

INSPECTION REPORT

BROOKMANS PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

Brookmans Park, Hatfield

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117570

Headteacher: Miss Lesley Stevens

Lead inspector: Selwyn Ward

Dates of inspection: 23rd – 25th May 2005

Inspection number: 266511

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: Foundation
Age range of pupils: 3 – 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 344

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Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of Mrs Diane Bennett
governors:

Date of previous 4th May 1999
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Brookmans Park Primary is a larger than average suburban village primary school in Hertfordshire catering for boys and girls aged 3 to 11. There are more boys than girls. All but a small number of pupils are white and of British background. A very small number of children in the reception and nursery years are learning English other than as their mother tongue but there are no pupils in Years 1 to 6 who are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. Pupils generally come from very advantaged homes. This is reflected in the low number known to be eligible for free school meals. The number of pupils with special educational needs is well below average, with the main needs being autism and social and emotional difficulties. Children join the school with a range of abilities, but they are above average, overall, when they start school. They are confident, with well-developed social skills. Brookmans Park has a *Healthy Schools* award for promoting pupils' well-being.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
9271	Selwyn Ward	Lead inspector	
9537	Caroline Marden	Lay inspector	
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2133 4	Savi Ramnath	Team inspector	<i>Foundation Stage</i> ; English; English as an additional language; French
3119 2	John Stewart	Team inspector	Science; information and communication technology (ICT); art and design; design and technology; music; physical education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Brookmans Park is a very good school. The very effective leadership of the headteacher has resulted in very substantial improvement, so that teaching is now very good and the pupils attain high standards and achieve very well. The school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- The teaching is very good and pupils of all abilities achieve very well
- The very good leadership and management of the headteacher, staff team and governors have resulted in very good improvement
- The climate for learning is very good, so that pupils enjoy their lessons, behave and get on very well with one another and are keen to learn
- The school has developed very effective partnership arrangements with parents and local secondary schools that contribute strongly to pupils' very good achievement
- Although pupils achieve well during their time in the nursery and reception years, they do not do quite as well as the older pupils
- Pupils are capable of doing better in information and communication technology (ICT)

There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. Standards have risen and there has been good or better improvement in all of the weaknesses identified in the last report. The improvement in teaching has been excellent, and virtually every aspect of the school is significantly better than it was six years ago.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in <i>National Curriculum</i> tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
English	B	A	A*	A*
mathematics	A	A	A	A
science	A	A	A	A

Key: A – very high (top 5% of schools); A – well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average; E* – very low (bottom 5% of schools). Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.*

Inspectors judge pupils' achievement by looking at the progress they make over their time in school as well as how well they do in lessons. **Achievement is very good.** This is true for pupils of all abilities, including the most able and those with special educational needs. Children's standards are generally above average when they join the school. They achieve well in their time in the nursery and reception years so that, by the start of Year 1, the vast majority exceed the expected goals for children of this age. Their social development is very good. Pupils achieve very well in Years 1 and 2, attaining results in the national tests that are well above average. Results have been similarly high in the Year 6 tests, where they have improved year-on-year. Last year, the test scores in English, mathematics and science, taken as a whole, were in the top 5 per cent of schools nationally. When compared with schools where pupils had attained similarly high scores in their Year 2 tests, last year's test results were still high, and particularly so in English. Current standards in Year 2 are well above average in English, mathematics and science. In Year 6, standards are not quite as high as they were last year, but achievement in English, mathematics and science is still very good. In the other subjects inspected, standards by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are average in design and technology and well above average in religious education and personal, social and health education. In ICT, standards are average by the end of Year 2 and above average by the end of Year 6.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good. Behaviour is very good, both in class and around the school. The very good relationships between staff and pupils very successfully promote pupils' self-esteem. Pupils work very well independently and take their responsibilities very seriously. They are proud of their school and enjoy their lessons, and this contributes to their very good attendance.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided is very good. The school is increasingly linking subjects together so that skills learnt in one subject are practised in others. This is particularly strong in developing pupils' writing skills. Specialist teachers are used very effectively to raise standards of achievement in Years 5 and 6. This is supported by very good links with local secondary schools which provide teachers to teach ICT and French. Accommodation and resources are good. Pupils benefit from very good guidance and support and their views are strongly valued. Parents are very supportive of the school and of their children's education, raising considerable amounts of money to improve resources. Links with the local community are good.

Teaching and learning are very good. Lessons are very well planned, making good use of assessment information to help ensure that work is matched carefully to pupils' different abilities. Pupils learn very well because lessons often include short, varied activities that keep them interested and involved and that help them build on what they have learnt before. Pupils like and get on very well with their teachers. As a result, they frequently work hard and get a lot done in lessons because they are keen to please. Teaching assistants are used very well to give support to pupils who need extra help, including those with learning difficulties. Pupils are helped to develop in confidence and to become independent learners, undertaking research for themselves, although sometimes opportunities are missed for using ICT as a learning tool. Although, in the vast majority of lessons, pupils settle to work without fuss, some teachers are less effective than others at organising their classes and pupils do not do quite as well because they fidget and allow themselves to get distracted. The involvement of pupils in assessing for themselves the progress they are making is good. Marking is good, but the quality varies too widely. The best gives very good guidance to pupils on what they need to do to do better, but some merely offers words of encouragement.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The headteacher has been very successful in building a strong staff team that has helped to raise standards and drive forward significant improvements in the school, and particularly in the quality of teaching. Together they have built a school ethos where every child is keen to learn and achieve their best. Self-evaluation is very effectively used, so that the school and governors are well aware of the school's many strengths and those areas that could be further improved. Governance is very good. Governors provide a very good balance of support and challenge. They ensure that all legal requirements are fully met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils express very favourable views of almost everything about the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important thing the school should do to build upon its current success is:

- Further raise standards of achievement in the nursery and reception years and in information and communication technology (ICT)

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

Standards are well above average. Pupils achieve very well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are high in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science
- Pupils of all abilities achieve very well as a result of the high quality of teaching
- Although pupils do well in ICT, particularly in Years 5 and 6, they do not do as well in this subject as they do in most others

Commentary

1. Inspectors judge pupils' achievement by looking at the progress they make over their time in school as well as how well they do in lessons. Children are generally above average when they join Brookmans Park Primary, and the high quality of teaching ensures that they make good and very good progress in almost all subjects as they move through the school. This is true for both boys and girls, and for those of all abilities. Teachers' high expectations and the challenging work set in lessons ensures that the most able do very well, while less able pupils and those with special educational needs also achieve very well because they are given very effective learning support from teachers and teaching assistants.
2. Children in the nursery and reception years benefit from well-planned teaching from staff that work together very effectively as a team. As a result, almost all of the children in the nursery and reception years are on target to attain all of the learning goals that are expected for children by the start of Year 1, with a high proportion likely to exceed this standard. They achieve particularly well in their social development and in the development of their spoken language skills, where standards are well above those expected for children of their age.
3. The tables below show the average points scores attained in the Year 2 and Year 6 tests in 2004 (with the 2003 scores in brackets). One point represents roughly one term's progress, so the tables show, for example, that, in Year 6, pupils last year were more than a year ahead of pupils nationally in English and mathematics.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.5 (16.7)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	16.2 (16.0)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	17.6 (17.1)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 45 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. Results in the Year 2 tests last year were well above average in writing and mathematics. In reading, they were above average. Standards seen during the inspection were well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils also showed very well developed speaking and listening skills. Standards in science are well above average, as are those in religious education and pupils' personal, social and health education. In other subjects inspected, standards are average in ICT and design and technology.
5. Test scores in Year 6 have been well above average in all subjects in most of the years since the last inspection. In 2004, the school's test results placed it in the top 5 per cent of schools nationally, with pupils attaining particularly high scores in English. Results were high even when compared with schools with pupils who had done similarly well in their Year

2 tests in 2000. Standards in the current Year 6 are not quite so high, but they are still well above average in English, mathematics and science. This represents very good achievement, with pupils of all abilities making very good progress, particularly in Years 5 and 6 where they benefit from consistently very good teaching. In the other subjects inspected, standards are well above average in religious education and personal, social and health education. They are above average in ICT, where the older pupils benefit from specialist teaching from a neighbouring secondary school. Standards are average in design and technology.

6. Pupils with SEN achieve as well as their peers because they are very well supported by teaching assistants and their teachers have a very good understanding of what they need to do next. As a consequence, several pupils (representing more than 12%) have improved sufficiently so they are no longer on the register and needing special help.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	30.9 (28.5)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	30.1 (28.6)	27.0 (26.8)
science	31.1 (31.3)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 45 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

7. Standards are significantly higher than they were at the time of the last inspection. Pupils are also achieving better. Whereas there were previously subjects, such as ICT and design and technology, in which pupils underachieved, achievement is at least good in all subjects and it is very good in most subjects and overall.

Pupils’ attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils’ attendance and punctuality are very good. They behave very well and are very keen to learn. Personal development is very good. Provision for moral, social and spiritual development is very good. Provision for cultural development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils work and get on very well with each other
- Pupils develop strong independence and fulfil conscientiously the responsibilities they are given
- Not all subjects sufficiently promote appreciation of the range of different cultures in modern Britain

Commentary

8. Since the last inspection, there has been good improvement in pupils’ attendance, behaviour and personal development. Pupils’ very good attendance and punctuality is due to a number of factors, including strong partnership with parents and rigorous monitoring of absence. Another important factor is that pupils enjoy school and find many lessons interesting and fun, therefore they are keen to come to school.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	3.9	School data:	0.0
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.

9. In lessons, pupils respond very well to the very good teaching and appreciate the exciting activities on offer. Relationships between pupils and staff are very good and because of this pupils want to

please their teachers so they work very hard. Teachers put a lot of emphasis on developing pupils' social skills and the success of this is apparent in how well pupils work together. They listen attentively to each other and are prepared to take other points of view into account. A very good example of this was in a personal, health and social education lesson, where pupils were discussing ways to make it easier for pupils to get support if they felt they were being bullied. Teachers have high expectations that pupils will work independently and pupils rise to this challenge. There are many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility within the community, for example as school councillors or playground friends. Pupils relish these roles and fulfil them diligently. The school is very successful in building pupils' self-esteem so that they become self-assured young people. Spirituality is also promoted across the curriculum, for example, pupils reflect on the wonder of nature and they use this as a stimulus for artwork. Their written work shows they empathise with other people and reflect upon the lives of historical figures.

10. Pupils are taught to respect each other, and consequently racial harmony is very strong with pupils from different ethnic groups playing and working happily together. Most staff use the behaviour policy consistently and this promotes very good behaviour in all aspects of school life. Pupils and parents feel that bullying is not an issue in the school but when concerns are raised they are dealt with quickly and effectively. There were no exclusions in the last year.
11. The learning environment underpins pupils' understanding of moral issues, with the school rules setting a clear moral code. In addition, pupils have opportunities to discuss moral dilemmas within lessons, for example environmental issues within geography. Pupils learn about their own culture through a range of subjects. For example, they study different western artists and learn about their own history. Provision for multicultural understanding is satisfactory overall, with religious education lessons making a good contribution to pupils' understanding of other faiths. The school also encourages pupils to talk about their own experiences of different festivals and celebrations and this helps to promote respect for other cultures. However, there are relatively few opportunities in other subjects to develop this understanding and prepare pupils for the rich diversity of cultures in modern Britain.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. The teaching is very good. The curriculum is good. Arrangements for the care and welfare of pupils are very good. There are very good links with parents and other schools, and good links with the local community.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are very good. Assessment is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons are very well planned to help pupils build on what they have learnt before
- Teachers make very effective use of questioning to check pupils' understanding and to ensure that all are fully involved
- Relationships are very good, and this helps to motivate the pupils
- Pupils are helped to develop in confidence and independence
- Although assessment is good, marking is too inconsistent
- In a small minority of lessons, time is not used as well as it could be and pupils are allowed to fuss unnecessarily

Commentary

12. The improvement since the last inspection in the quality of teaching has been excellent. Effective monitoring of teaching and learning by the headteacher and other staff with leadership responsibilities has helped to significantly improve teaching and learning. Whereas, in the last inspection, nearly one in five of the lessons in Years 3 to 6 were unsatisfactory, now all the teaching is satisfactory or better, and almost four out of five

lessons are good or better. There is now three times as much very good and excellent teaching as there was at the time of the last inspection. All pupils benefit from a consistent diet of at least good teaching, although the proportion of lessons that are very good or better is higher in Years 1 and 2 and Years 5 and 6 than it is in Years 3 and 4 and in the nursery and reception years.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 53 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (4%)	21 (40%)	19 (36%)	11 (21%)	0	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen. Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

13. All lessons are very well planned. In the best lessons, teachers make very effective use of their assessments of what it is that their pupils need to focus on in order to make the best progress in their learning. In many lessons, particularly in English and mathematics, teachers keep a careful track of individual pupils' understanding, for example, through the use of whiteboards on which children record their answers and hold them up for the teacher to see. Questioning is also used very well to check on pupils' comprehension and to enable them to develop their own ideas. Where teachers' questioning identifies that pupils are having difficulties in understanding, lessons are adapted to ensure that all are learning. When questioning pupils, teachers are careful not to just take answers from those who are keenest to volunteer. By directing questions at those who may be more reluctant to put up their hands, teachers ensure that every pupil is fully involved in the lesson. Individually targeted questions are also used to enable less able pupils and those with special educational needs to contribute to whole-class discussions.
14. Teachers' careful planning helps to ensure that tasks are well matched to the different abilities of the pupils. Their high expectations mean that able pupils are set challenging work but without neglecting the needs of other pupils who need more support. Pupils with special educational needs, and others who need help, benefit from the very good support of teaching assistants, who work closely with the class teacher. A notable feature of the teaching and support is that pupils of all abilities are helped to develop their confidence and independence as learners.
15. Relationships are very good. The teachers know and get on well with their pupils, and pupils in turn like their teachers and the adults in the school. Often, pupils are keen to work hard simply because they are eager to please their teachers – although team points and the school's other reward systems also help to motivate them. Teachers vary activities, usually with strict time limits for the tasks they set. As a result, pupils generally get a lot of work done in lessons. On occasion, however, where time is not so well managed or when time limits are less strictly enforced, pupils allow work to fill the elastic time allowed for it and they achieve less well.
16. In the vast majority of lessons, pupils settle to work quickly and without fuss, but some teachers are less effective than others at organising their classes and pupils do not do quite as well because they fidget and allow themselves to get distracted. These lessons, where pupils made satisfactory rather than good progress, often involved quite long delays before pupils got on with the tasks they were set. There would typically be much unnecessary fussing over trivia before settling to a written task, or pupils would go on pencil-sharpening expeditions that took longer than they should have.
17. Class teachers have good subject expertise, and pupils' learning is further enhanced through the use of some subject specialists, both from within the staff and including visiting teachers from local secondary schools who teach ICT and French to the older pupils. Teachers are making increasing use of the suites of laptop computers and of interactive

whiteboards (which link a computer to a data projector) but opportunities are sometimes missed for using ICT as a tool for learning. In part, this is due to some teachers' lack of confidence in the use of ICT, but it is also due to the problems that the school has had with the reliability of some of its laptop computers.

18. Pupils' knowledge of their own learning makes a significant contribution to their achievement. Throughout the school, pupils are routinely involved in assessing their own work and in signalling to the teacher whether or not they feel they have achieved the learning objective for the lesson. Because this is part of the school routine, pupils give honest and accurate responses. Pupils also generally have a good idea of how well they are doing through teachers' marking of their work. However, marking is too inconsistent. The best gives pupils very good guidance on what they need to do to do better, but some does little more than provide a few words of encouragement. Occasionally the positive comments are awarded indiscriminately, with some lacklustre or effortless work seemingly given equal value to that that is of high quality or which has clearly involved considerable effort.

The curriculum

Curricular opportunities are good throughout the school. Enrichment of the curriculum is very good. Staffing and accommodation are good and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths

- Pupils benefit from a very good range of extracurricular clubs and other activities
- Good links between subjects help develop pupils' skills
- The school's regular themed weeks help to make learning interesting and fun

Commentary

19. There has been very good improvement to the curriculum, with very effective action taken to tackle the weaknesses previously identified in, for example, personal, social and health education. The curriculum is well planned to ensure that all *National Curriculum* requirements are met and, in addition, that it is interesting and exciting for pupils. The school is increasingly linking subjects together so that skills that are learnt in one subject are practised and developed in others. This has been particularly effective in promoting very high standards in writing. Other innovations include the use of *Brain Gym* (a system of simple early morning exercises at the start of the first lesson of the day) that teachers use effectively to help pupils in Years 1 and 2 to think and concentrate. The school endeavours to arrange one themed week per term to give pupils in-depth knowledge of a particular subject. These have included science, design and technology and arts weeks. They are popular with the pupils, who enjoy what they see as fun activities and the extra challenge that these special weeks bring. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. All are helped to have full access to all subjects and the very effective tailoring of tasks to their individual needs means that their interests and abilities are taken into account very well.
20. A very good programme of personal, health and social education provides very effective opportunities for pupils to learn about sex and relationships and the dangers of drug misuse. Healthy lifestyles are consistently promoted throughout the school and this was very well promoted through the school's *Health and Fitness Week*. The school has earned a *Healthy Schools* award for its promotion of pupils' well-being.
21. The school imaginatively deploys teachers to promote high achievement for pupils of all abilities and the setting of pupils for mathematics in the older classes is very effective. In Years 6, the teaching of science by a teacher with specialist knowledge contributes to the high standards achieved by pupils. Specialist secondary teachers are also very well deployed to promote good achievement in ICT and to extend the curriculum by offering pupils the opportunity to learn French. Teaching assistants are organised well so that they provide very effective support for pupils. The accommodation is good overall, with very good playing fields. Inside, the classrooms are spacious and displays contribute to a stimulating learning environment. However, the lack of small rooms means that visiting music teachers have to take lessons in the hall. All subjects are adequately resourced, although one set of laptop computers have a technical fault that the school is seeking to remedy with the manufacturer.
22. The range of extracurricular activities is impressive and includes sports clubs, gardening, producing a magazine, chess and *Warhammer*TM (which involves painting fantasy wargaming figures). These clubs are well attended and make a good contribution to pupils' personal development as well as developing their sporting skills, which are reflected in the number of sporting trophies in the school. The curriculum is also enriched by a range of visits, including a residential visit in Year 6, and visitors to the school.

Care, guidance and support

The school takes very good care of its pupils. Pupils benefit from very good support and guidance and their views are strongly valued.

Main strengths

- Pupils have very good opportunities to express their views through the *Think Tank* which has its own budget
- There are very good procedures in place for helping pupils with medical problems and for dealing with any health and safety or child protection concerns
- The school keeps a careful track of how well pupils are doing and all have helpful targets for improvement

Commentary

23. The last inspection report identified several shortcomings in the school's arrangements for pupils' care and welfare. Since that time, the improvement has been very good. The school carries out comprehensive risk assessments both on the school site and for school trips and visits to ensure that pupils are safe. Child protection procedures are securely in place and staff know what they should do if they had any concerns. In the last inspection, the quality of midday supervision was identified as an area of concern. This is no longer the case and pupils are well supervised in the playground.
24. The school values pupils' views and has changed the way the school council operates to allow more pupils to have a voice. It is now called a *Think Tank* and issues are thoroughly discussed at class level before they feed into the *Think Tank*. During the inspection, Year 6 were discussing different systems that could be introduced so that there would be a range of methods for having concerns dealt with. One idea was to have a box where pupils could put notes in about their concerns. This idea will be taken forward with pupils understanding that practicalities such as who would read the notes need to be agreed. The *Think Tank* has its own budget and also raises money for projects, most recently for playground equipment.
25. The very good relationships between staff and pupils mean that pupils are confident that if they had any problems staff would help to sort them out. However, because the school has so successfully developed pupils' self-confidence, the older pupils told inspectors that they could deal with all but the most serious problems themselves.
26. The school keeps a careful track of each pupil's academic progress, particularly in English and mathematics. This is used to identify pupils at risk of underachieving so that they can be provided with extra support. Pupils are also set individual targets that identify what they need to focus on in order to make the best progress in English and mathematics. Teachers know their pupils very well and provide very good support for their personal development and this has contributed to the high level of self-confidence that pupils have.
27. Induction procedures into the nursery and reception classes are good, with children and their parents having the opportunity to visit the school before they join. Where it is possible, staff visit the pre-school settings the children are attending to discuss the children's needs before they join the school. Currently the school is seeking parents' views about making home visits. For children who join the school in different year groups, they are allocated a "buddy" who helps them learn the routines.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Partnerships with parents and other schools are very good. Links with the local community are good.

Main strengths

- Links with other schools enrich the curriculum and contribute to pupils' achievement
- Parents are very supportive of the school and of their children's education
- There are very good systems for consulting parents and acting on their views

Commentary

28. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection in the partnership with parents, schools and the local community. Parents speak very highly of the school and support it in many ways. They help in lessons, for example, working with groups of children in reception classes. They work hard to raise money to improve the school's resources, purchasing items such as interactive whiteboards. The value that parents put on the education provided by the school is reflected in the high level of attendance of pupils. The school encourages parents to bring their suggestions forward and the headteacher regularly holds a parents' forum which is open to all parents. Issues that the forum has discussed include homework, reading and sex education. In response to parents' suggestions, the school has increased the amount of time parents can look at their children's work at consultation evenings and allowed them to take work home if they want. Information about pupils' attainment and progress is good. The feedback parents have given to the school shows that they like the new format of the reports and feel they give them good information. However, although this is the case for English, mathematics and science, there are no evaluative comments on pupils' attainment and progress in other subjects.
29. Specialist teachers from local secondary schools help to enrich the curriculum by teaching French to Year 6 and make a very good contribution to raising standards of achievement in ICT. Pupils also take part in many sporting competitions with other primary schools.
30. The school is central to village life and the highlight of the year is when the school and village come together for *Village Day*. People from the local community also support pupils' academic and personal development, for example, local police officers have helped to prepare Year 6 pupils for the transition to secondary school and the school nurse came in during *Health and Fitness Week*. Brookmans Park Primary has benefited from charitable donations that have increased the computer equipment in the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The headteacher provides very good leadership and the school is managed very well. Key staff do an effective job. Governance is very good and ensures all legal requirements are fully met.

Main strengths

- The headteacher has been very successful in building a staff team with a shared commitment to raising standards and creating a positive climate for learning
- Management of the school is very effective and has helped to improve the quality of teaching
- Governance is very good and governors play a very effective role in helping to drive forward school improvement

Commentary

31. The headteacher has been in post for three years and, in that time, her relentless drive for improvement has been crucial in maintaining pupils' high standards and very good achievement, and improving them in some key areas. Planning for the school's development for the current academic year shows a very clear vision for further improvement. It reflects the high priority that the school has to further raise standards of achievement and the quality of teaching and learning. Although the planning for future years is not in detail, as yet, there is a clear identification of areas for development. By building a very effective staff team with a common purpose, the headteacher has created a very positive learning environment, which enables pupils to thrive and has helped them to develop very good attitudes to their learning. She has played a leading role in developing the curriculum to suit the needs of all pupils, with effective support from key staff. For example, in Years 1 and 2, the focus on creating more effective links between subjects is making learning more interesting and creative, whilst ensuring that subject requirements are fully met. The vision to provide subject specialist teaching in Years 5 and 6, including the use of a teacher from a local secondary school and visiting sports coaches, is having a very

good impact on raising standards and achievement. Senior staff in the school provide very good role models for pupils and staff and support the headteacher very well, sharing the vision for improvement.

32. The school makes very good use of self-evaluation procedures and data on pupils' performance and, consequently, is very aware of its strengths and the areas for improvement. Although it recognises its successes, the school is far from complacent: indeed, its view of how well it is doing was less favourable than that of the inspectors. Procedures for monitoring the performance of teachers are rigorous. Staff are very clear about their roles and responsibilities and are set annual targets related to pupils' progress, their contribution to school improvement through their subject responsibility and individual personal targets. These are reviewed by the leadership team for the impact that they have had on pupils' achievement. As a result, teachers are given very clear feedback and are set new targets, which are closely linked to school priorities. Staff are provided with good opportunities for training to develop their knowledge and skills, with, again, the emphasis on how this can improve pupils' achievement. Teachers who are new to the school are very well supported and are helped to settle in quickly. The school has good links with teacher training institutions and provides student teachers with good opportunities to acquire skills and refine them. The school is managed very efficiently on a day-to-day basis because of the very effective support that staff and the administrative team give to the headteacher.
33. Subject leaders provide good leadership and management in their subjects, overall. However, although these roles are very well developed in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, they are more variable in other subjects. Leaders in the core subjects are generally very clear about the strengths and weaknesses in their areas. They monitor the performance and progress of pupils through work scrutiny and analysis of performance data and have regular opportunities to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. The result of this is that high standards are being maintained and there is a clear focus on improving achievement. For example, action taken following the identification of the need to improve pupils' problem-solving skills in mathematics and science has had a positive effect. Subject leaders provide their colleagues with good support to develop their skills further. However, in non-core subjects, leaders, some of whom are very new to their role, are still building their skills and do not have as much opportunity to observe the quality of teaching and learning in their subject.
34. Special educational needs is led and managed very well. The co-ordinator has a very clear vision for the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and works very effectively in supporting staff and pupils. The achievement and progress of pupils with special educational needs is monitored very closely, as are their individual education plans, to ensure that pupils get the experiences they need.
35. Governors are very supportive of the school and play a significant role in strategic planning. Governors review performance data and monitor the progress that the school makes against its strategic priorities. Consequently, they have a very clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and provide challenge in areas that concern them. They ensure that the school meets all legal requirements. They take an individual interest in curriculum subjects and monitor closely the progress of their subjects, reporting back to the governing body on their visits to school. In this way, the governing body is not solely dependent on the headteacher for information on what is happening in school.

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	866,768	Balance from previous year	84,944

Total expenditure	876,201
Expenditure per pupil	2,642

Balance carried forward to the next	75,511
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36. Finances are well managed. Although there was a large carry forward last year, this included money earmarked for the current year and staffing costs were less than predicted. The budget is monitored regularly and all priorities in the school are properly costed. The school makes very good use of best value in all financial decisions: confirming not just competitive quotes for its spending decisions but also ensuring that it consults parents and pupils, compares how well the school is doing and challenges the way in which it does things.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

37. The quality of provision for the children in the nursery and reception years is good, with many very good features. It prepares them well for their start in Year 1. Overall, children's attainment on entry to the school is above that expected for their age, particularly in speaking and listening and personal and social skills. By the end of the reception year, the children have built well on their good entry levels and almost all successfully attain and many exceed the expected standards in all of the areas of learning expected of pupils of this age. In their speaking and listening skills, and in personal, social and emotional development, their attainment is well above expectations. Children who have special educational needs and the very small number learning English as an additional language are identified quickly. They are fully integrated, well supported and make progress at the same rate as the rest of the class. Arrangements for starting school are good and children make a happy start. There are very good links with parents and carers, who are kept well informed and are encouraged to take an active interest in their children's learning.
38. Children achieve well because of the well-planned curriculum and the good quality of teaching and learning. All adults, including parent helpers, work extremely well together and collaborate very effectively to help meet the needs of the children. Assessment procedures are thorough and information is used well for matching work to the right to level. Effective records are maintained for children who have taken part in the adult-directed activities and teachers have good ongoing assessments of what children know, understand and can do. This information is effectively used to plan the next step in children's learning. On the other hand, there is no systematic method of recording children's use of, and progress in the activities which they explore on their own, for example, the "Graphics Area" or the role-play area. Children are encouraged to record their activities for themselves, which they do on a pictorial board, but this record is lost when other children take it upon themselves to clear the board as one of their "tidying up" activities.
39. Leadership and management are good. The leadership has a very good understanding of the *Foundation Stage* curriculum and of how young children learn. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

Personal, social and emotional development

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

Main strengths

- The strong emphasis placed on developing children's independent learning skills enables them to grow in confidence
- Very good teaching and use of teaching assistants enable children to settle into class routines quickly
- Very good relationships among staff and children create a secure and happy ethos in which children respond positively and enjoy learning

Commentary

40. Teaching is very good in this area of learning. Children's personal, social and emotional development is given high priority by staff because it is central to the school's work. Staff build well upon the learning started at home. Parents and children are positive about their contribution and feel valued, and this in turns makes for a happy and settled start in the nursery. A notable strength is the very good quality of relationships between adults and children, which enables the children to 'have a go' with their learning, explore new experiences and resources, and gain in independence. Adults treat children with respect, listen carefully to them and encourage them to make suggestions that are always taken

seriously. Children are given every opportunity to develop their initiatives and to manage tasks independently. They make their own decisions about what to do during child-initiated activities and are learning to monitor their choices. They approach new situations confidently and most sustain concentration well because interesting tasks are organised effectively.

Communication, language and literacy

Provision in communication, language and literacy is very good.

Main strengths

- The emphasis placed on developing children's speaking and listening skills is very effective
- Early reading skills are developed well and children enjoy books and stories
- There are plenty of opportunities for emergent writing experiences and good teaching of letter-formation

Commentary

41. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Staff place a high emphasis on the development of children's communication, language and literacy skills across the different areas of learning. They successfully reinforce and promote children's knowledge and responsibility for their own learning when they ask children to discuss and review what they have learned. As a result, children develop well their spoken vocabulary and the specific vocabulary for the different areas of learning. Overall, most children are fluent, articulate speakers who are eager to answer questions. They readily share experiences and talk at length in well-formed sentences using an expanding range of words to express and explain their ideas, for example, when answering questions about the changes that take place when water is added to different solids.
42. A love of books is fostered very well. Children learn to handle books carefully and turn the pages in the right direction. More able children recognise familiar words, show understanding of the characters in stories and answer questions about them. Staff teach effectively the sounds of letters so many children use this knowledge well when they spell and write simple words. Teachers plan many opportunities for children to develop early writing skills as a natural part of other activities. Staff frequently model writing and ask children to help them complete words and sentences. Children write "prescriptions" in the imaginative play area that is set out as a doctor's surgery, make a list of the foods that tigers enjoy and write a "thank you" letter after a visit from a toddler. Many write simple sentences with recognisable letters, while older and more able children accurately spell simple words and use capital letter and full stops with a degree of accuracy.

Mathematical development

Provision in mathematical development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Adults encourage good use of mathematical language
- Teachers plan a wide range of activities to support learning, which ensures children achieve well
- Very good use is made of the outside area to extend mathematical skills
- Sometimes children do not know exactly what they are expected to do

Commentary

43. Teaching is good and activities well planned to give children a rich and interesting mathematical experience. In the nursery, routine activities are used well to help children understand how the number system works and, throughout the morning, children practise and consolidate their counting skills. Most younger children recognise familiar flat shapes and are beginning to understand mathematical language, such as *smaller* and *taller*. They readily create sequential patterns by threading objects on a string and successfully sort and group items by colour and type. In the reception classes, children reliably count numbers to 20 and accurately perform simple addition and subtraction activities. Number games are thoughtfully planned, and these help children to use their initiative and develop social skills, for example, when working in pairs, they add or subtract items to match the roll of the dice.
44. Adults make very good use of the outdoor areas and, through a wide range of practical, well-organised activities, children develop mathematical skills in measuring, matching numbers and

making patterns. Staff generally match work well to children's needs, but sometimes children are not entirely clear about what it is they are expected to do. Teachers provide good support through well-targeted questions, which successfully extends children's understanding of shape and space. As a result, more able children not only accurately identify solid shapes but also successfully tessellate magnetic shapes when creating complex symmetrical patterns. Staff make good use of numbers songs and rhymes, and of computer games, to stimulate children's enjoyment in learning to count and match and to add and take away.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

Provision in knowledge and understanding of the world is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff prepare a good range of well-planned, first-hand experiences
- Questions are used very effectively to help children learn
- Children are not always helped to build systematically on their experiences

Commentary

45. Teaching is good. Activities are well-organised and learning benefits greatly from the first-hand activities planned to extend children's experiences of the world around them. The freedom given to children to choose activities for themselves is a strong feature of the school's provision, but the lack of formal monitoring of the children's choices inhibits the opportunity for teachers to help the children to build systematically on their experiences. Visitors, including a mother and baby, provide effective enrichment of children's learning. Support staff are well deployed and use skilful questioning to probe children's understanding. Children learn to explore and to observe carefully the changes that take place when caterpillars transform into butterflies and when beans are planted. Staff encourage children to make drawings of what they notice and these reflect the good quality of their observations. Children display good levels of independence in their designing and making activities. They enthusiastically select appropriate resources from a wide range, which they cut and glue with confidence to create three-dimensional models. ICT is used well to support learning. Children confidently choose stories from the computer library and skilfully use a mouse when they work a variety of computer programs. A good range of work is undertaken about festivals, such as Harvest and Christmas.

Physical development

Provision in physical development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers make the most of the good outdoor accommodation
- Children are confident using the outdoor toys and equipment
- Children do not always know the point of what they are doing

Commentary

46. The teaching of physical skills is good. As adults work alongside children, they encourage them to talk about the work. This helps staff to assess children's learning. In the outdoor area, clear routines have been established and staff use lots of praise and encouragement, which gives children the confidence to join in activities. Most children show good control and co-ordination when using wheeled toys and are confident when using equipment. When indoors, staff encourage children to work safely when using equipment and materials. As a result, children learn to use a range of tools with increasing skill and accuracy. Planning is good, but the purposes behind some activities are not always clearly stated in planning or made clear to children, who sometimes lose interest in what they are doing.

Creative development

Provision in creative development is good.

Main strengths

- Staff provide particularly interesting and imaginative experiences for the children
- Children learn to experiment and become confident with a wide range of media
- Adults intervene very well to encourage the children's experimentation and imagination

Commentary

47. Teaching is good. Staff plan a wide range of imaginatively organised activities that not only extend children's creative and physical development but also their learning across the whole curriculum. Particularly good use is made of the outdoor environment to plan activities that are inviting to children so that they have good opportunities to exercise their imagination and benefit both their creative and physical development. Paintings are colourful and attractive and reflect the staff's careful guidance, for example, when creating pictures of a tiger using bricks, sticks and string to reflect the stripes and texture of the skin. Children enjoy using paints and know how to mix them to create the exact colour needed to represent grass seeds or the colours of houses. Opportunities for children to develop their imagination through role-play are well thought out, and there are good links across other areas of learning. In the "Babies' Clinic" and "Doctors' Surgery", staff spontaneously build upon children's self-initiated learning, introducing challenging questions and supporting children in acting out the theme.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 & 2

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English was inspected in full and is reported below. French was sampled.

48. **French** is taught to pupils in Year 6 by a teacher from a local secondary school. In the lesson seen, pupils were making good progress in developing and using their vocabulary by describing, in French, the contents of their pencil cases. The teacher modelled spoken French well. The very good use of repetition, through a series of varied games and other activities, helped to build pupils' confidence in speaking French, although the boys were much more reluctant to join in than the girls.

English

Provision in English is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well and by Year 6 attain high standards
- Teaching is very good, particularly in Years 5 and 6
- Literacy is promoted very effectively within other subjects
- Marking is inconsistent and does not always guide pupils on how to improve

Commentary

49. Results in the national tests in 2004 showed that standards attained by Year 2 were well above average in writing and above average in reading. At the end of Year 6, standards were very high. Over recent years there has been very good provision in English, which accounts for the consistently high standards that are a good improvement on the findings of the previous inspection. Currently standards for both Year 2 and Year 6 pupils are well above average. The school is extremely successful in overcoming any barriers to pupils' achievements and, as a result of the action taken to improve the performance of boys in reading, standards for pupils in Year 2 have improved on last year's tests. Standards in

Year 6 are not quite as high as they were last year. This is due to the composition of the year group, which has fewer very able pupils.

50. Pupils' achievement is very good as a consequence of the very good teaching and learning. Teaching has a much sharper focus on developing pupils' speaking, listening and writing skills and in meeting the needs of the most able pupils. It is consistently very good for the pupils in Years 5 and 6. Particular strengths include highly effective planning to accommodate particular needs of different groups of pupils, the consistently high expectations of teachers and the very strong teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants. For example, in a Year 6 lesson on formal writing, learning support staff successfully explained what pupils were expected to do during the lesson, using simplified language. As a result, pupils with special educational needs achieved very well and participated fully in the task. Most lessons proceed at a brisk pace, which gives no opportunity to lose concentration, and pupils are consistently and sensitively challenged through the effective use of questions. Once tasks are set, teachers monitor pupils' progress well, so that those encountering difficulty do not wait long for assistance.
51. In Year 2, most pupils demonstrate very good listening skills. Pupils speak clearly and audibly, using correct diction and pronunciation. Very good teaching, which provides clear explanations in language that pupils understand and promotes talk through a range of interesting experiences, ensures that pupils quickly improve their ability to concentrate, listen and follow instructions. As pupils move through the school, they continue to improve their speaking and listening skills and, by Year 6, nearly all are very confident and articulate speakers, clearly giving their point of view. They make good use of an extensive vocabulary and responses to questioning are often extended and interesting.
52. Reading skills are well above average and are the key to pupils' very good achievement in many aspects of their work. From when pupils start school, they are given regular and frequent practice using a good range of books. Most pupils' early reading skills are strongly reinforced by parents hearing them read at home. By Year 2, nearly all pupils are skilled at using punctuation to put expression into their reading. Most confidently use a variety of strategies to work out words that they find difficult, such as, splitting up the word, sounding out the letters and gaining clues from the illustrations. In Year 6, pupils read and follow quite complex instructions and confidently use computer searches to look for specific information. The school has done much to overcome the problem that they had previously identified of boys' lack of interest in reading and, during the inspection, there were no perceptible differences between boys and girls in this respect.
53. Since last inspection the school has worked hard to improve pupils' achievement in writing with considerable success. In Year 2, pupils make good use of adjectives and conjunctions to make their writing lively and interesting. Nearly all write in whole sentences with accurate attention to full stops and capital letters as demonstrated when writing 'tongue twisters'. In Year 6, pupils have a good understanding of the variety of styles of writing that are used on different occasions. They recognise and employ the features of formal writing when designing mountain safety leaflets and writing letters of complaints. Pupils successfully adapt writing for different audiences and make good use of amusing anecdotes to enhance the writing of informal letters. They enthusiastically discussed the features of the poem *Skimbleshanks – The Railway Cat* in response to specific questions posed by the teacher and made notes to prepare their responses.
54. Leadership is very good, with a clear vision for raising achievement, particularly for groups of pupils who could do better. For example, an analysis of writing showed that boys did less well than girls and pinpointed exactly where they were struggling. As a result, the school provided more structured and interesting things for pupils to write about and boys' achievement improved significantly. The management of the subject is also very good. Pupils' performance data is carefully analysed and appropriate targets set in plans for the next stage of pupils' learning. Monitoring of teaching and

learning is rigorous and effective. Marking in books is regular, but comments do not always provide sufficient guidance to pupils on what they need to improve their writing.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

55. Literacy is promoted very effectively within other subjects, with a strong emphasis on speaking and listening. Pupils use reading skills very well to research information in other subjects, for example, mountains in geography and the lifestyle of the rich and poor in Victorian times in history. Writing standards are high because pupils have many very good opportunities to use different forms of writing to suit the purpose of the task. Pupils made good use of formal language when writing letters of complaint.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well and are particularly talented at thinking for themselves because they are usually very well taught
- The information from assessment is used very well to help teachers plan their lessons so that the work is closely matched to pupils' needs
- Pupils' attitudes to their lessons and their work are very good, and at times excellent
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to use ICT to help them learn

Commentary

56. Over recent years, test results at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 have been consistently well above the national average. Current standards reflect those results and represent very good achievement. Pupils' achievement is a direct result of very well planned and structured lessons that ensure that pupils are given small steps at just the right level of difficulty to help them learn. Teachers usually provide a varied and stimulating range of activities that match the pupils' differing levels of attainment very well and are also designed to make them think. As a result, pupils are very confident in using and applying mathematics and they readily work independently of the teacher. Mostly teachers use their skills in questioning very effectively to help pupils think at increasingly deeper levels. At other times, they use their questions to individual pupils to help them to understand and enable them to contribute. As a consequence, all pupils learn very well, including those with special educational needs, who are very well supported by teaching assistants. For example, in a Year 6 lesson about solving mathematical problems involving capacity, the teacher's very good subject knowledge and her accurate perception of the pupils' stage of understanding meant that the lesson was very well planned and provided exactly what they needed. The pupils were making containers of different shapes out of a fixed amount of card, then measuring the capacity using rice which was subsequently weighed to compare their capacity. The teacher's confident explanation and demonstration, together with stimulating and fascinating activities, contributed very well to her pupils' excellent motivation and focus on their work.
57. There are few weaknesses in teaching, but in one of the lessons seen, where the teaching was slightly less effective, the lesson planning worked less well because the ideas were a little too complicated for most pupils' level of understanding and they spent too much time listening to the teacher so their interest and ability to concentrate began to diminish. As a result of the reliability problems that the school has had with some of its computers, pupils are given relatively few opportunities to use ICT to help them learn in mathematics.
58. Teachers assess their pupils well and most work is marked regularly, carefully, with detailed comments in most books. Teachers track how well pupils are doing and, where they need additional help, it is given very effectively. Although pupils are clear about how to correct their mistakes, they are less clear about how well they are doing and where they need to improve in order to achieve a higher level. The school has recognised this weakness and introduced a new system for half-termly assessments to help to tackle it.
59. Pupils enjoy the subject, and their enthusiasm for mathematics contributes strongly to their very good achievement. Pupils' investigative skills are particularly well developed, especially in Years 5 and 6, with the result that by this age, most pupils are very adept in solving problems, thinking for themselves and working independently.
60. Mathematics is very well led and managed. There is a clear vision for the continuous development of the subject and a very precise understanding of its strengths and weaknesses, acquired through rigorous monitoring. The actions taken to improve the subject have been very well targeted and very effective, resulting in very good improvement to provision and pupils' achievement since the last inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

61. The use and development of pupils' numeracy skills in other subjects are very good. Pupils are very confident in using their skills in number, data handling and problem-solving, where there are opportunities in other subjects. For example, in science, Year 6 pupils use graphs to measure the time taken for ice to melt, for shapes to fall through water and to interpret the force needed to break the handles of plastic bags. In ICT, Year 6 pupils use a computer program to measure the distance a brick travels, while in design and technology, Year 3 pupils construct three-dimensional shapes from nets and measuring materials.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is very good.

Main strengths

- The quality of teaching is very good and, as a result, pupils achieve very well
- Standards throughout the school are well above average
- A very clear ambition to improve pupils' investigational skills has played a significant part in improving standards since the last inspection
- Pupils display very good attitudes to their work

Commentary

62. Results in national tests for pupils at the end of Year 6 have been well above average for the past four years. Assessments made by teachers show that standards are well above average by the end of Year 2. These results show that standards throughout the school have improved significantly since the last inspection.
63. Current standards in Year 2 are well above average. The majority of pupils have a very good grasp of investigation processes and produce work that is well presented. They use subject vocabulary confidently and have very good scientific knowledge. Pupils make very good use of their mathematical skills well when sorting materials and recording their answers in *Venn* and *Carroll* diagrams. Pupils continue to achieve very well as they progress through the school, so that standards in Year 6 are well above average. Pupils have very good scientific knowledge and are able to plan investigations, pose hypotheses and evaluate their results. The school's focus on developing these skills and the use of specialist teaching in Year 6 are significant features in the very good achievement of pupils.
64. Teachers, especially specialists, have very good subject knowledge and use it very well to plan lessons with clear objectives that are matched to the needs of all pupils and that help them build on what they have learnt before. Lessons usually start with a recap of previous work, which consolidates pupils' learning. During this time, teachers make very good use of questions to test and extend pupils' understanding. Lessons are well resourced and enable pupils to investigate and gain knowledge of how to conduct fair tests. In the most effective lessons, pupils are challenged to use their scientific knowledge to explain and justify their answers to problems. This was particularly effective in an excellent lesson with a small group of Year 6 pupils who were challenged to consider washing tablets and to give their opinion on how the shape, size and dissolvability affect the quality of wash. Pupils, most of whom have very well developed speaking skills, gave answers, which showed their very good understanding. Relationships are very good and teachers have very high expectations of good behaviour. As a result, pupils are interested, stay on task and behave very well. However, in a minority of lessons, the slow pace and inconsistent management of behaviour meant that pupils were slow to settle to their work, thus limiting their achievement.
65. Leadership and management of science are very good. As a result of very good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses and the very clear ambition for improvement, weaknesses identified in the previous inspection, including the quality of teaching and learning, have

been very successfully tackled. Good use is made of performance data to enable the school to know how well the pupils are achieving. Marking is very thorough and helps pupils to know how to improve their work, but it does not tell them how well they are doing. Very good support has been provided for teachers and, consequently, their confidence and competence has improved. The clear identification of the need to focus on improving pupils' investigational skills has had a very good effect on raising achievement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and enables pupils to achieve well by the end of Year 6
- Specialist teaching in Years 5 and 6 is having a very good effect on improving pupils' standards and achievement
- Opportunities are missed for using ICT as a learning tool in other subjects

Commentary

66. Although many pupils in the school have access to computers at home, pupils join the school with average standards. They are confident in their use of computers and have good keyboard skills but, other than word processing and games, most have made limited use of computers as a tool. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and standards, by the end of Year 2, are average. Although pupils in Year 1 could control devices to move in certain directions, the lack of resources in the lesson limited their achievement as they had little opportunity for individual hands-on participation. Pupils continue to achieve satisfactorily in Years 3 and 4, but older pupils make very good progress. Standards by the end of Year 6 are above average, overall, with some pupils attaining well above average standards. Pupils in Year 6, for example, write programs on a laptop and transfer the information to a vehicle to control its movement and direction.
67. The quality of teaching is good, overall, though it is very good in Years 5 and 6 as the school makes use of a subject specialist from a local secondary school. Characteristics of the very good teaching include tasks that offer pupils challenge and extend their learning. This keeps the pupils very keen and interested. As a result, they respond very well to the challenge and gain new skills. Relationships in all lessons are very good and explanations are very clear. Teaching assistants give good support to pupils and enable lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs to achieve as well as their peers. The school is trying to make use of skills across other subjects. In a Year 5 lesson, pupils were researching mountain areas in order to produce an independent slide presentation. Although the teacher prepared a very good model to support the pupils, discussion focused principally on geographical knowledge and, consequently, had little emphasis on developing computer skills.
68. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, as standards and the quality of teaching have improved, particularly in Years 5 and 6. Teachers have increasingly gained skills and confidence in their use of computers as they have received training. They are similarly gaining confidence in the use of interactive whiteboards, although most often use them as a projection screen rather than as a tool for controlling the computer.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

69. The use of information and technology to support learning in other subjects is satisfactory, overall, though better in Years 5 and 6 than in other parts of the school. Pupils in older classes have their own folders on the school network and use computers to write letters, poetry and autobiographies. They have researched using the internet in geography and

history and gained knowledge of, for example, the Lake District. They design their own covers, importing pictures to make them more interesting, and produce their own slide presentations about themselves. The school has suffered reliability problems with one of its two suites of laptop computers. It is this, coupled with some lingering lack of confidence among some teachers, that has limited opportunities for pupils to use ICT as a learning tool in other subjects.

HUMANITIES

Religious education was inspected in full and is reported below. Geography and history were sampled.

70. In the **geography** lesson seen, the teaching was effective in helping pupils to evaluate the environmental features of the local area. The pupils had a good grasp of the characteristics of the locality, both from their general knowledge and from the work they had already done, and they achieved well because the teacher used discussion effectively and gave good direct support to groups and individuals. However, from discussion with Year 5 pupils, it was apparent that their understanding and use of maps, particularly *Ordnance Survey*, is more limited.
71. In the **history** lesson seen, which was about the social and economic changes that occurred during the Victorian era, the teaching was good because it fostered pupils' independent learning. However, most pupils were regurgitating facts rather than using available resources to crosscheck and interpret. Classroom displays show a broad curriculum is covered, including the Tudors and Stuarts, Ancient Greece, and the lives of key people such as Florence Nightingale, Dr Barnardo and William Booth.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well and standards are high because the teaching is very good
- Teachers' very good planning and pupils' very positive attitudes enable the whole of Years 5 and 6 to be taught effectively in a single group
- Good use is made of visitors to broaden pupils' experience, but there have been few visits to other than Christian places of worship

Commentary

72. By Years 2 and 6, pupils are achieving standards that are well above those expected for their age. By Year 2, pupils have, for example, a very good understanding of the work of a vicar and the qualities needed, including those of leadership. By Year 6, pupils show significant sensitivity and understanding of each other. They have a very good grasp of ideas such as worship and celebration, and they demonstrate understanding and concern for others and for different beliefs.
73. Teaching and learning are very good. In the most effective lessons, pupils develop a wide range of skills and extend their knowledge and understanding of both Christianity and other faiths. Teachers use relevant ideas and know how their pupils think so provide explanations of more difficult ideas in a way that makes sense to them. Most teachers use questions very effectively to help pupils extend their knowledge and develop their ideas. They use accurate language that helps pupils develop their understanding of ideas such as *spirit* and *belief*. For example, in a very good lesson to all 90 pupils in Years 5 and 6 about giving gifts to deities in other faiths, the teacher used a *PowerPoint*[™] presentation to explain ideas and set the tasks for pupils. She had prepared the lesson very well and used precise language accurately. The teacher cited her own religious beliefs with sensitivity, providing a very good model of integrity and tolerance. Despite the very large number of pupils, the teacher's very good organisation, together with pupils' very mature and highly motivated positive attitudes to the lesson, meant that the lesson worked very effectively.
74. The curriculum is broad and varied, making full use of visitors such as the local vicar and rabbi, to enhance pupils' learning. Pupils benefit from the opportunity of visits, such as a trip to St Alban's Abbey, but there are fewer visits to non-Christian places of worship. The

subject benefits from a good range of artefacts that are used well. The leadership and management of the subject are good, with a clear vision for its further development, and there has been good improvement since the last inspection.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Design and technology was inspected in full and is reported below. Art and design, music and physical education were sampled.

75. In the **very good** art lesson seen, the excellent use of questions by the teacher recapped and extended pupils' learning. Relationships were excellent and pupils were engrossed in their work. The work was challenging but very good support was provided for the pupils who found the tasks difficult. Pupils were making a storyboard related to *The Owl and the Pussycat* and were given very good opportunities to work independently and choose their own fabric in order to design their own work.
76. Teaching in the one **music** lesson observed was good. Clear learning objectives and the good opportunities to assess one another's work enabled the pupils to achieve well. Pupils learned about the role of the conductor and how the pentatonic scale is used.
77. Teaching in the Year 1 and 2 **physical education** lessons observed was good overall and pupils achieved well. In a very good Year 2, gymnastics lesson, tasks and equipment were very well organised and appropriate attention was paid to pupils' health and safety. The teacher had high expectations of pupils' attitudes and performance and pupils were given very good opportunities to coach and evaluate each other's performance. Standards were well above average. However, in another lesson for pupils in Years 3 and 4, the pace was slow and tasks went on too long. Consequently, pupils' achievement was only satisfactory. There are very good opportunities for sports outside of school time and the school gains good success in local and regional competitions. Parents provide very good support and the school works closely with local clubs to extend pupils' learning.

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is satisfactory.

Main strength and weakness

- Pupils have good skills in describing their methods and evaluating their work
- Pupils' construction skills are not as good as their design and evaluation skills

Commentary

78. Standards in Year 2 and Year 6 are average, representing satisfactory achievement. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers because of good support from teaching assistants. Pupils throughout the school have above average skills in describing methods that they will use to produce finished articles, and they evaluate their work well. They do not have as well developed construction skills.
79. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers plan lessons with clear objectives that are explained to the pupils so they know what they are to learn. When questions are used effectively, pupils define the terms used and learn new subject vocabulary. Lessons are well resourced to enable all pupils to work practically. However, too often tasks use pre-prepared materials and so the finished articles are essentially the same. This somewhat limits pupils' skills as they *assemble* rather than *make* their own designs. For example, in Year 5, pupils made slippers and designed their own pattern of stitching on them. However, all the slippers had the same shape because they were made of the same components. The overwhelming majority of pupils behave well and show good attitudes to their learning. However, when teachers' management of behaviour is inconsistent, pupils do not all concentrate and stay on task throughout the lesson. This, inevitably, reduces the progress they make.
80. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Discussion with the new subject leader shows that the school is aware of the strengths and weaknesses in design and technology.

The monitoring of pupils' achievement is improving. Pupils' work, for example, is scrutinised so the school is aware of their standards. Improvement since the last inspection is good, as standards have improved and pupils are now making satisfactory progress.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education was inspected in full and is reported below. Citizenship is not taught as a separate subject but elements of citizenship are included in personal, social and health education lessons.

Personal, social and health education

Provision in personal, social and health education is very good.

Main strengths

- Standards are high and pupils achieve very well because the teaching is very good
- Pupils discuss ideas with confidence and maturity
- Lessons make a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and social development

Commentary

81. By Year 6, pupils have a very good understanding of moral issues, such as the possible implications of reporting bullying, and a very good understanding of other people's feelings. For example, they thought that Year 5 pupils might feel embarrassed to ask Year 6 pupils to sort out their problems. They discuss and contribute to the work of the school *Think Tank* (school council) and suggest very good strategies for dealing with bullying. They are highly articulate and discuss with confidence, both with visitors and with each other.
82. Most teaching very effectively helps pupils to gain confidence and learn about themselves and their peers through opportunities to discuss in pairs, small groups and as a class. They learn very effectively through discussions with visitors, such as a weather reporter from Sky Television who joined a Year 1 and 2 class for an English lesson. The teacher carefully provided the chance for pupils to use the visitor's experience and perceptions to help them consider their personal qualities and think about possible jobs where they could use their skills and talents. In an excellent Year 6 lesson, when pupils were discussing bullying and how to deal with it, the teacher created an atmosphere of trust and honesty so that pupils could talk openly. She carefully used questions to intervene and check whether views were widely held and also to explain ideas in more depth. There are few weaknesses in teaching, but in one of the lessons seen, where the teaching was less effective, the teacher did not intervene sufficiently to help pupils to develop their ideas in discussion.
83. Pupils enjoy the discussion and activities and take their work very seriously. They discuss with animation and remember what has been said. Lessons, and the activities planned, contribute well to developing pupils' maturity. Pupils are gaining a clear sense of right and wrong, a thorough understanding of how others might feel and an insight into democracy through the workings of the *Think Tank* and through voting.
84. Leadership and management are very good, and the subject is improving very well. It is planned very effectively and incorporates appropriate sex and drugs education. The links with other subjects, especially in Years 1 and 2, help pupils to understand and consider ideas in different ways.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	2
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
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	2
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
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	2

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