

INSPECTION REPORT

BASSINGBOURN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Bassingbourn, Royston

LEA area: Cambridgeshire

Unique reference number: 110602

Headteacher: Mr Michael Tildesley

Lead inspector: Mrs Elizabeth Coley

Dates of inspection: 21st – 24th February 2005

Inspection number: 266380

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: 4 – 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 328

School address: Brook Road
Bassingbourn
Royston
Hertfordshire
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Telephone number: 01763 242460
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Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of governors: Mrs Jane Taylor

Date of previous inspection: 24th May 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Bassingbourn Primary School is a larger than average village school with 328 pupils. It serves families from a range of social circumstances but, taken together, these are about the same as the national picture. Children come from a mainly white British background, and there are no pupils who are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is below average, but the data is misleading as a significant minority of families with children at the school are not entitled to claim free school meals. The proportion who have special educational needs is below average and their needs are mainly difficulties with speech and communication, hearing impairment or specific learning difficulties. Four pupils have statements outlining their particular special educational needs. When they enter school, children have skills and knowledge that are below average. The mobility of pupils is very high, being three times the national average. Many of the pupils do not start their school life in the school but transfer from other schools at various times, and this means their education is disrupted. In 2003 the school won a Schools' Achievement Award for good results in national tests.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Bassingbourn is a school whose overall effectiveness is satisfactory. Pupils are keen to learn, their achievement is satisfactory and, by Year 6, standards are average. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Parents and pupils speak well of the school. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall, enabling it to provide satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- Pupils achieve well in mathematics and, by the end of Year 6, reach above average standards
- Pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to their learning and to each other
- Lessons are usually well planned and teaching assistants support pupils' learning effectively
- The time allocated to some lessons is inappropriate and some lessons do not start on time
- Pupils who are new to the school feel really welcomed; all pupils are valued and are well prepared to move on to the next stage of their education
- The school has developed very strong links with parents, which support children's learning effectively
- The headteacher and deputy head provide good leadership, but management is satisfactory because the quality of teaching and learning is not checked rigorously enough to detect and tackle weaknesses
- Attendance is good, but some parents do not do enough to get their children to school on time, and the school does not check carefully enough on lateness

Since the school was last inspected, in 1999, improvement has been satisfactory. All the issues from the previous report have been tackled in part. As a result of a significant investment in information and communication technology (ICT), standards have risen. Better assessment procedures have been established recently, but are not yet being used as effectively as they could be across the school. Strengths that were identified last time, such as the links with parents, have been maintained. However, the key issue of improving the way in which management checks on the quality of teaching and learning has not been tackled and remains a weakness.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
English	A	C	D	A
Mathematics	B	C	E	C
Science	B	A	C	A

*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 satisfactory. Children join the school with skills that are generally below average. During their time in the reception class, they make steady progress, although many are not likely to reach the expected goals for children's learning by the time they enter Year 1. The 2004 Year 2 national test results were above average. Pupils currently in Year 2 are reaching standards that are in line with those expected because the year group contains a higher proportion of less able pupils than is usual for the school. The 2004 Year 6 results were below average overall, but strong in terms of the progress made since the pupils took the Year 2 tests. Current standards for pupils in Year 6 are average in

English and science, but above average in mathematics. Again, the discrepancy is due in part to the difference in ability of each year group, and the lesser number of pupils with special educational needs in the current Year 6. Pupils' progress slows in Years 3 and 4, but they then make rapid progress in Years 5 and 6. This means that, by Year 6, pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. Pupils with special educational needs and the high number of pupils who join the school part way through their education also achieve satisfactorily. Great care is taken in settling these pupils into school so that they feel welcome, and this contributes to their achievement because they quickly get on with learning.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Relationships between staff and pupils are good. Pupils have good attitudes to school and they generally behave well. They are respectful, polite and friendly. Attendance is good, but punctuality is unsatisfactory and the late arrival of many pupils affects their learning. Pupils have a satisfactory appreciation of their own and others' cultural traditions. Few opportunities are given for spiritual reflection.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with particular strengths in Years 5 and 6. Teachers generally plan lessons well to meet the needs of the pupils in their class. Teaching assistants are used well and all staff form good relationships with the pupils. Where teaching is very good, pupils work hard because teachers vary activities and the pace is brisk. However, in some lessons, behaviour management strategies are not used sufficiently well. There are some promising developments in assessment, particularly in literacy, but in most subjects marking is inconsistent and does not always help pupils to improve their work. Most subjects are heavily dependent on work sheets, which narrow the opportunities for pupils to write at length or to record work in their own words. A satisfactory curriculum is enriched with a good range of visits and visitors into the school, and extra-curricular activities are sound. In Years 3 to 6, time for teaching and learning is less than the recommended minimum, and lessons sometimes start late. This results in pupils not having enough time to complete their work. On other occasions, lessons are too long and pupils lose concentration. Accommodation and resources are good overall. Teaching and non-teaching staff take good care of pupils in school. The school has very good links with parents, who support the staff and governors very well, and links with the community and other schools are good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The leadership of the headteacher and deputy head is good. Their vision for a caring school has been effectively implemented and they are well respected by staff, governors and parents. However, management is satisfactory, as checks on the quality of teaching and learning are not rigorous enough and this has led to inconsistencies across the school that have not been identified and tackled. The leadership of other key staff is sound. Governance is good because financial management is effective, governors are supportive and they play a key role in drawing up plans to improve the school. They fulfil their statutory responsibilities well and they have a strong commitment to the school.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Most parents are happy with the school and believe their children are doing well. They appreciate the good care given to the pupils by the headteacher and staff. They value their opportunity to approach the headteacher with any concerns. The pupils say they feel

warmly welcomed when they first join the school and they are very confident about their relationships with the adults in the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are

- Put in place procedures that identify and tackle the inconsistencies in teaching and learning
- Rearrange the timetable to ensure that pupils spend an appropriate amount of time on their work
- Implement more effective procedures to check on pupils who habitually arrive late for school, and encourage better punctuality

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and, by Year 6, they reach standards that are close to those expected for their ages. Children make reasonable progress in the Reception class although many are not likely to reach the expected goals for children's learning by the time they join Year 1. Satisfactory progress is made in Years 1 and 2. Pupils make more rapid progress in Years 5 and 6 than they do in other years because of good teaching. Pupils who are given extra support because they have special educational needs also achieve satisfactorily, as do the high proportion of pupils who join the school at various stages of their education.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in mathematics and, by the end of Year 6, reach above average standards
- Pupils who join the school part way through their education settle quickly into their learning and achieve as well as could be expected
- Whilst standards in ICT are below average overall, this represents good improvement since the last inspection
- The length of some lessons and loss of time affect pupils' achievement detrimentally

Commentary

1. A significant number of pupils, which last year was just under one third of the school's population, join or leave the school at various times throughout the year, and this disrupts their education. Great care is taken in settling these pupils into school so that they feel welcome, and this contributes to their satisfactory achievement as they quickly get on with learning. Pupils who have special educational needs also make steady progress because they have good support from well-trained teaching assistants.
2. When children join the school in the reception year, their knowledge and skills are generally below average. During their time in the reception class they make steady progress across all areas of learning except physical development, where their progress is good. Overall, children's achievement is satisfactory. Tasks and activities meet the needs of individual children, including those who have special educational needs.
3. Results of the 2004 Year 2 national tests were above average in writing and mathematics and average in reading. In the current Year 2, standards are in line with national expectations and achievement is satisfactory. The lower standards are due to the fact that this year group contains a higher proportion of less able pupils than is usual for the school. However, pupils are making good progress and achieving well in mathematics. In other subjects, pupils achieve satisfactorily and standards are average.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	15.9 (14.9)	15.8 (15.7)
Writing	15.8 (13.8)	14.6 (14.6)
Mathematics	17.3 (15.6)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 47 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. Results of the 2004 Year 6 national tests were average in science, below average in English and well below average in mathematics. However, compared with similar schools, these results were average in mathematics and well above average in English and science.

These results represent a considerable dip from the previous year, but this was due to a higher proportion of less able pupils within the year group. In addition, the school had rightly focused in the previous years on raising standards of literacy. In the current Year 6, standards in English and science are as expected for pupils' ages. Standards in mathematics, which are above average by the end of Year 6, indicate that the long term strategies the school has been following to raise standards are beginning to have an impact. Teachers and teaching assistants have been well utilised to provide extra booster groups, and the grouping of pupils by ability, in Years 3 to 6, is effective in supporting pupils' learning.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	26.5 (26.9)	26.9 (26.8)
Mathematics	25.4 (27.3)	27.0 (26.8)
Science	28.5 (30.3)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 52 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. By Year 6, achievement is satisfactory in English and science. In English, progress slows in Years 3 and 4 because of the inconsistent quality of teaching, but rapid progress occurs in Years 5 and 6 because of good teaching, which means that pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. This includes pupils with special educational needs and those who join part way through their education. Some pupils do not make as much progress as they should because some lessons are too long, for example in science, and pupils lose concentration. Achievement in mathematics is good because work is generally well matched to the needs of the pupils within their ability groups. Achievement in other subjects is satisfactory. During the inspection, it was noted that some time is lost at the start of afternoon lessons and this too affects pupils' achievement in subjects like religious education.
6. Standards in ICT are as expected for pupils' ages by the end of Year 2, but below expectations by the end of Year 6. This subject has been a focus for major investment recently in terms of new resources, and good progress has been made since the last inspection. The rate of current progress in Years 3 to 6 indicates that standards are gradually improving. Standards in religious education have also improved since the last inspection and are in line with expectations in Years 2 and 6. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, with standards and achievement maintained at the same levels overall.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes to learning and the values they display are good because the school provides well for their moral and social development. Good relationships within the school, led by the headteacher, support pupils' good behaviour. Attendance is properly monitored and is good, but some parents do not do enough to get their children to school on time and this makes punctuality unsatisfactory. Provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides good opportunities for pupils' moral and social development
- The pupils enjoy school and the range of activities it offers
- The pupils have good relationships with each other
- A significant number of pupils are late arriving at school and this affects their achievement

Commentary

7. The school maintains good attendance through well-managed systems that are properly monitored. Parents and pupils are well informed about the attendance procedures. Punctuality is less well monitored. Many pupils arrive late to school and, after break and lunch, lessons do not always start on time. This means that valuable learning time is lost and pupils do not achieve as well as they could. Pupils' past work shows that in several subjects, but particularly in religious education and geography, work was left unfinished and in some cases hardly started, which means pupils are not having the opportunity to spend enough time consolidating their learning.
8. The pupils enjoy being in school and they have good attitudes to their work. They like most of the learning and particularly enjoy the residential trips organised for Years 4 and 6. In the majority of lessons, pupils work well and listen attentively. They collaborate effectively in pairs and in larger groups. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and so develop positive attitudes to their work. This was illustrated well in a lesson with younger pupils practising their literacy skills. After reading a story about a family who caught chicken pox, the pupils were extremely keen to express their ideas.
9. The headteacher provides a strong lead in implementing the school's good moral and social code because he treats everyone with equal respect. The majority of the pupils say they are free from bullying, although the younger children say that sometimes they are picked on by those in an older class. They are, however, confident that the headteacher always deals well with any difficulties. Behaviour in and around the school is generally good. Pupils are friendly and polite, although they say that disruptive behaviour in lessons sometimes distracts them from their learning. The school has a well-developed behaviour policy and multi-cultural policy and good efforts are made to value everyone throughout the school. Pupils' confidence and self-esteem is developed well in various ways, among them the opportunity to take part in assemblies and school productions. Good relationships are emphasised across the school, and parents see this as a major strength. In particular, both parents and pupils comment on how welcomed they are made to feel when they first arrive and how quickly they settle in.
10. Pupils are given good opportunities to become more mature and to take on responsibilities within the school community. The older pupils appreciate the responsibility they are given and like helping with the younger pupils during breaks. They know they are expected to behave sensibly and be good role models for the younger pupils. Year 6 pupils also have the opportunity to be involved with the wider community by visiting a local special school for disabled pupils each week, which contributes to the personal development of both sets of pupils.
11. The school provides satisfactory opportunities for pupils to explore their own and other cultures through the orchestra, choir, productions and listening to music at assembly time, as well as through visits to concerts and theatres in nearby places. Pupils also have some awareness of the artefacts of other cultures through art displays. During the inspection, assemblies involved pupils participating in themes such as perseverance and the desire to improve. Classical music provided a calm atmosphere and pupils took part in singing followed by a prayer. The school provides adequate opportunities for reflection. Whilst attendance has improved since the last inspection, punctuality is not as good. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is broadly similar to the last inspection and overall improvement is satisfactory.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	3.7	School data	0.2
National data	5.1	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 satisfactory education for its pupils. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, as is the way in which the school assesses pupils' attainment and checks on their progress. The curriculum is satisfactory. The school has developed a very effective partnership with parents to support their children's education, and good links with other schools and the community. Pupils are well cared for.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Assessment is satisfactory and is now being used more effectively to set group targets. Teachers' marking of work does not always help pupils to know what they should do to improve.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good in Years 5 and 6, good in ICT in the lessons seen, and good in mathematics across the school
- Most lessons are well planned, and learning is particularly effective where the teacher has a good command of the subject
- Teaching assistants are used well to support pupils' learning in lessons
- Lessons are generally conducted at a brisk pace and include a variety of activities
- In some lessons, pupils' behaviour is not managed well enough and disrupts the learning of others
- An over-dependence on work sheets narrows the opportunities for independent learning

Commentary

12. Teaching is satisfactory overall. The school has focused on improving teaching and learning in ICT and mathematics because ICT was identified as having weaknesses at the last inspection and recent national test results at the end of Year 6 in mathematics have been disappointing. In ICT, a large amount of funding has been given over recent years to improve the resources and a new ICT suite has been provided. Whilst standards at the end of Year 6 are still below national expectations, the quality of teaching was good in the lessons seen and has improved since the last inspection. An example of very good teaching was seen in a Year 3 lesson, where pupils were using a software program which enabled them to create a picture using the pointillist technique. The teacher's very good introduction, demonstration and appropriate use of language enthused the pupils and they became fully engaged in the task. They achieved very well in this lesson.
13. Mathematics has been supported not only from within the school, but also by the local education authority, which has monitored teaching and learning and given helpful advice. The teaching strategies the school has put in place over recent years are now having a positive impact on standards and achievement. The focus on mathematics means that the quality of teaching in this subject has improved and is now good across the school. For example, In a Year 5 lesson, pupils achieved very well because they developed their understanding and recognition of perpendicular and parallel lines through very good instruction, explanation and questioning from the teacher. During the lesson, the teacher used the effective strategy of asking pupils to explain to the class what they had found out in their investigations of shapes.
14. Where teaching is good, lessons are planned well, conducted at a brisk pace and teachers have secure subject knowledge. Suitable teaching strategies are employed which respond to the learning needs of the pupils, and a variety of activities takes place, which keeps pupils interested and involved. In these lessons, pupils make good progress and achieve well. For example, in a Year 6 English lesson, pupils were developing arguments for and against the use of mobile phones in school. The ringing of a mobile phone in the middle of the lesson, and the ensuing role play carried out by the teacher with another member of

staff, caught the pupils' interest and focused their minds on the impact of mobile phones on their lives. Learning is less effective, particularly for the younger pupils, when the lesson lasts too long. Pupils lose concentration and behaviour management strategies are not always used well enough to keep them on task. On these occasions, pupils do not complete a suitable quantity of work within the time allowed, the amount of learning is reduced and achievement is not as good as it should be.

15. The good relationships staff have with the pupils contribute to the quality of learning. Pupils like their teachers and have good attitudes towards their work, being keen to participate in question and answer sessions and discussions. The effective support offered both by the teacher and by teaching assistants means that all pupils are encouraged to approach their work with a positive attitude. In most lessons, work is matched well to the needs of the pupils. However, many subjects use a large number of work sheets, which are designed in such a way that pupils do not have control over the means of recording and reporting their own ideas in writing. This restricts independent learning skills, particularly of the higher-attaining pupils, and is a barrier to their learning and achievement.
16. Teaching assistants are used well and are mainly responsible for carrying out the school's programmes in literacy and numeracy for pupils with special educational needs, and those needing 'a boost' to ensure they reach the expected levels of attainment. Individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs are adequate, but targets on them are sometimes too broad. These plans are used well by teachers and teaching assistants to decide on the next stages of learning for these pupils.
17. The assessment procedures now in place to check on pupils' progress are satisfactory. However, these procedures are relatively new and have not yet had time to raise standards. Individual pupil performance in English and mathematics tests is recorded and analysed. This informs teachers about which topics need targeting in the future and gives information so that group targets can be set. The school has already recognised that the next step will be to give pupils individual targets so that they are more aware of what they personally need to do to improve. An individual target system for English is currently being trialled in Years 4 and 5. An improvement since the last inspection has been putting in place an assessment procedure which determines the level of attainment of those pupils who arrive during the year.
18. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is inconsistent in English, science and mathematics. Some comments are helpful and informative, but on many pieces of work no guidance is given on how pupils can improve. A whole-school strategy for the marking of pupils' work has not been put in place and this remains a weakness since the last inspection. In English and mathematics lessons, good practice was seen of teachers checking the pupils' perceptions of how well they were doing, but this is not carried out routinely by all teachers. However, teachers know their pupils very well and use this information when planning their lessons, so that generally pupils are given appropriate work and support within the classroom.
19. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The quality of teaching is about the same as reported then. Weaknesses in the provision and use of assessment have been tackled in part, but the key issue of rigorously checking on the quality of teaching and learning has not been tackled and inconsistencies in this area of provision remain.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 45 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
	9 (20%)	18 (40%)	16 (36%)	2 (4%)		

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 school's curriculum provides satisfactory opportunities for pupils' learning. A good range of opportunities is provided for pupils to enrich their learning experiences through trips and visits. The range of regular extra-curricular activities is satisfactory. Staffing and accommodation are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is enriched with a good range of visits and visitors
- Year 6 pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education
- The school makes good use of the accommodation available
- Valuable curriculum time is lost because of procedures that are not sufficiently tight

Commentary

20. The taught curriculum meets statutory requirements and is relevant to the pupils' needs. The curriculum for pupils in Years 5 and 6 is further broadened by the introduction of French, which is a good preparation for secondary school. Pupils also spend a number of days at their new school prior to transfer and enjoy taster lessons in several subjects, including design technology, science, ICT, French and German. This helps the pupils look forward to the transition to their new school with confidence.
21. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory and they have full access to the curriculum. Much of the 'extra' help they receive is related to improving literacy skills and is delivered in small groups away from their normal classes and lessons. Care is taken, however, to ensure this does not disrupt their learning in other curriculum areas.
22. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is satisfactory, and is addressed through a new scheme, which provides a comprehensive programme throughout the school. In Year 6, for example, this includes statutory sex and drugs awareness education. Parents' views were taken into account when implementing this, and the recently formed school council will give pupils a voice in how the school is run.
23. It was noted that, during the inspection, curriculum time was lost because some lessons did not begin on time. Pupils were brought in late, particularly after lunch, and registration was, therefore, delayed. As a result, work was sometimes unfinished and pupils did not always achieve as well as they should. Conversely, some subject lessons, for example science, were so long that pupils found it difficult to maintain concentration and progress slowed significantly.
24. The curriculum offers many opportunities for pupils to broaden their experience through a variety of visits and visitors. In addition to visiting the local village, Year 1 visit Milton Country Park and Year 2 the African village in Hertfordshire, adding to their cultural development. The school's link with Hitchin museum offers pupils in Years 5 and 6 the opportunity to experience a Victorian day, whilst Years 4 and 6 both enjoy residential visits. These opportunities are valued by everyone involved in the school community because they help to bring learning alive. They also help pupils to develop positive attitudes to school and to learning. Pupils are provided with the opportunity to participate in extra-curricular activities, mainly in sport and music, in order to enhance their achievement.
25. Teachers are effectively deployed and the school has grouped pupils according to their ability for lessons in English and mathematics. This helps teachers to match work to the pupils' needs, so that they make suitable progress. In most lessons, pupils with special educational needs are well supported by teaching assistants. They work with pupils both individually and in small groups to give them additional support. This helps them to feel more confident and to achieve as well as their peers. In the afternoons, the school operates a system for some foundation subjects where teachers teach the same subject to different

year groups. This is most effective when teachers work within their particular strength and, in such cases, pupils make rapid progress.

26. Despite the restrictions of size, the school has made good use of every available space and created a number of attractive, well-resourced areas where pupils are supported in smaller groups by teaching assistants and parent volunteers. The Activity Hall and the ICT suite have had a positive impact on pupils' learning in music and ICT respectively. The large outside area provides ample space for games lessons and for play. Governors are planning to build a further room, which will create much needed flexibility for teaching groups. However, the variation in size between the reception classrooms creates difficulties in planning for certain learning activities. The quality of the curriculum is broadly similar to that provided at the time of the last inspection. Improvement has been satisfactory.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides good support for the care, welfare and health of all pupils. Good relationships throughout the school provide the pupils with a friendly working environment where everyone is valued. Support, advice and guidance based on monitoring pupils' progress are satisfactory. The involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is satisfactory and improvements are currently being implemented.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are cared for well and so they enjoy coming to school
- Pupils feel welcome at whatever point they join the school
- Pupils are very confident that, if they have a problem, adults in the school will listen to them
- The monitoring of pupils' work does not provide sufficient guidance

Commentary

27. The school encourages the pupils in a healthy life style, such as eating fresh fruit at break, and makes good use of its outdoor spaces. Both the playgrounds have recently been improved by the addition of an adventure playground area, which allows pupils greater scope for play. Arrangements for travelling to school have been improved by the school's adoption of a commitment to the 'Safer Routes to School' scheme, which encourages more children to walk to school, but some parents continue to put the pupils at risk by their irresponsible parking.
28. The school has a caring ethos which begins with the accessibility of the headteacher and his involvement with all the pupils and their families. The care and welfare of pupils is monitored well and the school works closely with other agencies where appropriate. The pupils are very confident in their relationships with the adults in the school. "There is always someone to talk to if you have a problem." The pupils feel they are treated fairly. Parents also feel that their children are well cared for at school. The school keeps parents and pupils informed of progress through good annual reports and termly parents' evenings, but some parents, especially those with children in reception, feel they are not kept well enough informed about progress.
29. The school has recently introduced a good system for tracking the progress that individual pupils make. This system is very manageable, and enables staff to see how much progress each child has made in English and mathematics each year. The information gained from this analysis is being used to set group targets throughout the school and there are plans to introduce specific targets for each pupil in the near future. However, there is currently insufficient information available to determine how much progress pupils have made over their time in school because the system has only been in place for eighteen months. Assessments in other subjects are satisfactory and based on nationally recognised published schemes. They give teachers a good indication of what proportion of their class have reached the expected levels in each subject, and show which pupils need more support.
30. The school wants each child to achieve as much as possible and is very good at taking in pupils at all stages. Pupils joining the school mid-year are readily settled into the school through a well-developed 'buddy' system reinforced by clearly defined procedures. A good

assessment procedure when pupils first join ensures they can pick up on their learning at the appropriate level, and this represents good improvement overall since the last inspection.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has very good links with its parents, who support it strongly. It has good links with the local community and with the neighbouring community college.

Main strengths

- The school provides very good support for its families
- Through its links with the local community, the school is well supported in its activities
- The school works well with the neighbouring college to ensure the very smooth transfer of pupils

Commentary

31. The parents are enthusiastically supportive of the school and appreciate the open-door policy of the head and the support offered to families. They like the welcoming accessibility of the school, which means they can be involved in its work informally. They are confident the headteacher and other staff will be readily available to deal with any concerns. They are kept very well informed of the school's activities through a fortnightly newsletter, and information on the curriculum is given in a termly document. These are both new since the last inspection. Parents are given regular information about their child's progress through termly consultative evenings, and there is a home-school agreement which sets out what the school expects of parents. Annual reports are good and advise parents on both effort and progress, although some subjects do not contain targets for pupils to work towards. Many parents support the parents' association and are active at events and in raising funds. Many opportunities exist for parents to be involved in the work of the school, such as providing reading support, helping on trips, and assisting in the ICT suite.
32. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are involved in the reviews of individual education plans, usually through the evenings organised for all parents to meet staff. The school is adapting its present practice so that, in future, parents will receive a copy of these plans.
33. The school has good links with people in the local community, who make use of its facilities and support its activities, such as the annual fete. It has particularly good links with the barracks, which is involved with the school at all levels from governance to providing music for the fete. The school has been successful in getting support from local businesses.
34. Almost all of the Year 6 pupils move to the secondary school on the same site. Good collaboration exists, and pupils spend at least five days during Years 5 and 6 working at the secondary school. This ensures that their transfer is very smooth. The two schools work closely and successfully together. The school also has good links with the two playgroups from which most of the pupils come. The school has maintained its good links with schools and the community, and improved its links with parents, since the last inspection.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The leadership of the headteacher and deputy head is good. Leadership of other key staff is satisfactory, as is management. Governance is good because governors play a leading role in shaping the direction of the school, ensuring that statutory requirements are met.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the headteacher and deputy head has created a good ethos and sense of teamwork throughout the school

- Governors are well informed and committed to the school
- There is insufficient rigour in checking on and improving the quality of teaching and learning

Commentary

35. The headteacher and deputy head provide good leadership. They are well respected by all staff, governors and parents. The headteacher has a strong sense of pastoral care and knows the pupils and their families well through regular teaching and by being very accessible. Together with the deputy head, he has generated a good sense of teamwork in the school with staff sharing ideas, supporting each other and planning work together. Established subject co-ordinators provide good role models and give valuable support and advice to their colleagues. The school has also made good use of the guidance and expertise of the local authority to improve its provision, especially in mathematics. Co-ordinators produce annual plans to develop their subjects and all staff contribute to the production of the school's overall improvement plans. These provide a working tool for school staff, but initiatives are not always clearly focused on subjects and the raising of standards.
36. The headteacher and other senior staff manage the school satisfactorily. Performance management is used adequately to set targets for teachers and has been extended to the whole staff. There has, however, been insufficient checking on the quality of teaching and learning, which means that inconsistencies have not been identified and tackled. Some scrutiny of teachers' planning and analysis of pupils' work takes place, and some teachers have been observed in lessons. This has, however, been too informal and has lacked the rigour needed to raise standards. In addition, few co-ordinators have the opportunity to observe lessons in their subjects. The school provides good training for its teaching assistants, which includes the development of their computer skills, because it has recognised the good role they play in providing extra support for those pupils who need it. Training of other staff has not been a priority recently because of financial constraints.

37. The leadership and management of the school's work with pupils with special needs are satisfactory. The co-ordinator ensures suitable records are kept and that pupils receive appropriate education plans. The high number of teaching assistants is well managed, and they provide an essential part of the school's provision in this area.
38. Governance is good because governors are well informed and committed to the school. The headteacher and other key staff make regular reports to them, for example on progress in ICT and special needs provision. In addition to the planned visits all governors make, several governors are frequently in school. They challenge as well as advise school staff. They play a significant part in the drawing up of the school's plans to improve and keep a careful eye on the progress of planned initiatives. The governing body is made up of governors with expertise and experience in a number of different fields, which they use to the school's advantage. For example, two governors were instrumental in the design and installation of the computer suite with one governor continuing to play an almost daily part in its maintenance. The school's finances are well managed and this is illustrated in the quality of the school's financial planning. This has enabled staffing levels to be maintained through the financial turbulence caused by the ever-changing number of pupils. In addition, governors have funds and good long-term plans for the upkeep and improvement of the premises. The high costs associated with improving the school's provision for ICT have also been successfully met although, as yet, there has been no assessment of the impact on standards of this provision.
39. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall, but the key issue of improving the quality of teaching and learning through rigorous checking has yet to be tackled.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	800566
Total expenditure	797807
Expenditure per pupil	2517

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	16026
Balance carried forward to the next	18785

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for children in the reception year is satisfactory. When they come into school, the children have a wide range of ability, but overall they have skills and knowledge that are below those normally expected. Although they speak confidently and are keen to learn, many have not acquired basic skills such as holding a pencil correctly or using scissors safely. Most are not used to writing and lack confidence when counting to five. During their time in the reception year, the children make steady progress and achieve satisfactorily in all areas of learning except physical development where achievement is good, but they are unlikely to reach all of the expected goals for children's learning by the time they join Year 1. Work is planned effectively so that children learn the skills necessary in all areas of learning. Assessments are carried out regularly so that tasks and activities can meet the needs of individual children. This includes the children who have special educational needs. They are quickly identified and a careful watch kept on their development so that they can make steady progress during their time in the reception class. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Good use is made of teaching assistants so that all children can be involved in activities. Adults form good relationships with the children and encourage them to persevere at, and fully participate in, tasks. However, there is a tendency for adults to do too much for the children. Although resources are good and accommodation is satisfactory overall, there is a great deal of difference in the size of each classroom. One room is much bigger than the other and has its own toilet facilities, whilst the other is much smaller and the children have to use the toilets that are some distance from the classroom. This affects the activities that can be offered to the children who occupy the smaller classroom and, although the staff make every effort to share the facilities, the situation is far from ideal. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are satisfactory and there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

Personal, social and emotional development

Provision in personal, social and emotional development is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children settle into school quickly
- Pupils behave well and play together sensibly
- Adults sometimes do too much for the children, which limits children's developing independence skills

Commentary

40. The promotion of children's personal development is satisfactory. An appropriate induction system ensures that the children settle into school happily and soon become used to the routines. Staff encourage the children to work together and share resources. Through well-planned activities, such as playing dice games, children are encouraged to take turns and celebrate the success of others. Good displays, such as the one linked to the story of *Handa's Surprise*, provide children with positive images of other cultures and helps them learn about the lives of others. As a result, children behave well and get along together. There are, however, times when staff do too much for the children. Many of the displays are made up of adult-made outlines that the children have filled in, and children are not always encouraged to write their own names on their work as staff do this for them. This affects the opportunities children have to be independent and try things out for themselves.

Communication, language and literacy

Provision in communication, language and literacy is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are good opportunities for children to learn letter names and sounds
- Children learn to handle books appropriately
- There are too few opportunities for children to write for themselves

Commentary

41. Children's early reading and writing skills are taught systematically. Good opportunities are given for children to learn letter names and the sounds individual letters make. This means they are confident when handling books and quickly become accustomed to reading. Some of the children are beginning to read confidently. In class discussions, the children talk confidently and usually listen to each other. There are, however, times when the children become very enthusiastic and they then find it hard to listen and respond appropriately. The work in books shows that children have many opportunities to learn to form letters correctly and practise their skills. Some of the children are beginning to write simple sentences, sometimes copying what the teacher has written, or sometimes trying to write for themselves. However, the work shows that there is an over-dependence on printed work sheets, many of which are duplicated, and this is too restricting. Children do not have enough opportunities to write for themselves. Little evidence was seen of writing in the role-play areas, and there was no designated writing area where children could practise writing for a variety of purposes. This means that teaching and learning are satisfactory overall.

Mathematical development

Provision in mathematical development is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children count accurately to ten and beyond
- They explore a range of mathematical language
- There are not enough opportunities for children to practise recording for themselves

Commentary

42. Teaching and learning in mathematical development are satisfactory. Most of the children can count accurately to ten and beyond, and can match the correct number to a set of objects. The good display on pictures made from a variety of different shapes demonstrates that the children know about circles, squares and triangles and can use them in creative activities. Work in books shows that the children have explored mathematical ideas, such as longer and shorter, and can use this knowledge when comparing objects of different lengths. Once again, there is an over-dependence on printed worksheets and children have too few opportunities to record for themselves. Opportunities are lost for children to explore different ways of recording and to think about simple addition and subtraction problems.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

Provision in knowledge and understanding of the world is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good opportunities are given for children to explore ICT
- Good resources are available and children use a wide range of construction materials
- Not enough emphasis is put on encouraging the children to look at their local environment

Commentary

43. Teaching and learning in this area of learning are satisfactory and children make reasonable progress. Staff encourage the children to use a wide variety of resources to build and make their own models. The children understand how to use these resources

effectively to make complicated models, and they enjoy talking about them. ICT skills are also promoted well. The computers in the classroom are used well to support learning, for example in mathematical development. Children also have access to the computer suite in the school and learn how to use the mouse and keys with increasing control. Staff plan good opportunities for children to learn about the wider world. They tasted fruit from around the world and knew which came from hot countries and which could be grown in this country. There were few examples, however, of the children looking at the local area and finding out about their immediate environment.

Physical development

Provision in physical development is good.

Main strengths

- Children use a wide range of equipment safely and with increasing confidence
- The outside area is used well to promote physical development
- Children learn about the importance of healthy eating

Commentary

44. Teaching and learning in this area are good and pupils make good progress. Activities are well planned so that all children experience using a variety of wheeled toys and use them confidently. The outside area is used effectively so that the children can play there regularly without the rest of the school present. Children learn to balance and develop good hand/eye co-ordination as they play together. Other activities are planned well so that children learn to use a variety of tools safely and with increasing control. This means that the children can use scissors and other tools effectively. The school hall is used well so that the children can be challenged when using the large apparatus that is available. Children also learn about the importance of eating healthily. During an activity that involved cutting and tasting fruit, the children confidently discussed the fact that they should eat fruit because "it is good for you."

Creative development

Provision in creative development is satisfactory.

Main strength and weakness

- Children experience a range of role-play activities that help them make up their own stories
- The range of creative activities is not as wide as normally seen

Commentary

45. Children make reasonable progress in this area of learning. There are good role-play opportunities for the children. These include a shop where children can use real money to act out paying for goods in the supermarket. The children sing enthusiastically, especially number rhymes that support their learning in mathematical development. There are, however, fewer creative activities than are normally seen because activities like painting, sand and water are not readily available. One classroom is too small for all activities to be out all of the time, but the other one is not. The creative activities that are displayed on the wall are mostly adult directed and there are few opportunities for children to paint their own pictures. When children do participate in creative activities, however, they do so with enthusiasm and care.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers plan lessons well, enabling pupils to acquire new skills and knowledge
- Teaching assistants give good support to lower-attaining pupils
- Pupils are given insufficient opportunity to write independently in other subjects
- The school is aware of the strengths and weaknesses in the subject and has identified strategies for improvement

- The school checks on pupils' progress, but systems are too recent to have had an impact on standards and achievement

Commentary

46. Results in the 2004 Year 2 national tests were in line with the national average in reading and above average in writing. Reading standards were well below average when compared to similar schools but writing was average. Results in the 2004 Year 6 national tests were below the national average, but well above average in comparison with similar schools. This is partly accounted for by the larger proportion of pupils with special educational needs in this year group than is normal for the school.
47. In the current Year 2, standards are close to those expected for pupils' ages. They are lower than the Year 2 results in writing last year because the current Year 2 is a less able cohort. Higher-attaining pupils can create compound words and spell common words accurately. Although handwriting is improving, many pupils are not writing fluently and joining their letters. Standards by the end of Year 6, although varied, are in line with national expectations. For example, higher-attaining pupils in Year 6 organise their writing well into paragraphs and use punctuation, but lower-attaining pupils do not use these skills consistently. Pupils in Year 5 use a range of vocabulary in order to make their writing more powerful. Year 4 pupils' knowledge of poetry is improving and they recognise examples of alliteration, rhyme and words that show dialect. All pupils speak confidently when feeding back from group work. Achievement overall is satisfactory, with pupils making good progress in Years 5 and 6. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers.
48. The overall quality of teaching and learning in English is satisfactory. Tasks are well planned to be suitably challenging for the needs of pupils. Where teaching is good, lessons have a brisk pace and build well on what pupils have learnt previously. Teachers use effective questioning to challenge pupils' thinking and probe their understanding, with the result that pupils make good progress. In these lessons, pupils are engrossed in their work and keen to achieve. Where teaching is satisfactory, but has weaknesses, questioning can lack clarity and pupils who do not put their hands up do not play such an active part in the lesson. Behaviour is not managed effectively, and this can interrupt the flow of the lesson and affect the progress pupils make. Throughout the school, pupils' work is marked regularly but this often fails to tell pupils how they can improve. Teaching assistants work well with pupils who require extra support, both individually and in groups. Pupils are generally positive about their learning and work well with each other. Their relationship with their teacher is good and they respond well to the positive encouragement they receive.
49. Leadership and management are satisfactory and the school is working hard to address any areas of weakness that have been identified. For example, higher-attaining pupils are not always achieving as well as they should be, so an additional teacher has been brought in to ensure that all pupils are sufficiently challenged to do as well as they can. Resources have been built up systematically and staff training has taken place in order to improve standards in writing. Speaking and listening has been identified as an area that would benefit from more detailed planning. A number of new initiatives have been introduced which, in time, should have an impact. These include new schemes for reading, handwriting and marking. Pupils' progress is tracked, so that those whose achievement is not good enough can be given extra support or challenge. A system of individual targets for pupils, which highlights exactly what they need to work on to progress to the next level, is being piloted in Years 4 and 5. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Much has recently been put in place but, as yet, is not sufficiently established to have had any real impact on standards.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

50. Opportunities for pupils to practise their English skills in other subjects are satisfactory. For example, in history, pupils make good use of their writing skills when describing objects from the past. Pupils use correct vocabulary in mathematics and music and explain their working methods well. They usually read fluently as, for example in religious education when reading aloud the modern version of the Bible. However, reading standards are varied and, in other lessons, pupils' skills are below average. In religious education, Year 2 pupils write their own sentences with accurate punctuation. The over-use of work sheets in subjects such as history, geography, religious education and science means that opportunities for independent writing are too limited.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are much improved this year at the end of Year 6
- Good teaching enables pupils to achieve well
- Detailed analyses of test results identify areas for improvement
- Marking is inconsistent and does not always help pupils to improve their work

Commentary

51. Results in the 2004 Year 2 national tests were above the national average and about the same as those gained by similar schools. Standards in the current Year 2 are in line with those expected nationally. Each cohort of pupils at Bassingbourn changes frequently because of the very high mobility which the school experiences, and the current Year 2 is generally not as able as the 2004 cohort. Results in the 2004 Year 6 national tests were well below the national average, but average in comparison with similar schools. Current standards at the end of Year 6 are much improved on last year. The current Year 6 is a more able cohort, and the intervention strategies the school has put into place over the last few years are beginning to have an impact on pupils' achievement. Year 5 standardised tests last summer were analysed rigorously to identify where weaknesses in learning existed, and the school has worked hard to improve those weaker areas of learning. In addition, numeracy has been a focus of the school development plan and has received helpful local education authority support during the last year.
52. Pupils' achievement is good overall. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress across all year groups, systematically building up their understanding and mathematical skills. This was particularly evident in the sampling of work in Years 3 to 6. The grouping of pupils by ability in these years means that they are generally given work that is matched to their needs well. An example of very good achievement was seen in a Year 6 lesson, where pupils were asked to recognise and then calculate different types of angles within a triangle. They used their knowledge about these angles in questions that tested their ability to apply their understanding to unusual and challenging situations. Pupils achieved very well because of the good use of resources, very good questioning techniques and encouragement given in the teaching.
53. Teaching and learning are good across the school. Among the strengths of teaching are the good subject knowledge of teachers, which develops pupils' understanding, and the time targets set in some lessons, which focus the pupils on the task. Teachers use good questioning to encourage pupils to give explanations for their methods and answers, and this strategy develops literacy skills as well as mathematical ones. Good planning, where work is generally matched well to pupils' abilities, and good relationships within the classroom, create a good environment in which to learn. An example was seen where a teacher realised that certain aspects of a lesson would need to be revisited by some pupils, in order to consolidate their understanding, before the topic could move further forward. Appropriate adjustments were made to the lesson plan. In some lessons, particularly in the lower years, a few more able pupils were not sufficiently challenged because of a reliance on work sheets, which reduced the opportunity for pupils to think for themselves. Teachers sometimes intervene in questioning too soon and do not encourage pupils to complete answers orally for themselves, but some good examples were seen of pupils' learning being extended as far as possible.
54. Leadership and management are good. Strengths and weaknesses within pupils' learning are known and appropriate action taken. Assessment against key objectives takes place, and each term a formal assessment is compared with National Curriculum levels so that the

progress of pupils can be identified. Targets set are group or class ones, not individual targets, so pupils do not easily know what they need to do to improve for themselves. The school is planning to develop the good work already started by checking individual pupils' progress more carefully. Marking does not always identify what pupils should do to improve and often just consists of ticks. However, some staff, particularly those who teach the oldest pupils, do use marking well to help pupils move on in their learning. Resources are good. Accommodation is good, although more room for group work is needed if the effective intervention strategies are to continue to have a good impact on pupils' learning. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Judgements are very much in line with the last report, but a move forward has been made in the assessment of pupils' progress which is now satisfactory.

Mathematics across the curriculum

55. Opportunities for developing mathematical skills across the curriculum are satisfactory. Examples seen during the inspection included a history lesson about the Indus Valley civilisation for pupils in Year 4/5 where scale measurements were used to measure the distance between places in India. A time line was also used on which to plot historical events. Pupils' work in science shows some evidence of block graphs and line graphs being used. A good opportunity was seen in a Year 1 science lesson, where pupils were using their own initiative in comparing sizes of balloons and measuring how far elastic bands would stretch.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are well prepared for national tests and have a good recall of factual information
- There is an over-reliance on work sheets, which restricts independent learning
- Pupils' knowledge and skills in scientific investigation techniques are not sufficiently developed
- Pupils have positive attitudes and enjoy their work

Commentary

56. Results of the 2004 national tests showed that, by Year 6, pupils' attainments were in line with the national average and well above average in comparison with similar schools. This was lower than in previous years but reflects the high number of pupils with special educational needs in that cohort. Standards in the current Year 6 are average. Pupils' achievement overall is satisfactory. They progressively cover a wide range of work, ensuring that, by Year 6, the focus is on the format and style of the questions required for the national tests. Pupils in both infant and junior classes have a good knowledge of scientific facts. For example, pupils in Year 2 readily identify the materials used to make a variety of cups. In Year 6, pupils speak knowledgeably about the composition and use of human teeth, and in Year 5 pupils know the names and actions of different forces. Pupils know some of the requirements of a 'fair test' and that investigations are a way of testing ideas. Their knowledge of how to carry out scientific experiments, however, is not developed sufficiently well.
57. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Throughout the school, teachers provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to engage in a variety of investigations. These opportunities, however, are not always used to their best advantage. There is little evidence that pupils set up their own experiments, predict outcomes, re-test to check their findings, or account for and reflect on what they have found out. In the younger year groups, pupils are given appropriate writing frames to help them record their work. However, they are still using these in the older classes and more should be expected of them in recording their

own work. There is an over-use of work sheets throughout the school. They are used to advantage when teachers provide homework or help pupils become familiar with the nature of the national tests they will take. Often, though, they restrict and direct pupils' responses.

58. In the lessons observed, teachers' knowledge was good and enabled them to pose appropriate questions and extend pupils' understanding. Where teaching was good, teachers were lively and engaged their pupils' interest well through the practical activities they provided. This meant pupils worked hard and were keen to take part. This was illustrated well in one lesson in which pupils in Year 1 explored a variety of materials and how their shapes might be changed. They experimented on a variety of materials including elastic bands, dough, different papers and cans. By the end of the lesson, pupils were confidently using a number of terms – roll, twist, stretch, pull and squeeze – to describe how they changed their materials. In Year 6, pupils used mirrors while eating carrots in order to see the actions of different teeth. This proved an amusing but very practical way for pupils to learn. In the older classes, teachers make good use of assessment to judge how well pupils have understood during the lesson.
59. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory and standards have been broadly maintained since the last inspection. Current leadership is very new and has had too little time to make any impact. At present, there is insufficient checking of the quality of teaching and learning to ensure consistency throughout the school.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision in ICT is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has addressed most of the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection
- Good leadership and management have helped raise the quality of the school's provision
- The use of ICT in other subjects is insufficiently developed
- Teaching in the lessons seen was good overall

Commentary

60. By Year 2, pupils reach standards that are in line with those expected nationally. Standards by Year 6, however, are below those expected because pupils have had too few opportunities to practise the required skills and extend their knowledge sufficiently. Pupils in the younger classes use computers competently. They open and close programs, produce pictures and add text to graphics. Their keyboard and mouse skills are developed appropriately and they can instruct a floor robot to move in a prescribed way. By Year 6, pupils have used a variety of software that has developed their skills started in the earlier years. Pupils access the Internet, have started constructing and using spreadsheets and use CD-ROMs to gain information. Some refine their written work using word processing and older pupils have presented their research using some of the tools available in a multimedia program. Throughout the school, pupils are beginning to make use of digital cameras in their work, for example when photographing artefacts for a history project. However, pupils' skills are generally below those commonly seen and now expected of pupils this age. Pupils have gaps in their understanding, but are catching up quickly as they begin to benefit from the improvements in the school's provision since the last inspection.
61. Based on the progress pupils make, teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but teaching was good in the lessons seen during the inspection. This is because the quality of teaching is improving all the time. In the lessons observed, teachers ensured a brisk pace, motivated pupils well and provided them with activities that ensured they learned quickly. For example, in Year 3, pupils made very good use of a paint program to construct pictures. From learning the basic techniques, pupils quickly moved on to experimenting using dots to create some imaginative and skilful work. In Year

6, pupils learned how to control an output using a sensor. They quickly grasped the ways in which this could be achieved and went on to apply it in a number of situations created by the program.

62. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The school has gone a long way towards addressing the key issue regarding ICT from the last inspection. Statutory requirements are now met, the ratio of computers to pupils has fallen and is close to the national average, and the school now has an appropriate scheme of work. It has an agreed policy and the provision of a computer suite has helped raise the quality of teaching and learning appreciably. Governors have played a significant part in the installation and maintenance of this facility, giving up time and waiving costs to the great benefit of the school. Although standards by Year 6 are below expectations, the rate at which pupils are catching up suggests these standards will be appropriate in the near future. All teachers have received training and the subject co-ordinator has provided good training for the school's teaching assistants. Some opportunity has been given for the co-ordinator to observe lessons and advise accordingly. Staff have positive attitudes and there is a good sense of wanting to continue to improve and raise standards.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

63. Teachers are beginning to make more use of the school's growing stock of software to support pupils' learning in other subjects. More use is gradually being made of the Internet to help pupils research, for example in history and geography lessons. In mathematics, pupils construct graphs and learn about measuring angles using the computer. At the moment, however, this use of ICT is not a significant feature of most lessons and the use of computers is not routine. For example, in science, little use is made of the school's microscope. There is an under use of word processing and desktop publishing for pupils to draft and refine their work.

HUMANITIES

64. Only one lesson was observed in each of geography and history, partly because few lessons were taught in these subjects during the inspection period, but mainly because they were not a focus for the inspection. As a result, it is not possible to make judgements about overall provision in either of these subjects. Examples of pupils' past work were available, however, from which to make judgements about standards and the quality of the curriculum. Inspectors also held discussions with subject co-ordinators. A full report on religious education follows.
65. In **geography**, pupils' past work shows that standards in Year 2 and Year 6 are similar to those expected for the pupils' ages and the curriculum is satisfactory. The only lesson observed was based on the Katey Morag books and engaged pupils in a range of activities linked to the Isle of Struay. These included mapping places of interest, drawing up an itinerary for a visit, and research into wildlife that would be found on the island. Although the topic was one that would normally interest pupils of this age, many had done it the previous year, because of a change in planning. This meant that pupils found it hard to maintain their concentration and little progress was made.
66. In the **history** lesson observed, the teacher quickly captured the pupils' interest by introducing the discovery of the Indus Valley civilisation through role play. She discussed with pupils what she would need to take in her rucksack, giving them the opportunity to use their knowledge of the climate and terrain to make decisions. Through a combination of projected images, pictures and text, the pupils learnt about the issues surrounding the discovery of these people. Mathematical skills were developed as they calculated where to place this civilisation on the time line and used a key to calculate distances on a map. Finally, a practical demonstration using a pipette which dripped water onto a mound of soil in a tray, followed by a much stronger torrent, helped pupils understand the significance of erosion as a factor in deciding on the position of a settlement. The lesson was lively, the teacher was animated and the pupils were transfixed. However, scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that worksheets are used extensively, severely limiting pupils' opportunities to

write and learn independently. Standards in Year 2 and Year 6 are close to those expected for the pupils' ages and the curriculum is satisfactory.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at the end of Year 6 have improved since the last inspection
- Co-ordination of the subject is in place and a good information pack supports teachers well
- Too many pieces of work are incomplete

Commentary

67. By the end of Years 2 and 6, pupils reach standards that are in line with those laid down in the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils achieve satisfactorily because they systematically learn about a variety of faiths and steadily build up their knowledge. By the end of Year 2, pupils are confident when explaining about special occasions in the Christian tradition and understand about the significance of christenings. Their knowledge of Christianity is developed appropriately so that, by the end of Year 6, pupils know about the story of the Good Samaritan. Pupils in Year 6 made up their own modern version of the story and clearly understood the underlying meaning of treating others as you would like to be treated.
68. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers make good use of resources and explain clearly about artefacts from different religions. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 could name and explain very simply why Sikhs wear the five Ks. Lessons are usually well paced and pupils enjoy discussing various aspects of their learning. In the good lesson seen, the teacher used a question and answer session very well so that all pupils could contribute. They all gave good ideas about what they would wish for the newborn baby at his christening, including that he would have friends, and believe in God. A weakness of the lessons that were satisfactory was that teachers talked too much and their knowledge was not always secure enough to make sure that pupils made good progress. For example, in a lesson about the Easter story, although pupils extended their knowledge, they were given little opportunity to discuss their own ideas, views and beliefs. Many activities were too reliant on printed worksheets. Evidence from the scrutiny of work suggests that marking is satisfactory, although there was much work unfinished, and teachers do not always make sure that work has been completed. This situation may be caused by the fact that the time given to religious education is quite short and some classes are allowed extra time for work to be completed first thing in the morning during form time.
69. The subject is satisfactorily led and managed. A good information pack has been designed to complement the agreed syllabus and support staff in their assessment of pupils' progress. However, this is still fairly recent and has not yet had time to make an impact on pupils' achievement. The curriculum is on a rolling programme, which means that all year groups study the same topics at any one time. However, an improvement since the last inspection is that different tasks are now set according to the age of the pupils. Evidence from the work examined indicates that the curriculum is presented to pupils in such a way that it is more weighted in favour of learning about religion rather than learning from religion. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Work in the subject is now co-ordinated, standards have risen, and resources, particularly artefacts from various world faiths, are now good. Part of the key issue from the last inspection, concerning a lack of checking on the quality of teaching and learning, still remains.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

70. Too few lessons were observed in art and design, music and physical education to be able to make judgements about provision in any of these subjects, and it was not possible to observe any lessons in design technology. This is mainly because these subjects were not a focus for the inspection.
71. Only one **art and design** lesson was seen during the inspection. However, by talking to the pupils and looking at work there are strengths within art that are notable. There is a good range of art taught in the school and, by the end of Year 6, pupils have experienced working with clay and a wide variety of textiles. This has resulted in high quality clay tiles and weavings that are similar to those found in North American Indian art. There are also good opportunities for pupils to work with professional artists and create a good display in the foyer of the school. Throughout the school pupils use sketchbooks well to practise and develop their skills in shading, tone and perspective. There were no lessons planned for the time of the inspection in **design and technology**.
72. Only two **music** lessons were seen during the inspection. Enthusiastic leadership ensures that pupils have opportunities to participate in regular music activities. A choir and orchestra meet weekly and they participated successfully in an assembly. Three peripatetic music staff give brass and string instrumental tuition. Pupils gain in confidence by being involved in annual school productions. In the lessons seen, pupils were given opportunities to respond to the music they heard by defining the elements and making careful judgements about the mood of the music. Their responses were accurate and well thought out. Resources, which included some instruments from other cultures, were used well and treated with respect.
73. In the lessons seen in **physical education**, pupils learned well through some good teaching. Pupils' gymnastic and ball skills are appropriate for their ages. For example, Year 6 pupils trapped, dribbled and passed a football with accuracy and control. Despite some inclement weather, they paid careful attention to instructions given and tried hard to carry them out. Year 1 pupils showed great enthusiasm for the aerobic movements they carried out. They learned well and displayed a good repertoire of movements which they performed with control and skill. In the lessons seen teachers were enthusiastic and lively. The pace of lessons was brisk and pupils were encouraged well to do their best.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

74. One lesson was seen in personal, social and health education and a discussion took place with the co-ordinator. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education, and for citizenship, is satisfactory. In the lesson observed, pupils were encouraged to recognise and challenge an appropriate range of stereotypes, and came to the thoughtful conclusion that people are not judged by their appearance. Appropriate time is given to sex and drugs education and good use is made of the school nurse to help the older pupils understand about growing up. Throughout the school, pupils begin to understand about the dangers of misusing drugs and the importance of listening to each other. The recent introduction of a school council will result in the pupils having a voice in what happens in the school, and they are beginning to learn about the responsibilities of living in a community.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	4
How inclusive the school is	3
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 (ethos)	3
Attendance	3
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	4
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	4
Accommodation and resources	3
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	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	4
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).