

INSPECTION REPORT

HALEBANK C E PRIMARY SCHOOL

Widnes

LEA area: Halton

Unique reference number: 111244

Headteacher: Mr P Freeman

Lead inspector: Mr M Thompson

Dates of inspection: 10th – 12th January 2005

Inspection number: 266945

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: Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils: 4 to 11 years
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 62

School address: Heathview Road
Widnes
Cheshire
Postcode: WA8 8UZ

Telephone number: 0151 424 4878
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Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of governors: Miss Kathleen Williams

Date of previous inspection: 18th January 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Halebank CE Primary School is a small urban school located close to an industrial estate on the outskirts of Widnes. Almost all of its pupils are of white, British heritage. More than a third have special educational needs, a proportion which is well above the national average. The nature of pupils' special needs includes social and emotional, behavioural, speech and communication, and learning difficulties. The number on roll has been declining for several years and is now little more than half what it was at the time of the last inspection. For the most part, this is because the local population now contains a large number of families whose children have grown up in the area but are no longer of primary school age. Within the group of families with young children, a significant number are highly mobile. The home circumstances of pupils are below average overall, and about a third are eligible for free school meals. The attainment of children on entry to the school at the start of the Reception Year varies because of year-on-year fluctuations within the small groups admitted. In general, it is below average. However, attainment on entry overall is well below average. This is because about half of the pupils who move into the school during the course of each year have special educational needs.

The school received a national Achievement Award in 2003.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2537 2	Mike Thompson	<i>Lead inspector</i>	Special educational needs Mathematics Science Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology Physical education
9388	Anthony Mundy	<i>Lay inspector</i>	
2629 2	Helen Mundy	<i>Team inspector</i>	Foundation Stage Curriculum English Geography History Music Personal, social and health education and citizenship Religious education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Halebank Primary School provides a **satisfactory standard of education** for its pupils, and gives satisfactory value for money. Teaching, leadership and management are satisfactory. Despite unfavourable circumstances, and the fact that a large number of pupils arrive or leave during the course of each year, the school ensures that its pupils make reasonable progress overall.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils achieve well in mathematics and attain average standards by the end of Year 6.
- Standards are below the national average in English and science.
- The curriculum for children in the Reception Year is unsatisfactory.
- The school is very good at developing pupils' social skills. Pupils are very well behaved, relate very well to one another, and are very interested in school life.
- The school's provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is well managed. These pupils, who comprise more than a third of the number on roll, achieve well.
- The curriculum in science and some non-core¹ subjects fails to ensure that pupils' skills are developed in a step-by-step way as they move through the school.
- Attendance rates are below the national average.
- All the members of staff know the pupils very well and take good care of them.

The school has made steady progress since its last inspection. Comparisons between the school as it is now and as it was at the time of the last inspection need to be treated with some caution because the way in which pupils are grouped into classes has significantly changed as the number on roll has fallen. One of the consequences of these changes is the unsatisfactory provision for children in the Foundation Stage. This has occurred because the youngest children are now in the same class as all the pupils from Years 1 and 2. Overall, the quality of teaching is not as good as it was, because expectations are now higher than they were. Improvements have been made in the provision for information and communication technology (ICT); as a result, standards have improved and are now average. Standards of pupils' behaviour, and their attitudes towards school, have improved, but attendance rates have declined. Issues for improvement, set out in the previous inspection report, have been addressed satisfactorily.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Owing to the small size of the groups of pupils tested, the results in the table below need to be treated with some caution, because the performance of individual pupils can disproportionately affect the overall grade for any subject. When the school's performance is viewed as a whole over the past four years, steady progress has been achieved.

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004

¹ The non-core subjects are subjects other than English, mathematics and science.

English	D	C	D	B
Mathematics	C	D	E	C
Science	C	E	D	B

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

Inspection findings show that, overall, **pupils achieve satisfactorily**. Standards of attainment on entry are well below average overall because of the high proportion of pupils with SEN who join the school between Years 1 and 6. The standards attained by children starting in the Reception Year are better, but below average. Because of the present organisation of classes and the weaknesses in provision, the children currently in the Reception Year are not doing as well as they should. In relation to the goals expected for the early stages of children's development, standards are below average. Despite much uneven development throughout Years 1 to 6, achievement is satisfactory overall. In Year 2, standards are below average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. In Year 6, they are below average in English and science. In all classes, standards in ICT and religious education are average. Standards are rising in music, following the appointment of a specialist teacher, but pupils still have much to do to reach the levels expected in Years 2 and 6. No judgements were made about standards in other subjects.

Overall, pupils' **personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is very good**. Their attitudes towards learning are also very good. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good overall. Attendance is unsatisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides an uneven, but satisfactory quality of education for its pupils.

Teaching is satisfactory overall. It is unsatisfactory in the Foundation Stage but satisfactory in Years 1 to 6. In all classes, teachers insist on high standards of behaviour. They relate very well to their pupils and create a climate in which their pupils can learn satisfactorily. One of the school's strengths is its work with its higher than average proportion of pupils with SEN. These pupils make good progress, particularly when withdrawn from class for lessons with a specialist teacher. Overall, assessment is satisfactory. Teachers generally mark their pupils' work well and ensure that pupils correct their mistakes. However, in science and some of the non-core subjects, planning focuses on the activities to be taught rather than the skills to be developed; as a result, teachers do not always know precisely what their expectations should be for the different year groups. This in turn leads to weaknesses in assessment. The curriculum is satisfactory, except for the Foundation Stage. Planning for the Reception Year is largely driven by the needs of pupils in Year 2 and is not effective in providing suitable activities for the youngest children. Not enough emphasis is placed on creating opportunities for pupils to practise and develop through other subjects the skills they are taught in literacy. The school provides well for the care, welfare and safety of its pupils. Relationships with parents are satisfactory, but the school has to work hard to overcome the lack of active support by parents for their children's education. Links with the community and local schools are satisfactory.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, the **leadership and management of the school are satisfactory at all levels**. The leadership given by the headteacher is satisfactory. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and provide satisfactory governance. In some areas of the curriculum, key staff do not monitor the provision rigorously enough. All legal requirements are properly met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have positive views of the school. Pupils feel proud of their school and enjoy the work that they do.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise standards in English by providing better opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy skills in other subjects, and to improve their skills as independent writers.
- Ensure that the curriculum and assessment in science and the non-core subjects focus more clearly on the development of pupils' skills.
- Ensure that children in the Reception Year receive their entitlement to fully integrated programme of practical learning, both indoors and out, as required of the Foundation Stage.
- Increase levels of attendance.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

With the exception of the youngest children, the achievement of the majority of pupils is satisfactory. Boys and girls generally achieve equally well. Standards in Reception are below average in relation to the goals expected of children in the Foundation Stage. By the end of Years 2 and 6, standards are average in mathematics but below average in English and science.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The way in which the curriculum is planned for children in the Reception Year results in their unsatisfactory achievement.
- The vocabulary and general knowledge of a significant number of pupils are limited. They do not express themselves clearly when speaking or in their written work, and they often read without fully understanding the text.
- Pupils with SEN achieve well overall.

Commentary

1. No great reliance can be placed on the national test data as an indicator of the school's effectiveness. The number of pupils taking the tests at the end of Years 2 and 6 can fluctuate considerably from year to year, and is often small. Conclusions drawn from the results achieved in a single year may be unreliable because the performance of a single pupil can have a disproportionate effect on the school's overall performance. For example, in 2004 the school failed to achieve its targets for the performance of pupils in Year 6 in English and mathematics. The shortfall, which was significant in percentage terms, reflected the impact of the performance of two pupils. An alternative approach of looking at trends in the school's performance over the past few years is similarly unreliable because of the large number of pupils joining and leaving the school during the course of each year. For these reasons, the test data normally included in this section of the report have been omitted.

2. Three key factors have an impact on the school's performance:

- the on-going decline in the number on roll has resulted in the need to reduce the number of classes and, therefore, staffing levels. This has meant that the organisation of year groups into classes is now different from what it was last year, and the range of expertise among teaching staff has been reduced. Both of these features adversely affect the delivery of the curriculum;
- owing to the high turnover of pupils during the course of each year, the overall attainment of individual year groups changes over time;
- the arbitrary nature of the distribution of pupils with learning difficulties has resulted in wide variations in the overall attainment of year groups. For example, six of the ten pupils in Year 5, but only two of the eleven pupils in Year 6, have SEN.

3. The school copes well with the high turnover of pupils, and newcomers settle in quickly and achieve satisfactorily. The attainment of some pupils is affected by their home

circumstances, particularly where punctuality and regular attendance are not considered by parents to be important. The school's systems to address these issues need to be improved.

4. Pupils' lack of experience and poor general knowledge also affect their attainment. For instance, a number of the pupils who were heard reading had limited understanding of parts of their books, despite the fact that the text was at an appropriate level in terms of its technical difficulty. Responses to teacher's questions are generally brief, and pupils' explanations of what they are doing are rarely developed in any depth.

5. In the Reception Year, children's achievement is unsatisfactory because the curriculum is planned and taught in such a way that they do not receive their full entitlement to the high-quality activities which integrate the six areas of learning for young children at the Foundation Stage. This occurs because the presence of Year 2 pupils in the same class, for the first time, is placing very different demands on the way in which the class is taught. The school has tried to resolve these conflicting demands, but the way in which it is trying to integrate the very different curricula involved is not working. This is because:

- the timing of activities for the children in the Reception group is too often determined by the time needed for teaching the pupils in Years 1 and 2;
- the activities for children in the Reception group are over-directed by adults;
- the way in which the classroom is planned and the day is organised does not give children enough opportunities to choose and explore both indoor and outdoor learning opportunities.

6. Weaknesses in the Foundation Stage curriculum are amply illustrated by the fact that observations of activities in the Reception Year provided very limited evidence of three areas of learning: physical development, creative development, and knowledge and understanding of the world.

7. The results of the most recent national tests for Year 6 show the impact that the large number of pupils with SEN have on standards. In English, mathematics and science the proportion of pupils attaining the national target of Level 4 was either below or well below average. In addition, the proportion of pupils who exceeded Level 4 was also below or well below average in English and science. Inspection findings broadly reflect these results in English and science. However, in mathematics, the proportion of pupils likely to achieve or exceed the nationally expected level is about in line with the national average. This is because of differences in the groups of pupils compared, and also because the good teaching in mathematics, which is based on a good curriculum and sound planning, provides suitably challenging work for pupils of all levels of attainment. As a result, pupils achieve well. In English and science, potentially higher attaining pupils are not always challenged sufficiently. In science, this is due to weaknesses in the curriculum; higher-attaining pupils are frequently given the same tasks as all other pupils in their class. This is also evident in subjects such as geography and history. In science, this weakness is linked to the use of photocopied worksheets which limit opportunities for potentially higher attaining pupils to record their answers independently and at greater length. In most subjects, more opportunities need to be planned for pupils to apply the skills learned in English when recording their work.

8. The good achievement of pupils with SEN is due to good leadership by the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO). Good assessment means that these pupils' precise needs are well known and are effectively met in lessons, particularly those taught by the specialist teacher.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Very good attitudes and behaviour contribute significantly to pupils' achievements. Their personal qualities are quickly developed by very good provision for moral and social education. Standards in each of these aspects have been maintained or improved since the previous inspection. Attendance was unsatisfactory in the school year 2003/04, and has deteriorated since the previous inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are very keen to take part in lessons and other activities.
- Pupils fulfil the school's high expectations of behaviour and courtesy.
- In mixed-age classes, pupils of widely differing ages work and play amicably together.
- Attendance is below the national average.

Commentary

9. Most pupils in all year groups enjoy school and cheerfully do their best in academic and informal activities. Their very good attitudes and behaviour contribute significantly to the ethos of the school and to the quality of learning in all classes. In all year groups, pupils are often required to sit patiently for extended periods when listening to their teachers' explanations and instructions. They answer questions politely, but briefly, and sometimes offer relevant suggestions and ideas. Pupils are very proud of the school environment, and they take care of the building and of the resources available to them.

10. All adults in the school are good role models, and pupils emulate their courtesy and thoughtfulness. Pupils' behaviour is usually very good in classrooms and in the open areas of the school. All relationships are very good, and pupils have no concerns about bullying. They know that occasional reported incidents are quickly investigated and resolved. Last year, two pupils with acute SEN were excluded for fixed periods as part of a strategy for the management of their behaviour, which had been agreed with the local education authority.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
65	6	

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

11. Pupils are involved in a variety of everyday duties in their classrooms, and as representatives on the school council. Last year, the council successfully completed and submitted to the local authority a successful bid for funding playground improvements. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have whole-school responsibilities, such as being lunchtime monitors, play leaders and librarians. Pupils in all year groups contribute to the school's recycling and garden development projects.

12. Pupils' moral and social development is very good. They are encouraged to consider the welfare of others, and always to do what is right rather than what is expedient. Volunteers in Year 6 dependably balance cash and stock from playtime snack sales, and pupils have no fears of their own cash or possessions being misappropriated. Although pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory, they are rarely invited to reflect upon events, or to respond to music and art. Class visits to a theatre, a farm and an environmental project

give support to curriculum work, but teachers do not systematically encourage pupils' additional research or learning at home. Pupils have satisfactory understanding of western culture. Although a recent multicultural day explored some aspects of Indian customs, pupils have limited understanding of non-western cultures, and the school has few artifacts, displays or links which acknowledge the diversity of society outside the local area.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (92.2%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.7%	School data	0.1%
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 (2003/4).

13. Although attendance was unsatisfactory in the academic year 2003/04, the overall figure was distorted by the repeated absences of three pupils, constituting some five per cent of the roll in this small school. These pupils, presenting acute medical conditions or SEN, have now left the school.

Additionally, a small number of families did not fulfil the legal requirement of ensuring their children's regular attendance, and many families acquiesced in occasional absences. Most of these pupils are still on roll. During the inspection, attendance and punctuality were satisfactory.

14. The school's procedures for ensuring regular and prompt attendance are unsatisfactory. Many pupils transferring to Halebank have already developed poor attendance habits. The school does not have a coherent policy to guide pupils, parents and staff in sustaining regular attendance. For example, the headteacher and secretary are jointly responsible for contacting families on the first day of unexplained absence, but the balance of responsibilities is unclear. Daily and weekly monitoring of attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory. For instance, parents arriving late with their children for morning school are not systematically approached on the matter, or required to sign in at the office.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is satisfactory overall, but provision for children in the Foundation Stage is unsatisfactory. The school provides good quality care for all its pupils.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but the teaching provided for children in the Foundation Stage is unsatisfactory. Assessment is satisfactory overall but is unsatisfactory in the Foundation Stage.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching does not meet the needs of children in the Reception Year.
- Teaching is consistently good in mathematics and satisfactory in other subjects.
- Teachers manage their pupils very well and have high expectations of their behaviour.
- While assessment is satisfactory overall, it is unsatisfactory in science and needs to be improved in the non-core subjects.
- Pupils with SEN are taught well by a specialist teacher.

Commentary

15. The school satisfactorily meets the needs of pupils through its teaching. The quality of teaching is not as good as that seen at the time of the previous inspection, because expectations are now higher than they were.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 15 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	0	6	7	2	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

16. The reduction in the school roll, and the inevitable reorganisation of classes, has resulted in inappropriate teaching methods being used with children in the Reception Year. Teaching is too formal and is not closely linked to detailed assessments. Activities are not clearly differentiated to match the needs of individuals. A good feature of teaching for these children is the teamwork of the staff concerned.

17. Where teaching is good, teachers have secure knowledge of what they have to teach. They make their lessons interesting through their clear explanations and the crisp pace of their dialogue with pupils. Another important feature of these lessons is the way in which the challenge presented to pupils is carefully 'layered', and is gradually increased as the lesson develops. All teachers manage their pupils well and relate very well to them. As a result, pupils behave very well during lessons and have very good attitudes to their work. A further good feature of teaching is the use made of interactive whiteboards² to enhance explanations and clarify learning, particularly during the introduction to lessons.

18. Teaching in mathematics is particularly effective. This is because the curriculum provides a clear structure to lessons, and information from the assessment of pupils is used well. As a result, all pupils within the mixed-age classes are given achievable challenges at a level appropriate to their age and individual stage of development. In addition, the teaching of skills in numeracy is generally good. Teaching and assessment in English are satisfactory overall and, within lessons, the teaching of skills in literacy is of an acceptable standard. Although teaching of basic skills in science is satisfactory, it is not making enough of an impact on standards because of weaknesses in assessment, which themselves result from weaknesses in the curriculum. A detailed scrutiny of samples of pupils' previously completed work showed that, in this subject, teachers frequently provide all pupils with the same basic task. This method of working relies on the activity being pitched at an average level, with lower-attaining pupils being given extra help to cope with the task, and higher-attaining pupils being expected to produce higher quality or a greater quantity of work. In these circumstances, the teacher is unable to fully control the outcomes of the task, and not all pupils achieve as well as they might.

19. Learning is satisfactory overall. Boys and girls alike take pride in their work. Their books are usually very neat, well organised and attractive. Pupils try hard, and generally work well together.

20. Pupils with SEN are taught well when withdrawn from lessons for work in small groups with a specialist teacher. In these sessions, work is well matched to meet pupils' needs; basic skills are well taught and there are high expectations of what each individual is capable of achieving. Anything less than a pupil's best effort is not accepted. Good use is

² These are large boards on which the screen display from a computer is projected. The technology enables the user to control the images on screen by touching it.

made of individual learning plans to produce short-term targets which are challenging but achievable, and these are reviewed regularly. In class, teaching for pupils with SEN is satisfactory. Teachers are fully aware of the needs of these pupils and ensure that they are fully involved in the activities provided for them.

21. A recently appointed specialist teaches music lessons to all classes, and the teaching seen was good. Although it has yet to have an impact on pupils' attainment, this arrangement benefits all members of the school community because it provides much-needed expertise, and pupils enjoy very good continuity in their learning.

22. The needs of pupils who arrive during the course of each year are quickly and satisfactorily identified. They are quickly integrated into their new classes, and the high proportion with SEN are given effective help.

23. Teachers generally mark their pupils' work well. The most effective marking gives pupils clear information about why they are doing well and ideas about how to improve their work. Corrections are generally used well in mathematics to help pupils to learn from their mistakes.

24. Assessment in the non-core subjects is satisfactory in that the requirement for teachers to make an annual 'best fit' judgement about pupils' attainment is met. However, assessment in some of these subjects, such as art and design and design and technology, focuses too much on coverage of topics rather than on how well pupils acquire skills. The weaknesses in assessment in the non-core subjects, which stem from weaknesses in the curriculum, make it difficult for teachers to provide different levels of challenge for pupils of different ages and abilities within their mixed-age classes. A scrutiny of pupils' work showed that this is generally the case.

The curriculum

The curriculum, accommodation and resources are satisfactory for pupils in Years 1 to 6, but are unsatisfactory for children in the Foundation Stage. Comparisons with the curriculum in operation at the time of the previous inspection cannot be made because of the significant changes which have occurred in the organisation of classes as a result of a decline in the number on roll.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The Foundation Stage does not have a unique identity within the combined Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 classroom. As a result, children in the Reception Year do not have full access to the six areas of learning.
- The curriculum in mathematics is good.
- Planning in science, and in several of the non-core subjects, has not been adapted well enough to accommodate the needs of pupils of different ages and stages of academic development.
- Provision for pupils with SEN is good.

Commentary

25. The school's falling roll and consequent staff redundancies have made necessary a major reorganisation of the school into three mixed-age classes. In Class 1, children of Reception age are currently grouped with pupils in Years 1 and 2. Class 2 comprises pupils in Years 3 and 4, and Class 3 combines pupils in Years 5 and 6.

26. The school satisfactorily implements the national strategies for literacy and numeracy, and teachers have a sound knowledge of these subjects. The mathematics curriculum,

supported by a good scheme of work, provides effective challenges for pupils of all levels of attainment.

27. Planning for science, history, geography, art and design, and design and technology is largely based on activities, and does not focus enough on the step-by-step development of pupils' skills as they move from one year group to the next. In each class, pupils of different ages and levels of attainment work on the same tasks at much the same levels. This form of planning undervalues the importance of teachers' assessments of pupils' achievements. Planning alone does not provide teachers with specific enough guidance about what is to be expected of pupils in each year group.

28. In Class 1, teaching duties are equitably shared between two part-time teachers and a nursery nurse. The school's conscientious attempts to plan an integrated curriculum for the three year-groups in the class do not meet the needs of the children in Reception. For example, the national strategies for literacy and numeracy have not been adapted to link with the 'Stepping Stones' and Early Learning Goals. Additionally, play activities for children in Reception lack specific purpose. Accommodation for children in Reception is unsatisfactory because the organisation of the shared classroom is matched largely to the needs of pupils in Years 1 and 2. Outdoor accommodation for children in Reception is not easily accessible and is significantly under-resourced in, for example, large fixed equipment and wheeled toys.

29. The school's ethos and values promote equality of opportunity for all its pupils and ensure that overall they are fully included in all aspects of school life. The curriculum for pupils with SEN is good. Procedures for the early identification of pupils' needs are sound and effective. Individual education plans (IEPs) for these pupils are clear and detailed.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides good care for all pupils, and satisfactory guidance to improve their academic work. Pupils have adequate opportunities to express their views and to influence school life. The quality of academic support and guidance has deteriorated since the previous inspection, but standards in all other aspects have been maintained or improved.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have very good, trusting relationships with staff, and feel secure and comfortable in school.
- Staff have not recently been trained in child protection procedures.

Commentary

30. Pupils of all ages receive a warm welcome when starting at Halebank. A good induction system settles children into their Reception Year. Pupils joining other year groups settle quickly and happily into the school's routines. They are secure in a clean and carefully maintained environment, where good policies for health and safety, child protection and behaviour management promote high standards of welfare. The headteacher is responsible for child protection. He is alert to possible issues, but neither he nor the staff have received recent training. The school has adequate procedures for verifying that current and prospective staff are not prohibited from working with children.

31. At a friendly and well organised breakfast club, pupils select from a pay-as-you-go buffet, and enjoy a variety of food, drink and conversation before morning school. Pupils

are becoming aware of the importance of healthy eating, and the school is working towards a 'Healthy Schools' award. School lunches are of exceptionally good quality.

32. Teachers and other adults have good knowledge of pupils' personal development, and satisfactory knowledge of their academic development. Beginning in the Reception Year, work from each pupil is collated into an individual 'Family Book' of art and original writing about the family and other topics. Pupils in the upper school are fascinated to observe how their work develops as they move through the school. Awards and additional samples of 'best work' are saved in individual records of achievement. Family books and records of achievement are presented to pupils when they leave the school in Year 6.

33. Each day, teachers and midday assistants award stickers for good work, effort or helpfulness. Exceptional achievement in school-citizenship or attendance is rewarded each term with an attractive certificate and a photographic portrait on an honours panel in the entrance hall. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good, and pupils confidently ask for help with academic or personal difficulties. However, academic target setting does not contribute enough to pupils' attainment.

34. All pupils are satisfactorily involved in the life of the school. They complete occasional questionnaires on a variety of topics, and staff immediately review their ideas and suggestions. Pupils significantly influenced a redesign of the playground. The school council meets occasionally, with their discussions chaired and minuted by pupils in Year 6. Pupils know that the council discusses their concerns and promotes their ideas for the school's development.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's satisfactory relationships with parents, other schools and the community contribute adequately to pupils' achievements. Standards in each of these aspects have been maintained since the previous inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Although satisfactory overall, the annual written reports to parents could be improved.
- The support of a local secondary school in providing help with design and technology is much appreciated.

Commentary

35. Parents are passively supportive of the school, but few volunteer as classroom helpers or leaders of extra-curricular activities. An *ad hoc* committee of parents, friends and staff organizes occasional social events and a weekly fund-raising draw.

36. Regular newsletters for parents provide satisfactory information about dates and events. The school website is in the early stages of development. The combined prospectus and governors' annual report to parents meets statutory requirements and includes much useful additional information about the school. At two consultation meetings each year parents are invited to discuss their children's progress, and they are welcomed informally at other times. Annual written reports are satisfactory, clearly describing the work completed by each year group but rarely indicating to parents how their children's attainment could be improved. There are also weaknesses in the quality of reporting pupils' attainment in some of the non-core subjects, as outlined in the art and design section of this report. Good features of the provision for reporting to parents are the separate written reports for all pupils who receive extra help from the specialist teacher for SEN, and the teacher's attendance at parent-teacher meetings.

37. Links with local schools are satisfactory. Pupils regularly visit a local secondary school, where they benefit from advanced resources and specialist teaching in design and technology. Halebank provides good support for trainee teachers, further education students and secondary school students on work experience programmes.

38. Satisfactory links with the community make a steady contribution to pupils' learning. The school hosts occasional social events and a popular bi-annual exhibition of local

history. Regular and occasional visitors include a minister from the local church, local historians, theatrical and musical groups, and a community policeman. Local businesses provide some donations and sponsorships. Multicultural, multi-ethnic and international links are significantly underdeveloped.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher's leadership is satisfactory. Leadership provided by key members of staff varies, but is satisfactory overall. Governance is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for mathematics and for SEN is well led and managed.
- The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are unsatisfactory.
- Staff work well as a team.
- In general, teachers' skills in monitoring their areas of responsibility need to be improved.

Commentary

39. The headteacher gives competent leadership. He shows a strong commitment to the school, and has ensured that the school has made satisfactory progress during a period of instability in staffing, stemming from the continued decline in the number on roll. He is well supported by his deputy, who provides good leadership in her dual roles as co-ordinator for mathematics and SEN. The leadership team monitors the effectiveness of the school satisfactorily, and works hard to address its weaknesses. Issues resulting from the high turnover of pupils are managed well. Under the headteacher's leadership, the school's average performance over the past few years has been generally as good as that of schools in similar circumstances.

40. All staff, teaching and non-teaching, work well as a team. They know their pupils very well, and share a strong commitment to inclusion and to maintaining the 'family' feel and good climate for learning which is evident in all classes. This commitment contributes strongly to the school's very good ethos.

41. The leadership and management of English, science and ICT are satisfactory. Within each of these areas there are specific strengths, such as the work done by the ICT co-ordinator to help improve the subject knowledge of her colleagues. However, there are also weaknesses, recognised by the school, in the quality of monitoring provided by its subject co-ordinators. For example, while the monitoring carried out by the co-ordinator for science has resulted in some improvements in the delivery of lessons, it does not yet focus rigorously enough on the achievement of pupils of different ages within the mixed-age classes. To some extent, this occurs because curriculum plans do not clearly set out what is to be expected of pupils in different year groups.

42. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory in the Foundation Stage. The part-time co-ordinator is aware of the unsatisfactory provision, but her expertise in dealing with a class which now contains three age groups is limited. In addition, she has numerous other responsibilities within this small school. She is very willing to learn, but has great difficulty in locating day-to-day advice on the difficulties relating to the management of the Foundation Stage within the present circumstances. The school is the smallest in the local authority and there are no schools locally with similar class groupings.

43. The management of the school's provision for pupils with SEN is effectively shared because of the very good teamwork of the SENCO and the specialist teacher. They monitor the school's provision well and liaise closely with teachers when the IEPs for pupils

in their classes are written, using a computer program designed specifically for this purpose.

44. Governance of the school is satisfactory. Governors have a strong commitment to the school and successfully fulfil their role as ‘critical friend’ through their monitoring of its work. Many have had a long association with the school and know it well through their day-to-day contact. Governors receive termly reports from the headteacher and meet regularly, both in committees and as a full governing body, to oversee the work of the school and to evaluate progress made. A meeting with representatives of the governing body showed that governors have a good appreciation of the issues facing the school, such as its transient population and falling number on roll. They effectively use information gathered from their monitoring to inform their discussions, and they apply principles of ‘best value’ satisfactorily when making decisions. All legal requirements are properly met.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income*	325,699.00	Balance from previous year	27,246.00
Total expenditure	273,325.00	Balance carried forward to the next	52,374.00
Expenditure per pupil	3,178.00		

* NB: the total income figure includes the balance from the previous year.

45. The information above shows that the amount of funding brought forward into the 2003-4 financial year was well in excess of the national ‘benchmark’ of five per cent. Discussions with the headteacher and governors show that this is the result of prudent planning to enable the school to sustain reasonable staffing levels despite the likely future reduction of per capita funding as a result of the declining number on roll. The carry-forward figure forecast for the end of the current financial year is significantly smaller.

46. The day-to-day administration of the school office is efficient. The secretary’s contribution to the smooth running of the school ensures that teachers are able to focus on their professional duties and are not diverted from their work by administrative tasks.

47. Even though standards overall are below average, pupils are generally doing as well as could reasonably be expected. Although unit costs are higher than average they are not untypical of small schools, and therefore the school gives satisfactory value for money.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for children in the Reception Year is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Under present arrangements the school is unable to teach the six areas of learning effectively.
- Children's attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- The outdoor area does not provide sufficient opportunities for children to exploit the practical activities of the Foundation Stage.

48. At the time of the inspection there were 10 children at the Foundation Stage in the Reception age group, within a class also containing all the pupils in Years 1 and 2. This is a new arrangement resulting from a decline in the number on roll. Teaching is shared between two part-time teachers, one of whom is newly qualified, and a full-time nursery nurse. On the children's entry to the Reception Year, their attainment is below average. These challenging new circumstances have created a significant weakness in the provision for the Foundation Stage. The school is acutely aware of the deficiencies and is working hard to address them.

49. A very narrow range of activities was seen during the inspection because the curriculum for the children at the Foundation Stage is driven largely by the National Curriculum demands for pupils in Years 1 and 2, and particularly Year 2. Sufficient evidence was available to confirm that children's achievement in relation to the Early Learning Goals is unsatisfactory overall, and most are unlikely to attain these goals by the end of the Reception Year. These findings compare unfavourably with those of the previous inspection report, which judged provision to be good and children's achievement to be good, albeit in different circumstances.

50. Teaching is unsatisfactory because the style of teaching is generally too formal, and children are required to sit passively, listening to their teachers for extended periods. Because lessons are often based upon plans for Years 1 and 2, teaching objectives are not linked securely to the Foundation Stage 'Stepping Stones' and Early Learning Goals. Assessment is unsatisfactory. Teachers do not fully understand children's individual strengths and weaknesses, and rarely intervene to correct obvious mistakes.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

51. Achievement is unsatisfactory and standards are below average in this area of learning. Although teachers' management of the children's behaviour is good, teaching is unsatisfactory. The school's satisfactory induction programme welcomes parents and quickly settles their children into the Foundation Stage. Children enjoy school. They have very good attitudes to learning, but their play activities are unrelated to the Early Learning Goals because adults do not understand the essential links between play and work. Often,

children are told to complete their 'work' before starting to 'play'. They quickly respond to established routines and adult expectations. Relationships are very good between children, and between adults and children. While activities often lack clear purpose, children's behaviour is consistently very good as they respond to praise and encouragement from teachers and to the example of Year 1 and Year 2 pupils in their class. All children in the Foundation Stage have a good understanding of right and wrong. They attend whole-school assemblies and take part in reciting the Lord's Prayer.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

52. Achievement is unsatisfactory, as is teaching. Children's skills in speaking and listening are below average. When children respond to questions, adults do not encourage them to answer in complete sentences. Teachers' planning does not include a focus on specific vocabulary to improve children's skills. Children's reading and writing skills are also below average. Those of average attainment can recognise sounds at the beginnings of words but do not apply their knowledge of letter sounds when reading and writing. When writing, they form letters correctly, but teachers write words for them to copy, rather than challenging them to try for themselves. Similarly, when reading aloud to an adult the children are reluctant to apply their emerging phonic knowledge, and they rely on adults responding to moments of hesitation by saying the word for them. Teachers do not maintain good records of individual reading strengths and weaknesses, and their timetable shows that the frequency with which children are heard reading is inadequate.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **unsatisfactory**.

53. Teaching is unsatisfactory in this area of learning. Mathematical development is not integrated with other areas of learning, and mathematical activities are based on a formal scheme that does not promote learning through play. While discussions with children showed that those of average attainment can count objects accurately to 10 and recite numbers to 20, children working in the hall with the nursery nurse sat passively in a formal exercise on number recognition. The nursery nurse did not extend the activity beyond repetitive selection of printed numbers. As a result, children's mathematical skills did not develop in this 30-minute lesson. No evidence was available of activities to develop children's skills in weighing, measuring and problem solving. Children of all levels of attainment understand positional language, such as 'in front of' or 'behind', and demonstrate in simple drawings who is 'taller than' and 'shorter than' in their families. They can identify a few two-dimensional shapes but cannot describe simple properties of shapes.

54. There was not enough evidence available for an overall judgment to be made on standards or provision for **knowledge and understanding of the world**. In their 'post office' and 'grocery shop', children understand that envelopes must be addressed and stamped before posting. They identify, buy and sell a variety of toy fruit, including bananas, apples and pears. Work in their writing books indicates some knowledge of electricity. For example, they know that an iron is heated by electricity. They understand simple computer programs, and know that work on screen can be printed. However, because their use of computers is not monitored, they frequently change programs before completion. During the inspection, no resources were provided to stimulate children's interest and curiosity, or to develop their design and technology skills.

55. There was also insufficient evidence to judge provision or standards in **creative development**. During the inspection, children were not seen working with media such as paints, pastels, adhesives or re-cycled materials. Few activities are planned for children to express themselves creatively. Examples of completed artwork included few of their original ideas.

56. No overall judgement could be made about provision for **physical development**. Children in the Reception group do not have exclusive use of an outdoor area. During the inspection they were not seen engaged in daily outdoor activities typical for this age group, such as riding wheeled toys or climbing and balancing. Although their fine motor skills are satisfactory, planning in this area of learning is weak, and activities are not systematically developed. This is a particular disadvantage for pupils who may have difficulty with fine motor control, for instance in controlling a pencil.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' skills in speaking and listening and reading need to be improved.
- Opportunities for pupils to develop skills as independent writers in other subjects are not generally taken.
- Pupils with SEN make good progress when taught in small groups.
- Pupils' written work is always neatly presented.

Commentary

57. Achievement in English is satisfactory, but standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are below average overall. This represents a decline since the last inspection, when standards were average. However, there has been a similar decline in pupils' attainment on entry to the school.

58. Pupils' skills in speaking and listening are below average. Pupils in all year groups often listen passively to their teachers and their peers. They rarely ask questions in class and often give brief answers to questions asked of them. Class teachers frequently direct questions at all pupils, rather than targeting individuals; they often select from a small number of regular volunteers, while other pupils listen. Pupils rarely give presentations to their peers, take part in debates or address the whole school in assemblies. Plenary sessions, where learning is reviewed at the end of lessons, are not planned in sufficient detail to encourage pupils to talk confidently about their work and respond to their peers' questions. Teachers have recently been trained in the teaching of speaking and listening, but little good practice in this area was seen during the inspection.

59. Reading standards are below average in Years 2 and 6. Although many pupils read competently, their understanding of what they read is often limited. For example, a Year 6 pupil, reading the word 'sentries' in context from the interactive whiteboard, defined it as '*Something to do with time*'. Pupils regularly take home their reading books, but parents and teachers rarely exchange comments in home/school diaries. When reading to an inspector, pupils in Year 2 did not know the meaning of key words such as 'author' or 'illustrator', though they did know the meaning of less common words such as 'blurb'. The school library is a pleasant room, with satisfactory stocks of fiction and reference books. Some Year 6 pupils are enthusiastic library assistants.

60. Standards in writing are below average in Years 2 and 6. Pupils of all ages and levels of attainment take great pride in their work and rarely need reminding to improve their presentation. Handwriting is generally formed correctly, and pupils consistently write the date and heading on each piece of work. High attaining pupils in Year 2 punctuate correctly. They usually spell correctly because either they know a word or they ask the teacher to spell it for them; they rarely experiment or take risks with their work. Pupils of average attainment in Year 6 can name many parts of speech, but they do not always apply them accurately. During the inspection, in a satisfactory lesson for pupils in Year 5 and 6, the teacher set work to meet the needs of pupils of widely differing ages and levels of

attainment. For example, pupils of average attainment improved sentences by adding similes and metaphors, while high attaining pupils discussed the concept of personification³.

³ A form of metaphor in which language relating to humans is used to refer to objects or abstract concepts, for example, '*the weather is smiling on us today*'.

61. The quality of teaching and learning is generally sound. Teachers have good understanding of the National Literacy Strategy. They imaginatively use computer programs to maintain pupils' interest in all aspects of the subject. Assessment is satisfactory overall. Teachers conscientiously mark pupils' work and make specific suggestions for improvement. Target-setting is underdeveloped and has little effect on standards. A priority of the school's development plan is to improve literacy standards in all year groups. However, proposed actions in the current year are not sufficiently rigorous to ensure improvement. For example, staff will not be involved in raising the standards of the poorest readers; this critical function is to be devolved to parent-volunteers.

62. Pupils with SEN make satisfactory progress in the classroom, although the work they are given is not always challenging. They make good progress when withdrawn for regular small-group sessions with a specialist teacher, where work is always carefully matched to the requirements of their IEPs. At the close of each session, the specialist teacher discusses with the class teacher the progress of each pupil.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

63. Opportunities for developing pupils' independence in writing are often missed in history, geography, science and religious education. Written work in books is often identical, regardless of pupils' level of attainment, indicating that much is copied, or based on simple word-filling exercises. On the other hand, literacy lessons are often linked to other curriculum areas. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 have written original play scripts about Theseus and the Minotaur, and have researched information about the Black Death.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and a well-structured curriculum contribute to pupils' good progress.
- Pupils' progress is carefully monitored.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used effectively to support learning.
- The subject is well led and managed.

Commentary

64. Pupils achieve well and make good progress as they move from Year 1 to Year 6. However, because of the disproportionate effect that the attainment of each individual pupil has on the group's overall performance, there are wide variations between the standards of work seen in different year groups. Currently, standards are below average in Year 2. There are proportionately more lower-attaining pupils in this year group than in Year 6, where standards are average. In all year groups, there are not enough pupils of above average attainment.

65. Pupils achieve well because the school is good at ensuring that they develop their skills in a logical and progressive way. There are realisable challenges for pupils of different ages and stages of mathematical development within the mixed-age classes. This occurs

because the curriculum, based on commercially produced materials, enables teachers to construct their lessons around a common theme before setting individual tasks of differing levels of complexity. This method of working means that the teacher's introduction is relevant to all pupils, and that everyone can contribute to the plenary session, where learning is reviewed at the end of the lesson. The curriculum also ensures that pupils periodically revisit different elements of the subject, but at a more advanced level. In this way, new learning is securely based on previous experience.

66. Teaching is consistently good in all classes. Teachers make effective use of the potential of the interactive whiteboards, found in all classes, to help pupils understand the concepts being taught. For example, in a lesson for pupils in Years 3 and 4, pupils took turns using the whiteboard to re-arrange the numbers 32, 46 and 78 in different ways. The answers obtained, such as $32 + 46 = 78$ or $78 - 46 = 32$, helped to make the teaching point that in an addition sum the largest number is always at the end, while in a subtraction it appears at the beginning. These concepts were reinforced as pupils worked on a computer program which used animation techniques to enliven learning.

67. Systems for assessing pupils and tracking their progress are good. Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly. Their marking is effective because it makes pupils aware of precisely what mistakes they have made and sets out clear expectations of the corrections that need to be done. At the same time it encourages pupils to improve by drawing attention to their achievements. As a result of the accuracy of their day-to-day assessments, teachers successfully pitch work at suitably challenging levels for all individuals. In addition, the subject co-ordinator carefully analyses assessment and test results to identify areas where the pupils are not achieving as well as they could, and adjusts the curriculum accordingly. Through these analyses, together with her regular monitoring, the co-ordinator has a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school's provision. The good quality assessment systems also help the co-ordinator to set out clear targets for improvement within the IEPs drawn up for pupils with SEN. These pupils make good progress because, like their classmates, they are given work which is suitably challenging, and also because they are well taught when withdrawn from lessons for individual help.

68. Overall, the school's provision in mathematics is similar to that reported at the time of the previous inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

69. Pupils generally apply their mathematical skills satisfactorily in other subjects. For instance, pupils in Year 2 used graphs to illustrate their work about 'favourite foods'. However, they also have difficulty in recalling some of the concepts which they have previously been taught. For example, in a science lesson for Years 5 and 6 in which pupils were recording their pulse rates, few could remember how to find the average of three numbers and then either 'round up' or 'round down' their answers. Most needed to be prompted by their teacher before successfully completing the task.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Weaknesses in the curriculum have an impact on the way in which the subject is taught and on the quality of teachers' assessments of their pupils.

Commentary

70. Standards are now lower than they were at the time of the previous inspection. They are below average overall in Years 2 and 6 because too few pupils exceed the levels expected nationally for these year groups. However, pupils achieve satisfactorily on the

whole, and make steady progress as they move through the school. While national test results suggest that boys do better than girls in science, this disparity appears to be attributable to individual differences and does not occur as a result of specific weaknesses in provision.

71. Overall, teaching and learning in science are satisfactory. Unfortunately, curriculum planning focuses on the activities to be taught rather than giving teachers clear guidance as to what levels of skills, knowledge and understanding to expect of pupils in each of the different year groups. A scrutiny of pupils' previously completed work confirmed this and showed that all pupils within the mixed-age classes are often given the same tasks to do. In addition, practical and investigative activities are sometimes too directed by teachers and do not give pupils enough opportunities for independent investigation. This became evident in the single lesson observed, which focused on the way in which exercise affects pulse rate. Because everyone had the same task to do, the teacher needed to focus her attention on the younger and lower-attaining pupils, many of whom have SEN, and to lead them through the activity to ensure that they got the most out of it. As a result, these pupils achieved well. Since the activity was pitched at the middle ability range, most other pupils found it to be suitably challenging. However, the very small number of the older higher-attainers made limited gains in learning.

72. The weaknesses in the curriculum are seen in pupils' books in Years 3 to 6. Much of the work recorded is similar, regardless of pupils' ages or relative ability. In Years 1 and 2, photocopied worksheets are used too much. While these sheets help to focus pupils on the scientific principles involved, they limit opportunities for pupils to develop their thinking and writing skills.

73. Assessment is unsatisfactory. Teachers' assessment of their pupils is not underpinned by sufficiently clear 'benchmarks' relating to the quality of the skills developed by individuals by the end of each year.

74. Overall, the leadership and management of science are satisfactory. The subject co-ordinator's monitoring of teaching has resulted in improvements in the way in which learning is reviewed by teachers at the end of lessons, but her monitoring of pupils' books has not been rigorous enough to identify the shortcomings evident during the course of the inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for ICT has improved since the last inspection.
- Resources are good, and are used well.
- Assessment procedures are satisfactory but need to be developed further.

Commentary

75. Owing to the way in which the timetable was arranged, no judgements can be made about the achievement of pupils in Years 1 and 2 or the standards attained in Year 2. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 3 to 6, and standards are average in Year 6. This represents an improvement since the last inspection, when standards were below average.

76. Two lessons were seen, and in each of them ICT skills were directly taught to whole-class groups. One of these lessons was good and the other was satisfactory, the difference being in the quality of the teachers' subject knowledge, evident in the clarity of explanations and ongoing dialogue with the pupils. Good features of both of these lessons were the

teachers' use of the interactive whiteboards to demonstrate techniques and the clear links made with previous learning, which helped to develop pupils' confidence.

77. Many pupils bring a good range of skills from home and readily share them in the classrooms. Almost all pupils show confidence in using the keyboard and mouse to manipulate images on screen. In Year 6, for example, pupils know how to use drop-down menus and Internet search engines.

78. The curriculum has improved since the last inspection. The school uses nationally recommended guidance to ensure that pupils experience a satisfactory range of activities, and has made sure that the equipment available to pupils is of generally good quality. While the ratio of computers to pupils is better than the national average, there are not enough for all pupils in a class to be able to practise skills immediately they have been taught them, and those who do have to share machines. To help overcome this problem, and the difficulties which can arise from it, such as pupils forgetting what they have learned, pupils in Years 5 and 6 write down in a notebook the way in which the program is used. This personal manual then acts as a reminder when their turn comes to use one of the class computers. This good procedure helps to develop pupils' independence in learning while also helping them to improve their skills in note-taking.

79. A more systematic approach to assessment is being developed, but this needs further refinement to ensure that the recording of pupils' progress focuses more on the quality of their work against national standards' criteria rather than on coverage of activities.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

80. Overall, satisfactory use is made of ICT to support learning in other subjects. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 used the Internet to research the life and work of Dr Barnardo as part of their history studies. During a residential visit, they successfully produced graphs to record their findings when using sensors to investigate science topics about light and sound levels and temperature. In all classes, pupils use computers to practise and to enhance their learning in other subjects. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 confidently used a program designed to reinforce their understanding of 'place value' during a mathematics lesson. In Year 3, pupils learned more about badgers through a program which simulates the animal's activities.

HUMANITIES

Religious education

No judgement can be made about the quality of the provision in this subject.

Main strengths and weaknesses

There are no significant strengths or weaknesses.

Commentary

81. Owing to the way in which the timetable was arranged, no teaching was seen in religious education. Three assemblies were seen, all of which were of a religious nature, samples of pupils' previously completed work were scrutinised, and pupils in Years 2 and 6 discussed their work with an inspector.

82. Overall, standards are average, and pupils achieve satisfactorily. Pupils in Year 6 have satisfactory understanding of Christianity. For example, they can explain in detail the meanings of major festivals, and they know the significance of some rituals. However, pupils' knowledge of other religions is less secure. While higher-attaining pupils know some facts about Judaism, and can explain the meanings of 'Torah' and 'yad'⁴, those of average attainment cannot clearly discriminate between the places of worship of major religions. In discussion, pupils of various levels of attainment expressed mature and contrasting views about the place of religion in society. Written work is unsatisfactory in quantity and in content. Although the presentation of work is good, pupils of all levels of attainment produce work of a similar level.

83. Similarly, pupils in Year 2 understand the significance of the Christian cross. They know that the cross is associated with Jesus' death, which is commemorated at Easter, and that it is a prominent feature of churches. Pupils of all levels of attainment know that Christians revere, and read from, the Bible. However, when questioned, they could not recall details of any bible stories. Their writing books include worksheets illustrating symbols of various faiths, but none could recall the name or symbol of any faith. All pupils are thoughtful and considerate. For example, when discussing the meaning of Christmas, and the relevance of gifts, a pupil of below average attainment said, *'The only gift Jesus wants from us is to be good'*.

Geography and history

84. No teaching was seen in **history** and **geography**, and therefore no judgements can be made about provision in these subjects. Although samples of pupils' work were scrutinised and small groups of pupils in Years 2 and 6 discussed their work with an inspector, there is not enough evidence for a firm overall judgement to be reached about standards or achievement.

85. The curriculum in each of these subjects is unsatisfactory because it has not been adapted well enough to meet the needs of pupils of different ages and levels of attainment within the mixed-age classes. As a result, all pupils study the same topic at the same level, because teachers do not have enough information about what to expect of pupils in different year groups in terms of their skills of historical or geographical enquiry. In each of the subjects a range of activities, such as a Year 5 and 6 visit to a 'Victorian classroom', enlivens the curriculum and stimulates pupils' interest. Pupils of all levels of attainment know the importance of trying to find the truth by researching information from several sources, including books and the Internet. However, they recalled little detail of work from previous years, when they studied the Greeks and the Tudors.

86. Pupils in Year 2 have some simplistic knowledge of European countries. For example, they believe that Norway is cold at all times, and that Spain is hot at all times! They understand that maps provide information about locations and distances, although they do not understand other terms such as 'globe'.

87. In all year groups, most work in books is confined to the completion of worksheets and hand-written pages of facts copied from secondary sources. Cross-curricular work is satisfactory. For instance, pupils have completed an attractive collage in the style of Matisse, based on the theme of Theseus and the Minotaur.

⁴ A pointer used when reading the Torah.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design / design and technology

88. No judgements can be made about standards or the quality of provision in art and design or design and technology because no teaching was seen in these subjects; there was also was limited evidence of pupils' previously completed work.

89. The few samples of work available in **art and design** were of average quality in terms of their composition and use of colour, but they showed that pupils are given experience in using a reasonable range of media. Pupils seen at work during part of an art period in the class for Years 5 and 6 showed satisfactory awareness of proportion when producing simple line drawings of one another in 'action' poses. In **design and technology**, satisfactory emphasis is placed on the key elements of designing, making, and evaluating products, as was evident, for example, in a project to make purses in Years 3 and 4. A good feature of provision in this subject is the weekly visit by pupils in Years 5 and 6 to a local secondary school for technology lessons.

90. Curriculum planning in both of these subjects is unsatisfactory. Although it ensures that the required breadth of the curriculum is covered, there are inconsistencies between classes in the amount of time allocated to these subjects. Furthermore, the curriculum has not been adapted sufficiently to reflect the mixed-age groupings in all classes, and planning focuses on the activities to be taught rather than the skills to be developed.

91. The school broadly complies with requirements for assessment in both art and design and design and technology, in that pupils' progress is identified through 'best fit' judgements made and recorded by teachers at the end of each year. However, because of the way in which the curriculum is mapped out, teachers' assessments are based on the topics covered rather than on clear expectations of what pupils in each year group in their class should achieve. The result of this weakness was seen in samples of annual written reports to parents which were scrutinised. In many of these samples, the comments made by teachers were almost identical, regardless of the differences in pupils' ages or relative ability.

92. The school's provision in art and design does not make enough of a contribution to pupils' cultural development because there is no systematic approach to the development of pupils' skills in art appreciation, including use of the work of non-western artists.

Music

93. Only one music lesson was seen in the class for pupils in Years 5 and 6, and the whole school was heard singing in assemblies. Following an extended period when the staff's expertise in music was acknowledged to be inadequate, a specialist music teacher was recently engaged to teach music throughout the school.

94. All indications are that pupils are now making rapid progress but have much to do to attain nationally expected levels in all elements of the subject. The single lesson seen was good. Noteworthy features of this lesson were the teacher's good use of subject-specific vocabulary, clear explanations, and good questions to involve all pupils in an exciting activity to write a musical score. Pupils of average attainment knew the meanings of terms such as 'pitch' and 'tempo', and explained the importance of 'ostinato'⁵. In this lesson, pupils achieved well and made very good gains in their learning. The class teacher was a good role model for pupils, learning alongside them and deeply appreciative of the specialist teacher's skills. Pupils are beginning to benefit from a good self-assessment programme, introduced by the specialist teacher.

95. Singing in assemblies is satisfactory. Pupils in all year groups sing tunefully, although many younger pupils cannot follow the words in verses projected on to a screen. Exhortations for them to sing up are sometimes misplaced; they try their best but lack adult help, such as singing clearly and pointing to words on the screen.

Physical education

96. No judgement can be made about the standards attained or pupils' achievement in **physical education** because no lessons were seen during the course of the inspection.

97. Planning for the curriculum is satisfactory, and the time allocated for this subject in all classes is in line with national recommendations. The school's records show that all pupils

⁵ A repetitive phrase that can be used as an accompaniment.

in Year 6, and most pupils in Year 5, have achieved the standards expected nationally in swimming.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

98. No lessons were seen in this area of the school's work, and no judgements are made about overall provision. Pupils benefit from satisfactory routines to promote their personal development. The breakfast club provides a sociable start to the day, and the good relationships continue in all classes. The programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is good and includes guidance on health, sex, drugs and personal safety. However, pupils do not yet understand the importance of healthy eating. Although school meals are of consistently high quality, commercial playtime snacks available to pupils each day contain high levels of fat and sugar. Good citizenship in school is rewarded with certificates and marked by a prominent display in the reception area.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	4
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	4
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)	2
Attendance	5
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	4
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	4
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4
The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	4
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	4

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