

# INSPECTION REPORT

## WRITTLE INFANT SCHOOL

Writtle, Chelmsford

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 114917

Headteacher: Mrs E Thomas

Lead inspector: Mrs H Ranger

Dates of inspection: 26 – 29 April 2004

Inspection number: 264279

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	Infant school
School category:	Community school
Age range of pupils:	4 to 7
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	146
School address:	Lodge Road Writtle Chelmsford
Postcode:	CM1 3HZ
Telephone number:	01245 420963
Fax number:	01245 422815
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr B Bridges
Date of previous inspection:	November 1998

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

The school is smaller than average and caters for pupils aged four to seven. It is situated in the village of Writtle, near Chelmsford. Most pupils live locally, but a third come from a wider area as a result of their parents' preference for this school. An average number of pupils move into or out of the school other than at the usual transfer times. Pupils come from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds which are average overall. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and all pupils speak English as their first language. Pupils' attainment on admission to the school in the reception classes is broadly in line with the levels expected for their age, although a minority have limited social and emotional development. Eighteen per cent of pupils are identified as having special educational needs and this is in line with the national average. The school has recently achieved the national 'Healthy Schools' award.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
22223	Mrs H Ranger	Lead inspector	Foundation Stage, English, history, religious education
11104	Mr M Fleming	Lay inspector	
18505	Mr D Matthews	Team inspector	Special educational needs, mathematics, art and design, information and communication technology, music, physical education
13805	Mrs L Lowery	Team inspector	Science, geography, design and technology

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is a good school.** It provides an effective quality of education for pupils from all backgrounds. The good teaching enables pupils to achieve well, considering their capabilities. The pupils reach standards that are at least in line with national averages and often exceed them. The school is led and managed competently and has coped well with the staffing changes of recent years. It is valued highly by parents and pupils and gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The well-organised teamwork of the teaching staff ensures pupils' good progress.
- There is high quality provision for pupils with special learning or behavioural needs.
- A rich curriculum covers all subjects well and gives very good attention to pupils' personal development.
- Good leadership and management are based on clear aims and high expectations for the continuing development of the school.
- Close partnerships with parents, linked schools and the wider community enhance the quality of pupils' learning.
- The assessment procedures are not fully exploited in the planning for the highest attainers or in helping pupils to improve their work.
- The monitoring by subject co-ordinators and governors needs to be more rigorous to check progress and plan further improvements efficiently.

The school has improved well since its previous inspection. Its performance in the national tests for pupils in Year 2 has improved faster than the national trend. There has been effective action on the key issues from the last inspection. As a result, provision for children in the reception classes is now better, the curriculum is planned more efficiently and pupils develop and apply their skills in information and communication technology (ICT) more widely. Day-to-day assessment is used well by teachers to evaluate their lessons and to plan the next stages for their pupils. However, teachers vary in how far they use these assessments to let pupils know how to improve, so this is an area for development.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average*

*Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals*

**Pupils achieve well.** The children in the reception classes are on course to meet the goals that are expected by the end of the year in all areas of learning. In view of the short time that many of them have attended full-time, this represents good progress. Attainment in Year 1 is above average. The current Year 2 pupils attain average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. These standards are not as high as have been reached in this age group in recent years. However, the pupils this year have achieved well in relation to their starting points in school, particularly the significant proportion that have special learning needs. Attainment by Year 2, in all the subjects that were inspected in detail, is at least in line with the levels expected nationally. Attainment is above expected levels in art and design and religious education.

**Pupils' personal development is very good.** Pupils have good attitudes to school, are keen to learn and they behave well. Attendance is above average.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education is good.** Teaching and learning are effective in all age groups. Teachers plan imaginative, well-organised lessons that engage pupils' interest and sustain their attention. These ensure that pupils systematically acquire the knowledge, skills and understanding required in each subject. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour very well and, together with the teaching assistants, cater very effectively for those with special educational needs. The needs of the more capable pupils are met well in most lessons. The information gained from the detailed assessments that teachers make now needs to be used consistently to give pupils more feedback on how to improve their work, to ensure that the highest attainers are always challenged to do their best, and to inform the planning of future lessons. The good quality of education is rooted in a rich and varied curriculum that benefits from innovative initiatives, such as those to promote pupils' health and well-being and their thinking skills. Procedures to ensure pupils' care and welfare are very good. Productive links with parents add to the quality of pupils' learning. There are very effective links with the wider community, most notably with the nursery and junior schools that share this school's site.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are good.** The headteacher leads a committed and hardworking staff team that has the interests of the pupils at the heart of its work. Senior staff have managed the many recent staffing changes well, although this has led to them carrying a considerable workload. Governance is good and statutory requirements are met. The governors support the senior staff well. Together they have a clear vision and plan for how the school can continue to develop in the future, although governors' monitoring of the main current initiatives would benefit from more rigour. Most aspects of subject leadership are good and co-ordinators have useful action plans to aid developments. However, several co-ordinators have had few opportunities to monitor teaching and learning at first hand in lessons and this limits their knowledge of how well their subjects are doing.

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

**Parents** hold very positive views about the school. Almost all are very satisfied with its provision for their children. A few would like more information about how their children are getting on, or are concerned about incidents of bullying. Inspectors endorse the many positive views expressed by parents. They feel that levels of information are good and that the school has very good procedures to deal with the few incidents of bullying. **Pupils** also have very positive opinions about their school. They enjoy their work and are keen to learn. They like their teachers and classmates. They feel that any problems are resolved by the caring staff.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- make more use of assessment information to give feedback to pupils, to plan for the highest attainers and to inform the school's long-term planning;
- improve the overall quality of monitoring by subject co-ordinators and governors.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

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

Pupils' achievement is good in all age groups. Standards of attainment are average overall in reception and Year 2 and above average in Year 1.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in all age groups achieve well in relation to their levels of attainment on entry to the school.
- Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress.
- The most capable pupils could do better at times if lessons offered them more challenge.
- Pupils attain above expected standards in art and design and religious education.

#### Commentary

##### The Foundation Stage (the reception classes)

1. The inspection took place when almost half the pupils in the Foundation Stage were in school for the first time on a full-time basis, following a term as part-timers. The children in both classes achieve well as a result of effective teaching. They are likely to reach or surpass the expected goals by the end of the reception year in all the areas of learning that were inspected. A minority start school with limited personal and social skills. These children achieve very well in this aspect of their development and are on course to meet the learning goals in their personal, social and emotional development. In mathematical development, children do particularly well in number work and are likely to exceed the goals in this area.

##### Key Stage 1 (Years 1 and 2)

2. In 2003, the school's results in the National Curriculum tests for Year 2 were well above both the national average and the average for similar schools in reading and mathematics, and above average in writing. The school's results over the past five years have improved faster than the national trend.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	17.4 (16.6)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	15.5 (14.4)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	17.8 (17.2)	16.3 (16.5)

*There were 53 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

3. Inspection findings are that the pupils who are currently in Years 1 and 2 achieve well. Attainment is above average overall in Year 1. Attainment in Year 2 is average in English, mathematics and science. While this may seem to indicate lower standards than last year's test results, it does not give the full picture. The current Year 2 classes have a much higher proportion of pupils with significant special educational needs than was the case last year. These pupils often make very good progress in relation to their attainment on entry to the school, although the standards they reach are at best average. They are supported very well by the school and activities are planned to meet their individual needs.



4. In a few of the lessons seen, most notably in mathematics and science, the most able pupils were not challenged enough. While their progress was satisfactory, they were capable of more than was expected of them.
5. In the other subjects that were inspected in detail, attainment is in line with nationally expected levels in ICT, and is above expectations in art and design and religious education. In art and design, pupils develop a wider range of skills than is usually seen and their work shows good imagination. In religious education, pupils study topics in depth and they show good recall of facts about religions and mature consideration for their age of what religion means to people.
6. Standards have improved well since the last inspection, when pupils' progress was satisfactory overall and the progress of the youngest children in personal and social education was unsatisfactory. Pupils in all age groups now make good progress and the school monitors the achievements of all its pupils effectively. Pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds make similar progress to other pupils. There are no substantial differences in the progress made by girls compared with boys.

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

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils have positive attitudes and behave well around the school and in lessons.
- Pupils are enterprising and keen to take on responsibility.
- The school has high expectations of the behaviour and attitudes of its pupils.
- The school provides very well for the moral and social development of its pupils.
- The school council is very effective and pupils take this responsibility seriously.
- The multi-cultural aspects of pupils' education are not as well developed as other aspects of their personal development.

### **Commentary**

7. The school has maintained the high standards identified by the previous inspection in these aspects of its work. The majority of pupils have good attitudes towards school, their learning and people around them. They are interested in school life. Initially, a significant minority do not find concentration, sharing and taking turns easy. Teachers work very hard and use effective strategies to improve their behaviour and attitudes. Pupils enjoy being asked to take responsibility. The behaviour code is strong and everyone tries to adhere to it. Even when pupils find co-operation difficult, teachers and teaching assistants manage them very well and ensure that difficult behaviour is not allowed to affect the learning of others adversely. Children entering the reception classes settle quickly and a calm, purposeful working atmosphere is created. There have been good improvements in the quality of the provision for personal development in this age group since the last inspection, when it was one of the weakest features of the school.
8. Relationships between pupils and staff are good. Pupils generally show respect for each other, their teachers and visitors. They are mostly polite and helpful. Pupils from different social backgrounds and minority ethnic groups are well integrated. Older pupils show concern for younger ones. They take their playground duties seriously. Pupils and parents say bullying happens occasionally, but that it is dealt with quickly and effectively. Exclusions are rare.

**Ethnic background of pupils**

**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	137	1	0

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

9. The provision that the school makes for pupils' personal development is very good. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility from an early age. Through effective, carefully planned assemblies, religious education and lessons in personal, social and health education, pupils consider moral issues and develop their own values and beliefs. Lessons in religious education begin to develop pupils' awareness of beliefs across a range of faiths, although pupils have relatively few opportunities to learn more about the full range of modern British culture. The resources available to support this multi-cultural aspect, including visits and visitors, are more limited than those used to promote the rest of pupils' personal development. As a result, pupils' understanding of the diversity of the wider community, while satisfactory, is not as strong as the other aspects of their overall development.
10. The school provides a strong moral framework and sense of community for its pupils. They are involved in establishing the rules in their classrooms and are fully aware of what they are and what they mean. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for the environment and to consider those less fortunate than themselves. They have all been involved in planning the new playground markings and the development of co-operative playground games and activities. They enjoyed their visit to Hylands Park to gather seeds for the site, plant them and ensure future growth. Pupils are willing to plan events and to support charities. They are happy to sing Christmas carols in the local club for the elderly. The provision for social development is very good. Pupils regularly work in pairs and small groups. More able pupils frequently help those who are insecure, for example, when using computers. Pupils are quick to offer to help each other and are sensible about helping to tidy up at the end of lessons. Pupils on the school council take their responsibilities seriously and regularly seek the views of their classmates.
11. The school provides equally well for all pupils in these aspects of its work. Pupils with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic groups are considered well and their response to the provision is as good as that of the rest of the pupils. The school has identified that, overall, boys' standards are a little lower than girls and more boys are identified with special educational needs. It has a current initiative to ensure that boys are fully included in lessons and, during the inspection, there was no evidence of variations in the achievements of boys compared with girls.
12. The rate of pupils' attendance was above the national average in the year 2002/2003 and the rate of unauthorised absence was below the national average. Pupils enjoy school and are keen to attend regularly. They are usually punctual for the start of the school day.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.1	School data	0.0
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.*

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good. Teaching and learning are effective. The curriculum is good, enriched well by extra activities and is well resourced. The day-to-day care of pupils is good. There are effective links with parents and very good links with the local community.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good in all age groups. A wide range of assessment procedures is used satisfactorily.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There have been good improvements in teaching for the Foundation Stage.
- Teachers plan well overall, and especially well for pupils with special educational needs, but do not plan enough challenging activities for the highest attainers.
- The effective teaching is based on very good relationships and high expectations of pupils' behaviour.
- Teaching assistants and classroom helpers make a valuable contribution to lessons.
- There is a wide range of assessment procedures, but they need to be applied more effectively to have a greater impact on raising attainment.

### Commentary

#### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 29 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	6	13	10	0	0	0

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

13. At the time of the previous inspection, teaching was judged to be mostly satisfactory but requiring some improvement, especially for the under fives and in ICT. The school has remedied these weaknesses and improved its overall quality of teaching well. Teaching and learning are at least good in all the areas of learning and the subjects that were inspected in detail, with the exception of ICT, which is satisfactory.
14. Teaching is now good in the Foundation Stage. The teachers work well as a team and plan interesting and relevant activities. These ensure that the children settle into school routines quickly and learn efficiently. It is at this stage that the teachers begin to instil the high standards of behaviour and of pupils' personal development that they expect. These high expectations and effective management of pupils continue throughout the school as a significant strength in all classes. As a result, pupils work in a calm, purposeful environment and are settled and attentive. The very good fostering of relationships at all levels leads to an atmosphere of mutual respect among pupils and between pupils and teachers. Pupils apply themselves well to their tasks and work well, both independently and collaboratively.
15. Teachers' planning of lessons is good overall. Teachers of parallel classes liaise well and provide consistency across each year group, enabling pupils to build systematically on their knowledge, understanding and skills. Teachers generally make good use of their regular evaluations of lessons, as well as of their assessments of pupils, to plan and modify activities. In most lessons, the higher attainers are catered for well. This includes in the 'setting' arrangements. Occasionally, in mathematics and science, the most capable pupils are not fully stretched by the planned activities. Teaching is very good for the pupils with special educational needs. The school organises support that is thoughtfully matched to the needs of individual pupils. Teachers and classroom assistants have a clear picture of which pupils need extra help

and support assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning. This is largely because the school ensures they are wisely placed to give most effective support, as in the lower attaining groups of pupils for literacy and numeracy. An effective programme of support helps the increasing number with behaviour difficulties. Teachers often use praise well to raise the self-esteem of these pupils and the teacher of a Year 1 class is particularly adept at praising boys and girls equally for their efforts. On rare occasions, teaching in some classes inadvertently misses opportunities to praise boys and to raise their self-esteem further.

16. Lessons are organised well. The high quality practical resources are used well. Most lessons move at a good pace, although a few are too long to maintain pupils' interest. Occasionally, the final 'plenary' session is too rushed to be wholly effective in reviewing and reinforcing pupils' learning. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and make good use of the agreed marking code. Pupils have useful individual learning targets in key skills such as literacy and numeracy. The quality of teachers' written comments in pupils' books varies. Too often, they do not communicate to the pupils how well they have done or what they should do next to improve.
17. There is a good range of procedures to check and track pupils' longer-term progress over their time in school. Increasing use is made of test results and of systematic assessments, especially in the core subjects, to ensure that pupils are learning efficiently. There are manageable and effective procedures in the foundation subjects. The assessment co-ordinator has a good overview of standards and uses data well to help the school set suitable targets for pupils' attainment. Among the staff as a whole, the use of assessment to respond to the needs of all pupils is satisfactory. The school has rightly identified the need for several of the teaching staff to become more confident in using assessment information to contribute to the overall planning and target-setting arrangements.

## **The curriculum**

The school provides its pupils with a good curriculum that is enriched well by extra activities. The quality and quantity of accommodation and resources help the school to support pupils' learning very well.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Initiatives that the school has introduced add interest and colour to the curriculum.
- The school provides very well for pupils with special educational needs.
- The site, building and equipment help to enrich pupils' learning and development very well.
- The school does not monitor sufficiently the effect of a few lessons that are too long to sustain pupils' learning and behaviour.

### **Commentary**

18. The school has improved its curriculum since the last inspection by tackling the identified weaknesses effectively and taking an active approach to new initiatives which add vibrancy to pupils' learning. It has introduced good plans for the areas of learning for children in the reception classes. Long term plans for pupils in Years 1 and 2 now ensure that they build their knowledge, skills and understanding in logical steps across the full range of subjects. Improvements in ICT mean that teachers now plan for pupils to use these skills in satisfactory ways across other subjects. Teachers are planning effectively to extend pupils' use of ICT skills in other subjects, to make it still better.
19. A range of interesting activities helps pupils to enjoy and make good progress in their learning. For example, the school is part of a national drive to promote pupils' appreciation of healthy living. This has resulted in their good understanding of the need to eat healthy food and to take exercise. Through the good involvement of parents, pupils now enjoy fruit daily and they are aware of its beneficial effect on their health. Other initiatives include a focus on pupils' 'thinking skills' to develop creative thinking and the use of their imagination. The school makes good use of visitors, such as one who brought in a robot to give pupils an understanding of the

importance of recycling unwanted materials. While the school's promotion of sport is satisfactory, its good emphasis on pupils' participation in the arts has a positive impact on their achievements. For example, many pupils take the opportunity to play the recorder and to take part in local music festivals, to experience singing with other pupils. Chances for pupils to take part in additional art activities have a direct, positive impact on pupils' standards in this subject. Visitors to the school, whole days devoted to art and a very popular art club contribute particularly well to pupils' success. Homework supports pupils' learning well outside the school day, most notably in English.

20. The school's very good arrangements for pupils with special educational needs mean that these pupils achieve very well in relation to their capabilities. The individual learning plans for these pupils are very detailed and well focused, are regularly reviewed and are effective in taking into consideration the thoughts of parents and of pupils themselves. Teachers keep a close eye on the needs of these pupils and are aware, for example of the increase in the number of pupils, often boys, with behaviour difficulties. Action is swiftly taken to support these pupils and to raise their self-esteem, for instance, by introducing individual learning programmes. Gifted and talented pupils have been identified and the school has begun to focus more directly on their needs.
21. The very good accommodation and resources help the school to provide its positive climate for learning. The spacious, well-maintained building lends itself to the attractive displays of pupils' work. The playground is particularly well set out, with colourful markings and equipment that are well suited to pupils' playground games. The well-equipped computer room is having a positive impact on the school's improvements in ICT. Teaching assistants receive good training, so that they have good levels of expertise to encourage pupils with special educational needs.
22. Sometimes the way that the school plans its use of time has a negative impact on pupils' learning, for example in science and design and technology where almost a whole afternoon may be devoted to one subject. Some of these lessons go on too long for pupils to sustain interest and understanding in the tasks that they are given. The school has yet to evaluate rigorously the effects of such lessons on pupils' concentration and their progress.

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

The care, welfare and guidance provided for pupils are good. There are very good systems for ensuring their health and safety. Pupils are monitored with care and supported well. There is good involvement of pupils in seeking, valuing and acting on their views.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school has very effective systems for ensuring pupils' welfare.
- New pupils are introduced to the school very effectively and settle very well.
- Pupils are known very well in the school and have good relationships with adults.
- There are effective arrangements for pupils to influence decisions about their school.

### **Commentary**

23. Because of the very good induction procedures and very good relationships maintained with the main feeder nurseries and playgroups, new pupils are well known to staff from their earliest days in the school. Staff continuously develop their understanding of pupils' progress as they share information through regular discussion, so they are well prepared to provide whatever support is required. Good care is taken to meet the needs of all pupils; for instance, effective ways have been found to identify pupils with special educational needs and those with particular gifts or talents. Pupils' feelings of security are well founded and any social difficulties, such as the rare instances of bullying, are well handled when they are drawn to the attention of staff. This, and the good relationships evident among adults, supports the calm and friendly atmosphere which pervades the school.

24. Pupils are given good opportunities to shape their school's character through the democratically organised class and school councils. It is impressive that such young citizens are able to propose ideas and see them implemented. The will of the pupil population has been a vital feature of the school's successful involvement in the Healthy Schools initiative.
25. Health and safety matters are taken care of effectively and the school provides a safe and secure environment, as noted in the last inspection report. Appropriate attention is paid to risk management. Arrangements for ensuring child protection are led effectively by the headteacher and there are sound procedures and facilities for dealing with medical issues or accidents.

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

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents regard the school highly and support it well.
- There are very beneficial links with other educational establishments and the wider community.
- The school takes good account of parents' views.

### **Commentary**

26. The school has successfully sustained its good partnership with parents, reported at the last inspection. Parents are delighted with most aspects of the school's work. They applaud the arrangements for new pupils and almost all report that their children like school. Parents have great confidence in the management of the school. Most are satisfied with the teaching it provides and the academic and personal progress their children make. A small minority say they would like to be better informed about their children's progress, but parents feel comfortable about approaching the school for further information, or to discuss any other matters. Inspection findings support parents' consistently positive views of the school.
27. Parents are well informed about school events and policies through the prospectus, governors' annual report and newsletters. Reports on pupils' progress are mostly good and usually provide useful pointers that assist parents in helping their children to improve. Informative parental consultation evenings are very well attended. Parents find that general communication with the school, including that conducted through the reading record books, is effective. The school regularly solicits parents' views about policies and other proposed changes and it takes care to inform them of the result of these consultations and to act on the findings. The school has a very good partnership with the parents of pupils with special educational needs. There are ample opportunities for parents to contribute their views on what the school plans for their children to do and how well they feel that their children are making progress. There is an active and effective parents' association, which raises valuable funds for school resources and organises events well supported by parents and the local community.
28. Particularly good co-operation and mutual support are maintained with the neighbouring junior school. There are also good relationships with the two main pre-school groups, particularly the one which is on the school site. As a result, the transfer of pupils between phases is very effective and their learning and support benefit from the close relationships and communication between staff. They also benefit from participation in local community events, from the contributions of visitors to the school, and from their own visits further afield.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The senior staff lead an effective team. Governance is good.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has achieved good improvements in recent years and there is a clear vision and strong drive for its continuing development.
- The headteacher is well respected and competent, and is supported ably by her deputy.
- Governors are knowledgeable and active, although their arrangements for checking the success of some initiatives are not rigorous enough.
- Increasing use is made of school data to set the agenda well for further improvement, although some of the subject co-ordinators have not monitored teaching enough at first hand.
- The management of provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- Administrative and financial procedures are very efficient and support the smooth running of the school.

### Commentary

29. The headteacher leads the school well. She has established a common purpose among the staff, which is evident in the clear sense of direction and the commitment to improve further. The headteacher is an experienced and competent manager. She works in close partnership with the deputy head in the successful running of the school. They act as very good role models for the staff and promote very good relationships and strong teamwork. The roles and responsibilities of staff are clear and arrangements for induction, training and performance management are effective. Levels of delegation are mostly good, but the school has felt the negative effects of a number of staff changes in recent years. These have been outside its control, but have made the continuity of teaching and subject management difficult at times. It is to the senior staff's credit that the disruption of pupils' learning has been kept to a minimum and the school has sustained its improving performance. This has, however, resulted in a continuing high workload for the headteacher and deputy head in particular.
30. The school maintains good procedures for evaluating its success and for planning its further development. The staff and governors are not complacent and show a determination to provide the best education possible for all pupils. They regularly check how well they are doing in all aspects of their work. Subject leaders, for example, compile annual action plans, check pupils' work and monitor their colleagues' planning. Data about pupils' academic performance are used well by senior managers to evaluate success and set further targets, and the rest of the teachers are beginning to use the data to improve their work. However, some of the foundation subject leaders do not have enough chances to observe lessons at first hand. As a result, they are not fully aware of the quality of teaching and learning, or of how the curriculum works in practice. The school's main written development plan gives clear indications of current and longer-term priorities and is based on information gained from all interested parties. It is linked well to the budget and includes criteria by which success will be judged.
31. The governors are mostly active and well informed about the school's strengths and relative weaknesses. They fulfil statutory requirements. The headteacher works closely with the chair of governors, who gives good support and leadership. Governors visit the school frequently to see classes working and receive regular progress reports on current priorities for action. They have confidence in the headteacher's feedback to them and this trust is well placed. However, they too rarely evaluate for themselves the success or cost effectiveness of the main initiatives that they plan.
32. The co-ordinator of the provision for pupils with special educational needs provides very good leadership. She monitors very thoroughly the work of the teaching assistants who support these pupils, giving them very good quality feedback on her observations. This means that these adults are very clear about which aspects of their work are effective and how they can continue to develop their skills to benefit the pupils. The school is committed to providing an

inclusive education for all pupils. It checks how well particular groups do, such as boys, girls and pupils from ethnic minorities, and tailors its planning to meet their needs.

33. The financial management of the school is very good and is supported very well by efficient administrative staff. It reflects the principles of best value well and the school achieves good value for money in its spending decisions. Regular audits of the financial procedures take place by officers from the local education authority and the reports from these are very positive. The school has carried forward substantial sums in its budget in recent years. These were built up to support its staffing and building plans. They have been spent well, to the benefit of the pupils. The remainder is sensibly allocated to ease the financial effects of the current small dip in the school's roll.

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

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	418,992
Total expenditure	433,759
Expenditure per pupil	2,835

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	64,880
Balance carried forward to the next	50,113

34. At the time of the last inspection, the management and efficiency of the school were good. The school has maintained its strengths and continues to develop well. It is a friendly, happy community that retains the confidence of its pupils, parents and staff, while providing a good quality of education.



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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

35. At the time of the previous inspection, the provision for the under-fives was a key issue for improvement. The school has acted well to remedy the weaknesses identified at that time and provision for this age group is now a significant strength of the school. At the time of the inspection, almost half of the children in both classes had only just started to attend school full-time, following a term of part-time attendance. As a result, they were still settling in to some routines. Children's attainment on admission varies considerably. It is average overall, although the school's assessments show that a significant minority of pupils have limited social and emotional skills.
36. Teaching is good overall. The staff work well as a team and plan work that ensures a wide and relevant curriculum. Assessment procedures are thorough and are used well in planning work that is suited to the very wide range of attainment. Leadership and management for this age group are good. The main co-ordinator is not based in the reception classes. She monitors the team's work well, but this responsibility adds to her already considerable workload. The children benefit from very good accommodation and resources. The classrooms are spacious and well-equipped and the outdoor area is of a particularly high quality.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

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

- Children are introduced very well to the routines of school, so they settle quickly.
- Relationships between children and adults are of high quality.

#### **Commentary**

37. Children achieve well in both classes and are on course to reach the learning goals they are expected to meet by the end of the year. This is a significant achievement for the minority who start school with limited skills in this area of their learning and for those who have only started full-time school this term. Good teaching ensures that children have clear guidance about their teachers' expectations of their work and behaviour. The day is organised efficiently, so that children are kept interested and busy in their work and are keen to learn. There is a good balance between the activities that receive the direct support of adults and those that the children pursue independently. The older children show good levels of confidence and independence, setting a good example to the newer entrants. Children behave well, take turns as needed and maintain their concentration during activities. The three teachers and the teaching assistants work closely together in planning lessons and so adopt a consistent approach that reassures the children. They offer a secure and caring environment. Provision in this area of learning was criticised by the last inspection and children's progress was judged unsatisfactory. The school acted swiftly to remedy the weaknesses that were identified and this is now an area of strength.

### **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

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

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

- Activities cater well for the wide range of children's attainment.
- Effective use is made of all available adults in school and of parental help at home.
- Teachers do not make the most of opportunities to develop children's writing.

### **Commentary**

38. Children in both classes are on course to meet the levels expected by the end of the year. This represents good achievement, especially for the younger ones. Most children are good listeners in more formal sessions, because adults insist on attention and respect for whoever is speaking. Children extend their vocabulary and sentence structure well. They show positive attitudes to books and their reading development is supported well at home through the home-school reading programme. Writing skills develop well and the oldest children write short sentences with some adult help. They have a good understanding of the sounds that letters make and are taught to form their writing well. Teaching is good. Teachers plan activities that cater well for the full range of capabilities. In doing so, they make good use of the skills of teaching assistants and voluntary helpers to support individuals and groups, especially those with particular learning or behavioural needs. In a very good lesson seen, three adults worked with groups of children to re-enact the story of 'The Three Little Pigs'. The adults varied their questioning and explanations to suit the children's levels of attainment and had appropriate expectations of the children's responses. More was expected of the most capable pupils and good support was given to those with special learning needs. Occasionally, teachers do not fully exploit opportunities that arise for children to practise their writing informally. For instance, an otherwise good session of mixed creative activities did not include any encouragement of children to write.

### **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

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

- Children exceed expected levels in their number skills.
- Teaching is good and emphasises practical activities.

### **Commentary**

39. Children achieve well and are on course to reach at least the expected levels by the end of the year. A significant minority are likely to exceed these levels in their understanding of number. Teachers plan interesting activities that are suited to the range of attainment in each class. The older children were seen counting confidently to 70 and they complete simple addition and subtraction tasks accurately. They use their mathematical skills across the curriculum, such as when measuring beanstalks or recording the size of chairs during work on 'Jack and the Beanstalk' and 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears'. Most mathematical activities are firmly rooted in first-hand practical activities that make learning relevant for the pupils. This is aided by the very good levels of resources available. The teachers take every opportunity to practise mathematical skills, such as asking children to work out how many are absent during registration, then counting the number of seconds it takes the monitors to return the register to the office.

### **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD**

40. No lessons were observed in this area of learning, so no judgements can be made about overall provision or the quality of teaching. Evidence from the children's previous work, from displays and from teachers' planning and records indicates that children are on course to achieve the early learning goals by the end of the year. Early experiences in science, technology and the humanities are all planned well. These include regular opportunities for religious education, in line with the guidance of the locally agreed syllabus. Children gain an awareness of the wider world through relevant studies, such as those of the history and geography of their village, the life cycles of plants and animals and 'people who help us'. They have regular access to computers for a wide range of activities. Mixed activity sessions provide opportunities for designing and making objects with a variety of construction equipment.

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in physical development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The hall and outdoor areas are used well to develop pupils' physical skills.
- There is no shade or cover in the outdoor area adjacent to the classrooms.

### **Commentary**

41. Children achieve well as a result of good teaching and are on course to meet the expected levels by the end of the year. The reception class area includes a large, well-equipped outdoor space and all children use this space regularly for a wide range of physical activities. The two classes have a separate morning playtime from the rest of the school and, during this time, they use the newly refurbished playground and all its facilities. This provides an extensive area for their play. Both classes also use the hall for whole-class lessons. In a lesson seen, children moved in a variety of directions around this large space, with due care for the safety of others. In their day-to-day work, the children develop satisfactory hand skills through experiences with tools such as pencils and scissors. The school has plans to provide a canopy later this year to cover part of the outdoor area adjoining the two classrooms. This is a sensible priority which will provide shade in hot weather and cover in wet weather, thus enabling the very good facilities to be used even more efficiently.

## **CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in creative development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers plan a wide range of activities that develop children's learning well.
- There is effective direct teaching of skills by adults, combined with good opportunities for children to choose their own activities.

### **Commentary**

42. A wide range of interesting and stimulating activities is planned for both classes, in aspects such as art, music and creative play. Children achieve well and are likely to attain the early learning goals by the end of the year. The younger children need and receive plenty of help from adults, in learning basic skills such as painting and cutting. The older children also receive guidance in new skills, such as when printing a little pig's 'house of bricks'. In these activities, the adults have clear objectives linked to current topics and they explain and instruct well. The teachers also plan activities that enable children to make their own choices and use their initiative and imagination. These include 'free' painting and creative play in the role play area or home corner. A satisfactory range of musical activities is also provided.

## SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 1

### ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The planning of lessons caters well for all levels of attainment and leads to good achievement.
- The staff team, led by an able co-ordinator, have used their monitoring well to sustain the improvements of recent years.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour in lessons.
- Teachers use assessments well in their planning, but their marking does not tell pupils often enough how they can improve their work.
- The summary session of lessons is used effectively in most but not all classes.

#### Commentary

43. In most recent years, the school's results in the national tests in Year 2 have been above or well above the national average in reading. They have been at least average in writing and were above average last year. In 2003, compared with schools with similar levels of free school meals, writing was above average and reading well above average. These results indicate that pupils made good progress, compared to their levels of attainment on admission. The pupils currently in Year 2 include a significantly greater proportion with special educational needs than last year. Inspection findings are that their attainment is average. Given the high proportion of special needs in the year group, they are achieving well for their capabilities. Attainment in Year 1 is above expected levels and pupils achieve well. At the time of the previous inspection, pupils' progress in English was judged to be satisfactory: it is now good.
44. Pupils achieve well in speaking and listening. The oldest pupils attain average standards. Teachers place a high priority on developing oral skills and organise their lessons to include relevant activities that promote these well. This, combined with their high expectations of pupils' behaviour, ensures that pupils listen carefully to adults and classmates. They have many opportunities to learn new words, as well as to practise and extend their speaking skills. Pupils speak audibly and confidently. In an impressive lesson in Year 1, pupils competently used terms such as 'illustration' and 'non-fiction book' when discussing a class text.
45. Achievement in reading is good. Pupils in Year 2 attain average standards, which represent good progress in relation to their attainment on admission. Pupils show good attitudes to reading. They enjoy books and most read regularly and enthusiastically at home, as well as at school. Good support for reading by parents enhances pupils' learning. Pupils are taught the skills to tackle new words competently and teachers provide a good range of opportunities for individual and group reading. Effective use is made of teaching assistants and voluntary helpers to ensure that pupils read regularly with an adult. The book areas in classrooms and the main library are well organised and provide attractive, up-to-date resources. Classroom displays show good attention to a wide range of texts.
46. Achievement in writing is also good and pupils in Year 2 attain average standards. Improvement in writing, especially by boys, has been a recent priority for the school and evidence indicates that it is being successful. There were no significant variations in the achievements of boys compared with girls during the inspection. For example, the upper attainment 'set' in Year 2 consists of broadly equal numbers of boys and girls. Pupils are given regular, good quality writing activities. Suitable attention is paid to phonics, spelling and handwriting. The older pupils are developing a fluent, joined style of handwriting in their practice books, although this is too rarely transferred to their independent writing. Teachers ensure that pupils practise writing in a wide range of styles and formats. Pupils have regular opportunities to write independently and to express their own ideas and imagination through their work. Satisfactory use is made of ICT skills to present final drafts of selected work.

47. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Underpinning all lessons is the teachers' successful promotion of good relationships and attitudes among pupils. The provision of interesting activities enthuses and stretches pupils of all abilities and there are clear expectations of how pupils will behave. The school makes effective use of grouping the older classes according to pupils' attainments. Additional staffing is used well in the lower set to give extra attention to the large number who have special educational needs. This has a positive impact on their achievements. Most aspects of lessons are organised well, although in some the final 'plenary' session is too rushed to be as effective as it could be. Teachers have a good range of assessment procedures that are increasingly used to set targets for improvement for individuals, year groups and the school as a whole. There is effective use of the agreed marking code, which tells pupils through symbols how well they have done. However, teachers' written comments in books too rarely give pupils sufficient information about what they can do to improve their work.
48. The knowledgeable co-ordinator leads and manages the subject well. She has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses across the school, as a result of regular monitoring of lessons, pupils' work and teachers' planning.

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

49. Teachers apply pupils' language and literacy skills well in other subjects, especially science and the humanities. They plan good links between subjects that make learning relevant for pupils and enable them to practise their literacy skills widely. The literacy lessons seen in Year 2 were based on science work about 'minibeasts' and encouraged pupils to write factually in formats such as tables, jotted notes and extended sentences. There were very good activities in a Year 1 history lesson enabling pupils to practise their discussion skills and compile word lists. In religious education, pupils are involved in quite complex discussions and they regularly record their work in writing.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve well, because the teaching of mathematical skills and understanding is good.
- The co-ordinator's good leadership has contributed well to the rising standards in recent years.
- Teachers do not always assess rigorously enough what the most talented pupils can do, in order to set work that constantly challenges them.

### **Commentary**

50. The school has effectively addressed the weaknesses noted in the last inspection. Teachers now give pupils sufficient chances to investigate and explore mathematical ideas and problems. The school plans how pupils will make systematic progress in their mathematical understanding year on year, so they no longer spend too much time unnecessarily practising skills at the expense of developing them further. Teachers now make satisfactory use of ICT to support pupils' learning in mathematics and some good examples were seen. The co-ordinator leads the subject well. She has a clear view of what needs to be done to enable pupils to do well.
51. Pupils achieve well and standards have risen significantly in recent years. In 2003, pupils' performance in the national tests was well above average. Pupils now in Year 2 have reached standards that are average for their age. Given their attainment when they began Year 1 and the high number of pupils with special educational needs currently in Year 2, they are achieving well. The school is aware of the larger number of pupils with special educational needs in this year group, notably the proportion of boys with emotional needs. The co-ordinator monitors the relative performance of boys and girls and the school maintains a sharp focus on supporting

these pupils. It effectively does this through devising special programmes for them and by considering carefully the placing of additional adults to provide support in their numeracy lessons. Boys' less favourable performance compared with that of girls over recent years is a school focus and it is a priority to increase the proportion of boys reaching at least the expected Level 2.

52. Pupils do well because teaching is good. Teachers give pupils clear explanations of mathematical ideas, so that pupils understand them easily and they know what they have to do. Lessons are purposeful and move along at a good pace, so pupils remain interested. This is particularly so when the teacher shows a sense of humour, as in a Year 1 lesson when pupils found learning fun. Teachers give pupils plenty of chances to explain how they work things out, which helps them to clarify their own thinking, as well as that of the other pupils. Very occasionally teachers do not fully engage the more reluctant pupils, often boys. This means that their progress is sometimes not sufficiently rapid. Most aspects of the planning for the more capable pupils are good, including the 'setting arrangements'. However, teachers do not always have enough information about what the most talented pupils can and cannot do in order to set work that constantly challenges them. As a result, these pupils could do better at times.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

53. Teachers make satisfactory arrangements for pupils to use mathematics across the range of subjects. It is used effectively in science, for example when Year 1 pupils measure their growing beans in centimetres. There are good examples of links with ICT, as when Year 2 pupils handle data about numbers and colours of cars to make a chart. While satisfactory elsewhere, there is less evidence of the application and practice of mathematical skills in subjects such as geography and design and technology.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching has improved well since the last inspection.
- Leadership and management of the subject are good.
- Good emphasis is given to the development of pupils' investigative skills.
- There is insufficient challenge for the most able pupils in a few lessons.

### **Commentary**

54. In the 2003 teacher assessments for science, pupils' attainment was just below the national average. However, the analysis of the current work in Year 2 indicates that pupils are on target to achieve average standards this year. Overall, they achieve well in relation to their capabilities, particularly considering the large proportion who have special educational needs. By Year 2, pupils demonstrate a secure understanding of scientific facts for their age. They understand how to carry out investigations and record their findings in different ways. They are beginning to understand the importance of ensuring that tests are fair. The considerable number of pupils with special educational needs receive good support and their work is usually carefully matched to their learning needs. Consequently this group of pupils achieves well. Although more is expected of the most able pupils in lessons, the work does not always challenge them sufficiently and the standards they reach are not sufficiently high. This has been recognised by the school: there are sound plans for improvement, but these have yet to have the impact that would make overall provision better.
55. Teaching and learning are now good, and better than at the time of the last inspection. They reflect recent improvements. Teachers have a secure understanding of the subject, which enables them to plan interesting and enjoyable activities. They always try to plan different levels of activity to meet the needs of all abilities in the class. This is successful for the great majority

of pupils and in most lessons, but has yet to have sufficient effect on the standards attained by the most capable minority. Teachers work closely with learning support assistants. As a result, they have a very positive impact on the learning of pupils with special educational needs. Teachers use questioning well to find out what pupils already know and to get them to apply their knowledge to new situations. Computers are used regularly to support or extend pupils' learning in science. This is an improvement on the situation in the last inspection, when computers were insufficiently used. Teachers also make good use of science to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and to show pupils how to apply these skills. The subject contributes positively to pupils' personal development. Teachers provide many activities requiring pupils to work independently or in groups and have high expectations of good behaviour. Their good use of the environmental area in the school grounds adds extra interest and first-hand experiences to pupils' learning. The school arranges stimulating visits and invites visitors, who make the lessons more interesting. Very effective displays of science work around the school help to create a stimulating learning environment.

56. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The co-ordinator understands well how the subject needs to be developed. She has a sensible action plan enabling her to achieve this, which includes how the school will cater for its most able pupils. She has improved the programme of work. She has introduced a good assessment scheme, which gives teachers the information they need to match the level of work to the ability of the pupils. She has rightly identified the need to monitor teachers' planning more closely to ensure that it contains sufficient challenge for the most able pupils, based on the information gained from assessment. Investigative work has been given more emphasis recently. Resources have been improved to enable pupils to undertake an interesting range of investigations. The co-ordinator monitors pupils' work and gets the chance to observe science lessons. This means she has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject and is able to make suggestions which improve standards in general. It also means that there is consistency in learning between parallel classes and better continuity from Year 1 to Year 2.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

Provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good resources and training for teachers are beginning to raise the satisfactory standards.
- There have been good improvements in linking ICT effectively with other subjects, to support learning.

### **Commentary**

57. Since the last inspection, there has been sufficient improvement. Lessons are now long enough for pupils to learn and practise specific skills effectively. The school now has satisfactory arrangements for recording pupils' progress as they move through the school. Some of these arrangements are new and have yet to be thoroughly monitored for their effectiveness.
58. Improvements in resources and training for teachers are beginning to have a positive impact on standards. The school now has a computer room with ample computers to enable good access by pupils. Although the room is often too warm to be comfortable for its users, it provides good facilities. Most teachers now have at least sufficient competence and confidence to teach pupils the planned skills effectively and to introduce new technology, including the recently acquired 'Smartboard'. The co-ordinators are aware of the few relative weaknesses in resources, such as the need for additional software to support what teachers plan for pupils to learn. They give satisfactory leadership. By the time they leave the school, pupils attain standards that are similar to those expected nationally for their age and their achievements are satisfactory. Pupils in Year 1 are often achieving well and with support they can save and

retrieve their work on a computer. They can label images with words and print their work. This was seen to good effect in a lesson linked to work in history.

59. The teaching seen during the inspection was satisfactory overall. In a good lesson, instructions to pupils were very clear, so they knew what they had to do to 'dress the teddy' on screen. Through prompt, effective support and guidance, the teacher and the support assistant enabled these Year 1 pupils to work at a level normally expected of older pupils. Pupils in this age group are on course to achieve well by the end of Year 2. Occasionally, the teachers do not give the brighter pupils work that challenges them sufficiently, as in a Year 2 lesson, where higher attaining pupils found their questions to do with data handling insufficiently demanding. On these rare occasions, the more capable Year 2 pupils do not achieve as well as they might.

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

60. The last inspection reported that ICT was not used effectively to support pupils' learning in other subjects. The school has remedied this weakness. There are now satisfactory links with a range of other subjects and the school is actively seeking to develop these further. Examples of good links with mathematics include pupils handling and representing data effectively. Pupils in Year 2 have presented their work attractively using word-processing, such as when writing about The Great Fire of London in a range of colours and fonts. In history, pupils demonstrated their understanding of a lesson well by taking digital images of old and new toys and choosing a 'work bank' of adjectives to describe how the toys' ages can be identified. The school has identified that there is scope to enrich further the satisfactory links between ICT and other subjects and has sound plans to achieve this.

### **HUMANITIES**

61. In the humanities subjects, work was sampled in **geography** and **history**. Not enough evidence was gathered to make overall judgements on the quality of provision.
62. In **geography**, no lessons were seen. There are indications from pupils' work and displays that standards meet expected levels, as at the time of the last inspection. A range of visits, visitors, videos and the use of ICT help to bring the subject to life and make it interesting. Before the inspection, parents said that their children particularly enjoyed geography lessons. Work in pupils' books indicates that pupils are gaining a good insight into the characteristics of the local area and that they are given the chance to express opinions about their likes and dislikes. In addition, they are encouraged to care for the environment and think about how it could be improved. In Year 2, pupils have compared their lives in Writtle to those of a family in Mexico. They have enjoyed this work and have used the Internet as a useful way of gaining information about distant places. The leadership and management of geography are satisfactory. The co-ordinator has only recently been appointed, but has already begun to identify ways of improving the subject as a result of monitoring teachers' planning and pupils' work. She is knowledgeable and enthusiastic, but has not yet had time to observe lessons in order to have a greater impact on standards.
63. In **history**, two lessons were seen. One was taught well and one very well. Both showed good planning by the teachers of relevant and interesting units of work, as well as high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Particular strengths in one lesson were the very effective use of a previous homework task to prepare pupils, a display of old and new toys to engage pupils' interest and a visiting speaker who talked to the class about toys in her childhood. Pupils made very good use of their ICT skills to produce digital images and typed word lists of a chosen old toy. Discussions with the oldest pupils revealed their sound recall of recent units of work, including those on Florence Nightingale and The Great Fire of London. Pupils talked well about how they find out about the past and how the impact of particular events can be seen today. Pupils' books and work on display show good practice and application of their literacy and ICT skills in their history lessons. The co-ordinator has a satisfactory grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject. She has a relevant action plan to develop the curriculum further,



but has not recently observed lessons to inform her knowledge of standards or the quality of teaching.

## Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective teaching ensures that the curriculum is covered well.
- Teachers skilfully encourage careful thought and reflection by the pupils.
- Pupils show considerable interest and pride in their work.
- The co-ordinator has a clear understanding of how well the subject is taught and how it can be developed.

### Commentary

64. Provision has improved since the last inspection. By Year 2, pupils' attainment exceeds the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. In both Year 1 and Year 2, pupils achieve well. This is because the subject is given sufficient priority in the timetable, the teachers have clear guidance about what they should cover in lessons and good practical resources are available to support learning. The units of work planned in both year groups more than cater for the requirements of the syllabus. Pupils' books show that regular lessons build systematically on pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. In discussions, pupils in Year 2 were enthusiastic and keen to share their learning. They were proud of their achievements. They demonstrated a good recall for their age of a range of features of Christianity and of other major religions. They know a number of Bible stories, such as the parables of Jesus and the story of David and Goliath, and are beginning to understand the meaning of these stories for Christians. Visiting the local church has resulted in a good understanding of the building and its artefacts, the role of the vicar and the symbolic meaning of items such as the cross. They have begun to learn about a range of world faiths, such as Sikhism and Islam, and remember some of the major festivals and beliefs from these.
65. Evidence from pupils' work, lessons and from discussions with the oldest pupils shows that teaching and learning are good. In a lesson in Year 2, pupils maturely discussed 'A Place for Prayer'. With sensitive encouragement from their teacher, they touched on topics of spiritual experience, people's need for quiet and reflection, and how some places are 'special'. The teacher retained the pupils' engagement in the lesson by relating these complex areas to the pupils' own experiences. This lesson combined well with the evidence from pupils' written work, the content of the programme of assemblies and the range of lessons in personal and social education to demonstrate the school's integrated approach. Religious education is promoted well alongside pupils' overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
66. The headteacher leads and manages the subject well. She has ensured that teachers have good support, provided through such documents as a clear programme of units of work and well-chosen commercial resources. She observes lessons and works jointly with colleagues in class to check the quality of teaching and learning. Her clear action plan includes relevant academic targets and specifies the additional resources that will be needed to enhance the subject further in the future.

## CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

67. **Design and technology, music and physical education** were not inspected in detail and it is not possible to judge overall provision in these subjects.
68. In **design and technology**, no lessons were taught during the inspection, but teachers' planning and examples of pupils' previous work were examined. Discussion took place with pupils and the subject co-ordinator. Pupils enjoy their work and find the activities interesting. They work with the full range of materials specified in the National Curriculum. Pupils' making skills consistently improve as they move through the school. Their work shows care with the quality of finish and indicates that pupils are encouraged to make their own choices and

decisions about their work from an early age. Practical work is of the expected standard, but more could be expected of the oldest and most able pupils in Year 2 in evaluating their products. Whenever possible, teachers link topics to work in other subjects, which makes learning more relevant for pupils. The subject is led and managed well. The co-ordinator has monitored planning and teaching throughout the school and, as a result, has an effective subject development plan. Good assessment procedures have recently been introduced. Pupils and parents have enjoyed entering the school's technology competition and the 'trolls' they have made together are of a very good standard.

69. In **music**, pupils achieved standards that are expected for their age in the two lessons seen. This reflects the findings of the last inspection, when standards were satisfactory. That inspection highlighted a lack of time for pupils to play instruments. Teaching in both lessons seen this time avoided this weakness because pupils had good access to instruments. Year 1 and Year 2 pupils sing well, as in assembly when they showed enjoyment of their singing and clapped accurately in time to the beat. A skilled voluntary pianist adds zest to assemblies with her animated piano playing. The curriculum is further enriched with chances for pupils to learn to play the recorder and to take part in local music festivals, and many respond well to these opportunities.
70. Effective features of teaching include the use of well-chosen resources. In the Year 1 lesson, for example, pupils listened to evocative music depicting the rainforest. Teaching gives effective emphasis to helping pupils learn the names of the instruments that they play. However, opportunities for them to be able to see and read the names are sometimes missed. Teaching challenges Year 2 pupils well, such as when expecting them to play long and short sounds on their instruments from written symbols. The teacher also gives pupils good opportunities to compose music of their own and to comment on the effectiveness of each other's compositions. Occasionally teaching lacks the pace and excitement to engage all pupils fully, and most notably the boys. The co-ordinator gives satisfactory leadership of the subject, though this has yet to include the systematic monitoring of teaching, so as to share with teachers what is working well and what could be improved.
71. In **physical education**, the teaching and learning seen during the inspection were satisfactory. Most teachers have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the subject to teach it adequately, so pupils show sound improvement in their knowledge and skills. Teachers value what pupils say and they encourage them to make comments, as when pupils in Year 2 discussed how best to control a ball. Occasionally, teaching does not clearly communicate to pupils what they are expected to do. The school enriches learning in interesting ways, including teaching pupils playground games and providing them with good resources through involvement in national initiatives that promote healthy living.
72. The last inspection identified weaknesses in the length and frequency of physical education lessons. Some lessons were too long and some classes had only one lesson a week. The school has effectively remedied this weakness so that classes now have three lessons a week of adequate length. There are occasions during some lessons, however, when teaching does not give enough time to the development of each new skill for pupils to improve it fully. For instance, in a brisk Year 2 lesson, the teacher did not allow enough time for pupils to practise each ball-rolling skill to make it fully accurate. As a result, their achievements by the end of the lesson were satisfactory rather than good. The co-ordinator's satisfactory leadership of the subject does not yet include observing teachers, so as to identify and address any weaknesses and to build on what is effective.

## **Art and design**

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

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve well because the subject curriculum is rich and varied.
- Teaching and learning are good, encouraging individuality and imagination.
- The enthusiastic co-ordinator has not been given time to observe others teaching to build on the present good practice.

### **Commentary**

73. Pupils achieve well and, as at the time of the last inspection, they reach standards that are above those expected for their ages in both Year 1 and Year 2. This is because the curriculum gives them a wide range of exciting chances to try out and to develop new skills that they use well to produce imaginative results. In addition to regular art lessons, the school devotes whole days to art, which give pupils plenty of time to explore methods and pursue their ideas to completion. Visiting artists inspire pupils and the very popular art club encourages pupils to use a range of media and techniques effectively to accomplish some very successful effects, for example in paint and collage. Three-dimensional work includes thoughtful sculptures using painted sticks and very imaginative dragonflies with original ideas for body parts, such as Blu-Tac for the ends of the antennae and a metal spiral for the body. Two-dimensional images are of similarly good quality, such as the well-finished buildings that Year 2 pupils produced when looking at shapes, colours and patterns.
74. Teaching is good. It continues to reflect the findings of the last inspection, effectively encouraging pupils to bring much individuality to their creations by experimenting and following their own ideas. This good impact is seen in the sculptures of Year 1 pupils, who have evolved varied ways of arranging paper to good effect. Teachers use the work of famous artists to stimulate pupils well, for example the sculptor Andy Goldsworthy, whose ideas motivated pupils to restructure the large stick sculptures that they created. Occasionally, teaching does not swiftly deal with the inappropriate behaviour of a small minority of pupils and, as a result, their progress slows for a time. Most pupils are keen artists, however. The many attractive displays of their work add to the very pleasant environment that is evident across the entire school.
75. The co-ordinator manages the subject well. She has a good knowledge of what is happening in the school and she has played a key part in the introduction of a range of effective enrichment opportunities. The art club, for example, caters well for the most talented pupils. The co-ordinator does not have the opportunity, however, to observe teaching directly, so as to support teachers in building on the present good practice. As a result, leadership of the subject is satisfactory, rather than good.

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

76. Not enough evidence was available from the small number of lessons seen in this subject to judge the quality of teaching and learning and, therefore, of overall provision. There is, however, a well-planned programme of work. This ensures that pupils experience regular, carefully planned lessons that progressively develop their skills and knowledge in this subject. Drugs awareness and sex education lessons are included in lessons at a level that is relevant to the age of the pupils. Lessons make a very effective contribution to the extensive work that takes place in the school as a whole to encourage pupils' social development. The programme of work combines well with activities such as assemblies, playground routines and the work of the school council. Pupils benefit considerably from all the work that has gone into gaining recognition as a 'Healthy School', a national award that it has achieved recently. Pupils have been fully involved in this initiative and their views have been sought and valued. For example, they have helped to plan their playground, with interesting and attractive results.
77. In the small number of lessons seen, pupils achieved satisfactory standards for their age. They listened well to each other and to the teacher. They confidently expressed opinions, which showed good levels of responsibility for the local environment. Pupils enjoy trusting relationships with teachers, who value what they say. Consequently, they are confident in

offering their views. A range of visitors from the local community visits the school, which makes pupils' learning more interesting and relevant.

78. The leadership and management of this subject are good. The co-ordinator is very enthusiastic and hard-working. She has achieved good results in the two years since her appointment. The subject is now a carefully planned and important part of the curriculum.

## 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>3</b>
Pupils' achievement	3
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>3</b>
Attendance	3
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	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	2
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	2
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	3
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).*