

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **CASTLE HILL INFANTS SCHOOL**

Basingstoke

LEA area: Hampshire

Unique reference number: 116041

Headteacher: Dr Steve Jefferson

Lead inspector: Mrs Jayne Clemence

Dates of inspection: 1 – 3 November 2004

Inspection number: 266573

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infants
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 – 7
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	179
School address:	Winklebury Way Basingstoke Hampshire
Postcode:	RG23 8BN
Telephone number:	01256 326899
Fax number:	01256 350639
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Michele Amos
Date of previous inspection:	June 1999

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Castle Hill Infants School has 179 pupils between the ages of four and seven. The standards of attainment on entry to the foundation stage vary widely but are below average overall; many children come with skills that are below average, and there is some significant social disadvantage throughout the school. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is well above average, and there is a minority of pupils with a statement of special educational needs. The range of special needs includes moderate, specific and emotional and behavioural needs. There are no pupils who speak English as an additional language. The vast majority of pupils have a white ethnic background, with a small minority from other heritages. The percentage of pupils eligible to claim for free school meals is below average, and the number of pupils who leave or join the school other than at the usual times is below average.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
22629	Jayne Clemence	Lead inspector	Foundation stage, art and design, geography, music, religious education
9756	Kenneth Parsons	Lay inspector	
1224	Graham Todd	Team inspector	Mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT), design and technology, physical education
4486	Michael Weller	Team inspector	English, history, special educational needs

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

Castle Hill Infants School provides an **excellent** standard of education, where pupils reach exceptionally high standards in many areas because of the very effective and often excellent teaching and learning. The headteacher's excellent leadership is visionary and dynamic. The school is underpinned by excellent management strategies that enable the staff and pupils to work so effectively. The school provides excellent value for money. Resources, staff and time are used to the full, so that all pupils, regardless of their individual differences or backgrounds, make rapid progress over time.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards are exceptionally high in reading, writing, mathematics and science; a high proportion of the teaching is very good or excellent, and has a strong impact on learning.
- Excellent assessment procedures ensure that pupils' achievements are tracked rigorously, and their rate of progress monitored precisely; work is matched meticulously to the pupils' wide-ranging needs.
- The headteacher's excellent leadership sets very high expectations and there is an unswerving quest for improvement; the deputy headteacher is an outstanding role model for other staff.
- The curriculum is highly effective, making coherent links between subjects such as literacy, numeracy, speaking and listening; pupils learn more readily in other subjects because of their secure basic skills.
- Pupils' ICT skills are not as high as those in other subjects, and there are missed opportunities for the use of ICT across the curriculum.
- Children in the foundation stage have a very positive and secure start to school life; they learn very good work routines from an early age.
- There is excellent organisation of the pupils' learning; the dynamic and flexible approach to grouping and regrouping pupils throughout the week ensures all are challenged and supported to meet their targets.
- The excellent ethos means that pupils develop a love for learning.

Improvements since the previous inspection have been excellent. The school has systematically addressed all areas identified in the previous inspection report, and has made significant and sustained improvements in standards. Aspects previously judged as good are now more often very good or excellent. The school is striving successfully to reach the highest standards possible and sustain excellence in its work, and is moving from strength to strength.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004

reading	A	A*	A*	A*
writing	B	A*	A*	A*
Mathematics	B	A*	A	A

*Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average*

**Achievement is excellent** overall, and very good in the foundation stage. Almost all children meet the goals they are expected to reach by the end of reception, and in some instances, they surpass them, for example in mathematical development, communication, language and literacy and physical development. Achievement is very good from starting points that are often below average, and sometimes well below average, particularly in speaking, listening, language and communication skills. Standards in the current Year 2 are very high in reading, writing, mathematics and science. There has been a sustained trend of improvement throughout the school. Higher attaining pupils achieve excellence because they are challenged so rigorously. Pupils with special educational needs achieve extremely well because they are identified very early on in school life, and plans are put into place swiftly to support them in developing their basic skills for literacy and numeracy. Standards in ICT are average and the pupils' achievements are satisfactory, because there are missed opportunities for the systematic development of their ICT skills across other subjects of the curriculum. **Pupils' personal qualities**, attitudes and behaviour are **excellent**. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent overall, and attendance is good.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

**The quality of education provided by the school is excellent. Teaching and learning are excellent** overall. The very high proportion of very good and excellent teaching throughout the school is having an excellent impact on the pupils' learning. Teaching and learning in the foundation stage and reception are very good, with some excellent features. Teaching assistants make an excellent contribution to the pupils' learning as they are involved so fully in all activities, including the assessment of pupils' achievements. The curriculum is very good overall, and there is a very good range of additional activities that extend the pupils' learning further. ICT is not as well developed as other subjects, though the school is working rapidly to address this relative weakness. Links with other schools are excellent and productive. Castle Hill is often used as an example of good practice from which others can learn. Teachers from other schools either visit the school, or receive training from the school in order to raise their own standards. Links with the community are good and help the school extend its own contacts and resources. The care and guidance given to pupils is very effective. There is a very positive working relationship between parents and staff.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Leadership and management are excellent.** The headteacher has established a strong culture whereby staff and pupils have high expectations of themselves, set within a supportive, yet challenging atmosphere. The school is buzzing with learning, and there are high aspirations for pupils to reach and surpass their goals. All staff are highly ambitious for every child to succeed, and keen to find ways to improve their own professional practice in order to have the most impact on the pupils' learning and achievements. Management is excellent and there are rigorous strategies for monitoring standards,

teaching and learning. Subject leaders understand clearly their roles and the priorities for further improvement. The school has a realistic assessment of itself, with no sense of complacency. The governing body is an example of excellence. It has excellent leadership from a member of the local education authority's governor services. This means that its work is on the leading edge of school governance. Governors ensure that all statutory requirements are full met.

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

Parents and pupils express a high degree of satisfaction. Parents appreciate all aspects of school life and recognise the high quality education their children receive. The inspection confirmed their views. Pupils enjoy coming to school, and feel their views are taken seriously and acted upon.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Raise standards further in ICT by developing the pupils' ICT skills systematically, and planning for the use of ICT across other subjects of the curriculum.



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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects**

Pupils' achievements are excellent overall. Children in the foundation stage achieve very well, and the achievements of higher attainers and pupils with special educational needs are excellent. Standards are very high in reading, writing, mathematics and science by Year 2.

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

- There is a trend of rising standards; pupils reach levels that are exceptionally high in many areas, and often in the top five per cent nationally.
- Higher attaining pupils are challenged rigorously and their thinking skills developed continually.
- Achievement for pupils with special educational needs is excellent because of early identification of their needs and excellent support.
- Many pupils reach the higher levels in basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics that help them access other subjects more effectively.
- Standards in ICT are only average compared to those found nationally; there are missed opportunities to use ICT across other subjects.
- Standards in speaking, listening, reading and writing are very high; pupils are encouraged to use these skills extensively.
- Children in the foundation stage achieve very well; they develop very positive work routines from an early age.

#### **Commentary**

1. Many pupils succeed in reaching standards that are in the top five per cent when compared to schools nationally, and to similar schools. A high proportion of children enter the school with below average attainment. There is also a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. This makes pupils' achievements over time even more impressive, considering their starting points and individual challenges. Pupils' achievements are excellent in basic skills including reading, writing, mathematics and science. In the last two years, 2003 and 2004, pupils have reached standards in the top five per cent nationally in reading and writing, and in mathematics standards have been well above average or in the top five per cent nationally. The leadership and management have rigorous and robust strategies for maintaining high standards that are proving most effective.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	18.4 (18.7)	15.8 (15.7)
Writing	18.1 (17.8)	14.6 (14.6)

Mathematics	18.2 (18.9)	16.2 (16.3)
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*There were 60 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

2. A very high proportion of pupils reach the higher levels in reading, writing, mathematics and science. The number of pupils has been at least double the national average, and in 2004, there were even more than in the previous year. In writing, for example, more than three times the number of pupils reached the higher level (Level 3) when compared to the national figure. Every pupil has work that is matched carefully to their individual needs. This means that all pupils, regardless of their differences or starting points, reach or surpass their goals regularly. The school has an atmosphere for learning where "every individual matters and every lesson counts". This excellent ethos has a direct impact on standards, achievement and the rate of pupils' progress. All pupils have work that is matched carefully to their capabilities. Higher attaining pupils are given work of a higher order. As soon as they have grasped a new idea, they are challenged to move on to new learning. This ensures they use their time productively and progress to a higher level of work as promptly as possible. Staff and pupils know the goals they are working towards, and there is a strong emphasis on reaching and surpassing those goals. There is a healthy sense of ambition, where everyone celebrates the successes of others, whilst at the same time striving to do their personal best.
3. Pupils with special educational needs are identified very early on in their school life. This means that they have support in developing their basic skills as soon as practically possible. As a result, many pupils have caught up to levels that are at least average by the time they leave the school.
4. There are excellent strategies for developing the pupils' basic skills in reading, writing, speaking, listening and mathematics. Pupils are supported and challenged to use those skills in a wide variety of settings throughout the school day. This means they are constantly developing these skills in real life and practical situations. Registration time is used most productively, whereby pupils often answer the register with a newly acquired fact, given in a complete sentence. They are challenged to think for themselves, share their ideas with others and develop views and opinions that are expressed with increasing clarity and confidence. There is extensive use of drama and role play across many subjects that helps develop pupils' speaking, listening, language and communication skills. Pupils are also helped to develop their memory skills, for example by learning lines for assembly, reciting poetry, and recalling recently learned facts. This approach is continually using and sharpening their memories. In mathematics, pupils are helped to use their numeracy skills in practical everyday situations. All these strategies are used consistently and systematically through the school, and there is an obvious and direct impact on standards and achievement.
5. Standards in ICT are not as high as those seen in other subjects, though the school is working hard to improve this situation. There are sometimes missed opportunities to use ICT skills in other subjects in the same way that reading, writing, speaking, listening and mathematics are planned for. The ICT curriculum is less well developed than in other areas, and teachers' ICT knowledge and expertise, though developing rapidly, have had some gaps.

6. Children in the foundation stage have a very secure and positive start to school life because the atmosphere for learning is overwhelmingly positive and thoroughly well organised. Most children by the end of the reception reach all the early learning goals, and a significant proportion exceed them in communication, language and literacy, personal and social development. They follow well-established routines, and expectations for their behaviour, attitudes and work are consistently high. They have a strong foundation in developing the basic skills in communication, language, literacy and mathematical development, and their personal and social skills are also strong. This helps them make the most of school and learning as they move on.
7. There has been excellent improvement in standards and pupils' achievements since the last inspection, and the school is sustaining this position.

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

Pupils have excellent attitudes to school and their behaviour is also excellent. Attendance and punctuality are good. Pupils' social and moral development is excellent, whilst their spiritual and cultural development is very good.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils have an exceptionally positive approach to their education and are very keen to take part in school activities.
- Behaviour is excellent in most lessons and contributes considerably to the learning taking place.
- The school has an excellent ethos which involves very clear and consistent expectations of behaviour and highly effective procedures to support pupils in meeting them.
- Relationships between pupils and with adults are excellent, and pupils are proud to be part of the school.
- Pupils' good attendance and punctuality contribute clearly to their achievements

## **Commentary**

8. The school has an excellent ethos which values each pupil as an individual and provides very clear expectations for staff and pupils alike. Pupils rise to the challenge and display a very strong interest in their lessons and everything else the school has to offer. They are pleasant young people whom it is a pleasure to meet. They have a strong sense of belonging and feel very secure in the school. It is a friendly place to be, with excellent relationships between the children and with teachers and all other staff. Pupils have excellent attitudes towards their teachers and their work. All adults put considerable effort and time into helping pupils to develop into mature and responsible individuals and the children thrive in this environment.
9. The school has a well-designed behaviour policy, which includes clear expectations and effective procedures, with rewards to encourage pupils to behave well. The procedures are used very consistently by staff, and this ensures excellent behaviour in lessons and around the school. Teachers have highly effective classroom management skills and in all lessons pupils work well; no time is lost in maintaining order. The pupils are encouraged from a very early age to take responsibility for themselves, for example, even the youngest children are expected to hang their coats on the right peg and prepare themselves before class without parental help. Children in the foundation stage are well on course to surpass the early learning goal in personal and social development because there is such a strong emphasis upon developing those skills. Behaviour around the school is very good and sensible. Bullying incidents are very rare, and there are very good procedures in place to deal with any should they occur. The school is very well supervised and recently arrived reception children are soon made to feel comfortable in the school environment. There have been no exclusions in recent years. Pupils with special educational needs have very positive attitudes in lessons and hence benefit from the high level of support that they receive.
10. The school has a very clear set of moral values to help pupils distinguish right from wrong. Pupils respect the feelings and beliefs of others and are able to work well as part of a group and when contributing towards a common goal; these values are fostered early on in the reception year. There are many opportunities for pupils to take responsibilities, ranging from helping as a group to decide their class rules, acting as a buddy in the playground, through to jobs such as taking the register to the office or putting out chairs for assembly. The school's strong set of social values emphasise

working as a community. There is particular encouragement of concern for others – a boy crying in the corridor was soon being comforted by other children, for example.

11. The school provides a daily act of collective worship for pupils through assemblies and there is a stimulating programme of thoughts for the week to support the exploration of religious, moral and social issues. Pupils have very good self-knowledge and spiritual awareness, developed through such well-planned exercises as exploring a “bat cave” in the classroom and expressing their feelings on it. The walls of the school provide a rich and varied display of pupils’ work, whilst regular opportunities such as class assemblies enable the children to develop self-confidence and show their parents how they are progressing. Topics in religious education and personal and social education help pupils to develop their views on the world. Pupils’ appreciation of their own and others’ cultural traditions is very good: they learn about features of various cultures, including religious beliefs, art, dance, and music and are prepared very well for life in a multi-cultural society.
12. Pupils want to come to school. Most parents are cooperative in ensuring their child’s good attendance, although a number of pupils are taken out of school by parents for holidays in term time. The school has a good system to contact parents by telephone when their children are absent. Most pupils arrive on time in the morning, and they go to their classrooms with no fuss, ensuring a prompt start to the school day.

***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.*

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The quality of education for pupils is excellent. Teaching and learning are excellent overall. The curriculum is very good, and the headteacher and staff ensure very good care overall, and excellent guidance for pupils. Links with parents are very effective, and there are excellent links with other schools and colleges. There are good links with the local community.

### **Teaching and learning**

Teaching and learning are excellent overall, and very good in the foundation stage with excellent features. Assessment procedures are excellent.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The high proportion of very good and excellent teaching across the school is having a significant impact on learning, standards and achievement.
- The excellent assessment procedures mean that all pupils’ work is matched meticulously to their individual needs.

- Teachers' excellent organisation ensures pupils are grouped most efficiently to maximise their learning.
- Teaching and learning in ICT are satisfactory, though teachers' expertise and the use of ICT for pupils' learning are less well developed than all other areas.
- Teamwork amongst adults is excellent and seamless; teaching assistants make an excellent contribution to the pupils' learning.
- Pupils understand their goals, and develop a genuine love of learning; they continually strive to meet and surpass their targets.

## Commentary

13. During the inspection, a high proportion of teaching observed was very good or excellent. The overall proportion of teaching in these categories is much higher than the national picture. More than a quarter of lessons were judged as excellent in terms of teaching and learning, and well over half were very good. Teaching and learning is underpinned by excellent assessment strategies whereby pupils' learning is noted, careful observations gathered over the week and pupils grouped accordingly. In addition, teachers assess how individual pupils learn, for example whether they learn best through predominantly looking, listening or doing, and seek to organise work in such a way that fits best their style of learning.

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 35 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
11 (31 %)	18 (52%)	6 (17%)	0	0	0	0

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.*

### Example of outstanding practice

#### **Excellent assessment of pupils and organisation of groups maximise their learning.**

Scrutiny of the pupils' records shows that their learning is observed and recorded meticulously, and from these future targets set. There is a dynamic and flexible approach to grouping and regrouping the pupils throughout the week that ensures all are challenged and supported to meet their targets. For example, towards the end of the week, pupils are regrouped for their basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics according to their rate of progress during that week. One teacher is responsible for collating information from other teachers about the pupils' progress in these subjects, and in identifying the composition of the new groups. Those pupils who need further support have specific and individual assistance, whilst others have new challenges that build on their previous learning. These groups are always changing according to the pupils' individual rates of learning. This approach means that almost all pupils are on course to meet their targets.

14. Teachers and teaching assistants work seamlessly to the overall benefit of the pupils' learning. All staff contribute towards planning lessons, and everyone understands what is happening, and what is expected of them. Teaching assistants are deployed extensively to assess the pupils, and carry out their observations with great efficiency as part of the overall lesson or activity. This means that by the end of any lesson, there is much useful information about the pupils' learning from all adults, and the information is used most productively to plan future work. In some instances, teaching assistants make high quality resources for the children, for example in the foundation stage, that enhance their learning. This is often done through their own initiative and

creativity, in discussion with teachers. Teaching in ICT is a relative weakness, as teachers' expertise is not at the same level as in other subjects. There are sometimes missed opportunities for pupils to develop their ICT skills as a result. The school is taking rigorous action to address this issue, and had already identified it as a priority.

#### **Example of outstanding practice**

**There are excellent opportunities at the end of every lesson for pupils to evaluate their own learning.**

Pupils are helped from an early age to understand the purpose of their learning and to know their individual learning targets. All lessons begin with an explanation of "what we are going to learn", and everyone understands what the teacher will be looking for by the end of the lesson. Pupils are reminded regularly of their own targets, and explain clearly to others what they are striving for next. The pupils are trained to evaluate their own learning at the end of every lesson, and there is a rigorous structure to the lesson endings, that always includes a summary of the learning that has taken place. Pupils, for example, identify one thing they remember clearly about their learning, and often share this with a partner. They also identify an area they feel they need to understand better. Teachers ask the pupils regularly how they as teachers could have helped them more in their learning during the lesson. Pupils learn and refine their skills of evaluation through such challenging questions. This approach is very well established, and pupils speak fluently about their learning and what they could do to improve and achieve even more.

15. Teaching and learning have gone from strength to strength since the previous inspection. There is an energetic and dynamic team of teachers and teaching assistants, working closely together with great consistency, precision and clarity for the overall benefit of the pupils.

#### **The curriculum**

The pupils have access to a very good range of learning opportunities and the curriculum is very good overall. There is a very good range of additional activities beyond lessons. Resources and accommodation are very good.

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

- Highly flexible groupings and creative use of time mean that pupils' differing needs are met very well and their achievement maximised.
- Very effective planning ensures many opportunities for the enrichment of learning; there are many useful subject links across the curriculum.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is excellent; the curriculum is matched closely to their individual needs.
- There are missed opportunities for pupils to use ICT across the curriculum.

#### **Commentary**

16. The school curriculum is very well planned, imaginative and creative. Pupils are organised into highly flexible groups based on detailed assessments of the pupils' individual needs. As a result higher attaining pupils are challenged and extended, for example in top sets for mathematics, and lower attaining pupils receive very good support, individually or in small groups, for example in spelling and reading. Similar groups operate to develop pupils' reading comprehension or extended writing skills. Pupils' progress is carefully checked and these groups are adjusted regularly. As a result nearly all pupils progress rapidly.

17. Pupils with special educational needs are identified early and benefit from excellent support. The targets in their individual education plans are shared with them and their parents regularly; their achievement is excellent. They are removed from the special needs register as soon as is appropriate.
18. Gifted and talented pupils are identified systematically, and there are very good opportunities for them through art, music, drama, gymnastics and mathematics. Additional activities are organised to ensure their talents are developed as extensively as possible.
19. Because of effective planning every opportunity is taken to make clear links between subjects across the curriculum, not just in subject lessons, but during registration and in school assemblies. Consequently there was excellent use of drama and development of language and literacy in a Year 1 science lesson on darkness and light, for instance, where pupils imaginatively explored a bat cave. A Year 2 class presented an outstanding performance based on London in a school assembly that incorporated drama, English, art, design and technology, history, geography and music. They dramatised a visit to the sites of London, rehearsed historical facts about some of the features of the city, and sang a range of songs relevant to the topic. Opportunities for pupils to use ICT across the curriculum are not yet sufficiently exploited, so that they match the excellent opportunities for literacy and numeracy.
20. Pupils' learning is also enriched very well through visitors to the school such as theatre and dance groups. All pupils benefit from visits outside school, for example to a museum, art gallery, environmental centre and animal centre.
21. There is a well-planned PSHE programme and pupils can discuss differences between right and wrong, or how to resolve conflict, during regular "circle time" sessions. This is when pupils reflect and discuss their views and feelings together. As part of the 'Sport for All' scheme in partnership with a local secondary school, pupils have received coaching in athletics and games skills and 'Totally Tennis'. Liaison with the local junior school is excellent and pupils are thoroughly prepared for their move to the next stage of education.
22. Accommodation and resources are used very effectively to enhance learning. Teachers and teaching assistants work together to provide an excellent team in planning for pupils' differing needs and raising pupils' achievement.



## Care, guidance and support

There are very good arrangements to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. The school provides pupils with excellent support, advice and guidance and involves them in its work and development in an excellent way.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are excellent induction procedures which ensure that pupils have a smooth start to their formal education.
- Pupils have excellent and trusting relationships with their teachers and other staff.
- Pupils have access to thoroughly well-informed advice and guidance.
- Health and safety and child protection procedures are very effective.

## Commentary

23. The school provides a very safe working environment. Risk assessments are thorough and also cover school trips. Routine safety procedures are all in place, with appropriate overview by the governors. Child protection procedures fulfil requirements and are effective; staff are regularly briefed on their responsibilities and appropriate records are kept. The school works very well with agencies such as social services to ensure that pupils get additional help when they need it. Parents report that the school is very good at dealing with particular issues, such as those relating to pupils' specific medical problems. Inspection evidence confirmed the parents' views.
24. Pastoral care of pupils is excellent. It starts with very effective induction arrangements for reception children. Teachers and other staff know their pupils very well. Relationships are excellent and pupils are confident that there is an adult they could go to with a problem. There is a very effective system to monitor pupils' personal development that enables staff to pick up problems quickly and to recognise success. Staff complete PSHE notes in the pupils' records regularly, highlighting any problems and strategies to address them. There is excellent and well planned additional support for pupils with special educational needs, targeted at their specific needs, so that the children involved can progress in line with their friends.
25. The school has exceptionally good procedures to seek pupils' views. This can take the form of interviews, but much of its success depends on the way that children are encouraged to articulate their views and the way that teachers are sensitive to the pupils' feelings and needs. Pupils are encouraged to think about the progress they are making through explicit lesson objectives that are shared with them; at the end they are encouraged to evaluate how well they – and often the teacher – have done.
26. The school's procedures for measuring attainment and assessing the pupils' academic achievements are excellent. In the core subjects of English, mathematics and science pupils are assessed regularly and the data is analysed very carefully; for example, information is gathered on assessment on entry, national tests and pupils' work. Excellent use is made of this information to predict future levels of attainment and set targets for teaching and learning. The assessments are particularly useful in helping teachers decide upon the different groupings for work. The regular monitoring and analysis of pupils' achievements means there is great flexibility and the groups are not static; pupils are moved according to their needs.

27. The identification and assessment procedures for pupils with special educational needs are excellent. This ensures their rate of progress is tracked closely and wherever possible they are given additional and individual support.

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

There are very good links with parents and excellent links with other schools. There are good partnerships with the local community.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents are very supportive of the school; there is a strong partnership between home and school to support their children's learning.
- There are very good links with other education providers and the school contributes well to wider partnerships.
- The information provided to parents is comprehensive and generally gives them a very good level of detail on how their children are achieving.

### **Commentary**

28. Parents are very supportive of the school and think that their children are receiving a very good education. They think that the school staff are approachable and hence any issues are resolved quickly. Parents are kept well informed about the life of the school through regular newsletters. Reading diaries, which all pupils take home, are actively used as a two-way means of communication. In addition, the school is quick to contact parents if their child is having problems. Parents have regular opportunities to discuss their children's progress at parents' evenings and feel that these discussions show how well teachers know their child. There are two reports completed annually that are comprehensive and thorough in their detail. Parents appreciate the useful letters they receive outlining the curriculum their child will be covering. There is a very good turnout of parents to class assemblies and parents support the school well through the Friends of Castle Hill School, who organise a range of social and fundraising events. Parents know precisely when homework is set, and when that homework should be returned. There is always sufficient time to complete the work, and parents say they know how to support their children on its completion. There is a high level of consistency in setting homework and in providing pupils and parents with feedback on how well their children are doing.
29. The school works closely with pre-school groups in the area, with very good arrangements to help the children transfer smoothly. Parents particularly appreciate the home visit that teachers conduct before the children join the school. There is also strong collaboration with the junior school, with the latter adjusting its approach to match the skills being developed in the children whilst at the infant school. There are very good transfer procedures. The school has positive links with other local schools feeding the same secondary school, including joint training. Staff come from Fort Hill and Brighton Hill a specialist sports college and in line with the specialism, to help to deliver the PE curriculum and advise teachers.
30. The school has good links with its local community. There are good links with the church, whilst two local businesses contribute to the school's work on road safety and provide science workshops respectively. Local police support the school's PHSE programme, and help pupils understand the importance of taking responsibility, behaving as good citizens, and ensuring they keep safe in different circumstances.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are excellent overall. Management strategies for raising standards are excellent. The headteacher's leadership is excellent and there is an exceptionally strong team of senior staff with key responsibilities, including the deputy headteacher. The governance of the school is excellent, and all statutory requirements are met fully.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher's leadership and management are visionary and dynamic; the school is improving continuously and moving from strength to strength.
- The deputy headteacher makes an exceptional contribution to the quality of teaching, learning, standards and achievement.
- There is an excellent team spirit, where everyone works towards common goals to maximise the pupils' learning.
- All subject leaders understand clearly the priorities for raising standards; the newly appointed subject leader for ICT has quickly grasped the issues for raising standards and improving its quality.
- The governors make an excellent contribution; they hold the school to account rigorously for its work.

## Commentary

31. The headteacher sets very high standards for pupils and staff, where everyone is encouraged to do their best within a supportive, yet challenging atmosphere.

### Example of outstanding practice

**There are excellent strategies for identifying and evaluating how best the pupils learn.**

There is an established way of working whereby everyone is required to reflect on what works well, and what they could do to make the pupils' learning even better. Pupils too are included in this process as they are asked to suggest ways in which the staff could help them more in their learning. These and other questions are posed regularly to pupils, and their replies are used to inform the school's strategies for further improvement. All classrooms have a range of different coloured "thinking caps" whereby pupils are encouraged to use their thinking skills in a particular way. There are red, yellow, white, blue and green thinking caps, which represent specific skills that may be required at a certain time during a lesson. For example, pupils are prompted to use their organisational skills, or to think particularly about how they feel, or may be to use their creativity, depending on the activity. Pupils also learn to recognise some of their own strengths and most effective ways of learning, thus maximising what they achieve over time.

32. There are well known phrases, repeated regularly, including "every individual matters and every lesson counts", that are built into the foundations of the school, its work and practice. This outlook adds a real sense of urgency, importance and motivation to lessons and learning. There is a sharp focus on standards and a passion that starts from the headteacher to identify the most effective ways for individual pupils to make the most of their learning. There is an infectious enthusiasm throughout the school, where pupils' achievements are central to all its work. The deputy headteacher is an exceptional role model in her own teaching. The excellent and dynamic teaching and learning that happen regularly in her own class are having a significant impact on others' teaching. This in turn is making an excellent impact on the pupils' learning as they are so keen to learn and find ways to do even better in lessons. There is a strongly established culture where staff observe one another teaching, learn new teaching strategies and develop their own professional practice. This means that teaching skills are being improved systematically. The excellent teaching demonstrated by the deputy headteacher, for example, is modelled to others, who in turn learn new skills and increase the impact of their own teaching on pupils' learning.

33. There is an excellent team spirit, where everyone is willing to help one another, and find ways to support the pupils as much as possible in their learning. Although roles and responsibilities are clear, staff work cooperatively for the best interests of the pupils. They are trained to work as productively as possible, and to use their time efficiently. Time, resources and staff are used to maximum effect for the pupils. Staff with additional responsibilities, for example subject leaders, understand clearly the priorities and strategies for further improvement. ICT subject leadership has been delegated to a member of staff with appropriate expertise and skills. The school, with a relatively small staff, has lacked the capacity to develop the subject in the past as it would have wished. The organisation where teachers work in teams to organise and plan the development of their subjects is another example, whereby a relatively small staff team cooperate and use their skills together. This means that more is achieved in less time, thus reducing the burden of work on everyone, and assisting in the quest for a better balance between work and the rest of life.
34. The chair of governors is at the forefront of training governors, as head of the local education authority's governor services. The governors are trained and coached individually by the chair of governors to support the school and challenge its work. Governors monitor closely the work of the school, and through their own high quality training are enabled and empowered to look objectively at the school's work and standards. The headteacher is held rigorously to account, and governors take seriously the pupils' viewpoints and opinions. Governors are involved fully in identifying priorities for the school, and discuss regularly how far those priorities are being met. Financial planning is linked closely to the school's priorities and all governors understand financial implications of decisions, and their impact on pupils' learning. In addition, there are rigorous conversations about the use of resources, time and staffing to ensure best value for money is achieved. As part of the headteacher's review and performance management, one of the governors observed an assembly taken by the headteacher, then followed this through by discussing with a group of pupils what they had learned and how useful the assembly had been. This approach is fundamental to the governors' work, ensuring that pupils' views are considered and sought directly and at first hand.

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

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	505,011
Total expenditure	504,540
Expenditure per pupil	2,803

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	47,139
Balance carried forward to the next	47,610*

*\* The balance carried forward, though high, is already allocated appropriately for ICT equipment, staffing and outstanding payments for good and services.*

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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

35. The provision for children in the foundation stage is very good. Leadership and management are very effective and the improvements since the previous inspection have been very good. Almost all pupils reach the goals expected for their age, and many exceed them in communication, language and literacy, and personal and social development by the end of the Reception. Children often start school with skills that are below those expected nationally. They achieve very well because of the very effective curriculum, and very good teaching and learning, with examples of excellent practice in developing their communication, language and literacy, personal and social skills. There was insufficient evidence to report in full on the early learning goals for knowledge and understanding of the world, creative and physical development.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in personal, social and emotional development is **excellent**.

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

- Children are encouraged from an early age to take responsibility, work together and understand the impact of their behaviour on others.
- There are many opportunities for children to express their ideas and feelings, and talk confidently to one another and adults.
- The excellent atmosphere for learning means that everyone is valued and the children's self-esteem grows visibly.

#### **Commentary**

36. Children develop a love of school life, and have many opportunities to take responsibility. There are wide ranging, yet realistic tasks for them to do and these are changed regularly, so that everyone takes their turn to help. Children show much enthusiasm. They are keen and interested to learn. The excellent relationships between children and adults mean they are ready to have a go, try new activities, and are not afraid to make mistakes. They are helped to join in as part of a group, and quickly realise the importance of considering the needs of others as well as themselves. Many children are able to concentrate and listen for sustained periods of time as the teaching is lively, interesting and very well matched to their needs.
37. Children have daily opportunities to speak to one another and adults about their thoughts. This means they are thoroughly prepared at any time to express their ideas. These skills are used in other lessons, for example when they are required to share thoughts, offer ideas and demonstrate new learning.
38. The atmosphere for learning is overwhelmingly positive, as teachers and teaching assistants look constantly to encourage and support the children in everything they do. The rewards and praise are genuine and linked closely to practical examples of

good work, attitudes and effort. Children are encouraged from the earliest opportunity to “put on their thinking caps” and use different skills, for example in organising themselves, expressing how they feel, remembering facts and using their memories, and thinking creatively. This approach is building a strong foundation for future learning.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

Provision in communication, language and literacy is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is a systematic emphasis on developing communication skills; children speak with growing confidence and use an extensive range of vocabulary.
- The excellent approach to teaching handwriting means children learn very rapidly to write clearly using “joined up” letters.
- Activities are organised very efficiently and effectively whereby the children’s literacy skills are developed in everyday situations.

### **Commentary**

39. Children have wide and varied opportunities through the day to speak and listen to one another. They learn to use new and exciting words, for example when they were taken on a bear hunt around the school grounds, there were peals of excitement and language to describe what they were finding on the way. Teachers are very skilled at making useful links between activities, for example some children were beginning to write letters to the bear to say “sorry for scaring you” then writing their name at the bottom of the letter.
40. There is a systematic approach in teaching handwriting whereby children learn to form letters and patterns that help them join up their writing very early on. By the end of reception for example, many children are joining their letters to make words that are legible, in proportion and laid out neatly. They are encouraged to use a piece of thick card with lines drawn on clearly, placed behind the sheet of paper they are using to write on. This means that their writing is set out more clearly, and they are able to read back to themselves and others what they have written. There are numerous simple and straightforward ideas that add to the children’s learning, and help make the difference in reaching high standards and achieving very well.
41. Teachers and teaching assistants are highly creative in their use and development of resources. In one lesson, the ordinary-looking school tables were transformed by the use of a piece of dark material, where children crept inside as if crawling into a dark cave. They were helped to describe the atmosphere, and in the process extend further their vocabulary. Elsewhere there was a “Castle Hill baby clinic” set up with a waiting area, appointments book and questions on the wall such as ‘What can my baby eat?’ ‘How much does my baby weigh?’ In another corner there was a space centre where rockets were launched, all with the highest quality play items and dressing-up materials. In the outdoor area, staff had organised a building site where children could use bricks, sand, wallpaper and other materials for construction work. Children were visibly drawn and challenged to learn and use new words whilst building, papering,



sanding and mixing. This level of thought, care and creativity is helping children enormously in their communications, use of language, and development of literacy skills.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is a wide range of resources, used most effectively to assist the children in their mathematical understanding.
- Children have many opportunities to use their number skills practically and purposefully throughout the day.

### **Commentary**

42. The mathematical resources are thoroughly well organised to maximise the children's learning. Children have a rich variety of mathematical experiences that help them explore and learn more precisely mathematical facts. Classrooms in the foundation stage have many areas where children can count and notice numbers written formally and used purposefully. There are many references to numbers around the rooms that help the children further in their use and application of numeracy skills.
43. In lessons, children are buzzing with excitement as they have such interesting activities to pursue. In one mathematical lesson, children were learning to name the shapes triangle, circle and rectangle and talk about them. There were excellent opportunities from the start for children to pair up, think and share their ideas. There were wide ranging and related activities to inspire them, encourage their curiosity and develop a love of learning. One group were taken to explore the school grounds with a teaching assistant and "discover" objects with those particular shapes. The digital camera was used most effectively to record their findings, and images were included at the end of the lesson to demonstrate what they had learned. Children were quick to notice even more shapes, for example a hexagonal shape, a square storage container, circle shapes on the school sign and squares on the paving slabs. Other children made biscuits using the shape cutters, and a further group discovered different shapes buried in the sand trays.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD**

44. It was not possible to make an overall judgement of provision or standards, though the planning for this area is detailed and comprehensive for the children's wide-ranging needs.

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT AND CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

45. It was not possible to make an overall judgement on provision or standards in these areas, though it was clear that there are many opportunities for children to use their imagination through carefully planned art work and musical activities.

## **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 1**

### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is **excellent**.

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

- Excellent teaching and learning over time result in very high standards.
- Flexible groupings and stimulating activities matched to pupils' differing needs lead to excellent achievement.
- Excellent leadership, management and shared planning ensure that every opportunity is taken to develop pupils' literacy and language skills.
- The school uses drama very inventively to enhance the pupils' learning.
- There are missed opportunities for using ICT in English to develop the pupils' ICT skills.

#### **Commentary**

46. Standards in English are very high. Results in tests for reading and writing in Year 2 are in the top five per cent nationally. Standards seen were similarly very high. Because pupils are grouped flexibly, and stimulating activities are planned to match their differing needs, their achievement is excellent. Pupils make considerable progress from the foundation stage to the end of Year 2, particularly in speaking and listening and writing. Higher attaining pupils are challenged rigorously. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are very well supported and make equally good progress. Boys and girls achieve equally well.
47. Teaching and learning in individual lessons are often very good or excellent; over time they are excellent. The school develops pupils' handwriting, spelling and reading skills extremely thoroughly and systematically. Teachers plan to use a very effective variety of teaching and learning styles. Pupils are given time to reflect, to discuss and to rehearse their ideas orally. Drama techniques and role-play are used very inventively. As a result pupils speak out confidently, give clear explanations and ask their own questions. Because they are given time to think and to plan their ideas, their writing is of a very high standard.
48. The organisation of pupils into different groups that are continually adjusted, based on careful teacher assessment of progress, is excellent. During the week, pupils benefit from varying groupings according to their needs, for example to develop their reading comprehension or to extend their writing. Teachers prepare and use a range of stimulating resources such as the interactive whiteboard, pictures, letter and word cards to develop spelling. They share an infectious enthusiasm so that pupils are fully involved and enjoy their lessons. Teaching assistants are deployed very effectively and they play a full part in developing pupils' learning and assessing their progress.
49. The leadership and management of English are excellent. The quality of teaching and learning and standards of pupils' work are monitored very carefully. A very effective team of teachers and teaching assistants share their planning. Excellent professional development in school has led to inventive teaching and innovative curriculum

planning. Every opportunity is taken in other subjects, registration time and assemblies to develop pupils' language and literacy skills. There has been a thorough analysis of strengths and weaknesses that has led to a very significant rise in standards. One area left for improvement is to continue to plan for more opportunities for pupils to develop their ICT skills in English. Improvement since the previous inspection is excellent.

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

50. There are excellent opportunities for pupils to use language and literacy skills across the curriculum. Such opportunities are an integral part of the teachers' planning and lessons across all subjects incorporate some aspect of language and literacy. The strength of this approach means that pupils are continuously using and developing these skills throughout the day, and in turn make such rapid progress.

## **MATHEMATICS**

The provision in mathematics is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Planning is very good, enabling pupils of all abilities to make excellent progress.
- High quality teaching and excellent assessment procedures are the reasons for pupils attaining very high standards.
- ICT is not used enough to support pupils' learning.

### **Commentary**

51. Standards in mathematics in Years 1 and 2 are very high. Standards were well above average in the most recent national test results, and in the previous year, they were in the top five per cent nationally. There is a sustained trend of high standards in mathematics. The school's test results over time show a steady trend of improvement, with no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls. Inspection evidence found achievement of the higher, average and lower attaining pupils to be excellent.
52. Excellent achievement is ensured through a very good curriculum that is firmly based on the National Numeracy Strategy. It has been adapted and modified to meet the wide range of needs within the school. The streaming is very effective and stretches the higher attaining pupils, but gives those of lower ability the space and attention to consolidate their skills.
53. Teaching is consistently very good and some excellent teaching was observed during the inspection. Outstanding features of the teaching are the planning, high expectations and the way in which teachers use resources to make learning fun.
54. In an excellent lesson, a lower attaining group of pupils made excellent progress. The pupils came to the front of the class in pairs where there was a washing line, with number cards pegged to it in random order up to twenty. Supported by the teacher and others in the group, each pair worked sensibly to unscramble the numbers and

put them in sequence. The high quality teaching and planning created a classroom atmosphere that was conducive to learning and where pupils felt valued and wanted to learn. Excellent use of resources such as the digital whiteboard, number cards, washing line and pegs helped to make learning fun. The high expectations and enthusiasm of the teacher were infectious and resulted in pupils working well together and making excellent progress in their learning.

55. Teaching assistants are valued highly, for example in their contribution towards organising and making resources for the pupils. They show great care for the pupils and work closely with the teachers. They all have clearly identified roles and make a significant contribution to lessons. Assessment is excellent and is used for target setting and to inform teachers' planning; it is the key to why teaching is of such a high quality. Pupils are assessed on entry and their progress tracked rigorously as they move through the school. The teachers' assessments are very accurate and clearly identify strengths and areas for improvement. The day-to-day assessments and marking are also excellent and help pupils to improve their work. Questions such as, "Why is it that...?" and "What do you think...?" are helping pupils to assess their own work, become more analytical and develop problem solving skills.
56. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The co-ordinator is new to the school, but has quickly come to grips with the role and developed a very good action plan. She is very aware that, although the use of ICT is satisfactory, it requires further emphasis and embedding in teachers' planning.
57. There has been very good progress since the last inspection; standards have risen significantly and the school is maintaining this upward trend.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

58. The use of mathematics across the curriculum is excellent. During the inspection pupils studying the Great Fire of London were developing a sense of chronology and sequencing events leading up to the fire. For example, "Firstly the fire started in a baker's shop in Pudding Lane and secondly....!" Classes are encouraged to use and develop their mathematical skills at registrations by calculating the numbers having school dinners and packed lunches.

### **SCIENCE**

The provision in science is **excellent**.

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

- An excellent practical curriculum encourages pupils to develop a sense of enquiry.
- Excellent assessment and very good teaching result in pupils attaining very high standards.
- There are occasionally missed opportunities to use ICT as part of the science curriculum.

### **Commentary**

59. Standards in science are very high. The school has maintained a steady trend of improvement since the last inspection. Compared with similar schools nationally, the school is in the top five per cent. Lesson observations, the scrutiny of pupils' work and the tracking of their progress confirmed the very high standards are being sustained, through the commitment of the teachers and the challenging targets set.
60. The main reasons for the very high standards attained by pupils are the high expectations of staff and an excellent practical curriculum that gives pupils the opportunities to develop predictive and investigative skills. The pupils find science fun and respond to the challenging practical work with obvious enjoyment and endeavour. Overall, pupils' achievement is excellent. Work is adapted and modified very well for the different groups of pupils. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls.
61. The procedures for assessing pupils' progress have improved significantly since the last inspection and are now excellent. Assessment is rigorous; it is used to inform teaching and learning and for target setting. Pupils are developing their own evaluation techniques and are able to question and explore situations by thinking more deeply about investigations. The very good quality teaching encourages them to do this, for example, in one lesson the teacher asked the pupils what they had enjoyed about the work and how they felt they could improve. Teachers take every opportunity to develop and reinforce key scientific language and there is excellent extension of literacy skills.
62. There were examples of excellent teaching and learning. With some trepidation, pupils in Year 1 lined up in the corridor and tiptoed into the darkened bat cave – classroom. This excellent use of role play was highly effective in helping pupils to express their feelings when encountering the strange atmosphere and darkness of a bat cave. Probing questioning and the high expectations of the teachers encouraged vocabulary such as 'frightened', 'puzzled', 'alone' and 'confused'. Their responses were recorded on the cave drawing on a digital whiteboard. These key words were saved so that they could be used in a literacy lesson the next day. This set the scene for pupils to learn more about animals, their environment and what they need in order to survive.
63. Teaching assistants are of a high quality and they work seamlessly with the teachers, at times assessing pupils' responses when teaching is in progress and at other times taking small groups of pupils. Subject leadership is excellent; the monitoring of teaching and curriculum planning has led to a steady trend of improvement and very high attainment. ICT is an area the school has some concerns about; they are aware better use could be made of ICT to support pupils' learning. Excellent progress has been made since the last inspection; the school is regarded locally as a centre of excellence.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

The provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards in ICT are rising rapidly with the appointment of a new subject leader.

- There are missed opportunities for pupils to use ICT across other subjects of the curriculum.
- Teachers' ICT skills are in some instances insecure and new equipment is not always used fully.

## **Commentary**

64. Throughout the school standards in ICT are average, though rising rapidly, and achievement is satisfactory overall. The newly appointed subject leader has developed an appropriate strategy for further improvements, and staff training is happening regularly in order to refine teachers' ICT skills, knowledge and expertise. In the lessons observed during the inspection, pupils achieved well. Pupils enjoy using ICT, but they are not always having sufficient opportunities to develop their skills. Some discrete teaching has recently been introduced to improve pupils' keyboard skills and their understanding of different programs. ICT is included regularly as part of the timetable, and there are appropriate plans to improve the subject.
65. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, and there were examples of good teaching observed during the inspection. The teachers are starting to help pupils use the Internet and the new digital whiteboards. They use laptop computers very well for planning and there is much evidence of good quality labelling on classroom displays. Digital cameras are being very well used to record pupils' achievements. However, there are a number of training needs regarding the use of the new technology; for example the digital video camera and for some staff the new digital whiteboards. There has been a significant increase in resources and the school is now well equipped. The school would like to have a computer room, but space is limited and any new initiative requires careful planning. Teachers and support staff are pursuing training as a matter of urgency, and taking responsibility to share their skills, support one another and ensure they gain more confidence in the process.
66. Assessment is an area that, although satisfactory, does not compare with the excellent assessment in the other core subjects. There are basic procedures for assessing the pupils' ICT skills, though tracking of how those skills develop over time is yet to be fully established and implemented.
67. The management of ICT is satisfactory. The subject leader is new to the school and is very keen to move the subject on. She has the full backing and support of the headteacher and senior management. In the past, the relatively small staff team has not had the capacity to develop the subject to the level it hoped for, due to limitations in staff expertise and ICT knowledge. This relative weakness is being addressed as a matter of urgency by the school. The staff are very willing to learn new skills and are anxious that the provision for ICT should match that in the other core subjects. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

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

68. The use of ICT is starting to be planned in different subjects, but this work is underdeveloped. During the inspection the Internet was used effectively by pupils in Year 2 to research key facts about the 'Great Fire of London'. Another good example

observed was use of the digital whiteboard in a mathematics lesson. Year 1 pupils used 'drop and drag' skills to gain a better understanding of applying their mathematical knowledge – using different amounts of money to purchase items on a shopping list.

## **HUMANITIES**

History was inspected in full. Religious education was not inspected as there were no lessons during the inspection. The subject is taught in a block at different times during the term, and at this stage of the year no pupils' work was available for scrutiny. Geography was not inspected.

### **History**

The provision for history is **excellent**.

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

- An excellent variety of teaching styles and resources stimulate pupils' interest in the past so that they want to learn more.
- The use of drama is highly effective in helping pupils' understanding of history.

### **Commentary**

69. Standards are well above average, and often very high. All pupils achieve very well over time. Higher and average attaining pupils understand about first-hand accounts and primary sources of evidence such as Samuel Pepys' diary, while lower attaining pupils are beginning to understand. Pupils' achievement in the lessons seen was very good because of the range of stimulating teaching methods used.
70. The quality of teaching and learning is excellent. In one lesson, pupils' interest was aroused extensively through the use of drama, pictures and maps, diary extracts, and historical costume. An effective demonstration, using a match, wood and brick, showed precisely why the fire spread so quickly in 17<sup>th</sup> century London. The teacher very effectively assessed pupils' understanding of first-hand evidence during the course of the lesson and encouraged higher attaining pupils to follow up individual lines of enquiry using information books and a website.
71. The learning of Year 2 pupils was greatly enhanced through a series of history and English lessons about the Great Fire of London. A visiting actor in costume enabled them to meet Samuel Pepys face to face, giving them an eye-witness account and where possible answering their questions. Using pictures as a basis, they enacted scenes from the fire and gave a spoken commentary, or interviewed the participants. The teacher also used drama techniques very effectively to demonstrate vividly how the flames spread quickly from building to building and how, by blowing up houses to form fire breaks, the flames no longer had anything to feed on. Matching text and pictures, they were able to sequence the events in chronological order. Then, very well prepared and stimulated, they wrote vivid, extended accounts of their own as if they

had been there. The range of techniques employed was excellent and involved every pupil.

72. History is led very effectively, and assessment of the subject is thorough and excellent, similar to assessment strategies elsewhere in the school.



## **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

Although physical education, art and design, music, and design and technology were not inspected as discrete subjects, there were many examples where skills that would normally be observed in these lessons were being developed very effectively in the core subjects of English and mathematics.

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

Personal, social and health education and citizenship were sampled.

73. The school's excellent atmosphere for learning ensures that every individual matters and their specific personal and social skills given careful consideration. Pupils learn from an early age that they are respected, and that their views and opinions are taken very seriously. Pupils learn to look out for one another both in and around the school. Their PSHE skills are developed extensively, for example through including and involving them in all aspects of school life. In particular, pupils are helped to reflect regularly on their learning, and to find ways, together with adults, whereby they may learn and achieve more. The school's highly innovative ways of involving the pupils in their education mean they are learning vital skills for life and their future education. This atmosphere creates a genuine sense of family and harmony throughout the school.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

