

INSPECTION REPORT

HOUGHTON-ON-THE-HILL C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL

Houghton-on-the Hill, Leicester

LEA area: Leicestershire

Unique reference number: 120136

Headteacher: Andrew Lee

Lead inspector: Robert Greatrex

Dates of inspection: 22nd – 25th March 2004

Inspection number: 264471

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils:	4 to 10
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	222 pupils
School address:	Main Street Houghton-on-the Hill Leicester Leicestershire
Postcode:	LE7 9GD
Telephone number:	0116 2412465
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mark Scase
Date of previous inspection:	October 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Houghton-on-the Hill is a medium sized village school near Leicester. It has close links with the Church of England, and has voluntary controlled status. The school also has close and beneficial links with local schools, other churches, a teacher training institution and other organisations.

Houghton has a socio-economic mix that is varied but advantaged overall. Attainment on entry covers a wide range, but is above average overall. The school draws its pupils from a largely white ethnicity, but with about one in ten from an Asian background and a very small proportion from other ethnic groups. About eight per cent of pupils have special educational needs, mainly learning difficulties. Of these, five pupils have statements of special educational needs, a proportion high by national standards.

The school was awarded the Charter Mark in 1998. It offers some after school and evening classes for pupils and adults.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
19924	Robert Greatrex	Lead inspector	Science Physical education Areas of learning for children in the foundation stage
13828	Ron Ibbitson	Lay inspector	
22831	Clive Lewis	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology Music Provision for pupils with special educational needs
22685	Natalie Moss	Team inspector	English Provision for pupils as English as an additional language Religious education French Geography History

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Houghton-on-the Hill is a **very effective** school giving **very good value for money**. A parent summed it up as 'the sort of school you want your child to attend'. It is fully inclusive of all pupils.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Houghton has a very positive atmosphere. It encourages pupils to 'have a go' and see making a mistake as the way we learn. Pupils are very well cared for and social development is excellent.
- Standards overall are well above expectations by Year 5 and all pupils make good progress.
- Pupils respond very positively with much interest and enthusiasm to the rich, varied and stimulating curriculum.
- There is a strong sense of purpose, a desire to make a good school better. Head and governors lead the school very well. They know what needs doing and what they must do to achieve it.
- Teaching is consistently good and pupils learn at a good rate.
- Parents and school work very closely together to the great benefit of pupils.
- Houghton is very outward looking. Very beneficial links exist to other schools and organisations.
- The school buildings are restrictive. The library is too small and insufficient facilities lower standards in physical education.

Since last inspected in 1998, the school has made very good improvement. It continues to drive forward. Progress in religious education is now good, literacy skills are used well in all other subjects, standards of presentation of work are high and reading experiences are more varied. Only in physical education has improvement been limited, and this is beyond the school's control.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Achievement is **good overall**. The needs of the least and most able are quickly recognised and work tailored to meet them. Boys and girls, and different ethnic groups, all do equally well. Children enter 'Four+' with a wide range of ability but above average overall. They achieve very well in 'Four+' and well in Reception. Almost every child achieves the standards expected of them, and many exceed them. Achievement is good throughout the next five years. When it dips, as in Year 2 reading in 2003, the school is quick to analyse why and make effective changes. In the Year 2 classes, and Year 5, pupils learn at a particularly good rate and consequently achieve very well.

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

*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*

The school is one of a few locally where pupils transfer at the end of Year 5. The vast majority of pupils in England transfer at the end of Year 6, after the nationally-set and externally marked national tests. This provides comparisons between schools. No such comparisons are available at the end of Year 5. The only national comparisons available are of Year 2, printed here. By the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 5, standards overall and in English and mathematics are well above those expected for this age group. Year 5 standards are judged by an analysis of pupils' previous work, work seen in classes now, and 'optional' national tests not marked to the same national standards. In science, they are above. In information and communication technology (ICT), art and design and music standards are well above those expected. In French, standards are very good.

Standards are above expectations in all other subjects except physical education. Here, limited facilities slow achievement and lower standards. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral and cultural development, is **very good**. Social development is excellent. Attitudes are very positive, behaviour very good. Older pupils happily help younger ones. Pupils want to learn, they have a thirst for knowledge. Each week starts with a celebration of last week's achievements, setting the right tone for new endeavours. Attendance is very good, pupils on time so the day gets off to a good start.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education offered is **very good**. Teaching is **good** and the curriculum **very good**. Pupils are **very well** cared for. Links with parents are **very good**. The atmosphere in classes is productive; very good relationships and trust between adults and pupils and good use of humour within a very 'business-like' approach. Classrooms are a hive of activity, they 'buzz' with learning. Pupils are all fully engrossed in well-planned worthwhile and interesting activities. They are enthused and keen to learn. Much is done to extend the curriculum and take the children into the wider world. This is a significant factor in producing such well-rounded and self-confident pupils readily willing, for example, to speak publicly from a very early age. Of particular note is the superb outdoor facility, very well used by staff to develop pupils' skills in many areas. Whether it is the youngest developing a sense of chronology as they watch season follow season, or the eldest learning to care for chicks, there is much to do and learn. Resources are sufficient, but accommodation overall is unsatisfactory. Every inch is well used, but the hall and library are too small for their purpose.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **very good overall**. Governance is very good. Governors know their school very well. They strike the right balance between supporting and questioning the school. They bring many skills beneficial to the school. The headteacher provides exceptional leadership. He continues to look to see the school raise standards while maintaining its warm, family feel and broad, rich curriculum. He is very well supported by a very good management team, good subject leaders and an able dedicated team of teachers, teaching assistants and support staff.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and fully involved in their children's learning. Parents respond to events such as the informative science evening enthusiastically. Questionnaire results, and comments at the meeting for parents, were very positive. Pupils like the school a great deal. They feel they are given lots of different and interesting things to do, whilst at the same time the school makes sure they learn the basic skills.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Look to further develop the accommodation and facilities for physical education.
- Limit class sizes (*This is already planned by the school*).

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Check the otherwise informative Governors' Annual Report to Parents includes reference to the impact of training on teaching and learning, and arrangements for the physically disadvantaged.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards are **above average** when pupils join the school and **well above average** when they leave at the end of Year 5. Pupils **achieve well** throughout the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards by the time pupils leave the school are continuing to improve year-on-year.
- Achievement is particularly good in the youngest and eldest classes, and in the two Year 2 classes.

Commentary

1. Work seen in lessons, tests done in school, and previous work suggest that standards when pupils leave the school are well above those expected for pupils of this age. Houghton-on-the-Hill is an unusual school. It is one of a local group in which pupils transfer at the end of Year 5. The vast majority of pupils in England transfer at the end of Year 6, after the nationally-set and externally marked tests. There are no such tests at the end of Year 5. The tests referred to here are nationally set 'optional' tests that are marked within the school.

2. Standards when children start in 'Four Plus' cover a wide range but are above average overall. In the Foundation Stage, achievement is good overall; it is very good in the youngest class and good in the eldest. Children are confident and keen to learn and try new things. Their positive approach is beneficial to their progress.

3. By the time pupils enter Year 1, nearly everyone has reached the standards expected for their age, and a good proportion has exceeded these standards.

4. At the end of Year 2, current standards are above expectations in English and science, and well above in mathematics. In English and science, this is better than national test results in 2003 (which were about average in reading, a little above average in writing and below average in science) and the time of the last inspection. The difference is due to two main reasons:

- Differences between year groups, particularly marked in relatively small year groups;
- Omissions in teacher assessment. For example, whilst all pupils reached level 2 in science, none were assessed for level 3 although some had undoubtedly reached that level. The effect of this is to deflate the level achieved. This contrasts with when the school was last inspected, and science assessments were described as 'generous'. This also explains why the trend over time is for improvement year-on-year to be below the national rate.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	15.8 (16.7)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	15.4 (15.1)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	17.6 (16.5)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 29 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

5. Progress is good throughout the school and pupils do well overall. Pupils achieve particularly well in the youngest and eldest classes, and in the two Year 2 classes. Here teaching is particularly sharp and relationships particularly good so that learning is at a very good rate.

6. Pupils for whom English is an additional language all do as well as their peers. These pupils come to school with high standards in English and a positive attitude. They achieve very well.

7. Pupils with a wide variety of special educational needs achieve very well. Due largely to the very good level and quality of support, pupils make very good progress towards their individual learning targets. Pupils with a special educational need are identified at an early stage and receive very good support. As a result, they achieve very well in terms of the targets contained in their individual education plans.

8. Very good provision for pupils who are gifted or talented ensures these pupils achieve very well. Their abilities are quickly recognised and tasks closely matched to their needs. Some receive individual attention. All receive a curriculum carefully tailored to their needs.

9. At the end of Year 5, standards in English and mathematics are well above those expected for pupils of this age, and above in science. Standards in ICT are well above expectation, too. ICT is used very well in other subjects and pupils have a good understanding of how useful ICT can be. Standards are also well above expectations in music and art and design. In French, standards are very good. Standards in physical education are better than when the school was last inspected, due to better and more consistent teaching. However, the limitations in the facilities available continue to hold back pupils' achievements in elements of the subject. Consequently, standards are below those expected. In all other subjects, standards are above those expected.

10. Parents at the meeting before the inspection felt that standards are high and that children achieve well. The pupils themselves feel they are doing very well.

11. Standards when the school was last inspected in 1998 were good overall. The school has continued to build on these standards and improvements include:

- Standards when pupils leave the school are now well above those expected for pupils of their age
- Standards in mathematics at the end of Year 2 are now well above average;
- Higher standards in handwriting;
- Literacy skills are used in other subjects to a high standard;
- Progress in religious education is good throughout the school.

Strengths that the school has maintained since the last inspection include:

- Good progress throughout the school in English, mathematics and science has been maintained;
- All pupils (different ethnic groups, boys and girls, the most and least able) continue to achieve well;
- Standards in speaking and listening remain very high.

Areas that are currently not as good as in 1998 include:

- Standards at the end of Year 2 are now above average, rather than well above average.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' learning is aided by their **very good attitudes** to work and their enthusiasm about school. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is **very good**. Attendance is **very good**. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- As at the time of the last inspection, and the one before it, this continues to be a strength of the school.
- Attitudes to learning are very good, pupils invariably try their best.
- Pupils' relationships with each other, with their teachers and other staff and volunteers are very positive.

- A few pupils miss school when their parents take them out of school for family holidays.
- Pupils' social development is excellent.

Commentary

12. In a happy atmosphere and because of staff's insistence on co-operative behaviour, Year 4 Plus and Reception children learn very well. These children have very positive attitudes to their tasks and to working independently. They behave very well both in lessons and at play. They persevere and have an impressive desire to complete tasks. In a 4 Plus physical education lesson for example, children had to cross over a ladder between two supports. Although some were initially daunted by the task all completed it through sheer determination; together with gentle encouragement from their class teacher.

13. All pupils like coming to school and are enthusiastic about all aspects of school life. In lessons they settle quickly to their work and listen very attentively to their teachers. They concentrate very well and take a pride in completing tasks.

14. Behaviour, both in and out of lessons, is consistently very good. This is largely due to the pupils' very positive attitudes and high expectations set by the school. Although clear procedures are in place for dealing with inappropriate behaviour, no examples of such behaviour were seen during the inspection. Parent questionnaires show that the vast majority of parents have positive views about behaviour in the school and the inspection team supports these views. In the playground, pupils of both sexes and all ethnic groups play well together and during the inspection there were no signs of aggressive or racist behaviour.

15. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are very good and are a valuable contribution to pupils' learning and development. Pupils say that they would readily turn to an adult in the school for help if they were worried. 'Circle time' is used to enable pupils to share their feelings and concerns. The time is also used by the school to make a note of pupils' views. For example, a suggestion from 'circle time' to eat packed lunches outside led directly to the school providing extra seating for this.

16. Pupils' personal development is very good. They treat one another very well, and work and play together very harmoniously. They have a good understanding of their own and other cultures, and show great respect for other people's feelings, values and beliefs. They have a very good understanding of right and wrong. School rules are explicit and pupils are often involved in drawing class rules up. Right from the youngest class, how to behave and assert oneself firmly are taught. All pupils are developing a good sense of their rights and responsibilities within the school community.

17. Everyday life in the school very effectively promotes pupils' personal development. Displays in public areas such as 'Look What I've Achieved', and in classes such as 'Things We Are Proud Of', very successfully demonstrate examples of the personal attributes the school seeks to encourage. A clear focus of the school is pupils' spiritual development. In assemblies, lessons and other activities, pupils have many good opportunities to learn about themselves and Creation, and ask themselves related questions.

Improvements since the last inspection include:

- Pupils' work is now much tidier and better presented;
- Provision for pupils' spiritual development is much better.

Attendance

18. Pupils attend school very regularly and punctually and the attendance rate is well above the national average. The school's very good attendance rate is achieved through its good efforts in promoting and monitoring attendance, as well as the concern of most parents to see that their children attend regularly and on time. However, a small number of parents taking children on holiday in term time lower the overall attendance rate and adversely affect the progress of these children.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	4.2
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.0
National data	0.4

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

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	175	7	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	5	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	3	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	18	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	3	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	3	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	11	0	0

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

19. There were seven fixed exclusions in the past year involving two boys. Although much higher than when the school was last inspected, all of these exclusions were for appropriate reasons.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good** overall. Assessment is **effective**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In the youngest and oldest classes, and in the two Year 2 classes, teaching and learning is very good.
- Questioning is used very effectively to extend and sharpen pupils' thinking skills and make them more self-evaluative.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' standard of work and behaviour. Pupils in turn respond very positively, do their best and contribute to the pace and effectiveness of their learning.
- Classrooms buzz with excited, energetic and purposeful activity.
- The vast majority of lessons are well planned with many stimulating and interesting activities that pupils quickly become engrossed in, although this is not always the case in longer afternoon sessions.
- Literacy and numeracy are both well taught and the national strategies used effectively.
- Tasks are matched closely to the needs of every individual pupil. All have work at the right level with just the right amount of challenge to engage and motivate them, without frustrating any.
- Teaching and learning are adversely affected in one class where a large group are taught in an awkwardly-shaped room.

Commentary

20. Teachers create and manage excellent opportunities for pupils to hone skills through imaginative tasks that engage pupils' interest. In an excellent Year 2 lesson, pupils demonstrated excellent skills in preparing and re-telling news items to the class. In a very good Year 4 lesson, pupils could ask questions of local people who had lived through a war. Questions were well thought through. Both lessons gave pupils excellent opportunities for speaking and listening. Achievement was high. In very good lessons in the youngest classes, tasks are imaginative and closely linked to children's current levels. No time is wasted, every moment used productively.

21. The climate for learning created by staff is excellent. Staff have very good relationships with pupils who are well motivated to do their best. Classrooms buzz with worthwhile activity. In the youngest class, for example, all children are fully engrossed in purposeful tasks.

22. Teachers use questioning very effectively. In very good Year 5 lessons, the teacher constantly asked pupils questions such as 'What did you do that helped you succeed?' or 'What did you find difficult?', followed by 'What suggestions can we make to help?' to the rest of the class. Over time pupils in this class are learning to be self-evaluative. They analyse what they do. They systematically and objectively look at what makes them succeed and what they can learn from each experience. They are learning skills fundamental to their future success. Throughout the school, teachers use questions particularly well to introduce and sum up lessons. A variety of questioning techniques is used to include, motivate, encourage and extend all pupils. In a very good Year 2 music lesson, questioning was used very effectively to provoke pupils' thinking and group discussion.

23. Teachers are enthusiastic and energetic in their teaching. Pupils sense that their teachers are enjoying the lesson and respond very positively as their enthusiasm, in turn, is aroused. In a very good Year 2 poetry lesson, the teacher's high expectations and the high degree of interest in the task, coupled with the pupils' unfaltering effort and desire to learn, led to high achievement. In very good Year 'Four Plus' lessons, concentration is high and work is very purposeful. No teaching is

mundane or 'ordinary'. Every task is taught in a new and different way that engages children's interest and eagerness to learn. Consequently, learning is at a very good pace.

24. Teachers' knowledge and understanding are good, and improved since the last inspection. Explanations are clear and pupils learn well. In a very good Year 3 mathematics lesson, the teacher developed and extended pupils' knowledge of shape very well through carefully planned and well resourced tasks. In a very good Year 1 and 2 art and design lesson, the teacher's very good knowledge of patterns from a range of cultures enabled pupils to design and make impressive fabric collage.

25. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together so that pupils with special educational needs, or those struggling or excelling in a subject, learn at a good rate. All pupils, including those for whom English is an additional language, learn effectively from the right tasks taught well.

26. Techniques are taught very well. In a very good Year 1 and 2 English lesson, pupils were well taught the importance of story openings, and the skills of editing, drafting and re-drafting. They learnt quickly from the teacher's clearly explained example.

27. Teachers plan lessons carefully, with clear reference to the nationally-recognised schemes of work. The learning intention of each lesson is made clear, regularly referred to during the lesson and when summing-up. Pupils consequently know what is expected of them, and work hard to achieve it. However, planning and organisation of the relatively long and uninterrupted afternoon sessions can vary from class to class. In a very well planned and resourced Year 5 session, ICT, design and technology and art and design activities were taught. Each task was well planned, fully resourced and offered purposeful learning opportunities that enthused pupils. Each was supported by a well-prepared adult, often with particular skill or interest in the area. Learning was of good quality and progress at a good rate. In some other sessions, too long is spent on one subject such as religious education so that pupils can lose their way. Pupils' enthusiasm can waiver and progress dip.

28. Teachers make good use of homework, to reinforce or extend work done in school. Tasks are meaningful and worthwhile, supporting and enhancing pupils' learning well.

29. Assessment of pupils' work is thorough and accurate so that subsequent work is well matched to each pupil's individual needs, ability and aptitude. Pupils are given a clear understanding of what they have accomplished and where they need to focus their energies. Coupled with pupils' own high levels of motivation, this leads to sharper and more purposeful learning.

30. In all lessons where they are present, teaching assistants make a very positive contribution. When any pupils struggle, extra explanation and encouragement mean these pupils progressed well. In other lessons, extra support may be given to the most able to help them move on more quickly. In all lessons, teaching assistants contribute fully to ensuring lessons move at good pace and smoothly from task to task. Volunteers, too, make a significant contribution and pupils work equally well with all adults who help them.

31. One class has a relatively large number of pupils taught in a difficult room, and occasionally progress slows. Although good teaching, skilled assistants and good use of resources means that these pupils generally do well, this is not always the case. For example, when the class is divided, the rate of progress dips for those who cannot have immediate access to their teachers. The school is aware of this and changes are planned.

Good improvements since the last inspection include:

- The overall quality of teaching has improved and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen this inspection;
- Opportunities to practise handwriting skills are now provided across all subjects;
- Teachers provide better guidance about reading texts;
- Better levels of challenge are given to pupils in gymnastic and dance classes. Teachers plan well to overcome accommodation difficulties, where possible;
- Teachers' expectations of pupils' presentation of work are much higher;
- Teachers focus much more sharply on specific groups during lessons;

- Discipline is consistently good throughout lessons;
- Assessment of progress made in lessons is used more consistently to match further tasks to pupils' levels.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in the fort-four lessons graded

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (2%)	19 (43%)	16 (36%)	8 (18%)	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.

The curriculum

Provision is **very good overall**. The school provides a very broad and well-balanced range of curricular opportunities with a very good range of opportunities for enrichment. Resources are satisfactory; the accommodation, however, is unsatisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides a very imaginative curriculum which promotes good achievement.
- Pupils enjoy and learn much from the wide range of activities and opportunities, for example in music.
- Provision for equality of opportunity and inclusion for all pupils is very good.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good; teaching assistants work very well with teachers.
- Out of school activities cover a wide range.
- The school's accommodation, although utilised very well, is unsatisfactory overall.
- The school is not able to offer all of the National Curriculum requirements for physical education
- The library is too small to support or promote independent study.

Commentary

32. The curriculum provides a very good level of continuity and progression, partly through the adoption of nationally-recognised schemes of work for all subjects. The curriculum meets nearly all statutory requirements, including provision for religious education and collective worship. However, some elements of physical education are excluded. It provides very effectively for pupils' personal, social and health education, including sex and drugs awareness education. The school is very inclusive in all its policies and practices. There is very good equality of opportunity for all pupils within general day-to-day school activities. The curriculum is evaluated rigorously with carefully managed innovations - such as the provision of French lessons, additional literacy and numeracy support groups and the imaginative use of the outdoors.

33. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Pupils are supported very well, by class teachers and experienced teaching assistants. The school works hard to give all pupils equal access to the full curriculum. Teachers meet the needs of pupils with a special educational need with good, and frequently very good, support. Tasks are well matched to targets on individual education plans. Teaching assistants work very well with teachers and provide very good support for pupils, monitoring pupils' progress and providing an appropriate blend of help and challenge. Support for pupils with statements of special educational need is very good. The school's special educational needs co-ordinator has a good knowledge and understanding of each pupil's needs. Individual education plans are relevant and appropriately matched to each pupils' needs by their teachers. The very positive atmosphere and 'ethos' of the school promotes the very effective inclusion of pupils with special educational needs into every aspect of the school's life.

34. The school provides pupils with a very good range of interesting and relevant extra-curricular activities, all well-attended. Sporting and cultural visits linked to the curriculum are organised to extend pupils' experiences and expertise from within and outside the school is used very well to enrich the curriculum. An excellent range of after-school activities involve infant and junior pupils and include several sports, technology, pottery and an excellent range of musical activities.

35. With the exception of the school playground, which is too small for all pupils, the school's external accommodation facilities are very good and are very well-utilised. The internal accommodation, however, is restricted in a number of important aspects and is unsatisfactory overall. Among the weaknesses are the general lack of space for storage and for small group work, the small library, and, in particular, the small hall which limits opportunities for gymnastics.

Improvements since the last inspection include:

- Better provision for religious education, including more resources;
- Better provision for developing writing skills and better use of group reading sessions.

Care, guidance and support

The school's provision for the care and welfare and safety of its pupils is **very good**. The school provides very good advice, support and guidance for pupils. Pupils' views are listened to.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision was a strength of the school when last inspected, and continues to be so now.
- The school provides a very caring, healthy and safe environment for its pupils.
- Child Protection arrangements and Health and Safety procedures are very good.
- Pupils are well-cared for and they receive the support and guidance they need to do well at school.
- Induction arrangements for children starting school are very good.
- Although there is no school council, pupils' views are sought and often acted on.

Commentary

36. Effective health and safety procedures ensure that children enjoy a safe and pleasant learning environment. The school has very good procedures for managing health and safety matters. For example, risk assessments are carried out prior to all educational visits to ensure that as far as possible children continue to be safe away from the school. A good number of qualified first-aiders and a generally well trained staff look after pupils well. All accidents are recorded and parents advised.

37. Child protection is very good. Training is regular and thorough. All staff are kept fully informed of child protection matters and all are aware of the need for vigilance. The school does not hesitate to use the services of relevant external agencies when needed.

38. Staff are very caring and have a good knowledge of pupils and their families. Because of the good relationships staff have with their pupils, and partly through regular 'circle time' lessons, staff have an access to pupils' views, which are valued. However, there are no formal strategies, such as a school council, for seeking pupils' views.

39. Parents appreciate the very good induction arrangements that help children to settle very quickly and happily into school. Each new intake receives an invitation to useful induction before starting school. On the visit children and parents are given a 'Teddy Bear' pack. The pack includes a booklet to complete which forms part of the school's initial assessment. Pupils transferring mid-term are very well received and welcomed into the school community. There is a real 'family-feel' which helps all settle quickly. This is very important as the school has a relatively high pupil mobility.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's **very good** partnership with parents is a major contributor to pupils' learning. **Very good** links with other schools, together with **very good** links in the community, are important factors in pupils' development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The partnership with parents was a strength of the school at the last inspection, and the one before that. It continues to be a strength now.
- Parents have high regard for the school and take a keen interest in their children's progress.
- Communication with parents is very good.
- The 'Evening Centre' has given the school an important place in the life of the community.
- Transfer arrangements for children leaving the school are very good and help most pupils settle well.
- Links with other schools and educational establishments are very beneficial.
- Although informative, the Governors' Annual Report to Parents does not cover all statutory requirements.
- Whilst parents receive information about the curriculum to be covered by each class each year, they are keen to support their children and would welcome knowing more precisely what is taught and when.

Commentary

40. The school's very effective partnership with parents has a very positive influence on pupils' learning at school and at home. Parents like the well ordered school and are pleased that their children are safe and happy there. Parents take a strong interest in their children's work and there is a very high attendance at school events. Many parents come into school to help in the classrooms.

41. Communication with parents is very good. Newsletters are informative. Useful curriculum information is sent home at the beginning of the school year, advising parents of the work to be covered. In Year 4 Plus and Reception the work for each week is displayed. Parents welcome this, but those who do not collect and drop their children miss out. Parents have very good opportunities each term to meet the governors and exchange views. There are also consultation meetings with teachers twice a year. At the inspection meeting, parents stated their appreciation of the way in which the head and teachers were readily available and very approachable. Two reports on pupils' progress are sent to parents each year. The first enables parents to keep a track on how well their children are doing at school, the second summarises the year's achievements. The school brochure is very detailed and well presented. The governors' annual report to parents is informative but does not fully meet statutory requirements. Main omissions are of arrangements for disabled pupils and showing the impact of professional training on teaching and learning.

42. Parents see the school as an integral part of the local community and through its 'evening centre' the school provides a range of activities for the community. Strong links also exist with local churches whose staff often visit the school to lead assemblies. An active 'Friends Association' arranges social events for parents and children and raises substantial amounts towards school projects; the events run by the association are well attended by parents, staff and members of the local community.

43. The school has very good links with other schools and educational establishments. Through very good links with an inner-city primary school, pupils gain a greater understanding of other cultures and customs. The school also benefits from links with a local independent school. The school works very closely with a teacher training institution to mutual benefit. Students on childcare courses also benefit from placements at the school.

44. Very good transfer arrangements help ensure pupils move easily to high school. In their last year, pupils meet teachers from the high school and 'bridging projects' are arranged in different

subjects which pupils begin at Houghton and finish at their new school. Pupils also attend a two-day induction at the high school.

Areas that still need improvement include:

- More could be done to give parents curriculum information. Although much is done, including curriculum outlines for each year group at the start of each academic year, two areas remain. Firstly, parents who do not bring or collect the youngest children from school do not receive curriculum information. Secondly, although general guidance is given at the start of the academic year, parents would appreciate knowing more precisely what is being covered when, so that they may better use opportunities they have to support their children, for example during their own visits to places of interest.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **very good** overall. Governance of the school is equally **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher inspires staff and pupils as a leader and manager who values all in the school. He provides a first- class role model.
- All subject leaders, teachers, teaching assistants and support staff are fully involved in the development of the school and work together as a dedicated team.
- The governors have developed a challenging yet supportive role and are very committed to promoting the aims and the work of the school.
- Information is used rigorously to check each pupil's progress and the school's improvement.
- Financial planning is very good; the school has clear priorities and budgets to meet them, for example to reduce the size of the large class.
- The school gives very good value for money.
- The school provides well for the needs of all its pupils, including those with special educational needs.
- The gap in National Curriculum provision is known and much done to combat it.
- Some information is missing from the Governors' Annual Report to Parents.

Commentary

45. The leadership of the headteacher is both outstandingly inspirational and all-embracing. His vision of a school which is successful in reaching very high standards and fosters intellectual curiosity, while maintaining an ethos as a close family of interested and motivated staff and pupils, has been realised by the model he presents to all and by his receptivity to new ideas. He leads the school excellently, by his own example. Under his direction, the school continues to grow in its provision of exciting experiences and opportunities. The members of the senior management team are all fully involved in the headteacher's vision for the school, as are all teachers and support staff. They feel part of a team, with the interests of the individual pupils at the centre of all they do. Their dedication and commitment are to be seen throughout the school's work and their pooled knowledge of pupils enables them to provide a full and rich curriculum, except for some strands of physical education, to meet the needs of all pupils well. All teachers have high expectations of their pupils and determination and energy to help them to reach their full potential.

46. Indicative of the very good leadership of the school is the response to the areas for improvement identified by the last inspection. The school has tackled all of these very effectively and to the benefit of the quality of education provided.

47. Management of the school is very good. The school uses information to check and closely monitor each pupils' progress and the school's improvement. This is very well established. Together with the very good knowledge teachers have of their pupils, this enables work to be set to meet the needs of all abilities, pupils with special needs and those who are gifted and talented, and for intervention to be planned to enable all pupils to reach their full potential. This information is used well to decide how to meet the needs of different year groups and how best to allocate the money at their disposal. For example, the immediate priority of the school is the provision of an extra class next year to accommodate the large cohort of pupils in the current Year 4. The use of this information also helps teachers to predict what pupils can achieve and to monitor their progress towards their individual targets. The school makes maximum use of opportunities offered to it, by the very good ways in which it nurtures newly qualified teachers and the equally good links it fosters with teacher training institutions from whom it regularly accepts student teachers and gives them intense help and support. Professional training for teachers is an on-going priority, always dictated by the needs of the school, as well as those of the individual, and linked with the school's improvement plan.

48. The leadership and management of pupils with special educational needs are very good. Pupils' individual education plans are regularly reviewed and new targets set. Parents are kept fully informed and are invited to all review meetings. Pupils who are not on the special needs register but who experience difficulties in their learning are also carefully monitored within the caring society of this school. The school manages the wide range of special educational needs very well and makes good provision for the higher attaining and gifted and talented pupils.

49. Governors are very supportive of the school and very committed to its development. They trust the headteacher's judgement and suggestions and, having evaluated them carefully and wisely, are very willing to help to achieve them. They carry out almost all their statutory duties well, particularly in their insistence on good provision for the inclusion of all pupils, particularly those with special educational needs. Most governors visit the school regularly and all work hard to understand the impact of initiatives and outcomes. Because they make the effort to monitor and to participate in the school's activities, they are secure in their ability to evaluate the school's progress and to understand its strengths and weaknesses. This allows them to be a very good critical friend to the school.

50. The school's day-to-day administration is efficient and well-organised. The school runs smoothly, with all staff working very well together to ensure that parents are kept well informed.

51. A relative weakness is the organisation of Year 4. This relatively large year group is currently taught as one class. Although good teaching, very good pupil attitudes and very good support from teaching assistants ensure that lessons flow remarkably smoothly, there are times when up to half the class are not under the direct supervision of their teacher. This can create a 'dip' in the pace and purpose of their learning. The school is taking steps to address this by creating two much smaller classes which should, providing the teachers are of high quality, have the effect of improving the rate of progress and raising pupil achievement.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	516 127
Total expenditure	506 927
Expenditure per pupil	2 509

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	(701)
Balance carried forward to the next	11 800

NB: Figures in parentheses indicate negative values

52. Financial planning is very good, as it was when the school was last inspected. The school plans ahead. This year, money is being deliberately earmarked for the creation of an extra class next year. The budget is generously supplemented by the Friends' Association and this considerably enhances the provision the school is able to make for pupils. The school implements the principles of best value in all its work. The headteacher, governors and staff continuously evaluate what they do and what they need to improve the quality of learning. The school is very effective, as it was at the last inspection, and continues to give very good value for money.

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 is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All children achieve well, particularly in the younger class where teaching is consistently very good.
- A curriculum that is carefully planned and based on the nationally-recognised curriculum for children of this age.
- Activities that are well matched to children's needs and current levels, so that the tasks they do are just right – not too difficult and not too easy.
- Interesting and stimulating activities that engage children's enthusiasm and inquisitiveness, reinforcing their interest in learning and making lessons a hive of activity.
- A fully inclusive curriculum that engages the interest of all children and enables them to do well.

53. Children are prepared very well for transfer to Year 1. The children enter the youngest class the term after they are four. They have between one year and one year two terms in the two classes that constitute the Foundation Stage. The majority have attended some form of pre-school provision.

54. Teachers and teaching assistants form a cohesive team, using one another's strengths and expertise to the benefit of all. Parents and other volunteers are carefully prepared so that they know what is expected. They make a positive contribution to children's learning.

55. Accommodation, both inside and out, is good and very well used. Children have good access to a small but secure outside area. An excellent outdoor facility, including a pond and wild area, is very well used. Resources are of good quality and appropriate for children of this age.

Good improvements since the last inspection include:

- A better quality of teaching;
- A better range of construction equipment;
- Progress in physical development is better and the equipment children use is right for their age.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff take every opportunity to extend children's personal development.
- Classrooms are organised to encourage personal and social development.
- Children contribute much to their own development.

Commentary

56. Nearly every child is on course to exceed the expectations in this area of learning. They do very well in the youngest class and well in the older class, similar to when the school was last inspected.

57. Most children start the Foundation Stage with a positive attitude to school. They expect to learn and respond enthusiastically to the very good teaching they receive. Staff's high expectations are invariably met by a desire to learn and find out. Staff are constantly looking to give children

opportunities to work with new and different people and to take decisions and make their own choices in learning. In the youngest class, children are given a great deal of autonomy-within a very clear structure.

58. In discussion, the youngest know that they would be sad without friends. They know a good friend shares, helps, cheers you up and shows you how to do things.

59. Teaching and learning are very good. Learning is closely linked to the recognised curriculum for children of this age. Teachers enable children to learn by organising tasks very carefully so that time is not lost. Staff quickly recognise when children need additional support and reorganise the task to enable them to succeed.

60. Children work well together. They are self-confident and willing to talk in the positive and trusting atmosphere created by staff. Children of all groups are fully involved.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff take every opportunity to extend children's understanding of vocabulary.
- Children are very confident to 'have a go', try new activities, initiate ideas and speak to the class.
- A carefully-planned curriculum, coupled with precise assessment, means children are working at the right level of challenge and tasks develop and extend them further.

Commentary

61. The vast majority of children are on course to meet the expectations in this area of learning, and a good proportion should exceed them. They achieve well.

62. Children's very good listening skills and concentration are very important factors in the good progress they make. Nearly every child has a good knowledge of letter sounds. Their willingness to have a go, and the very good tasks they are given, means that some are using capital letters and full stops accurately before they enter Year 1. The youngest use books correctly, 'reading' from front to back, often using the pictures to tell the story.

63. Children's maturity and excellent relationships with staff ensure that the climate for learning in the youngest class is excellent. Humour is used well. Imaginative variations in teaching keep children's interest. For example, when the teacher wants to check their learning from a television programme, she tells them 'Barney has fallen asleep, missed the programme, and needs you to tell him what has happened'. They dutifully recap the programme. In another lesson, practising their sounds, they try to say 'r' as if angry, or 'j' as if they are frightened.

64. Children are remarkably independent. They love the autonomy they enjoy in the younger class particularly. Here, they are given many opportunities to select their own tasks within the well-planned sessions. They do not 'flit' from activity to activity, but rather concentrate and invariably aim to do the best they can. From the start of the day, when they come in calmly, they waste no time. Partly because the tasks they are given are imaginative and relevant, they concentrate fully.

65. A lovely working atmosphere has been created and this helps ensure that children work equally well with teachers, assistants or volunteers. They work together with maturity beyond their young years – helping one another and waiting patiently. Most will also share and say – for example – 'let's put it in the middle' when looking at a book together.

66. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers provide a language – rich curriculum. They are always extending or practising children's vocabulary. Whether doing a 'favourite food' register or

asking pairs to divide tasks by youngest and eldest, children are constantly being asked to think about words. Because staff know their children's differing ability levels so well, tasks are carefully matched to each child's needs.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Resources are used very well to enable children to achieve the lesson's learning objectives.
- Children enjoy these lessons; they are on task and interested. They want to be involved.
- Assessment is accurate so that tasks are precisely matched to the capabilities of children.

Commentary

67. Nearly every child is on course to exceed the expectations in this area of learning. They achieve very well. Nearly all children can count to ten confidently. Reception children know the days of the week, and their order. They can answer questions such as, 'What day follows Monday?' The youngest children know that two is bigger than one and most can count on from three, four or five.

68. Teaching and learning are very good. Lessons are carefully prepared with just the right resources to meet the lesson objectives and stimulate the children's interest. Staff have very high expectations of children's standard of presentation, an area for improvement from the last inspection. Even so, the teacher of the eldest class is quick to remind children to focus on the task and that 'colouring comes last', ensuring no time is wasted and the task is completed first.

69. In the youngest class, the teacher is aware of each individual's level, and plans accordingly. For example, whilst nearly all used individual coins in a very good lesson, because the teacher knew her children's ability levels so well, two more able children were given one 5p coin because they knew it represented the same as five 1p coins. This excellent match of task to child ensured all worked at the right level and contributed to very good progress. Children thought hard, made a few mistakes, but achieved very well during the lesson.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good use is made of visits to give children a clearer understanding of the world around them
- Excellent use is made of the outdoor environment, which children adore and consequently learn a great deal from. Children experience the wonder of Nature, enhancing their spiritual development.

Commentary

70. The vast majority of children are on course to meet the expectations in this area of learning. They achieve well throughout the Foundation Stage. Children have a very well developed general knowledge, partly because so much of their work is based on visits, walks and other forms of direct learning. For example, they know what to do if there is a fire, they know fire officers wear helmets for protection, and that most people die from smoke rather than flames. They know some everyday foods which are healthy and some which are not. They have a good understanding of Chinese New Year and the symbols used to celebrate. The eldest have made a three-dimensional map of their route to the village post office, showing public buildings important to them such as their school and

church. All have good levels of ICT skills, for example using the mouse or programme tool bar accurately. They know the 'black bits' in frog spawn turn into tadpoles.

71. Teaching and learning are very good. Excellent curriculum planning involves a very high level of firsthand learning, giving children vivid and long lasting memories. The mix of teacher and pupil-led activities is good. Skills, such as 'click and drag', are clearly taught in ICT.

72. Teachers constantly develop children's vocabulary. For example, they talk about 'long' and 'short' hoses, and when the hoses were 'thick' because they were full of water and 'thin' because they were empty.

73. Teachers make excellent use of the outdoors. On a regular walk, for example, Reception children looking for 'signs of Spring' were encouraged to describe the changes in the snowdrops since their last walk. A few notice that the snowdrops have died back as the buds on the trees have grown. They are developing an excellent understanding of chronology.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good planning ensures all activities, whether inside or out, are stimulating.
- Tasks are demanding but achievable.
- Children respond very enthusiastically. They try hard, persevere and make a positive contribution to their learning.

Commentary

74. The vast majority of children are on course to reach the expectations in this area of learning. They achieve well.

75. One activity leads to another, skills are taught and then practised, so that children make good progress.

76. Teaching and learning are good. Very good use is made of demonstration, both by teachers and able children, to give visual cues so that all children achieve better. All children are fully involved; the less able have further instructions and encouragement, the most able have more difficult tasks.

77. Teaching assistants make a very good contribution to lessons. Whether collecting apparatus or supporting children who struggle, they help enable the teacher to teach and the lesson to flow.

78. Children are very responsive and behave very well. They wait patiently for their turn and contribute to the very good pace of lessons. They respond positively to their teacher's high expectations. When asked to be a 'wide-awake bear', for example, many have very demonstrative faces in addition to pointed toes and fingers. In the youngest class, about three quarters can understand and obey the rules of a simple game.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very well planned and resourced activities, taught well with particularly good questioning, very well received by responsive children who learn well.

Commentary

79. The vast majority of children are on course to meet the expectations in this area of learning. They achieve well. Reception children draw daffodils, tulips and buds on their walk outside with good size, shape and proportion.

80. Most children are very imaginative. They can pretend a parachute is the flames of a fire and search for a younger brother or sister, or feign surprise in the role play area when receiving a letter from Houghton Post Office.

81. Teaching and learning are good. Children are given many exciting opportunities, for example to use a good variety of instruments. They respond enthusiastically and try their best. Consequently progress is rapid and much is achieved.

82. Children's potential, skills, interests and attributes are quickly recognised and catered for well. Those with particular ability in music, for example, receive additional teaching.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards and achievement in English are good by the end of Year 2 and very good at the end of Year 5.
- Standards in writing are high.
- Pupils' speaking and listening skills are particularly good.
- Pupils' positive and motivated attitudes to their work ensure high standards.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good overall; some teaching is very good, so that pupils achieve very well.
- The curriculum is rich, full and provides the opportunity for all pupils to reach their potential.
- Leadership of the subject is excellent and management is very good.
- Good use is made of assessment to plan for pupils' improvement.
- The library is cramped and therefore inadequate as a resource for learning.

Commentary

83. By the end of Year 5, standards are well above those expected for pupils of this age and the level of achievement is very good. Results in the Year 2 national tests in 2003 showed average standards in reading when compared with schools nationally, though standards were well below average when compared with similar schools. Standards in writing were above average when compared with schools nationally and average when compared with similar schools. These results were a little lower than those in mathematics. Inspection evidence indicates that the current Year 2 are attaining above average standards in both reading and writing, so that achievement is good. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. They are very well supported and, as a result, make very good progress, through the skilled help of teachers and teaching assistants. Work is equally carefully planned to extend the most able to their full potential.

84. Although there are a small number of pupils in the school from ethnic minority backgrounds, there are none who speak English as an additional language or who do not speak English at home. As a result, no additional teaching is necessary in this area. These pupils achieve as well as their peers in English, as in other subjects. Pupils are fully supported by teachers and teaching assistants and are very aware of the need to monitor the progress of any pupils who might need help and support.

85. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are well above average. Teachers plan carefully to ensure pupils have regular opportunities to discuss and debate in literacy lessons, as well as in the rest of the curriculum. They are encouraged to express their ideas in full, instead of merely answering closed questions, and to listen to each other with thought and concentration. Most pupils speak with great confidence and an awareness of the audience they are addressing, as seen in an excellent poetry assembly given by Year 5, which reached an almost professional level. Their oral skills are extended further by the evaluation undertaken by pupils of their own and others' work and by the range of activities planned by the teachers, such as 'hot-seating' and the impressive 'News Reporter' sessions held regularly in Year 2.

86. Standards in reading are good for the majority of pupils. The school has a strong focus on reading and skills are taught systematically. Pupils learn a good range of word-building strategies, which enables them to read unfamiliar words with independence. Pupils regularly read in school, to their teachers, to teaching assistants and to themselves, as well as taking part in paired reading

sessions, in which Year 5 pupils work with Year 2 pupils to improve reading and comprehension skills. There is good support for reading at home, where parents listen regularly to their children's reading and comment in the home/school reading records. Pupils clearly understand what they read, with encouragement from teachers to explore ideas, predict what will happen later in a story and to talk knowledgeably about the books they are reading, such as the Year 5 pupil who could discuss the style and language of a Nina Bawden novel with interest and maturity. A good programme is in place to help pupils develop useful library skills, although the school library is very small and inadequate for the size of the school.

87. Standards in writing are high. Pupils are expected to write at length and in a variety of styles. A focus on improving handwriting and presentation of work has been successful and resulted in considerable improvement since the time of the last inspection. The main features which helps pupils achieve and maintain high standards are good quality planning, the wide range of interesting written tasks set within the framework of the literacy hour and in extended writing sessions and the way in which pupils' writing is used and celebrated in classrooms displays, class 'books' of poetry and in assemblies. There is good opportunity for pupils to use ICT as a regular feature in their writing. The school is continuing to target writing for improvement with the emphasis on spelling, punctuation and sentence structure. Extra extension lessons are provided for the higher attaining pupils in Year 2, who, as a result, achieve much thoughtful and creative work.

88. The curriculum is rich and full in quality. The national literacy hour is well implemented, much opportunity is taken to use literature as a teaching tool and the good range of activities and teaching methods ensures that pupils maintain interest and enthusiasm. Indeed, it is the positive and motivated attitudes of pupils to their work which adds to their success. Behaviour is usually impeccable, pupils hang on teachers' words when read to and they are always eager and enthusiastic to pursue avenues opened to them. The curriculum outside lessons is enriched by visits from poets and children's authors, visiting theatre groups and trips to the theatre. The use of poetry, drama and other literature makes a good contribution to pupils' social and cultural development, as well as to citizenship. A bridging project with pupils' next school aids the ease of transition to the next stage of education. In addition, there are many effective intervention groups, such as the 'PIPs Club' for phonics in Year 1 and additional literacy support in Year 3.

89. The quality of teaching seen during the inspection was good overall and often very good, occasionally excellent. Major strengths of the teaching are the very good subject knowledge and competence of teachers, their encouragement of pupils' interest and involvement, their maintenance of very high standards of behaviour, the ways in which teaching assistants are used to maximum effect and the effective and challenging way in which time and resources are used. All these factors ensure that pupils both want to learn and also succeed in doing so very well. The good quality of relationships between teachers and pupils and the sensitive management ensure that all pupils are made to feel special and helped to learn well. Marking is generally effective and is proving to be helpful to pupils in identifying how they can improve their work.

90. The leadership of the subject is excellent and management is very good. The subject leader has high expectations of both staff and pupils, sets a clear direction for constant improvement and is a very good role model for other teachers. She is innovative and creative with the curriculum, actively searching for new methods of teaching and learning most suited to the needs of the pupils. The monitoring of the subject and of pupils' work is very good and evaluation of the work of the department is used well to address weaker areas in order to raise standards even further.

91. Since the last inspection, improvement has been very good and standards are constantly improving.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

92. All three areas of literacy - speaking and listening, reading and writing - are well promoted in the school. Most pupils' level of literacy by the end of Year 2 is above average and, by the end of Year 5, it is well above average. Speaking and listening skills are used extensively throughout all subjects

of the curriculum and reinforced in assemblies and concerts. Reading is encouraged and well supported in subjects such as geography and history, teachers model vocabulary specific to that subject very well and pupils' writing skills are developed well in other subjects, such as history and science. A wide range of writing is covered across subjects, from narrative writing, poetry, and information text to report writing. The teaching of French in Years 3, 4 and 5 helps pupils with their English grammar and sentence structure. There are also good opportunities for pupils to use their writing skills in science for report writing. Speaking and listening are promoted well.

French

Provision in French is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are very good.
- All pupils make very rapid progress and achieve to the best of their abilities.
- Teaching is very good.
- The curriculum is interesting and stimulating.
- Management of the subject is very good.

Commentary

93. By the end of Year 5, standards are very good. There are no national standards for pupils of this age, but pupils achieve very well, especially since they have no school-based experience of learning the language prior to Year 3. They reach a standard typically seen in Year 7 pupils. Largely as a consequence of the good literacy skills of pupils on entry to the school and the very good teaching, achievement is very good and pupils progress very well throughout the junior school. Particularly noticeable is how well all pupils do. The most able achieve high standards whilst pupils with special educational needs find tasks accessible and interesting.

94. Pupils benefit greatly from a very good curriculum, which stresses oral skills very well. Teaching, which is done by a specialist teacher is very good, showing great competence, knowledge and using varied and absorbing methods. Expectations of what pupils can achieve are high and they are offered a good degree of challenge. Tasks are interesting and relevant, and pupils respond very positively to this stimulation. They work hard and are quick to offer answers.

95. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. Because one teacher teaches all classes, there is great cohesion and pupils move through the curriculum very smoothly from year-to-year. Pupils' work and their individual needs are monitored closely. Consequently, all abilities and levels of attainment receive the right level of work and support. Resources are used to maximum effect and are stimulating and engaging. Pupils strengthen their links with, and knowledge of, French life and language by corresponding with pupils at a French school. The subject adds a great deal to pupils' cultural development.

96. There were no areas for improvement at the last inspection.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards well above expectations for that age by the end of the Year 5.
- Very good achievement, largely because of the very good quality of teaching and very good leadership of the subject manager.

- Assessment is used very effectively to modify the curriculum and to track individual pupils' progress.

Commentary

97. Achievement in mathematics is very good throughout the school. The subject is a strength of Houghton School. National tests show that results at the end of Year 2 are well above average and, by the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 5, standards are, similarly, well above expectations for pupils of this age. Pupils make very good progress as they move through the school from above average attainment when they join. Evidence from national tests of the level of attainment of the current Year 5 class at the age of 7 demonstrates clearly that this particular group have made very good progress in the meantime.

98. Teaching is very good overall throughout the school. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge, they have good classroom and behaviour management skills, allowing most lessons to progress at a very good pace and they match tasks very well to pupils' abilities and learning needs. This was demonstrated very effectively, for example, in a very good Year 2 lesson. The teacher's very good classroom management skills, very good relationships with pupils, very good support from teaching assistants and the very good use of questioning motivated pupils very well and resulted in very good behaviour and a very high level of response. In the vast majority of lessons, teachers make the subject exciting and interesting and, as a result, pupils respond enthusiastically. The trusting and positive climate for learning in classes means that pupils are confident to try; most hands go up to answer the teachers' questions and pupils maintain a good focus on their work throughout the lesson and achieve very well.

99. The needs of all pupils are met very effectively, a crucial factor in the very good progress they make. Pupils with special educational needs are supported very well by classroom assistants and teachers and make very good progress in relation to the targets set in their individual education plans. Very able mathematicians are quickly identified. These pupils enjoy very good quality extra teaching and additional tasks tailored closely to their needs.

100. Mathematics is led and managed very well. The rigour in the management of the subject is largely responsible for its particular success. Year 5 optional tests are given, marked and analysed with the same level of objectivity as Year 6 national tests. All test results are analysed in detail, and amendments made to the curriculum in the light of what is revealed. Assessment in the subject is very good. As well as the detailed analysis of test results and trends noted above, pupils are tracked individually as they move through the school and adjustments are made to the curriculum in the light of insights obtained.

Improvements since the last inspection include:

- Standards of achievement have improved significantly;
- There are no longer any tasks with insufficient challenge;
- Pupils' behaviour is consistently very good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

101. Pupils make very good use of their mathematics skills in subjects such as science and design and technology. For example, pupils are often given good opportunities to measure and present results in tables and graph form. ICT is used very effectively in mathematics lessons. Pupils store and analyse data, for example, and learn the advantages of ICT in this area.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well, although some have not been assessed accurately in the Year 2 national tests.
- Consistently good teaching by staff who know the subject well.
- Very positive attitudes of pupils help lessons to move at good pace.
- Strong emphasis on practical learning.
- Subject management is very good with careful and relevant plans for improvement mostly carried through.
- Parents are fully involved and informed.
- Excellent use is made of the superb outdoor facility.

Commentary

102. Standards at the end of Year 5 are above national expectations, similar to the last inspection. Pupils have a very good understanding of experimental and investigative work. In Year 3, pupils are beginning to develop a clear understanding of what constitutes a 'fair test'. By Year 5, they are able to carefully and accurately plan investigations to solve problems for themselves.

103. Standards at the end of Year 2 seen in lessons are above national expectations, similar to the last inspection. Pupils achieve well, particularly in practical work. Here they carry out activities carefully, observe closely and demonstrate that their views are based on clear previous learning.

104. Teaching is good. It is of a more consistently high standard across the school than at the last inspection. Good use is made of aids such as 'Key questions' sheets to ensure that pupils are pointed in the right direction. Additional extension questions are used to push the most able on. Pupils know what they are expected to learn, and focus sharply on this. Lesson objectives are explained at the start of the lesson, returned to during it, and carefully explored during the summing up. Key vocabulary is taught and then practised throughout the lesson, pupils being expected to use it accurately in written accounts and oral explanations. Even in relatively large classes, teachers emphasise the use of practical learning. Pupils of all abilities respond enthusiastically to the opportunities for 'hands-on' learning, and work diligently. Pupils with learning difficulties often benefit particularly. Lessons proceed at a good pace and much is learnt. Teaching assistants, parents and other volunteers all make a positive contribution during group work particularly. They are well prepared and supported so that their time is spent usefully.

105. Good use is made of opportunities to practise key skills. Pupils are encouraged to speak and listen, to discuss and share knowledge and understanding. Pupils are encouraged to consider different ways of collecting, collating and displaying data to meet their objectives. ICT, too, is used to support learning, particularly through research and data storage and interrogation.

106. Subject management is very good. A very cohesive curriculum, based on the nationally-recognised scheme, is thoroughly planned. Lesson observations are generally used effectively. Systematic assessment of each unit of work ensures that when necessary, year-on-year improvements are made. There is a very clear plan for the subject's development. However, although most plans are regularly and carefully monitored, so that they are completed successfully, some are not. This can delay progress. Excellent use is made of the superb outdoor facilities. A recent very successful parents' evening enabled staff and pupils to demonstrate the curriculum. Parents joined in, had questions answered, and spoke at the Inspection Parents' Meeting about how helpful this was to their understanding of what is taught and why.

There have been a number of improvements since the last inspection. These include:

- Overall improvements in teachers' knowledge and understanding;
- Experiments are clearly and specifically focussed on what pupils are to learn;
- Discussion is used better, particularly to assess new learning;
- Worksheets are used much less and pupils have many opportunities both for extended writing and selecting how to present their notes, observations and recordings;
- Assessment within and between lessons is used well to match tasks to the levels of pupils of all abilities.

There remain some areas for development. These include:

- Standards at the end of Year 2 were not judged against level 3 in 2003. This was to the detriment of individual pupils, and had the effect of depressing the school's overall performance. The school recognises this and steps are being taken to put it right for 2004.
- Although the plans for the subject's development are very good and appropriate, some need more systematic monitoring over time, and more objective evaluation.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are high.
- Tasks are very relevant and pupils gain a very good understanding of how ICT can be used beneficially in everyday life.

Commentary

107. Standards by the age of Years 2 and 5 are well above expectations and pupils achieve very well. Particularly effective use is made of specialist teaching in Year 5. Here pupils work at a very high level, for example learning about data-logging and control technology in preparation for the annual 'Technology Challenge'. Tasks previously completed included a robot arm and conveyor belt programmed by pupils – standards well above expectations for Year 5 pupils. In another very good Year 5 lesson, a group of pupils used an 'objects-based' package to create, combine and manipulate objects. Again, they achieved standards well above those expected by Year 5.

108. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. Teachers demonstrate a good level of confidence and subject-knowledge and have appropriately high expectations of their pupils. In a very good Year 3 ICT lesson, the teacher made very good links to previous learning and motivated pupils very well; learning intentions and expectations of behaviour were made very clear. Pupils responded very well. Their positive attitudes contributed to the good pace of learning throughout the lesson.

109. The school bases tasks on the nationally-recognised scheme of work, detailing specific skills to be learned by each age group. Resources are sufficient and utilised very well – several examples of the very good use of ICT equipment were observed, the very good use of the school's digital cameras, for example, the electronic microscopes used in the Foundation Stage, and direction work using the school's 'floor turtles'.

Improvements since the last inspection include:

- There has been a significant improvement in standards from the last inspection, which in themselves had improved from the previous inspection;
- Better records of pupils' progress and achievements are kept.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

110. ICT is very well used in other subjects, and this is a significant factor in the subject's effectiveness. There is good cross-curricular use of ICT throughout the school. In very good English teaching in Year 4, for example, both teacher and pupils use computers regularly to undertake tasks effectively. A 'PowerPoint' presentation led the introduction with pace and clarity. Initial teacher-led modelling and discussion of drafting and re-drafting, using a laptop and overhead presentation, enabled all pupils to see and discuss suggestions and changes. Understanding was clearer, although a small number of pupils struggled to see in this long room. Groups of pupils went on to use computers very effectively to summarise and abridge, clearly understanding the difference and different purpose of each.

HUMANITIES

In humanities, work was sampled in geography and history. Only one lesson was observed in each subject. It is therefore not possible to form an overall judgement about provision in these subjects. Observations of work on display and in pupils' books, discussions with subject leaders and speaking to pupils about their work indicate that standards are above average in both subjects. In both subjects, areas for development at the time of the last inspection have been fully addressed. Each topic or unit of work is now assessed and this information used purposefully for example to revise the curriculum for the following year. Teachers' expectations of pupils' presentation of work are also much better. In **geography** it is clear that the pupils cover a full curriculum, with a clear focus on investigation and map work. In Years 1 and 2, pupils map their journeys to school, looking for familiar landmarks on the way. Much productive work is done through the use of the 'Katie Morag' series of books, allowing the pupils to gain good knowledge of island life, features of an environment, types of building and people's jobs and ways of life. Atlases are used to good effect in Years 3 to 5, to learn about the wider world and its countries. The topic of 'settlements' provides much fruitful study. In these years, much stress is laid on environment and its issues. This builds well on learning in science, for example about recycling. A study of pupils' visit to a local park had been used to great effect to examine mapping routes, signing, by-laws and environmental change. The one lesson seen, on 'The Island of Struay' was very well taught, illustrating well teachers' use of the interesting and unusual in their teaching. Written work reinforces literacy skills well and the subject is taught with citizenship carefully included. Standards are similar to those at the time of the last inspection. In **history** the pupils develop a sense of chronology through the use of timelines which give them a clear view of the changing people and features over a period of time, starting with their own lives and families and moving into a wider perspective of history. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 could discuss the Great Fire of London, Florence Nightingale and Remembrance Day with clear and accurate recollection. In Years 3, 4 and 5 pupils study a good range of appropriate and stimulating topics, ranging from Henry VIII to the Second World War. In a very good Year 4 lesson, local residents were giving pupils firsthand evidence of life during the latter period. Pupils all had roles for which they had carefully prepared. Questions were well-thought out. Pupils achieved well, particularly in their understanding of everyday life during this period. Very good displays were seen on subjects such as 'Our Evacuation Area'. Good use is also made of visits to places of historic interest, such as Beaumanor Hall. Standards are similar to those seen at the time of the last inspection.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' standards are above expectations and achievement is good.
- Teaching is sensitive, absorbing and uses creative methods.
- The subject adds well to pupils' spiritual, moral and social development.
- A good range of artefacts and resources supports teaching and learning, an improvement since the last inspection.

Commentary

111. The previous inspection found standards in religious education to be in line with the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus by the end of Year 5. It now exceeds these requirements. Standards by the end of Year 2, too, are above expectations. Achievement is good for all pupils, including those with special educational needs. Pupils have a good understanding of the Bible stories, festivals and different peoples and faiths. Religious teaching is well interwoven with moral teaching and an appreciation of relationships in everyday life. In Years 1 and 2, pupils look at topics such as the meaning of friendship, as well as learning something of the practices and festivals of other religions, such as Shabbat. In Years 3, 4 and 5, they study Islam in some detail, are familiar with Bible stories such as 'The Good Samaritan' and the story of Creation, as told in Genesis. They look at concepts such as charity-giving and neighbourliness.

112. Teaching is good overall, using many methods to capture pupils' interest and vary the scope of work they cover. Good use of resources and visual and physical stimuli were seen in, for example, a very good Year 1 and 2 lesson on the story and meaning of Easter, where pupils were all given a full opportunities to view Easter as both a sad time and a time of hope. The school also makes full use of the local religious communities; two lessons were seen, one given by the local Methodist preacher and one by the local Anglican priest. Although the school has few pupils of religions other than Christian, much effort is made, through visitors and through visits to buildings such as a synagogue, to make pupils as informed as possible on other faiths and ways of life. Links with a local school, too, help pupils gain a more in-depth understanding of other cultures and customs.

113. A good range of artefacts is used to allow pupils the opportunity to investigate and think about their significance. Pupils reinforce work done by following it with practical activities, such as the designing and making of stained glass windows from transparencies. Literacy skills are put to good purpose, both in discussion and in reading and writing and all pupils, including those with special educational needs, find lessons interesting and accessible.

114. Religious education is well linked throughout the school with the themes of assemblies, with literature and with music and song. This was seen in many assemblies, for example when pupils' favourite songs were linked with the writer, Sidney Carter. Real evidence of spirituality was seen in lessons, especially when pupils were given the independence to think of answers to difficult questions, such as about Creation, for themselves. In this way, the subject contributes greatly to pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development.

115. Leadership and management in the subject are good, with shared expertise and firm objectives. Pupils' work is carefully monitored and a record kept of pupils' progress.

Since the last inspection improvements include:

- Higher standards and better progress, more consistent from year-to-year;
- Balance between aspects of the curriculum is good and more time is spent on the subject;
- Artefacts and other resources are much better, both in quality and quantity;
- Teaching is of higher standard and lessons are better planned.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

No **design and technology** lessons were observed and, as a result, it was not possible to make secure judgements about the school's provision for design and technology. An analysis of pupils' work displayed around the school and in their folders and books indicates that standards are above expectations for pupils of their age and they achieve well. This represents a good improvement in standards and achievement since the last inspection which reported pupils' designing skills were unsatisfactory in most classes and standards of work produced were only satisfactory. Pupils throughout the school now undertake a full range of activities covering all aspects of the subject. These tasks are fully and thoroughly based upon the nationally-recommended scheme of work. Resources for the subject are satisfactory and particularly good use is made of the food technology facilities for small group activities to design, make and evaluate. As well as those mentioned earlier,

improvements since the last inspection include: Planning is sharper and makes sure pupils acquire the necessary skills and resources are much better

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in the subject are well above those generally expected.
- Teaching is very good.
- Pupils achieve very well.
- ICT is used very effectively.

Commentary

116. Pupils' current and previous work demonstrates that standards are particularly high. A number of reasons exist for this. Teaching is very good. Schemes of work are cohesive and fully cover all strands of the subject. Tasks are imaginative and interesting, helping to generate high pupil interest. Pupils enjoy the subject and want to learn. Resources, including the well-used kiln, are good and varied. Very good use of ICT in art and design activities helps develop pupils' skills in both subjects. Good links with other subjects – especially history, geography and design and technology – also generate greater pupils' interest and understanding. Pupils with special educational needs are very well-supported and fully included in all activities.

117. Teachers demonstrate very good subject knowledge and plan and resource their lessons very well. The challenge of very high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour are met by well-motivated pupils who apply themselves to their work with great enthusiasm. This was seen, for example, in a very good Year 2 lesson where pupils were investigating tools, techniques and digital media. Building well on previous learning, some pupils produced mosaics using 'cold', 'warm' and 'autumn' colours. Others extended part of a photograph outwards, producing excellent work. For example, a photograph of a leopard had been extended outwards, with the pupil matching scale, colour and pattern very skilfully. The teacher's and student teacher's very good relationships with the class and very good subject knowledge and evident enthusiasm for the work under discussion led to pupils responding very confidently and responsibly. As the lesson progressed, the very good pace and the use of relevant resources led to very good progress in learning. Similarly, in a very good Year 5 'activity afternoon', very good teaching, planning and resourcing enabled a group of pupils to design and make high quality batik designs. They understood the need for simplicity in their designs, the concept of 'saving' colours with hot wax and the safety aspects of working with such materials. Throughout the lesson, they made sensible, well-thought through decisions for themselves.

118. The only area for improvement highlighted by the last inspection, the need for opportunities for pupils to appraise their own work, has been effectively addressed.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very high profile afforded music in the school.
- Very good teaching by teaching and additional specialist staff.
- The very good standards attained and the very good progress made by pupils.
- The range of instruments taught and activities offered is impressively broad.
- The very wide range of good quality resources are utilised very well to give pupils many and varied opportunities.

119. Progress is very good throughout the school and pupil achievement is very good. Pupils learn at a very good rate so that standards by the end of Year 2 are above expectations for pupils of this age, and by the end of Year 5 well above expectations for this age. This has built upon the good standards when the school was last inspected. It is a testament to the very high profile that music continues to have in the life of the school. Singing in assemblies and in lessons is tuneful and rhythmic and is characterised by good diction and good use of dynamics. Pupils with special educational needs also achieve very well. The breadth and range of musical opportunity gives many of these pupils who struggle with the more academic curriculum, the chance to shine. Some who have difficulty concentrating, have learnt to play an instrument and perform as part of a group. The subsequent benefits to their self esteem, self confidence and achievements in other subjects, have often been substantial.

120. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Class lessons are well taught. A very wide range of additional tuition and activities, largely supported by additional musical specialists, is taught to a very high standard. Subject knowledge in both is very good. Teachers move lessons along at a good pace, changing activities frequently to gain and maintain interest. Pupils respond very positively to their teachers' very high expectations of them. Instructions are very clear and most teachers exhibit genuine enthusiasm for the subject. As a result, pupils enjoy music lessons; they understand what they need to do to improve and achieve very well. In a very good Year 5 lesson, pupils compared and contrasted different kinds of music. When discussing and appraising examples of music, pupils spoke confidently about 'the pitch changing', the 'duration' of notes, the 'tension' in a piece of music, which was 'working to a climax'. In this lesson, the pupils rose to the challenge set by the teacher's very high expectations and clear enthusiasm and very good use of individual encouragement and support and, as a result, made very good progress.

121. The curriculum is a hive of high quality activity. In addition to very good class lessons observed during the inspection, music has a high profile in most assemblies. Particularly impressive is the vast range of individual and small group instrument tuition. More than 40 pupils benefit from high quality teaching of instruments including violins, recorders, trombone, flute, guitar, trumpet and hand bells. Many of these pupils play in the high quality school orchestra.

122. The curriculum is cohesive. Tasks, based on the nationally-recommended scheme of work with additions to suit the school, are very good. This effectively supports non-specialist teachers, giving the clear guidance, with detailed lesson plans and resources, to enable them to teach well. It also provides a good level of continuity and progression in learning as pupils move through the school and ensures all national requirements for the subject are fully met. Resources are utilised well and of very good quality, the latter due largely to the very good support provided by the school's 'Friends Association'.

123. A very wide range of additional musical activities takes place during the year. Performances by the school orchestra, carol concerts, musical plays and the "Music Week" and the "Music Evening" held for parents at the end of the Summer term are much enjoyed and appreciated. They contribute greatly to pupils' personal development. For example, performances by the hand-bells group encourage concentration, self discipline and teamwork.

124. There were no significant areas for development at the last inspection.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good quality teaching and pupils' keenness to learn leads to good progress in individual lessons.
- The very small hall severely restricts pupils' progress generally, but in gymnastics particularly. It also means that pupils do not follow the full National Curriculum.
- The playground is also limited in size and this restricts progress too.

Commentary

125. Standards are similar to those found at the last inspection and unsatisfactory overall. Gymnastics is particularly low, but the level of basic skills in many areas is adversely affected by the poor facilities. Pupils achieve well in many lessons and make good progress in the development of skills where facilities and accommodation allow.

126. Pupils make the most of the facilities offered. They all work together very co-operatively indeed, whether in pairs, small groups or as a class. They work very well with their teachers and their sensible, mature attitudes mean no time is wasted and they achieve a great deal. This is an improvement since the last inspection. In Year 2, pupils recognise they can learn from one another's advice and demonstration. In Year 4, they work very co-operatively to meet challenges, employing problem-solving skills well. In Year 6, pupils recognise the need to concentrate and work together as a team if they are to be effective.

127. Teaching is good overall, an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers know what they are talking about, and explain clearly and fully what it is they want pupils to learn. Pupils listen, try hard and persevere. Consequently, much is achieved. Relationships between adults and pupils are excellent. Humour is used effectively. For example, in a very good Year 2 lesson the teacher's 'you are the boss, the ball is trying to be naughty and get away' encourages pupils. Teaching assistants make a positive contribution, particularly by giving struggling pupils greater explanation and encouragement, and by aiding the smooth changeover from one activity to another.

128. Lessons flow at a very good rate because teachers manage the limited facilities very well. With the help and co-operation of pupils, they get a lot done - even though the limited space available often means the whole class cannot participate at once.

129. Accommodation is very poor. The hall is small, so that sustained energetic activity is not possible. This is made worse because the availability of equipment such as wall bars is limited. The full range of the National Curriculum cannot be offered. Outside, the playground offers barely sufficient space for all pupils in any of the older classes to work simultaneously. The school has done much with limited success to try to solve this problem, such as using the village hall. Only in dry weather when the field is an acceptable alternative for teaching a limited number of skills, is there an adequate alternative.

130. Management is good. Staff are well trained. The curriculum is well planned, supplemented by very good after school activities. Resources are generally satisfactory but accommodation limits the range. For example, wall bars, ropes and large pieces such as climbing frames cannot be provided.

Good improvements since the last inspection include:

- High standards of behaviour are consistent across all classes;
- Teaching is now good and of a more consistent standard, subject knowledge is better;
- Lessons are better organised so pupils are inactive for short periods of time only;
- Moveable gymnastics equipment is of better quality and quantity.

Areas remaining for improvement include:

- Indoor accommodation and facilities generally are insufficient;
- Outdoor 'hard' play surface is limited and restricts learning.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal and social education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well and thrive at Houghton School.
- The school sees this as an important part of its work and does a great deal to promote pupils' personal development.
- Pupils are taught very well about living in a community and their rights and responsibilities.
- Much is done to develop pupils' understanding of their personal health and well-being.

Commentary

131. Provision helps ensure a very harmonious community. All pupils fully understand their rights and responsibilities within the school. They can clearly explain what they can expect from others, and what others can expect from them.

132. Although there is no school council yet, pupils know that their views are sought and listened to. In-class provision to discuss issues important to pupils is very good. Pupils listen very carefully, consider others' views very thoughtfully, and respond respectfully. Each class has a wonderful atmosphere where pupils learn they can trust both adults and pupils they work with. Consequently, they are happy to express views, even when the topic is sensitive to them.

133. Teaching and learning are good, so that-for example-pupils gain a good understanding of 'democracy'. Pupils in Year 4, for example, are taught well about decision-making in general and voting in particular. When selecting their 'Star Pupil', they give very mature and well-reasoned arguments for their choices. They understand how persuasive argument can inform the listeners and help change their minds.

134. The programme for personal, social and health education is very good. The curriculum generally and specific events, such as 'healthy school', help pupils develop very good and accurate knowledge and understanding. Personal safety and well-being is enhanced through careful and appropriate lessons, for example in sex and drugs education.

Improvements since the last inspection include:

- A more cohesive curriculum;
- Better, more relevant activities to promote pupils' development.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	2
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	1
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).