

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **BALFOUR JUNIOR SCHOOL**

Chatham

LEA area: Medway

Unique reference number: 118328

Acting headteacher: Mrs Brenda Wood

Lead inspector: Miss Margaret Coussins

Dates of inspection: 27<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2004

Inspection number: 266352

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	475
School address:	Balfour Road Chatham Kent
Postcode:	ME4 6QX
Telephone number:	01634 843833
Fax number:	01634 301070
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Kevin Plews

Date of previous inspection: 25<sup>th</sup> January 1999

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

Balfour is a large junior school for boys and girls who are 7-11 years old. It has 475 pupils organised into 16 classes. The school is situated close to the centre of Chatham in Kent. It serves families from a range of social circumstances but, overall, these are less favourable than the national picture. The school was awarded Beacon status in 2000 and 2003, and gained the Medway Inclusion Mark in 2004. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is around the national average. Overall, pupils' attainment when they enter the school is average, although there is a range of ability within each year group that varies from year to year. A significant number of pupils leave or join the school at times other than in Year 3. One hundred and fourteen pupils, a higher than average proportion, have been identified as having special educational needs, mainly for moderate learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural needs, and speech or communication difficulties. It is not possible to give accurate details of the ethnic background of pupils, as this information was not obtained from over half of the families. Fifteen pupils are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The school received the Basic Skills Quality Mark and a Healthy School Award in 2002, an Activemark and an Eco Schools Green Flag Award in 2003, and an Investors in People award in 2004. At the time of the inspection, the deputy had been acting headteacher for the three weeks of the new school year because the headteacher left at the end of the previous term.



## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
16084	Margaret Coussins	Lead inspector	Science, history, geography, religious education
19798	Jane O'Keefe	Lay inspector	
31222	Susan Croft	Team inspector	English, music, art
33024	Kate Higgs	Team inspector	Mathematics, design and technology, physical education, special educational needs
30244	Roger Tapley	Team inspector	Information and communication technology, English as an additional language

The inspection contractor was:

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**Balfour is a good and effective school.** Most pupils achieve well and by Year 6, standards are close to those expected for pupils' ages. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, but there are inconsistencies across the school. Leadership and management are good. The acting headteacher, well supported by senior staff, leads the school well. The school places a very strong emphasis on ensuring that pupils of all abilities and backgrounds achieve well. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- Most pupils have very positive attitudes to their work and behave well because the school pays good attention to their personal development
- Standards in writing are not high enough
- The quality of teaching is good overall, but not consistent enough across the school; as a result, in a few lessons, pupils make too little progress
- Classroom support staff support pupils' learning very well
- The acting headteacher and key staff lead the school well, but the governing body is not effective enough in checking on the impact of measures taken to improve standards
- The school provides excellent support for pupils with special educational needs and, as a result, they achieve very well
- An excellent range of experiences outside lessons has a very positive effect on pupils' learning

**Since the last inspection in 1999, improvement has been satisfactory.** Standards in national tests are about the same in English, better in science, but have declined in mathematics. The points for development have largely been dealt with. Standards and teaching in science have improved. Individual education plans for pupils who have special educational needs have improved considerably and now have detailed targets for improvement. Assessment is used more effectively to monitor pupils' progress and inform curriculum planning. The control aspect of information and communication technology (ICT) still needs further development. The issue of access to the school has been resolved.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average  
Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.*

**Pupils' achievement is good.** Most pupils join Year 3 from the local infant school and their attainment is generally average. In the current Years 3 and 4, however, a significant number of pupils are from further a field, and the proportion who have special educational needs or who are learning English as an additional language has increased to about a quarter. An increasing number of pupils join the school at times other than at the beginning of Year 3. During Years 5 and 6 there is a high turnover of pupils. Almost one third of the pupils who took the 2004 Year 6 national tests did not start at the school in Year 3, and a third of the pupils had special educational needs. Although the school's results in national tests appear to indicate that pupils'

achievement is satisfactory, evidence gathered during the inspection shows that achievement in most lessons is good, and that pupils have done well to reach the standards seen in Year 6. Good teaching ensures that pupils achieve well from their various starting points at the school. Pupils' work shows that current standards in English and mathematics are about average in Years 3, 4 and 5 and slightly above average in Year 6. Standards in writing, however, are not high enough and fall significantly below standards in reading. Standards in science are above average throughout the school. Pupils' achievements in ICT and history are good. Pupils who have special educational needs do very well in many lessons, are very well supported and make very good progress overall. More able pupils and those learning English as an additional language achieve well.

**Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and other personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good.** Pupils have very good attitudes to learning. They take a lively interest in school life and enjoy responsibilities they are given. In lessons and around the school, pupils are well behaved and form good relationships with other pupils and adults. The school promotes a strong sense of community which supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. Attendance is well above average and punctuality is good.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is good.**

**The quality of teaching and learning is good.** Where teaching is good, sometimes very good, or in one lesson excellent, teachers stimulate pupils' interest and enthusiasm through lively, active lessons in which a good range of strategies ensures that pupils are fully involved in their learning. In many lessons, teachers ask searching questions and set challenging tasks, which really make the pupils think and extend their understanding. Where teaching is satisfactory but has weaknesses, the pace of learning is slower and the teaching does not ensure that all pupils are fully focused on their work. Classroom support staff make a very good contribution to helping pupils learn as quickly as they can. The curriculum is well planned to provide a good range of work. Excellent additional activities beyond lessons add breadth and further interest to pupils' education. Systems for assessing pupils' attainment and checking on their progress are good and help teachers know what pupils need to learn next. The school provides very good care and support for its pupils. There is a very good partnership with parents, very good links with other schools and good links with the community.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**The leadership and management of the school are good.** Although she has been in the role for only a short time, the acting headteacher is providing good leadership. She knows the school very well and is clear about what needs to be done to raise standards further. She is committed to continuing the school's high profile on meeting the particular needs of each pupil, and is providing strong support for the staff during an unsettled time. A strong culture of teamwork results in staff being very supportive of one another. Key staff play a vital and effective role in leading subjects and year groups. Senior managers and subject co-ordinators monitor teaching and learning, but when weaknesses are identified, not enough is done to ensure improvements are made. The governors fulfil their responsibilities satisfactorily. They provide good support for the school, but do not have a strong enough focus on monitoring the impact of measures taken to raise standards

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

Parents are very supportive of the school and happy with the progress their children are making. They say their children like school and are treated fairly. Some parents would like more information about the homework their children are given. Pupils say they have to work hard and teachers show them how to make their work better. They feel teachers are fair and that there is an adult to go to if they are worried at school.



## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The most important things the school should do to improve are

- Raise standards in writing
- Ensure greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning
- Ensure the governing body has more influence on the work of the school and keeps a closer check on the impact of measures to raise standards

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in subjects**

Pupils' achievement is good overall. By Year 6, standards are average in English and mathematics, and above average in science. Pupils' work shows that standards in English and mathematics are about average in Years 3, 4 and 5 and slightly above average in the current Year 6. Standards in writing however, are not high enough and fall significantly below standards in reading.

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

- Pupils achieve well and those with special educational needs achieve very well
- Standards in writing are not high enough
- Standards in science are above average
- Pupils achieve well in ICT and history

#### **Commentary**

1. Most pupils join Year 3 from the local infant school and their attainment is average overall. A significant number of pupils, however, join Year 3 from other schools, and their attainment is generally lower. In the current Years 3 and 4, the proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or who are learning English as an additional language has increased to about a quarter. Many pupils leave or join the school at times other than in Year 3 and this mobility lowers the overall attainment. For example, almost one third of the pupils who took the Year 6 2004 national tests did not start at the school in Year 3, and a third of the pupils had special educational needs. Although the school's results in national tests appear to indicate that pupils' achievement is satisfactory, evidence gathered during the inspection shows that achievement in most lessons is good, and that pupils have done well to reach the standards seen in Year 6. Good teaching ensures that pupils achieve well from their various starting points at the school.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	26.7 (27.3)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	26.1 (27.6)	26.8 (26.7)
science	28.6 (29.4)	28.6 (28.3)

*There were 117 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

2. The results of the 2003 national tests for English and science were average compared to all schools nationally and when compared to similar schools. Results in mathematics were below average in both cases. The unconfirmed results for 2004, however, indicate that good teaching has resulted in an improvement in mathematics and in the work seen during the inspection standards were average. Since the previous inspection, standards have improved in science and are now above average. The school has focused successfully on improving standards in science, through staff training, which has improved the quality of teaching, and by providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their investigative skills. Standards in English have been maintained since the previous inspection, but standards in writing are not high enough and not as good as standards in reading. Standards in story and poetry writing are average but pupils' technical writing is weaker. They do not organise their writing well to make the meaning clear to the reader or use technical features well to explain what they want to write.

Following its analysis of the 2004 national test results, the school has given improving pupils' writing skills a high priority in the school development plan.

3. In most other subjects where a judgement could be made, pupils reach standards that are in line with those expected and their achievement is satisfactory. In ICT, standards have risen since the last inspection and are above expectations. Pupils achieve well because teachers are confident and have good subject knowledge and the subject is well led and managed. Standards in history are better than those expected and pupils achieve well. Leadership and management are very good and ensure that planning and assessment meet the needs of pupils so they know how they can improve their work.
4. Pupils who have special educational needs achieve very well in most lessons and reach the targets set for them. Pupils who are learning English as an additional language (EAL) make good progress. Teachers make sure that all these pupils are fully involved in lessons and that tasks are appropriate to their needs. When they are expected to do the same work as other pupils, they are supported very well by the teacher, classroom support staff, or for some EAL pupils, a bilingual assistant. For example, pupils in Year 3 concentrated well when studying a map of the local area in a geography lesson because the teaching assistant repeated the instructions given to the class by the teacher. She then checked that pupils had understood the vocabulary being used on the map. As a result, pupils described accurately journeys from home to school and achieved well.

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

Pupils have very good attitudes to school and their work. Attendance levels are well above average and punctuality is generally good. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall.

#### **Main strengths**

- Pupils enjoy coming to this school and have very good attitudes to their work
- Attendance levels are well above average
- Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good
- Relationships between staff and pupils are good

#### **Commentary**

5. Pupils have very good attitudes to school. They clearly enjoy coming to school and one Year 6 pupil commented, "It's a really good school. I shall be sorry to leave." Attendance is well above average and most pupils are punctual in the mornings. The school deals effectively with the very small minority of pupils who arrive late. Many pupils take advantage of the excellent range of clubs provided for them, which stimulates considerable motivation for learning in general. In lessons, most pupils are very focused and keen to learn. Pupils listen well to teachers and each other and try their best.
6. Behaviour is good and managed well by staff in lessons and around the school. During break times, pupils' play is generally good and managed well by both staff and the specially trained Year 6 mentors known as 'Red Caps'. There have been no exclusions in the past four years. Pupils say that bullying is not a big problem in the school and that, if it does occur, staff deal with it quickly and effectively. Lunchtimes are well organised and pleasant.
7. Pupils and their parents value highly the rewards system within the school, and pupils take great pride in receiving a 'special mention' certificate in assembly. This increases their self-esteem very effectively and, as a result, pupils are confident, friendly and polite. Relationships are good in the school with pupils treating each other with kindness and respect. Pupils take great pride in the responsibilities they are given around the school. When asked about his role

as a playground ‘Red Cap’ one Year 6 pupil said, “You know you have done your job well when everyone is smiling in the playground”.

8. The school provides well for pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Spiritual development is promoted well through assemblies and religious education lessons. All legal requirements for a daily collective worship are being met. Pupils clearly understand the difference between right and wrong, and discuss moral issues sensibly in lessons. The school works very well as a community and creates good opportunities for pupils to socialise through the clubs and residential trips. The very effective leadership programme for older pupils is now being developed for all pupils in the school. Pupils’ cultural development is fostered well in curriculum areas such as art, geography and music. Pupils have good experiences of other cultures and faiths, such as studying Sikhism in religious education lessons. These findings are similar to those in the last inspection.

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

Authorised absence	
School data	4.1
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.2
National data	0.4

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

**QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The school provides a good education for its pupils. Teaching is good overall, but ranges from excellent to satisfactory and the quality is too variable between classes. The curriculum provides a good range of experiences in most subjects. An excellent range of extra activities enriches the curriculum. Procedures for assessing pupils’ attainment and monitoring their progress are good. Pupils are cared for very well. The school works hard to establish a very good partnership with parents, it has very good links with other schools and good links with the community.

**Teaching and learning**

Teaching and learning are good. Assessment is good and helps pupils know what to do to improve their work. The quality of teaching is about the same as at the last inspection, but this time all the teaching seen was satisfactory or better.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers make most lessons interesting and enjoyable, which helps pupils achieve well
- A good range of effective approaches to learning ensures that pupils are well motivated and enthusiastic
- The quality of teaching is not always as good as it is in the majority of lessons, often because the pace is too slow, and so pupils do not concentrate well enough on their work
- Assessment systems are good and the information is used well to plan what pupils should learn next, which helps them to make good progress
- Classroom support staff make a very good contribution to pupils’ learning

**Commentary**

9. Across the school, a good feature of the teaching is that work is matched very well to pupils' abilities so that they are all fully involved in lessons and achieve well. Lessons are planned well to capture the interest and enthusiasm of the pupils, and to include lots of practical, active tasks. For example, science lessons usually involve experiments and investigations carried out by pupils. In these lessons pupils learn well through observation and discussion, as seen in a Year 4 lesson on forces where pupils achieved very well and as a result standards were above average. Teachers use drama well to help pupils' understanding. In a Year 6 English lesson, pupils gained a good understanding of the feelings of characters in Macbeth through "hot-seating" where they assumed the role of a character and asked and answered questions. This approach helped all pupils achieve well and meet the objectives of the lesson. The emphasis on speaking and listening allows teachers to assess the achievement of all pupils' learning, including those who are less able in writing. Through using a variety of approaches to learning, which make lessons interesting, teachers ensure that pupils are motivated and achieve well.
10. In the satisfactory, though less successful lessons, the content was planned well but the teaching progressed at a slower pace, which limited the progress pupils made. Expectations for how much pupils could achieve in a set time were too low and teachers did not move on to the next part of the lesson quickly enough. This was particularly evident in some English lessons where pupils sometimes lost their concentration and became distracted from their learning.
11. There are good systems for assessing pupils' attainment and monitoring their progress, which help teachers provide appropriately challenging work. Teachers use assessment information well to plan lessons for the whole class and to provide a variety of activities with appropriate challenge for different groups and individuals within the class. Teachers mark work well so that pupils are clear about what they did successfully and what they need to do to improve.
12. Classroom support staff provide very good help to pupils to ensure they are all fully involved in lessons and achieve well. Teachers and support staff work very well together as a team in the classroom where support staff are involved in planning and assessing as well as supporting learning. For example, in a mathematics lesson on shape for Year 4, the teaching assistant made notes during the final session to show which pupils had exceeded expectations and had a good grasp of the correct mathematical vocabulary. The information was shared with the teacher who used it to inform and modify her planning for the next mathematics lesson. Support staff also work very well with small groups or individuals outside of lessons, particularly with pupils who have special educational needs or who are learning English as an additional language. They know the pupils well and support them very effectively.

**Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 36 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (3%)	4 (11%)	17 (47%)	14 (39%)			

*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**

The quality of the curriculum is good overall with some very strong features, including an excellent range of extra-curricular activities to enrich pupils' learning. The accommodation and learning resources support the delivery of the curriculum effectively. This judgement is similar to that found in the last inspection.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- An excellent range of extra-curricular activities enriches pupils' learning
- The provision for pupils who have special educational needs is excellent

- The way in which the curriculum is organised makes it difficult for teachers to exploit links between subjects

### **Commentary**

13. The curriculum includes all the required subjects of the National Curriculum and policies are in place for all subjects. Acts of collective worship meet requirements. The school has made effective use of the national literacy and numeracy strategies and the curriculum is planned well in these subjects. The school has a well-planned science curriculum, which has improved since the last inspection and now provides good opportunities for pupils to carry out investigations and independent research, which has helped to raise standards. The strong emphasis on literacy, numeracy, and science means that other subjects are taught during alternating blocks of time ranging from three weeks to seven weeks. Although this arrangement has advantages in the efficient use of time, it also means that cross-curricular links are inhibited when a particular subject is not timetabled.
14. The curriculum is greatly enhanced by relevant visits and visitors to the school. The excellent number and range of out of school clubs for pupils enriches their learning. There are very good sporting opportunities and access to competitive sport, where pupils do well. A few examples of these clubs are netball, korfbal, skiing, gardening, art, drama, ocarina, and science. The local community is used well as a resource and for visits which extend pupils' learning. A small number of pupils participate in peripatetic music lessons for instrumental tuition. Pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 have opportunities to attend residential trips, which have a significant impact on their social development.
15. Pupils' personal development is systematically provided for through a very good programme of personal, social and health education that incorporates worthwhile opportunities for developing their understanding of citizenship. The provision for pupils who have special educational needs is excellent. These pupils are given full access to the curriculum and receive very good quality support from teachers and trained classroom assistants who ensure they achieve their potential. Individual educational plans are very well written and contain targets that are carefully considered in an effort to ensure that they are challenging but achievable over time.
16. The accommodation is suitable for teaching the subjects of the National Curriculum and there are areas in which focused work and activity can be planned and taught. A newly refurbished computer suite provides good support for teaching and learning in ICT. The school has good learning resources which are used well to promote pupils' learning and sufficient to meet the needs of the curriculum.

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

As at the last inspection, the school takes very good care of its pupils. Arrangements for health and safety and child protection are very good. Pupils are supported very effectively through the monitoring of their progress. Pupils have satisfactory opportunities to express their views on the school.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Staff have a very caring approach, which makes pupils feel secure and supports their learning
- Induction procedures are very good
- Pupils' progress is monitored very effectively
- The lack of a school council reduces the opportunities pupils have to express their views

### **Commentary**

17. Staff have a caring approach to the pupils and look after them very well. Parents and pupils are appreciative of the effort taken to ensure pupils' well-being. "Everyone is really nice. I feel comfortable here." commented one Year 6 pupil. The arrangements for the induction of new pupils into the school work very well, with very sensitive support given to any children who may be feeling particularly anxious. As a result, all new pupils settle very quickly into the life of the school. Many staff are regularly trained in first aid and pupils know who to see and where to go when hurt or feeling unwell. The acting headteacher is currently the designated person for dealing with child protection issues. Local guidelines for dealing with concerns about pupils' welfare are followed meticulously. The school has very effective procedures for ensuring health and safety for all. All required risk assessments and regular safety checks take place, with good support from governors and the caretaker.
18. Very good systems are used for recording and monitoring pupils' academic progress. These support pupils' achievement very well because they are made aware of what they need to do in order to improve in the key areas of English, mathematics and science. Relationships between staff and pupils are good and they get to know pupils well personally. Pupils have good opportunities to express their views in circle times and through the annual questionnaires issued to them. There is currently no school council, which would further enable pupils to have a say on their school and its future.

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

The school has built up very good links with its parents, who are very happy with the care and education their children receive. Links with the local community are good, and links with other schools are very good.

### **Main strengths**

- Parents are very happy with the work of the school
- Very good information is provided for parents

### **Commentary**

19. Parents are very happy with all that the school does for their children. The school has worked very hard to nurture links with its parents, which have improved since the last inspection and are now very good. A wide range of information is provided for parents both about the school's work and their children's progress. Parents have an opportunity to speak formally to teachers each term and staff are very accessible at other times. Frequent newsletters are very helpful, and parents find the school's web site useful and informative. The school's prospectus and governor's annual report to parents are clearly written and meet all the legal requirements for their content. Informative annual reports are issued in the summer term. The use of target setting and homework enables parents to support their children's learning at home very effectively. Useful curriculum information is provided termly for each year group.
20. The rapidly developing 'Share' project gives parents an opportunity to come into school and learn more about its work and how their children learn. Parents speak very highly of this scheme and feel that both they and their children have benefited from it. The school listens to its parents and issues a questionnaire to them each year. The results of these are carefully monitored and any concerns responded to positively. Parents are very supportive of the school and many help around the school during the day, on outings and with extra-curricular activities. Attendance at parents' meetings, concerts and productions is always very high. The Friends of Balfour School are very active and regularly raise considerable sums of money to provide extra resources for the school.
21. The school has good links with the local community. Good links have been established with local churches, with members regularly holding assemblies at the school. Good use is made of



the local area to support pupils' learning, for example through visits to local museums. The school's successful 'STEAM' project has encouraged many local businesses to become actively involved in science, technology, English and mathematics projects by sending staff into school to work with children on activities such as designing water rockets or musical instruments.

22. Very good links have been maintained with local schools. As a Beacon School, staff have worked closely with other schools to share good practice. An Advanced Skills Teacher and a Leading Mathematics Teacher on the staff frequently work with other schools to share their expertise. The school works very closely with its feeder infant schools to ensure that transition is handled very well. Many classroom support staff from the local area come in to the school on training placements. The school linked with the local secondary school during its recent art week.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are good overall. The leadership of the acting headteacher and other key staff is good. Management and governance are satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The acting headteacher leads the school well, supported effectively by a committed and experienced senior management team
- Teaching and learning are monitored by senior managers and subject co-ordinators but, when weaknesses are identified, not enough is done to ensure improvements are made
- The strong team culture within the school results in staff being very supportive of one another
- The school does not always grasp the opportunity to use new initiatives which would raise standards
- The governing body is not effective enough in steering the work of the school or in checking on the impact of measures taken to raise standards

### **Commentary**

23. The acting headteacher has been in post since September. She was formerly the deputy headteacher and knows the school and its pupils well. She is committed to maintaining its success as a school that ensures pupils of all abilities and backgrounds achieve as much as they can. She provides good leadership as she has identified what the school should be aiming to do and gained the commitment of the school community to her vision. She leads colleagues effectively in setting high standards for teaching and learning and is beginning to form a clear view of the way forward. An established and experienced senior management team provides good support.
24. Subject co-ordinators lead developments effectively. They are committed and enthusiastic and lead their subjects well by providing good quality training and guidance to staff and ensuring that curriculum planning is thorough. They have an action plan for their subject and these are linked to the priorities in the school development plan. Co-ordinators, year group leaders and senior managers observe and monitor teaching on a regular basis, but the school systems are not always rigorous enough to ensure that weaknesses in teaching are tackled and improved.



25. The school's provision for pupils who have special educational needs is very well led and managed and provision is excellent. Very good liaison between teachers, classroom support staff and parents provides very good advice and support on effective teaching and learning strategies for individual pupils. Leadership and management of the provision for pupils who are learning English as an additional language is good. Recently, more rigorous systems to monitor and assess these pupils' progress have been developed. Closer links are being made with the senior management team so as to raise the profile of planning work throughout the curriculum for pupils who are learning English as an additional language. As a result, standards have been maintained since the last inspection.
26. All staff are very supportive of each other and the team ethos is very strong throughout the school. Staff work very well in year group teams and are supported well by year group leaders. Year teams are very well organised but, to some extent, operate in isolation.
27. Management throughout the school is satisfactory. The provision for the continuing professional development of staff is good and linked to identified school priorities, for example the training in science has been a significant factor in the improved standards since the previous inspection. The school development plan is devised annually following a staff training day during which all are consulted. The plan does not always make clear, however, the expected impact of developments on pupils' achievement, so it is not possible for management to check whether initiatives have been successful. Initiatives, which would raise standards are not always planned carefully enough to be fully effective, for example reading and writing support and opportunities for pupils to use their writing skills in different subjects. There is a lack of a whole-school overview of the curriculum, its structure and the balance between subjects. The school has not yet developed a more strategic view, which articulates its aims for more than one year ahead. Financial management is good; governors, the acting headteacher and administrative staff work well together to fund the school priorities.
28. The governors offer good support to the school and individual teachers, and ensure the school fulfils its statutory responsibilities. The current governing body has only recently been established under a new chair of governors. It does not yet offer the challenge needed to move the school forward and has not yet developed a strategic view of the way ahead. The governing body has, however, put the systems in place that will enable it to carry out its work more effectively.
29. At the last inspection, leadership was judged as excellent and management very good. Recent changes in leadership have resulted in the school being in a period of transition. It is, however, well placed to improve and re-establish previous high standards.

***Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004***

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1,288,501
Total expenditure	1,241,977
Expenditure per pupil	2,643

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	99,209
Balance carried forward to the next	145,733

## **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS**

### **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 2**

#### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is good.

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

- Leadership of the subject is good
- Standards of writing are weak throughout the school
- Assessment is thorough and links directly to pupils' targets for improvement
- Pupils who have special educational needs make very good progress
- Pupils have too few opportunities to use and develop their literacy skills through work in other subjects

#### **Commentary**

30. Standards in English are average. Achievement is satisfactory overall, but improving and good in Year 6. Achievement is improving because the school has identified the weakness in writing, which has been the main factor in the disappointing results in the national tests. This weakness has been in non-fiction writing and during the inspection there was evidence of the effective ways in which the school is addressing this issue. Teachers are beginning to focus more effectively on teaching pupils how to organise technical writing like reports, instructions and persuasive argument and this is resulting in better progress in writing. Pupils join Year 3 with average attainment and results in national tests at the end of Year 6 are in line with the national average.
31. Standards in speaking and listening are above those expected for pupils' ages and improving across the school because achievement is good. Pupils speak confidently and express themselves clearly. Teachers provide lots of opportunities for pupils to develop their skills through drama and role-play, discussion times and presentations. Role-play activities are particularly effective, as seen in a Year 6 lesson where pupils asked and answered questions in role as characters in Macbeth. They asked good questions, answered them clearly and justified their views. Most English lessons include a session at the end where pupils talk about their work and this helps them think about and evaluate what they have learnt.
32. Standards in reading are average. Pupils read well, read aloud with confidence in Years 5 and 6 and benefit from 'guided reading' sessions, which develop their comprehension skills well. Younger pupils who are still developing early reading skills are supported well and all pupils benefit from a good range of reading material, including play scripts and poetry books.
33. Standards in writing are below average and do not match standards in reading. Pupils are competent story and poetry writers. Stories are imaginative and structured well with correct punctuation and grammar. Their technical writing is weaker and they do not organise their writing well to make the meaning clear to the reader or use technical features well to explain what they want to write. The school has already identified this issue and put in place strategies which are starting to show improvement in this aspect of writing, particularly in work seen in Year 6. For example when pupils in Year 6 were writing a report, they first of all discussed the layout and language needed to make this type of writing effective. They checked their draft writing against a list of features and had opportunities to discuss and improve their work. Spelling is not taught in a consistent and progressive manner, which also impedes the quality of pupils' writing.
34. Teaching is satisfactory overall, but some good and very good lessons were also seen. In a very good lesson, pupils investigated language in the murder of Macbeth through a variety of

strategies which maintained their interest. They learnt through choral drama, hot seating and dramatic writing. Expectations were high and the teacher used a wide range of activities to help pupils learn effectively so that all pupils made progress. Where teaching was satisfactory but had weaknesses, the pace was too slow and the teacher's input was often too long so that the pupils lost interest. Teachers did not always give tasks that were appropriate to pupils' abilities and, because deadlines were not set, time was wasted. Assessment is thorough and pupils have targets for improvement. Teachers do not always refer to these so as to maximise improvement in the lesson.

35. Leadership in English is good. There is a detailed action plan for improvement. Good guidance and training is given to teachers and there is a clear focus on raising standards, particularly in the identified weaker aspect of writing. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress through targeted support, and they achieve very well. Provision for English is similar to that reported in the last inspection.

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

36. Although there are some links across the curriculum, the school has not yet fully embraced the strategy of teaching literacy through other subjects, thus enabling pupils use and develop their skills. This lack of opportunity for writing in other subjects is a reason for the weaker standards in this aspect of writing. Speaking and listening skills are used well in other subjects, as seen in a Year 6 history lesson where pupils made presentations to the rest of the class. They spoke clearly and with authority on the subject, and other pupils gave constructive evaluations on the effectiveness of the presentations.

### **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is good.

#### **Main strengths**

- Teachers use a wide range of effective methods to develop pupils' mental skills
- Classroom support staff make a good contribution to pupils' learning, particularly for less able pupils
- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning in the subject
- Good leadership and management ensure the continuing development of the subject

#### **Commentary**

37. Results in national tests for pupils at the end of Year 6 have fluctuated since the last inspection. In 2003, the results were below average, but they rose slightly in 2004. Year 6 pupils' work from last year shows that standards were average. Standards in the current Year 6 are also close to those expected for pupils' ages.
38. Pupils' achievement is good. Pupils join Year 3 with average attainment overall. During Years 3 to 6, however, many pupils leave or join the school, which lowers the overall attainment. By Year 6, pupils have done well to reach the standards seen. Achievement was good in most of the lessons observed because teachers gave clear explanations and modeled a variety of mathematical vocabulary. They used good questioning techniques to encourage pupils to reason for themselves, recall previous learning and check understanding. For example, in a good Year 5 lesson, the teacher's effective questioning, targeted at pupils of differing abilities, helped many pupils to take the next step in their learning. Teachers have good relationships with pupils, who concentrate well and show confidence when asking or answering questions. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good.
39. Pupils practise and sharpen mental skills at the beginning of lessons and are taught a variety of strategies to solve calculations. Where teaching was satisfactory but had weaknesses tasks

were not always appropriately targeted to the varying abilities within the set, and so the more able and less able pupils of each set did not achieve as well as they might.

40. The school makes very effective use of the National Numeracy Strategy to plan and provide a consistent framework for teaching and learning. Teachers plan lessons to ensure that pupils learn specific skills through a wide range of teaching methods. Planning allows for regular consolidation of skills. Pupils are well motivated because teachers have clear expectations and understandable learning outcomes for lessons, which are revisited and reinforced throughout. The final session in lessons gives pupils the opportunity to explain what they have learnt and enables teachers to evaluate and reinforce what has been taught.
41. Resources are good and used well to extend the pupils' mathematical understanding. For example, during whole-class sessions, pupils wrote answers on individual white boards in response to questions from the teacher. These were used to share strategies and assess learning.
42. Classroom support staff make a valuable contribution to the quality of teaching and learning. They plan with teachers and know what pupils should learn in a lesson. When working with less able pupils and those who have special educational needs, support staff are very skilled in explaining tasks carefully and ensuring that the pupils remain focused on their work. As a result, pupils who have special educational needs make very good progress.
43. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Teachers are well supported through training days and staff meetings. Management monitors the quality of teaching and learning by observing lessons, looking at teachers' planning and by evaluating samples of pupils' work. This gives a good overview of the subject. Assessment is thorough and pupils' progress is carefully tracked. There are clear plans and suitable priorities to develop the subject further. Provision in mathematics has improved since the last inspection.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

44. Teachers provide some good opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy skills in other subjects. Year 5 pupils were combining literacy and numeracy skills in an ICT lesson where they produced a graph which charted the emotions and feelings of characters in a book. Pupils use number skills when constructing spreadsheets in ICT. They use graphs and measurement in science work.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is good.

#### **Main strengths**

- Standards have improved since the last inspection and are above average
- Teaching and learning are good and work is well matched to pupils' needs
- The subject is well led and this has contributed to the improvements

#### **Commentary**

45. The results of the 2003 national tests were average compared to all schools and similar schools. Standards seen during the inspection, however, are above average. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, those learning English as an additional language and the more able, achieve well because teaching is good and pupils are given effective support whatever their starting point. Weaknesses in science were a main issue in the previous inspection and good improvements have been made since then because the school has focused on the identified weaknesses and worked hard to improve them.
46. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned so that pupils experience all aspects of science, and investigative skills are taught well. Where teaching is very good

teachers ask pupils questions that make them think things out for themselves and this helps pupils of all abilities learn well. This was evident in a very good Year 4 lesson where pupils were investigating friction by observing forces on rolling objects. In this lesson, the teacher extended pupils' thinking by asking them to predict the outcomes of an investigation. All the pupils were involved and expressed their views using correct scientific vocabulary. The teacher valued all their suggestions, which left the pupils full of anticipation to conduct a practical experiment to test out their predictions. Pupils with special educational needs, almost half the class, were fully involved and achieved very well due to the very good support from classroom support staff. The teacher overcame the problems of working in a small classroom because she organised the pupils very well in the limited space and the pupils were very sensible and well behaved, helping to create some space by moving all the furniture around. All pupils achieved very well and as a result standards were above average.

47. Pupils work together well in science and have very good attitudes to learning. In a Year 5 and a Year 6 lesson, pupils who were investigating life processes worked in small groups to discuss what they already knew, what they needed to find out and what sort of investigation would give them the evidence they needed for their conclusions. They learnt a lot from each other and their good speaking and listening skills were significant in their very good achievement, resulting in standards which were above average.
48. The subject is well led and this has contributed to the improvement in standards. Test data is carefully analysed and pupils' work is monitored so that any gaps in learning are identified. Training and guidance for staff is effective and linked to priorities in the school development plan.
49. Assessment has improved and systems ensure effective support is put in place for pupils of all abilities. Resources are very good. A lunchtime club is run for high achieving pupils and there has been an improvement in the number of pupils who achieved the higher level 5 in the 2004 national tests.

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

Provision in ICT is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards have risen since the last inspection
- Teachers have good subject knowledge
- Leadership and management are good
- Pupils have too little experience in the use of control mechanisms

### **Commentary**

50. Standards by Year 6 are above average and all groups of pupils achieve well. This represents an improvement since the previous inspection. Analysis of work and lesson observations indicates that teaching is good overall.
51. The good teaching of basic skills in Years 3 and 4 ensures that pupils quickly become familiar with the computer keyboard. They can enter text on to a word processing program accurately and are taught to combine text and tables or graphics, including using a digital camera and using the pictures created to supplement their work. Pupils maintain this good progress through the school and, by Year 6, nearly all use computers well to edit text, produce multimedia presentations and design spreadsheets.
52. Standards are higher than at the previous inspection because of the good leadership of the subject. The school's good use of training has developed teachers' knowledge well, and this is evident in the confident way they teach skills. The main strength in teaching is the good planning for pupils of different levels of ability and experience. For example, in a Year 5 class

where boys tended to dominate the groups, separate groups of boys and girls were taught to use a computer program on plant growth. As a result, girls achieved as well as boys because classroom support staff could concentrate on raising the girls' confidence to work independently.

53. Good management of the subject ensures that provision is evaluated well by checking pupils' work, monitoring teachers' planning and observing their lessons. The school maintains useful pupil portfolios. These are used to assess achievement and progress throughout the school. Targets are discussed with pupils and provide the teachers and the subject co-ordinator with a clear understanding of pupils' strengths and weaknesses. The change to the recently built computer suite has been well managed. The new arrangements work well. Pupils' access to computers has improved and they are now used more regularly to support learning in other subjects.
54. Pupils are knowledgeable and very enthusiastic about the subject. They recognise the impact of ICT on everyday life and, when interviewed, describe clearly how computers can sense changes in materials and control devices. Examination of pupils' work, however, shows little evidence of practical work in control. The school is aware of this and has just acquired the necessary equipment for pupils' to develop these skills further.

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

55. The school makes good use of ICT across the curriculum. Teachers are given opportunities to use the new computer suite for planned work that covers other curriculum subjects. For example, in a good lesson seen with a Year 5 class, pupils were constructing line graphs to illustrate exciting and calm points in stories they have written in an English lesson. Sensor equipment is used to monitor light and temperature in science. Computer programs have been used in music to investigate pattern in musical compositions.

#### **HUMANITIES**

56. During the inspection, no lessons were seen in geography or religious education and so it is not possible to judge overall provision or the quality of teaching in these subjects. On the evidence of work sampled, work displayed around the school, teachers' plans and discussions with pupils, both subjects are taught fully and the breadth and depth of study are good.
57. An analysis of pupils' work in **geography** indicates that standards are in line with average and the achievement of all groups of pupils is satisfactory. Standards by Year 6 are average and are lower than reported in the last inspection. Recent developments in the subject have not been in place long enough to see an impact on standards. Leadership is good. Management has a clear view of improvements which need to be made, and has helped to improve teachers' confidence in the subject by organising training in fieldwork. There are good links between geography and history, as seen in the work on rivers, and between geography and numeracy through work requiring data collection, as in Year 3 work on houses in the locality and a traffic survey. A system has been put in place for pupils who have been given authorisation to be taken out of school during term time to travel abroad, which involves them keeping a scrapbook of their time out of school and enriches their learning.
58. In **religious education**, the scheme of work is based on the locally agreed syllabus. The standard of work seen in pupils' books is average, indicating that achievement is satisfactory, which is the same as reported in the last inspection. Leadership is good. Management has re-written the plans, which give an outline of what is taught in different year groups. These have helped to raise the profile of religious education by including links with drama, art, ICT and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Management has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the subject and has identified a broader

range of visits to include a variety of places of worship and more visual resources, both of which will help meet the improvements detailed in the subject planning documents.

## History

Provision in history is very good.

### Main strengths

- Standards are above average
- Teaching is good, which enables all groups of pupils to achieve well
- The subject is led very well, which is a significant factor in the quality of provision

### Commentary

59. All groups of pupils achieve very well and, by Year 6, standards are above average. This reflects the finding of the previous inspection. Pupils make good use of reference books, the internet and historical artefacts to research information and they have a good understanding of the important features of life in the past. By Year 6, pupils show, through their study of Ancient Egypt, their ability to use a variety of historical sources to find out about the past, and they understand that sometimes events have been represented and interpreted in different ways. Pupils make effective use of their literacy skills to record their learning in a variety of ways, for example in reports, posters and charts.
60. Teaching is good and this is a significant factor in stimulating the pupils' enthusiasm for history and in their good achievement. Teachers ensure that all groups of pupils are fully involved in learning. There is good support for pupils with special educational needs and, as a result, they achieve well. In an excellent lesson, Year 6 pupils took on the role of archaeologists in a very well planned, stimulating practical activity. The teacher constructed mini archaeological digs with as much accuracy as is possible in a classroom! Pupils recorded their findings in a variety of ways from logging on charts to photographic recording using digital photography. They made presentations to the rest of the class, which were recorded on video by pupils. The teaching was inspiring and had a huge impact on pupils, who responded as historians unearthing great finds. Their achievement was excellent and resulted in well above average standards. There are many opportunities for pupils to develop their research skills through use of the internet. Pupils in Year 4 and Year 5, studying Celtic life and the Tudors, used their good ICT skills to research specific aspects of their study. These lessons were well taught and motivating and pupils learnt to interpret information and balance their findings against other sources. They achieved well in this work.
61. The subject is very well led. Plans for teaching have been revised and adapted appropriately in order to meet the needs and interests of the pupils in different year groups. Management has produced good, useful guidelines, which include practical activities and ideas as well as an overview of how skills are developed over the years and expectations for standards. Prompts and suggestions for marking and assessment ensure that teachers let pupils know how they can improve their work.

## CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

62. It was not possible to observe any lessons in design and technology or physical education and so no overall judgements have been made about provision in these subjects.
63. The **design and technology** curriculum is broad and balanced. Leadership and management are good. Management has introduced and created a teaching and learning model that ensures that all pupils work to clear criteria and well-established procedures for design and making. There are good procedures for assessment, which are being well used to monitor the progress pupils make. This information is used very well to identify areas for development



within the school. The subject is well organised and significant changes have been made to raise the profile of design and technology within the school.

64. There is a clear policy statement for **physical education** and detailed curriculum guidelines. Resources are good. The school offers a very good range of extra-curricular sporting activities, including clubs for cricket, basketball, football, hockey, gymnastics, korfbal, netball, rugby, skiing and tennis which promote physical skills and knowledge. Leadership and management of the subject are good. There are four specialist physical education teachers within the school who support colleagues in developing teaching skills to ensure good learning. Management monitors the subject by observing lessons and questioning the pupils. There are clear priorities for the future development of the subject which includes raising the profile of the gifted and talented pupils.

## **Art**

Provision in art is satisfactory.

### **Main strength and weakness**

- Leadership is good and helping to raise the profile of art in the school
- Three dimensional work is not yet fully developed

### **Commentary**

65. Standards are average and achievement is satisfactory, which is the same as reported in the last inspection. Art work displayed in classrooms and in the school 'gallery' is of a good standard and reflects the range of media and techniques pupils learn. The range includes work in paints and pastels, landscape watercolours, sketching, collage and digital photography. Pupils study the work of famous artists and produce good work which depicts the different techniques and subject matter in the style of the artist studied. Good representations of the work of Klee were seen in Year 5 and Picasso in Year 6. There are good links between art and cultural development. Pupils' study of the work of Navajo Indians showed an understanding of the techniques used. There is less evidence of three-dimensional work and there are too few opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in this area.
66. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Three lessons were seen during the inspection ranging from satisfactory to good. Where teaching was good, the teacher made good use of questioning, taught the pupils the skills needed and expected high standards of behaviour. Where teaching was satisfactory but had weaknesses, the task was not explained clearly and the skills required were not identified so that the pupils were not sure what to do and thus attitudes deteriorated.
67. The scheme of work has been re-written and is based on a themed approach, which provides good support to teachers. The school joined forces with the local secondary school to run a successful art week and evidence of the quality of work from this event is displayed around the school. Observational drawing skills have improved since the introduction of sketchbooks for all pupils. Links with ICT are not fully developed but each year group now has a digital camera and an art package has been purchased for the new ICT suite. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory and standards have been maintained.

## **Music**

Provision in music is good.

### **Main strengths**

- The leadership and management of the subject are very good
- A high level of participation in extra-curricular music helps pupils achieve well

### **Commentary**



68. Standards in music are in line with those expected for the age of the pupils and achievement is good. Pupils' attitudes are good and they show enthusiasm and a willingness to learn. The provision of extra-curricular music is good and there are high expectations for pupils' involvement and competence. A large number of pupils are involved in extra music activities and this interest supports their learning and achievement in class music lessons.
69. Teaching is good overall. All staff have received very good guidance and support in teaching music and they do so with confidence and enthusiasm. Pupils in Year 4 learned the techniques of 'rap', rehearsing towards a performance in a disciplined manner. When teaching was satisfactory but had weaknesses, teachers struggled to maintain the momentum of the lesson because pupils did not always behave well enough to concentrate on their learning.
70. Leadership of the subject is very good and has worked hard to maintain high standards. The subject makes a significant contribution to the social development of the pupils through promoting high self-esteem. The subject is well resourced and accommodation is good as there is a dedicated music room, which enables good access to the variety of instruments. The school takes part in many musical events and activities and music plays a large part in school productions. Various instruments are taught and there is a successful and popular school choir.

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

71. Only one lesson in personal, social and health education was seen. As a result, it was not possible to make judgements about overall provision or the quality of teaching and learning. The curriculum section of this report evaluates provision for pupils' personal, social and health education as very good. Citizenship is given a high profile within the curriculum. There is a policy, which is regularly reviewed, and outlines the skills to be developed through other subjects. As a result, pupils know about rules and laws, and how to make and change them, for example when discussing behaviour in order to maintain a safe and secure working atmosphere in their classroom. There is a very good leadership scheme project for pupils in Year 6 based upon practical activities of working in a team to solve problems. Successful completion of the course leads to a citizenship award. There are plans to develop this throughout the school. As there is no school council, opportunities are missed for pupils to express themselves on issues that affect them. The school has identified this as an area for development.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	3
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>3</b>
Pupils' achievement	3
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)</b>	<b>2</b>
Attendance	2
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	1
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	4

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