

INSPECTION REPORT

HIGHAM FERRERS NURSERY AND INFANT SCHOOL

Higham Ferrers

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 121899

Acting Headteacher: Mrs M Peregrine

Lead inspector: Mike Capper

Dates of inspection: June 28th – 30th 2004

Inspection number: 264493

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 - 7
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	322
School address:	Wharf Road Higham Ferrers Rushden Northamptonshire
Postcode:	NN10 8BQ
Telephone number:	(01933) 312 904
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs M Newman

Date of previous inspection: 12th October 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This is a large community Nursery and infant school, which admits pupils between the ages of three and seven. There are 322 pupils on roll and they are taught in ten single-age classes, with the Nursery admitting children on a part-time basis for either morning or afternoon sessions. Pupils come from a variety of home backgrounds, including some from families that have low incomes, though the percentage eligible for free school meals is well below average. Pupil mobility is average. There are 38 pupils on the register of special educational needs. This is similar to the percentage found nationally. Most of these pupils are identified as having moderate learning difficulties. There are six pupils with a statement of special educational need. This is higher than the number normally found in schools of this size; some of these pupils are hearing impaired. When they start school in the Nursery, children's attainment is broadly average. Most pupils are of white British origin and only one has English as an additional language.

The school received a 'Schools Achievement Award' in 2001 and in 2002. At the time of the inspection, a Year 2 class was being taught by a temporary teacher and the school was being led by an acting headteacher, who had been in post since the start of the summer term. A new headteacher was due to take up post in September 2004.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
23239	Mr M Capper	Lead inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology (ICT) Religious education Physical education Personal, social and health education (PSHE) English as an additional language (EAL)
9545	Mr K Greatorex	Lay inspector	
23609	Mrs A M Cartlidge	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Science Art and design Design and technology
21686	Mrs D Songer-Hudgell	Team inspector	English History Geography Music Special educational needs

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a satisfactory school. Pupils are well cared for and their behaviour is good. Teaching is satisfactory, enabling pupils to make sound progress over time, though there are variations in overall attainment from year to year. Leadership is satisfactory but there are important weaknesses in the management of the school and in the way that provision is monitored. The school provides sound value for money.

THE SCHOOL'S MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES ARE:

- The acting headteacher and the deputy headteacher are working together closely and have a clear vision for school development.
- Systems for evaluating the school's work and ensuring consistency of provision have not been effective in addressing weaknesses.
- By the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment is too low in mathematics, ICT and listening.
- Pupils achieve well in religious education and personal, social and health education (PSHE) in Years 1 and 2.
- The curriculum lacks balance and is inconsistent from class-to-class.
- Teachers do not always have high enough expectations or use assessment information to plan challenging work, especially for more able pupils.
- The school has good links with parents and the local community.
- Good levels of care mean that pupils are happy at school and get on well together.

The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection in 1998. Pupils' attainment has risen in religious education and most of the key weaknesses from that time have been addressed. However, pupils continue to underachieve in ICT and standards of attainment have fallen in mathematics in the last year.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. Achievement is generally more secure in the Nursery, Reception classes and Year 1 than in Year 2, where there are significant variations in standard of attainment from class to class, with significant underachievement in one of the three classes.

In the Nursery and Reception classes, children's achievement is satisfactory and children are on target to meet the expected levels in all areas of learning by the end of the Reception Year. In Year 2, pupils' attainment is in line with nationally expected levels in science, reading and

writing but below them in ICT and listening and well below them in mathematics. This is confirmed by test results for 2004 which show that there has been a slight rise in standards in reading and writing but a significant fall in mathematics.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall in Years 1 and 2, with strengths in religious education and personal, social and health education, where attainment is good. However, in mathematics, the curriculum is fragmented and skills do not develop as quickly as they should. In reading, writing and science, whilst achievement is satisfactory overall, there is not always enough challenge for more able pupils and consequently there are occasions when they underachieve. In contrast, pupils with statements of special educational needs make good progress and achieve well.

Pupils' personal qualities, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good overall. Pupils' behaviour is good and they develop satisfactory attitudes and values. Attendance and punctuality are good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is **satisfactory** but weaknesses in the curriculum have a negative impact on pupils' achievement, especially in mathematics and ICT.

Teaching and learning are **satisfactory overall**. Members of staff in the Nursery and Reception classes work together well as a team, have good relationships with the children and share good ideas for planning. In Years 1 and 2, teachers and other members of staff are good at managing pupils' behaviour. However, there are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching from class to class, especially in Year 2, where expectations in one class have been too low. In too many lessons in Years 1 and 2, the pace of learning is comfortable rather than challenging and teachers do not always expect enough from their pupils. Assessment arrangements are unsatisfactory and information collected is not used consistently to plan suitable work.

There are good levels of care, welfare, health and safety and a good partnership with parents and the community. Accommodation is satisfactory, with weaknesses in the dilapidated state of demountable classrooms, the lack of a small group room for the Nursery or a library for the whole school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The leadership of the school by the acting headteacher and other key staff is satisfactory. However, management is unsatisfactory, with the recent drop in standards not being satisfactorily addressed by senior managers. Systems for evaluating the school's work have not been effective in ensuring consistency of provision; strategic planning is not based on a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The acting headteacher has inherited a management structure that places too many responsibilities on too small a group of teachers. This is unsatisfactory. Governance is satisfactory overall. Governors ensure that statutory requirements are met in full. They are supportive but do not do enough to challenge the school when weaknesses are identified in test or other data.

The acting headteacher and the deputy headteacher are working together closely to ensure that there is a smooth handover to the new headteacher. These arrangements, together with the enthusiasm and commitment of members of staff, mean that the school is well placed to improve provision.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils are largely positive about the work of the school. Parents are pleased with support given to pupils with special educational needs and feel well involved in school life. Pupils like school and say that learning is fun.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS THE SCHOOL SHOULD DO TO IMPROVE ARE:

- Raise pupils' attainment in mathematics, ICT and listening.
- Ensure that there is consistently high challenge for more able pupils in lessons.
- Improve the effectiveness and impact of evaluation, monitoring and development planning to ensure a greater consistency in the quality of teaching and in the breadth and balance of the curriculum.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. Achievement is generally more secure in the Nursery, Reception classes and Year 1 than in Year 2, where there are significant variations in standards of attainment from class to class. There are no significant differences between the attainment of boys or girls or between pupils from different backgrounds.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- In the Nursery and Reception classes, more able children achieve well in reading and writing.
- Less able children make slower progress in writing than other children in the Reception classes.
- By the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment is too low in mathematics, ICT and listening.
- Pupils' attainment is good in religious education.
- More able pupils do not always achieve as they should.
- Pupils with statements of special educational needs achieve well.

COMMENTARY

CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE (NURSERY AND RECEPTION CLASSES)

1. Children's achievement is satisfactory overall and children are on target to meet the expected levels by the end of the Reception Year in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development. There is insufficient evidence to form a judgement about standards of attainment in creative development because this area was not a focus for the inspection.
2. In communication, language and literacy, whilst achievement is satisfactory overall, more able children are given good support in developing their reading and spelling in the Reception classes. However, the less mature and those with special educational needs find it difficult to listen and are easily distracted when being taught as a whole class. In one lesson, not enough support was given to help lower-attaining children to learn to use the pictures to help them understand what might be happening in a story.
3. Attainment and achievement in the Nursery and Reception classes are not as high as those found at the time of the last inspection and a turnover of staff and extensive building work have been barriers to learning over the last year.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	14.9 (16.1)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	14.3 (14.5)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	16.5 (15.5)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 78 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. Test results in 2003 indicated that attainment was:
 - in reading and writing, below the national average and well below that for similar schools; and
 - in mathematics, in line with the national average and below that for similar schools*.

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

5. Inspection findings, based on work seen, are that in the current Year 2, pupils' attainment is in line with nationally expected levels in science, reading and writing but below them in listening and well below them in mathematics. This is confirmed by test results for 2004 which show that there has been a slight rise in standards in reading and writing but a significant fall in mathematics.
6. Pupils' attainment is higher in Year 1 than Year 2, because teaching is more effective in meeting differing needs. In contrast, there are wide variations in pupils' attainment from class to class in Year 2, with significant underachievement in one of the three classes. For example, test results at the end of Year 2 in 2004 indicate that in writing, 43 per cent of pupils in one class failed to reach nationally expected levels, compared to 16 per cent in the other two classes. A scrutiny of pupils' work shows that over the academic year, there have been major differences in the expectations of teachers, with a lack of consistency having a negative impact on overall attainment.
7. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall in Years 1 and 2. However, in mathematics, the curriculum is fragmented and skills do not develop as quickly as they should, leading to significant underachievement. In reading, writing and science, whilst achievement is satisfactory overall, there is not always enough challenge for more-able pupils and consequently there are occasions when they do not learn as well as they should.
8. In ICT, pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory, with attainment being below nationally expected levels in Year 2. Pupils do not achieve as well as they should, because the curriculum is unsatisfactory, with too little time being allowed for the teaching of ICT. Some teachers lack confidence and rarely make use of the ICT suite.
9. Pupils' attainment in religious education is above the expectations of the locally-agreed syllabus by the end of Year 2. Pupils achieve well, with their knowledge and understanding of the Jewish faith especially strong. This is because of the good quality teaching and the successful use of visitors who talk about their beliefs.
10. Pupils of all ages achieve well in personal, social and health education. This is because there are good opportunities for them to develop personal and social skills through a range of activities, including lessons, visits and visitors that together make up a good curriculum.

Pupils with special educational needs

The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall, with a strength in the progress of statemented pupils. The needs of pupils with statements of special educational need are met well. They are fully included in lessons and specialist support means that they make good progress. For non-statemented pupils, there is appropriate provision in some literacy and numeracy lessons, with good support from teaching assistants ensuring that they learn well at these times. However, there are occasions, especially when there is no

support from teaching assistants, where work is not matched closely enough to needs and is unfinished because it is too hard.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES, VALUES AND OTHER PERSONAL QUALITIES

Pupils' personal qualities, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good overall. Pupils' behaviour is good and they have satisfactory attitudes and values. Attendance and punctuality are good.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Behaviour in lessons is good and around the school it is very good.
- Pupils throughout the school form good relationships with each other and with adults.
- Many pupils do not listen or concentrate well in the longer lessons.
- Good attendance and punctuality ensure that lessons start promptly.

COMMENTARY

11. Behaviour throughout the school has been maintained well since the last inspection and continues to be good. Pupils rise to the challenge of high expectations set by the school and as a result, their behaviour in lessons is good. When they come to school, in assemblies, in the playground and particularly in the dining hall, pupils show that very good levels of orderly behaviour are consistently achieved. The school deals effectively with all forms of harassment.
12. Relationships have been maintained well since the last inspection and continue to be good. Exemplified by the warm and caring attitude of the acting headteacher and other staff, all pupils show mutual respect and trust. From the earliest time on entry, all pupils constantly demonstrate a willingness to help each other and share resources. They work co-operatively and collaboratively together.
13. Although a high proportion of pupils have positive attitudes to the school and their work, a significant number are less enthusiastic. While most are fully prepared to work hard and participate fully in all the activities, many others have great difficulty in listening and maintaining concentration, particularly in the very long lessons. Nevertheless, as they progress through the school, most pupils become more articulate, confident and mature. In the Nursery and Reception classes, most children are on target to meet the expectations for children by the end of the Reception Year in personal, social and emotional development and, in particular, they show good levels of independence.
14. The school continues to provide proper provision for the pupils' personal development. Spiritual, social and cultural developments are all satisfactory and moral development is good. Opportunities to learn about their own and other cultures are regular and varied. The trips and visits to museums, churches and other venues all further their personal development. Pupils respect the views of others and understand the importance of traditions and festivals of other religions. Pupils regularly support fund-raising for charities.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence

Unauthorised absence

School data	4.1
National data	5.4

School data	0.3
National data	0.4

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

15. Attendance has improved since the last inspection and is consistently good. Virtually all pupils are punctual and many arrive early, enabling the school to make a prompt and efficient start to the school day.

EXCLUSIONS

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	Number of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	172	2	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	3	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	3	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0

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

16. There were a small number of exclusions in 2002-2003 as the headteacher addressed serious incidents of poor behaviour from a very small number of pupils. These pupils no longer attend the school and there have been no exclusions since they left.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. There are good levels of care, welfare, health and safety, with pupils given sound support and guidance. There is a good partnership with parents and the community and satisfactory links with other schools.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. However, assessment procedures are unsatisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and information is not always used well when work is being planned.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Members of staff in the Nursery and Reception classes provide interesting activities for independent work.
- Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well in most lessons.
- Teachers do not always have high enough expectations or use assessment information to plan challenging work, and there is some unsatisfactory teaching in Year 2.
- Throughout the school, pupils are independent and work together well.

COMMENTARY

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 34 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0 (0%)	1 (3%)	14 (41%)	14 (50%)	2 (6%)	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.

17. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and proportions of good and satisfactory teaching are similar to those found at the time of the last inspection. Most parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire are pleased with the way their children are taught and find members of staff to be kind and caring.

Nursery and Reception classes

18. Teaching and learning in the Nursery and Reception classes are satisfactory overall. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and is good in half the lessons. Adults in the Nursery provide consistently good support as children work on tasks they have chosen for themselves. Members of staff in the Nursery and Reception classes work together well as a team and, as at the time of the last inspection, share good ideas for planning. They have good relationships with each other and the children. However, teaching in the Reception classes is not as effective as at the time of the last inspection, because children's attention is not always maintained successfully and whole-class discussions sometimes lose momentum when not followed up with related activities. Assessment arrangements are thorough and information is used to help plan a wide range of interesting, practical activities. However, this information is not used consistently to ensure that activities provide the right challenge for all children.

Years 1 and 2

19. Teachers and other members of staff are good at managing pupils' behaviour. As at the time of the last inspection, they are friendly and form supportive relationships with the pupils. Pupils like their teachers and find most lessons to be fun. Teaching assistants are used well when providing individual or small group support, especially for pupils with special educational needs. However, their skills are not always fully utilised during whole-class work.
20. As at the time of the last inspection, teachers plan lessons together within their year groups and this can be a successful strategy. For example, teachers in Year 1 have planned some interesting science lessons exploring types of physical force. However, there are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching from class to class, especially in Year 2 where expectations in one class have been much too low. In too many lessons in Years 1 and 2, the pace of learning is comfortable rather than challenging and teachers do not expect enough from their pupils.
21. Assessment arrangements are unsatisfactory and information collected is not used consistently to plan suitable work. Work is regularly marked, but teachers do not always add written comments to help pupils understand how they can improve. There are insufficient systems in place to track pupils' progress as they move through the school. Taken together, these factors mean that not all pupils have a clear understanding of how they can improve their work.
22. Pupils of differing ability often complete similar tasks and sometimes pupils in Year 2 complete tasks that do not build sufficiently on work they carried out in Year 1. A few parents before the inspection were right to raise concerns about the challenge provided for more able pupils. During the inspection, examples of unsatisfactory teaching in Year 2 were due to the teacher having weaknesses in subject knowledge and not being sufficiently well prepared for lessons.
23. The teaching of literacy and numeracy are satisfactory overall. Teachers are hardworking and conscientious, but there are weaknesses that have a significant impact on learning:
- In some classes, especially in Year 2, expectations are too low and work is not matched closely enough to pupils' needs.

- Teachers do not assess learning effectively and this means that planned work is not matched closely enough to pupils' previous learning.
- In numeracy, insecure subject knowledge means that pupils are sometimes given inaccurate information.
- Work for pupils with special educational needs does not always meet their needs because it is too difficult for them to complete independently.

Whole School

24. Throughout the school, pupils develop good skills in co-operation and independence. This aspect of learning is especially strong in the Nursery and Reception classes, where children are encouraged to find their own resources and initiate their own tasks.
25. Parents are especially pleased with the support given to children with statements of special educational needs and the inspection team agrees that their needs are met well. Good quality support from skilled specialist staff means that they are fully included in all activities and make good progress.

THE CURRICULUM

The curriculum is satisfactory in the Foundation Stage. In Years 1 and 2 it is unsatisfactory as it is broad but not balanced. Although the school lacks a library and has timeworn mobile classrooms, the accommodation, staffing and learning resources are satisfactory overall. Opportunities to enrich the curriculum are appropriate for the age range of the pupils.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- There is too much variation between classes in the use of time and the balance of the curriculum.
- Pupils with statements of education need receive good provision.
- There is good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education.
- A revision of the curriculum is being undertaken but it lacks focus because it is not based on a systematic evaluation of what needs to be improved.

COMMENTARY

26. The school offers pupils a broad range of opportunities for learning and the curriculum meets statutory requirements. However, the allocation of time to each subject is not monitored rigorously enough, resulting in variations from class to class in the time spent on each subject weekly. Too much time is spent on 'snack-times'; whilst these sessions are of some value for younger children, helping them to improve social skills, the amount of time allocated for snack times each day is too long, resulting in a significant loss of teaching time. Throughout the school, lessons can be too long, particularly in English, history and geography. Individual class timetables indicate missing curriculum areas such as art and design and ICT and others allocate variable blocks of time for subjects, not always providing for them each week. This is particularly the case in history and geography, where these subjects are taught alternatively each half-term. This makes it harder for pupils to build regularly and progressively on their learning or to make links between curriculum areas.
27. The balance of time spent on English in some classes is to the detriment of other subjects and a balanced curriculum. In mathematics, the curriculum is fragmented, with new topics not taught in sufficient depth to ensure secure learning. This is a key factor in the low attainment found in Year 2.
28. All pupils, and particularly those with statements of special educational needs, are well supported to access the curriculum. Individual programmes are followed regularly and teaching assistants are clear about their role and responsibilities in helping pupils to

learn. Pupils with hearing disabilities are given high quality support with signing to enable them to participate fully in lessons. This good provision ensures statemented pupils are secure and confident in their attitudes to learning.

29. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is good. Teachers use every opportunity to develop pupils' personal and social skills and teach the importance of good health. Lessons are regularly planned in the majority of classes as well as discrete topics relevant to the age and stage of the pupils. There is appropriate coverage of sex and relationships education and issues relating to substance abuse at a level that is appropriate to the age of the pupils. The school is working towards a Healthy School Award, and an awareness of eating habits and nutrition forms the theme for a number of subjects that link more than one curriculum area. These strategies help to build pupils' confidence, self-esteem and an understanding of why it is important to maintain good health.
30. Members of staff, led by the deputy headteacher, have spent a considerable time in reviewing and revising the curriculum. However, because there has been insufficient monitoring of provision, reviews have been driven by government initiatives rather than being based on a clear understanding of where there are weaknesses. Nevertheless, a useful overview of the curriculum has been devised for each year group and is being trialled this year. This indicates the topics or themes to be covered each term in each subject.
31. Accommodation, staffing and resources are satisfactory overall. However, there are some important weaknesses, with the dilapidated state of demountable classrooms, and the lack of a library and a small group room for the Nursery having a negative impact on provision. The inspection team was also concerned about the unacceptable levels of smells coming from the toilets.

CARE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The school takes good care of the children's personal needs. It effectively promotes the pupils' welfare in a secure and caring environment. Their personal development is well supported, but academic guidance is less secure. Pupils are involved properly in the work of the school.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The school provides a safe and secure environment in which the pupils can learn.
- The school has good induction procedures.
- The headteacher and other staff offer good pastoral support.

COMMENTARY

32. Health and safety continue to be well handled. Site inspections are conducted regularly to identify potential hazards and prepare appropriate action plans for remedial work. All members of staff are safety conscious and watch for the security of the children. Child protection issues continue to be handled effectively. All members of staff are aware of their responsibilities. They understand the need for vigilance and the steps to take if suspicions are aroused.

33. The good quality induction procedures enable the children to feel comfortable from the moment that they first enter the school. The information provided by the school enables parents to be reassured and, in turn, to reassure their children.
34. The school continues to provide effective support for the pastoral needs of the pupils. However academic support is unsatisfactory. Assessment is not used effectively to plan the teaching and learning for pupils' particular academic needs. Nevertheless, all staff counsel pupils well, offering high quality personal and social support to those most in need. Stemming from the good relationships and led by the headteacher, all staff set good examples of how to have trusting relationships, enabling the pupils to develop good self-esteem. Pupils confirm that they know whom to approach if they have a problem and there are appropriate procedures for seeking pupils' views and involving them in the work of the school.

PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS, OTHER SCHOOLS AND THE COMMUNITY

The school has good links with parents and the community. Links with other schools are satisfactory and improving.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Parents are very supportive of the school and their children's education.
- Parents contribute considerably to pupils' learning at school and at home.
- Visits and visitors strengthen the links with the community.

COMMENTARY

35. The partnership with parents has been well maintained since the last inspection and continues to have a positive effect on the children's learning and personal development. Parents responding to the questionnaire and those attending the meeting were extremely supportive of the school and its work. They believe that it has many strong features.
36. Parents are encouraged to become involved in the life of the school and a good proportion respond positively. The school has appropriate systems in place for consulting with parents and to ensure satisfaction should concerns or complaints arise. Parents say that members of staff are approachable and respond quickly to any problems.
37. Parents are a considerable help around the school, as well as on school trips and visits. The Higham Ferrers Nursery and Infant School Friends Association is very active. It organises many fundraising and social events in support of the school. The school values highly the support and contributions made by all parents and members of the community that enhance the children's learning and development.
38. The information for parents about their children's progress is good overall. The annual reports to parents now give much clearer information about the children's progress and what they know, understand and can do. In addition, they contain targets for improvement that are specific and measurable. Reports also give parents the opportunity to make their response to the detailed information.
39. The school enjoys very positive partnerships with a number of groups in the community. Representatives of various faiths visit the school to extend the children's knowledge of religions. Visits and visitors are used regularly to extend awareness of the wider community. Good use is made of the various specialist agencies to support pupils with particular needs. The link with the nearby junior school has recently been improved, is now satisfactory and is to improve further with the promotion of the liaison to improve the transfer process for pupils when they leave this school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The leadership of the school by the acting headteacher and other key staff is satisfactory. However, management is unsatisfactory, with a drop in standards over the last two years not being satisfactorily addressed. Governance is satisfactory overall.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The acting headteacher and the deputy headteacher have a clear vision for school development.
- Subject leaders are enthusiastic, committed and hardworking but not all have had sufficient opportunities to monitor teaching, learning and standards.
- There is a strong commitment to ensuring that the school provides successfully for pupils who have disabilities.
- There are ineffective systems for evaluating the school's work and ensuring consistency of provision.
- Strategic planning is not based on a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- The governing body is supportive but has not done enough to challenge senior managers about standards or the impact of spending on provision.
- The acting headteacher has inherited a management structure that places too many responsibilities on too small a group of teachers.

COMMENTARY

40. At the time of the inspection, the school was being led and managed by an acting headteacher who had only been in post for a short time. She is providing sound leadership for the school and has quickly earned the respect of staff, parents and governors. Parents are very happy with the quality of leadership being provided by the acting headteacher. They find her supportive and approachable.
41. The acting headteacher has monitored provision, including the quality of teaching and learning, enabling her to develop quickly a clear understanding of where the school has weaknesses. She is working very closely with the deputy headteacher to address these, though, inevitably, many of the improvements initiated by the acting headteacher are very recent. This means that they have not yet had a significant impact on standards. Nevertheless, recent action includes:
 - Holding staff interviews to identify future training needs and giving more responsibility to subject co-ordinators for managing budgets and reviewing test data.
 - Reviewing and extending the roles and responsibilities of staff. This has had a good impact in subjects such as ICT where improvements are already evident.
 - Organising regular meetings with midday supervisors to increase their level of involvement in the work of the school.
 - Improving links with the neighbouring junior school and re-organising lunchtime and some playtime arrangements.
42. The acting headteacher and the deputy headteacher are working together closely to ensure that there is a smooth handover to the new headteacher. These arrangements, together with the enthusiasm and commitment of members of staff, mean that the school is in a good position to improve provision.
43. Management of the school is unsatisfactory. This is because effective action has not been taken to address the drop in standards that is evident over the last two years. Where weaknesses have been identified, for example in the quality of teaching in a Year 2 class, steps taken to remedy the problem have not been successful in ensuring that the

pupils' education does not suffer. School development planning is unsatisfactory. It is not based on a clear understanding of the issues facing the school. It is completed in April rather than later in the academic year when it can respond to weaknesses identified in test results and other monitoring. The school development plan lacks focus, does not set measurable targets and does not clearly identify how improvement is to be ensured.

44. School self-evaluation is not well enough established. Subject leaders are enthusiastic, committed and hardworking but have had insufficient opportunities to monitor teaching, learning and standards. Teachers are not yet reflective enough about their own practice. Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning have not been addressed by senior managers and this has had a significant impact on school effectiveness.
45. The delegation of responsibilities from senior managers downwards is unsatisfactory. The management structure places too many responsibilities on too small a group of teachers. This means that some members of staff have an unrealistic workload, limiting their effectiveness because they are being asked to do too many things at once. For example, one member of the senior management team has responsibilities for assessment, mathematics, mentoring newly-qualified teachers and co-ordinating provision in the Nursery and Reception classes.
46. Special educational needs provision is well led and managed by the deputy headteacher. All members of staff have a strong commitment to providing a fully inclusive school and this is particularly evident in the way that the school supports pupils with disabilities. Recommended special educational needs procedures are carefully followed and record-keeping is systematic. Funding for pupils with special educational needs is spent appropriately for their benefit.
47. Governance is satisfactory and statutory requirements are met in full. There are many new governors on the governing body and they are beginning to develop an understanding of their various roles and responsibilities. They are supportive of the school's work and are committed to developing the school further. Individual governors have responsibility for curriculum areas such as literacy. This is helpful, giving them a wider perspective on the school's work. As a result, they have a sound understanding of some of the strengths and weaknesses in the school. There are several committees that perform useful roles, especially in buildings and finance management. However, governors do not do enough to challenge the school when weaknesses are identified in test or other data.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	567,660	Balance from previous year	5,794
Total expenditure	561,866	Balance carried forward to the next	-2,370
Expenditure per pupil	2,081		

48. The quality of financial planning is sound. Spending is rightly targeted on raising standards, maintaining staffing levels and building improvement. The school uses specific grants appropriately and parents also make a significant contribution to the

financial security of the school. Governors apply some of the 'best value' principles by ensuring that they get competitive quotes for all major spending projects. However, the impact of spending on standards is not considered carefully enough. For example, there has been considerable spending on ICT since the last inspection, without there being any significant impact on pupils' achievement.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

49. Provision for children in the Nursery and Reception classes is satisfactory overall. Attainment on entry to the school is broadly average for the children's age, though children come from a wide range of backgrounds and have different pre-school experiences. The school admits children into the Nursery at the age of three on a part-time basis and children in the Reception classes are part time for the first half-term. As at the time of the last inspection, there are good induction procedures and children are confident and happy at school. A good information pack and home visits enable members of staff, children and their parents to become acquainted and there are purposeful links with local pre-schools. Parents are supportive and several help in the Nursery on a regular basis.
50. Children's achievement is satisfactory overall and children are on target to meet the expected levels in all areas of learning by the end of the Reception Year. There is insufficient evidence to form a judgement about attainment and achievement in creative development because this area was not a focus for the inspection. Attainment and achievement are not as high as those found at the time of the last inspection and a turnover of staff and extensive building work have been barriers to learning over the last year.
51. Most children behave sensibly and co-operate well when working in small groups on practical activities. However, children are not always attentive during whole-class discussions and find it difficult to sit still. Provision for children's personal development is satisfactory overall. There is very good provision for children to develop independence, though they do not all learn to concentrate well.
52. Teaching and learning are never less than satisfactory, with about 50 per cent of lessons being good. Adults in the Nursery provide consistently good support as children work on tasks they have chosen for themselves. However, teaching in the Reception classes is not as effective as at the time of the last inspection, because children's attention is not always maintained successfully and whole-class discussions sometimes lose momentum when not followed up with related activities. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to children's learning and support groups of children and individuals competently. However, they are not always used fully during whole-class discussions. Members of staff work together well as a team and, as at the time of the last inspection, share ideas for planning well. They have good relationships with each other and the children. Assessment arrangements are thorough and information is used to help plan activities. However, this information is not used enough to ensure that activities provide the right challenge for all children.
53. The curriculum is satisfactory overall. Members of staff take great care in planning activities indoors and outside that support all areas of learning. However, the high levels of choice and long sessions without adult intervention sometimes lead to children coming off task and not using resources purposefully. Provision for children with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. Once a need has been identified, support other than from external agencies is provided from the existing allocation of staffing, taking up

time available for assisting all children. Additional support sessions for the hearing impaired and children with specific listening difficulties are focused and of good quality.

54. Leadership and management are similar to those found at the time of the last inspection and are satisfactory. The co-ordinator has monitored changes to the curriculum over the past year but, due to a very heavy workload, has not had time to take sufficient action to counteract weaknesses identified in children's listening skills.
55. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall. The classrooms are made bright and cheerful with attractive displays of children's work, and safe and interesting outdoor areas have been developed recently with some financial support from parents. However, despite being extended, there is limited space in the Nursery and this causes difficulty in providing regular access to the computers and suitable areas for quiet discussions.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for personal, social and emotional development is **satisfactory**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Children develop confidence and independence well.
- They are weak at sitting quietly and taking interest in what others have to say.

COMMENTARY

56. Children's achievement is satisfactory overall and most are on target to meet the expectations for children by the end of the Reception Year. An interesting range of activities enable children to become independent in making choices and encourages them to be inquisitive and explore their environment. However, not all activities provide sufficient challenge to encourage children of differing abilities to concentrate and remain on task well, and there are times when children have too little interaction with adults. This very high proportion of independent work limits opportunities for children to learn how to take interest in what other children want to say or have been doing. There are good opportunities for children to co-operate with each other when sharing resources or working in pairs or small groups. Good manners are promoted well and a 'promise tree' is used to remind children about the difference between kind and unkind behaviour. As a result, as at the time of the last inspection, children form good relationships with each other and with members of staff.
57. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The teachers, Nursery nurse and teaching assistant are successful in encouraging good behaviour by gently but firmly reminding children of how to behave and by using praise consistently to raise self-esteem. There are too few occasions when children are expected to sit attentively and they tend to call out answers and not listen to each other's ideas.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Provision for communication, language and literacy is **satisfactory**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- More able children achieve well in reading and writing.
- Children speak confidently but their listening skills are weak.
- Lower-attaining children make limited progress in reading and writing.

COMMENTARY

58. Children's achievement is satisfactory overall and they are on target to reach the expected levels by the end of the Reception Year. Children are confident speakers and a wide choice of activities provides good opportunities for children to extend their conversations. However, children often become inattentive when taught as a whole class and are unable to sustain concentration as long as expected for their age. Children show most interest when topics being discussed are based on their own experiences. Most children enjoy looking at and discussing books and have distinct preferences. Higher-attaining Reception children discuss the characters in their stories and are starting to read simple sentences. However, lower-attaining children remember few letter sounds and several classes do not have letters prominently displayed as a point of reference. Most Reception children are starting to write recognisable letters and words and higher attaining children are using some punctuation correctly. However, lower attaining children have weak hand control and not all form their letters correctly. Errors are not corrected quickly enough and some children continue with the same mistakes for several months.
59. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with an example of good teaching in one Reception class. More able children are given good support in developing their reading and spelling in the Reception classes. However, the less mature and those with special educational needs find it difficult to listen and are easily distracted when being taught as a whole class. Not enough support is given to help lower-attaining children to learn to use the pictures to help them understand what might be happening in a story. Most parents make a good contribution to learning by supporting their children with reading and spellings. A home/school record book provides clear guidance on how children need to develop.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for mathematical development is **satisfactory**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Children develop a good knowledge of numbers.
- Teachers plan interesting practical activities, but do not always maintain children's interest when working with the whole class.

COMMENTARY

60. Children's achievement is satisfactory overall and most are on target to meet the expectations for the end of the Reception Year. Reception children have good counting skills and most are beginning to add together and subtract small numbers. In the Nursery, children are confident when choosing to sort buttons according to their own criteria. Children are most attentive when engaged in practical activities such as holding up

fingers to represent a number or when the task is set as a game, for example, 'What's the hidden number?'

61. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with an example of good teaching in one Reception class. In the good lesson, the teacher explained how to measure accurately and involved the children well in the demonstration. Effective use was made of questioning to consider likely errors. In other lessons, children's interest is not always maintained and the questioning of individuals does not always provide enough opportunity for other children to become fully involved.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Provision for knowledge and understanding of the world is **satisfactory**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Teachers plan interesting practical activities that support learning well.
- Expectations are often the same for children of differing abilities.

COMMENTARY

62. Children's achievement is satisfactory and most are on target to attain the levels expected at the end of the Reception Year. Nursery children gain an awareness of maps by drawing roadways for their cars and use the digital camera unaided. Reception children have a good understanding of parts of a flowering plant and use ICT appropriately to label a diagram.
63. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with a good lesson being observed in one Reception class. In the good religious education lesson, children's interest was captured and held by the effective use of resources to help illustrate the parable of the sower. In all lessons, members of staff use resources well to encourage children to find out about the world around them. For example, in the Nursery, children enjoyed exploring the properties of ice cubes, and Reception children were keen to discuss a collection of unusual seeds. However, written work shows little difference between the attainment of higher- and lower-attaining children and the challenge during independent activities relies on the children's interest rather than the teachers' intentions.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for physical development is **satisfactory**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Independent activities provide plenty of opportunity for children to work on a large scale.
- Specific weaknesses are not monitored closely enough.

COMMENTARY

64. Children's achievement is satisfactory and most are on target to attain the levels expected at the end of the Reception Year. Nursery children develop appropriate skills in

controlling wheeled vehicles and beach balls. Reception children show a good awareness of space, though several boys lack control when jumping with feet together and children take little interest in demonstrations provided by other children.

65. Teacher is satisfactory overall. Teachers provide a good range of activities to improve the children's manipulation. For example, Reception children practised using tweezers to pick up small seeds and Nursery children use scissors and sticky tape to make their own flags for sand castles. However, where children have specific difficulties in controlling movement, not enough action is taken to meet their needs.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

66. This was not an area of focus for the inspection and there is insufficient evidence to form a judgement on provision or standards. There are good opportunities for children to take part in role-play such as recreating a scene on the beach in the Nursery or pretending to be pirates in the Reception classes. Children have free access to a wide range of resources to encourage creativity when making pictures and objects. Children enjoy joining in with action songs and are confident when experimenting with percussion instruments.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 1

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- There is a significant variation in the quality of pupils' work and standards of attainment in Year 2.
- Pupils' listening skills are weak throughout the school.
- Opportunities for independent and co-operative work are good and pupils have good attitudes to their lessons.
- There is not always enough challenge for more able pupils.
- The provision for pupils with statements of special educational need is good and teaching assistants support all pupils with special educational needs well.
- Recording and assessment of pupils' work and achievement are not used enough to plan lessons which respond to pupils' individual needs.
- Monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the subject are weak.

COMMENTARY

67. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall and the school has maintained the broadly average standards of attainment found at the time of the last inspection in reading and writing. However, inspection findings show that over the academic year, there have been major differences in the expectations of teachers, with a lack of consistency having a negative impact on overall attainment, with pupils in one class attaining significantly less well than the others, particularly in writing.
68. Results in the 2004 national tests for pupils at the end of Year 2 confirm that there has been some improvement in overall attainment since 2003, when standards were below

average in reading and writing when compared with all schools and well below average when compared with similar schools.

69. Throughout the school, listening skills are below nationally expected levels. This is because teachers do not have clear enough expectations and do not always hold pupils' interest, especially when lessons are too long or teachers have talked for too long to the whole class before pupils start their work. In contrast, speaking skills, which were a weakness at the time of the last inspection, have improved. They are now satisfactory, with pupils showing appropriate levels of confidence when speaking in a range of situations.
70. Pupils have good attitudes to their work and settle quickly to the tasks they are given. This has a good impact on learning. Pupils work well in pairs as talk partners and are good "buddies" to each other in paired reading sessions, showing interest, understanding and support for those who do not find reading easy. When required to write, they readily share ideas and willingly help each other with spellings. This enables the teachers and support staff to focus on groups and individuals without interruption and develops in pupils the expectation that they will work independently.
71. Teaching is satisfactory overall. However, a scrutiny of pupils' previous work shows that there are variations across the school and in some classes, teachers' expectations are not high enough, especially for more able pupils. Teachers provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to write for an appropriate range of reasons and most pupils are beginning to write confidently, attempting to spell unknown words using their knowledge of letter sounds. However, a lot of work is undated and there are variations in the way pupils correct their work and form their letters. Throughout the school, a significant number of pupils do not hold their pencils in a good grip. Pupils in Year 2 join their writing successfully, though teachers do not give enough attention to ensuring that work is presented neatly at all times.
72. The curriculum is broad but not balanced, as lessons in the majority of classes are too long. Although the school follows an adapted form of the National Literacy Strategy, lessons of 75 minutes are longer than recommended. This can result in pupils undertaking spelling, grammar and handwriting exercises which do not always relate to the main themes of the lesson or enable pupils to see the links in their learning. Pupils mostly all do the same work, with those who are higher attaining expected to write more. Teachers' questions to individuals extend learning for these pupils appropriately. However, the tasks they are expected to do lack challenge and do not enable them to reach the standards of which they are capable. This results in some underachievement in reading and writing.
73. The provision for pupils with statements of special educational need is good. Teaching assistants work on well-planned programmes to help pupils make progress. Pupils with a hearing disability receive very good signed support, enabling them to access the curriculum successfully. Other pupils with special educational needs are well supported in groups and as individuals and this enables them to keep up with the main class group and make satisfactory progress when measured against their prior attainment.
74. Teachers' use of assessment is unsatisfactory. It is not used effectively to respond to pupils' needs and is not done regularly enough to ensure pupils' attainment and progress are tracked sufficiently well in all classes. When marking pupils' work, teachers make

few comments about how pupils can improve their presentation or spellings. This results in a significant number of pupils repeating regularly the same mistakes.

75. The co-ordinator's leadership of the subject is satisfactory overall. However, management is unsatisfactory, as monitoring and evaluation of the subject is not yet sufficiently developed to ensure consistency in provision across the school.
76. Resources are satisfactory. Pupils appear to enjoy their reading and have access to a substantial range of good quality books. However, there is currently no library and this restricts pupils' opportunities to develop further their research and library skills.
77. Insufficient use is made of ICT to support learning. Teachers do not always include computer use in the lesson plans and have yet to realise the full potential of ICT in literacy lessons.

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

78. There are appropriate opportunities for pupils to use and develop their literacy skills in other areas of the curriculum. Pupils write confidently as required by their teachers in other subject areas. However, the lack of a library means that pupils get few opportunities to carry out their own research in subjects such as history and geography.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **unsatisfactory**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Standards are too low by the end of Year 2.
- There are inconsistencies in provision across the school, with varying achievement from class to class in Year 2.
- The curriculum lacks balance.
- Insufficient action has been taken to address the recent fall in standards.

COMMENTARY

79. Progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Standards of attainment have fallen significantly and are now well below nationally expected levels by the end of Year 2.
80. Test results at the end of Year 2 show that there has been a significant drop in standards in the last year, with inconsistencies in provision having a negative impact on learning and leading to unsatisfactory overall achievement. In 2003, test results show that pupils' attainment was in line with national averages but below the average for similar schools. Test results in 2004 show a significant decline, and confirm that there are wide variations in pupils' attainment from class to class in Year 2, with significant underachievement in one of the three classes where a scrutiny of work shows that expectations have been much too low. In Year 2, the percentage of pupils achieving the higher Level 3 fell from 35 per cent in 2003 to 18 per cent in 2004. This is because there is a lack of challenge in many lessons and more able pupils are not having their needs met consistently.

81. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but there are important weaknesses in the curriculum that affect pupils' attainment. The numeracy strategy is not firmly established; lessons generally follow the recommended format, but in some classes too little emphasis is placed on developing oral and mental mathematical skills. New topics are introduced in a fragmented way and are not followed up in detail. This means that there is a lack of continuity to learning and weaknesses are not immediately addressed.
82. Too much time is spent on teaching number skills, with little time allowed for pupils to learn about other aspects of the subject. Pupils are given too few opportunities to apply their knowledge to practical applications, with too much work consisting of 'sums' which are not extending learning. As a result, number skills are better developed than other aspects of the curriculum.
83. Although teachers are hardworking and conscientious, there are important weaknesses that have a significant impact on learning:
- In some classes, especially in Year 2, expectations are not high enough, with work not always matched closely enough to pupils' needs.
 - Teachers do not assess learning effectively, which means that planned work is not matched closely enough to pupils' previous learning.
 - Insecure subject knowledge means that pupils are sometimes given inaccurate information.
 - Insufficient use is made of ICT to support learning.
84. Pupils' attainment and achievement are better in Year 1 where teaching is more effective in meeting differing needs. In this year group, new topics are introduced more effectively, and there are more opportunities for pupils to apply their learning to practical applications.
85. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. They are often supported well by teaching assistants, which enables them to make good progress. However, progress is unsatisfactory when they are given work that is too difficult for them to complete independently. As a result, though they may complete a task with adult help, they may not have a secure understanding of what they have done.
86. Assessment is unsatisfactory. Throughout the school, work is regularly marked but teachers do not always add written comments to help pupils understand how they can improve. Target-setting is inconsistent and underdeveloped and there are no systems in place to track pupils' progress as they move through the school. Taken together, these factors mean that few pupils have a clear understanding of how they can improve their work.
87. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory but management is unsatisfactory because insufficient action has been taken to address the recent fall in standards. The co-ordinator has high aspirations and has identified many of the most important areas that require development. Weaknesses in teaching in one of the Year 2 classes were identified in the autumn term, but there has been a failure by senior managers to satisfactorily address these issues even though they were aware of them. This has been a major factor in the drop in standards in 2004.

88. The use of test data has been significantly improved this year, with the co-ordinator carrying out a detailed analysis of test results to help identify where improvement is needed. This, coupled with the enthusiasm and commitment of the co-ordinator and other members of staff, means that the school is well placed to rapidly improve provision.

MATHEMATICS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

89. The use of mathematics across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Opportunities for the use of mathematics across the curriculum are not clearly established and this is an important factor in the weak practical skills shown by many pupils.

SCIENCE

Provision for science is **satisfactory**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Pupils achieve well in Year 1.
- Assessment is not used to help provide consistently challenging work.
- There are good opportunities for practical activities.

COMMENTARY

90. Inspection findings are that pupils' attainment is broadly average for their age by the end of Year 2. Teacher assessments at the end of 2003 showed that attainment was below the national average at the expected level (Level 2) and average at the higher level (Level 3). Teacher assessments for 2004, for which there are no national comparisons, show an improvement in attainment at Levels 2 and 3. However, a scrutiny of pupils' work shows that higher-attaining pupils do not work consistently at a higher level and teachers' expectations for the way all pupils record their findings are not consistently high enough. Pupils' achievement, including those with special educational needs, is satisfactory overall. Expectations in Year 1 are higher and consequently the achievement of these pupils is good. Throughout the school, pupils make careful observations and sensible predictions. Pupils' attainment and achievement is similar to that found at the time of the last inspection.
91. Most pupils are keen to learn about science and participate with each other well in practical activities. For example, pupils in Year 1 enjoyed testing various materials to see if they could be pushed or pulled. However, they are not good at listening to the teachers or each other when discussing what they have learnt and the presentation of their work and their spelling are of variable quality.
92. Teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, with an example of good teaching in Year 1. In the good lesson, the teacher's good subject knowledge was shared with the pupils well and effective questioning enabled pupils to improve their knowledge of the properties of various materials. In most lessons, practical work and good resources are used to generate the pupils' interest. For example, equipment for finding out about magnetism, up-thrust, friction and gravity created enthusiastic exploration in the lessons in Year 1. However, in some lessons in Year 2, pupils complete similar tasks to ones carried out when pupils were in Year 1 and at these times, teachers' expectations are too low and progress slows.

93. Teaching assistants provide valuable support for small groups of pupils, especially those with special educational needs. For example, in one lesson in Year 2, the teaching assistant discussed which plants and creatures the pupils might find to prepare them for a search in the school grounds. Whilst attainment is assessed regularly, teachers do not make enough use of information to plan suitable work for all pupils. This has a significant impact on the achievement of more able pupils, in particular. Teaching is similar to that found at the time of the last inspection.
94. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory overall. The subject co-ordinator provides a good role model with her own teaching and has a clear understanding of how provision in the subject needs to be improved further. Teacher assessments are analysed thoroughly but there have been limited opportunities for monitoring teaching and learning and the quality of pupils' work. The curriculum is satisfactory overall. There are good opportunities for investigative work and this has developed well since the last inspection. There are suitable opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy skills. For example, pupils in Year 1 measure height using hand spans and pupils in Year 2 measure distance in centimetres. However, there are few examples of pupils or teachers using ICT to support learning and too much of the pupils' work is presented pictorially, limiting their literacy development.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Whilst pupils are making satisfactory progress in Year 1, standards are too low by the end of Year 2.
- There is insufficient teaching of ICT in Year 2.
- The recently appointed co-ordinators have already made significant improvements to provision.
- An ICT technician gives good support to small groups of pupils.

COMMENTARY

95. As at the time of the last inspection, there continue to be significant weaknesses in provision. Since then, there has been some improvement in resources, which are now satisfactory, though the pupils-to-computer ratio is still below the nationally recommended level. The school has developed a small ICT 'mini-suite' containing four computers, a scheme of work has been introduced and there has been some training of staff. However, the impact of these improvements on pupils' learning has been minimal, with pupils' attainment by the end of Year 2 continuing to be below nationally expected levels.
96. Standards are too low in Year 2 and achievement is unsatisfactory because the curriculum is unsatisfactory, with too little time being allowed for the teaching of ICT. Teachers lack confidence and rarely make use of the ICT suite. Very limited use of ICT was seen during the inspection in Year 2, and there are very few examples of ICT work in pupils' books. When they were seen working in the ICT suite, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, had weak basic skills. They are very slow at using a keyboard and are only just learning how to 'save' work.

97. Provision is best in Year 1, where teachers give pupils more opportunities to use ICT in lessons. As a result, standards and achievement are satisfactory, with pupils having more secure basic skills. Pupils know how to change fonts when word-processing and are generally more confident at finding their way around the keyboard. In Year 1, pupils have produced simple graphs using data-handling programs and they use art programs to draw pictures and signs.

98. The two recently-appointed subject co-ordinators are working together well to improve provision and they are providing good leadership. They have high aspirations and a clear understanding of where improvement is needed, especially in providing training for teachers and teaching assistants in Year 2. They have already made some significant improvements, especially in the way that the ICT technician is deployed. Previously, most of his time was spent on minor maintenance tasks, even though he was in school for a whole day. The subject co-ordinators have now changed his timetable so that most of his time is spent working with small groups. This is having a good impact on learning, with the quality of teaching at these times being good. In sessions taken by the technician, pupils make good progress because of the sensitive and patient way in which new skills are introduced. The technician has good subject knowledge and he carefully explains new techniques, giving pupils good opportunities to try out ideas for themselves.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

99. Insufficient use is made of ICT across the curriculum. Although every classroom has a computer, these were rarely used during the inspection, especially in Year 2. As a result, there are many missed opportunities to practise and consolidate ICT skills.

HUMANITIES

History and **geography** were not an area of focus for the inspection. One lesson was observed in each subject and there is insufficient evidence to form an overall judgement on provision or standards.

100. In **history**, Year 2 pupils are able to talk about the topics they have covered such as Guy Fawkes, wartime evacuation and Christopher Columbus and have a sense of time present, past and future. They understand that some castles have moats and the reasons for small windows. However, the teacher's limited knowledge and understanding of the topic meant it was presented to pupils in a very simplified way which did not enable them to learn about castles in depth. In Year 1, pupils have completed work sheets and drawings about their favourite toys and those of the past and have looked at artefacts, recognising those from a past time.
101. In **geography**, Year 1 pupils are able to observe traffic markings in the locality of the school and place these fairly accurately on a template map. They explain the reasons for traffic 'bumps' and speed signs and make suitable suggestions such as a lollipop person or traffic lights to improve traffic flow around the school. In Year 2, they have studied features of the seaside, the local environment and a contrasting locality. A toy bear has travelled with pupils on holiday and provides a focus for discussions about the countries the bear has visited including Antarctica, South Africa and France. This is particularly evident in one of the three Year 2 classes.
102. In both history and geography, the curriculum covers the required areas of study, and practical experiences are an integral part of the lessons. Sufficient opportunities are provided for pupils to undertake enquiry skills. Workbooks show pupils recording their work by copying, completing work sheets and writing simple sentences or stories about what they have done. However, pupils' handwriting and presentation skills vary from class to class depending on teachers' expectations. Consequently, a significant majority of pupils, particularly in Year 2, do not present their work neatly in a well-ordered way. In most classes, pupils all do the same work and challenge for those capable of attaining more is not evident in the quality of their work in their books. Insufficient use is made of ICT to support learning, especially in Year 2, where links between ICT and other subjects are unsatisfactory.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Provision in religious education is **good**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Good quality teaching means that pupils achieve well.
- Pupils have a good knowledge of Judaism.

- Good leadership and management have ensured very good progress since the last inspection.

COMMENTARY

103. Progress since the last inspection has been very good, with standards of attainment now above the expectations of the locally-agreed syllabus by the end of Year 2. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are now achieving well, with their knowledge and understanding of the Jewish faith especially strong. This is because of the good quality teaching and the successful use of visitors who talk about their faith and have brought the subject alive. Pupils have a good recall of basic facts about the Jewish faith. They can name different festivals and understand how Jews worship, showing a good empathy for their beliefs. They can accurately retell various Bible stories and they understand that not everyone has the same beliefs.
104. Teaching is good because of the teachers' good subject knowledge and the very effective use of resources. Teachers are enthusiastic about the subject and this means that pupils are motivated and engaged. There is a good pace to learning in lessons and pupils are encouraged to talk about their own beliefs, with teachers successfully linking activities to the pupils' own experiences. This means that work is made purposeful and, as a result, pupils show very good attitudes. There are good opportunities for discussions in lessons and effective use is made of literacy skills, with pupils encouraged to write about what they have learnt. However, limited use is made of ICT to support learning.
105. There is a broad and balanced curriculum, with pupils given good opportunities to learn about Christianity and Judaism. Planning is carefully linked to the agreed syllabus and work is successfully assessed at the end of each unit.
106. Leadership and management by the subject co-ordinator are good. The co-ordinator has high aspirations and has worked successfully over the last two years to significantly improve provision. Development planning has been carefully considered, and is based on a clear understanding of where there are weaknesses even though there has not, as yet, been any opportunity for the co-ordinator to monitor teaching and learning in the classroom. There is a clear and appropriate vision for future development, including extending further the use of visits so that pupils are able to widen their experiences.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

This curriculum area was not an area of focus for the inspection. There is insufficient evidence to form an overall judgement on provision or standards.

107. No lessons were observed in **art and design**. Nevertheless, photographs and wall displays show some interesting work. For example, pupils in Year 1 made attractive pictures of sunflowers in the style of Van Gogh, by using lollipop sticks to apply textured paint. They used modelling material and seeds to make cheerful sunflower plaques. In Year 2, pupils cut intricate fabric figures for their collage in the style of Lowry. The co-ordinator monitors the school's work informally and is developing new assessment procedures. An annual art day provides good opportunities for pupils to learn specific skills based on a shared theme. ICT makes a satisfactory contribution to the subject. For example, pupils in Year 1 used an art program to make some symmetrical pictures.

108. One satisfactory lesson in **design and technology** was observed in Year 1. Samples of work show that pupils have suitable opportunities to design and make models and are provided with good quality materials. For example, pupils in Year 1 used colourful pipe cleaners, cotton reels and various types of paper and card when joining materials to make models of playground equipment. Pupils in Year 2 made attractive working glove puppets by sewing felt and adding details in accordance with their plans. The co-ordinator is on maternity leave and the role is being maintained appropriately by a temporary teacher.
109. In **music**, one good lesson was observed as well as a short choir practice and assemblies. In the good lesson in Year 1, pupils quickly learnt a new song and followed the teacher well to ensure they sang the right notes. The quality of singing is very good, particularly in the choir. Pupils sing with obvious enjoyment, very sweetly and tunefully. They rehearse to improve their words and diction and use expression well to highlight the meaning of the songs. Pupils are aware that they are to sing to an audience of parents in the near future and are working hard to perfect their performance.
110. One **physical education** lesson was seen during the inspection. In this, teaching was satisfactory. Behaviour was managed effectively and the teacher successfully introduced new techniques, helping pupils to improve their weak throwing and catching skills. There was a good pace to learning, with basic skills being carefully linked to a final team game, where pupils competed sensibly against each other.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship is **good**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Good teaching helps pupils to achieve well.
- There is a good curriculum for PSHE and citizenship.

COMMENTARY

111. Pupils of all ages achieve well. This is because there are good opportunities for them to develop personal and social skills through a range of activities, including lessons, visits and visitors that together make up a good curriculum. There is appropriate coverage of sex and relationships education and issues relating to substance abuse at a level that is appropriate to the age of the pupils.
112. Teaching is good, with an example of very good teaching in Year 1. Teachers constantly reinforce personal and social skills in the way that they deal with problems. In circle times, teachers give pupils good opportunities to talk about issues that concern them and to share their views. Members of staff are good role models, treating all pupils and each other with care and respect.
113. In the very good lesson, the teacher sensitively handled a discussion about feelings and how the pupils' actions can affect others. The topic was introduced effectively and pupils were encouraged to talk about their own experiences. A hearing impaired pupil was fully

included in the lesson by the very good use of a specialist teaching assistant who 'signed' the teacher input. A story was read well and pupils made very good progress in developing an understanding of how they can be unintentionally 'hurtful' to their classmates.

114. Development of provision has been carefully planned and aspirations are high. There is a good focus on encouraging pupils to think about issues that they will experience in their lives. The school is in the early stages of working to become a 'Healthy School', reflecting its emphasis on ensuring that pupils leave well prepared for the next stage of their education.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	4
How inclusive the school is	4
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	4

Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	4

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	3
Attitudes	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4

The quality of education provided by the school	4
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	5
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	5
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	4
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4

The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	4
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	5

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