended curriculum, as well as good coverage in other subjects and through the everyday life of the school. Pupils have good opportunities to learn to take responsibility in the life of the school community. They learn about the democratic process through the work of the school council and their contribution to it. They know that their voice is heard and they affect decisions about what happens at Poplars.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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