

INSPECTION REPORT

HERMITAGE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Hermitage, Thatcham

LEA area: Berkshire

Unique reference number: 109815

Headteacher: Peta Collicott

Lead inspector: Mr J Earish

Dates of inspection: 1st – 3rd November 2004

Inspection number: 266997

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	106
School address:	Hampstead Norreys Road Thatcham Berkshire
Postcode:	RG18 9SA
Telephone number:	01635 200355
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Appropriate authority:	Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Jon Watkinson
Date of previous inspection:	1 st October 2002

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Hermitage Primary School is a village school situated near Newbury in rural West Berkshire, where the socio-economic circumstances of pupils are very favourable. It is smaller than the average primary school. There are 106 boys and girls on roll, aged 4 to 11 years. Pupils come mainly from surrounding villages, with about a fifth of the pupils from the local Hermitage Barracks. The numbers of pupils leaving or joining the school can vary each year. For example, 74 per cent of the pupils in Year 6 in 2003 did not join the school in Year 1. Just under 21 per cent of pupils are identified as having special educational needs. This proportion is broadly in line with the national average. The range of pupils' needs includes speech and communication difficulties and severe learning disabilities. Two pupils have a statement of special educational need, which is below the national average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, at one per cent, is well below the national average. Very few pupils come from ethnic minorities, and all pupils have English as their first language. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school at the start of the Reception Year varies because of year-on-year fluctuations within the small groups admitted. Overall, the attainment is above average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
23216	J Earish	<i>Lead inspector</i>	Science; Information and Communication Technology; Physical Education.
9614	C Webb	<i>Lay inspector</i>	
32168	A Keen	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics; Design and Technology; Geography; History; Music.
12764	W Thomas	<i>Team inspector</i>	Foundation Stage Curriculum; English; Art; Religious Education; Special Educational Needs; English as an Additional Language.

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Hermitage Primary School is **an effective** school that caters well for all its pupils, whatever their abilities, backgrounds, age or gender. The teaching is of a very good standard and results in good achievement by all groups of pupils. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teaching throughout the school is very good and pupils of all abilities achieve well.
- The school is very well led and managed.
- Standards are well above average in English, mathematics and science by the age of 11 years.
- Pupils benefit from a good range of learning opportunities, with very good opportunities in the Foundation Stage.
- The school provides very well for pupils' personal development and, as a result, pupils behave very well, get on very well with one another, and are very keen to learn.
- Parents are very supportive of the school and they ensure that their children's attendance is very good.

There has been good improvement since the last inspection, and the school is no longer judged to be underachieving. The issues identified in the last report have been tackled well. The overall achievement of higher attaining pupils is now good across the school. Teaching is much better, with a higher proportion of very good teaching. The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide very effective leadership, with a clear vision for the future of the school. There is a strong and supportive team of staff and governors, who are dedicated to further improvement.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

At the time of the last inspection report, the school was judged to be underachieving. In particular, there were not enough pupils attaining the higher Level 3 and Level 5 in all areas. The unvalidated results for 2004 show that the number of seven year old pupils achieving the higher Level 3 in writing was above the national average; in reading it was well above average, and in mathematics it was in the top five per cent of all schools. The numbers of pupils aged 11 years achieving the higher Level 5 was well above the national average in English and mathematics, and in science it was in the top five per cent of all schools nationally.

Inspectors judge pupils' achievement by looking at the progress they make over their time in school, in addition to how well they do in lessons. Inspection evidence shows that pupils' overall **achievement is good**. Children join the school with a wide range of capabilities, but, taken overall, their attainments are above average. Children develop well within the Reception class, and achieve well in the Early Learning Goals in all aspect of their development. Pupils continue to achieve well,

and pupils in the current Year 2 are attaining standards that are well above average in reading and science, and above average in speaking and listening, writing and mathematics. Pupils in Year 6 are attaining standards in English, mathematics and science that are well above those expected nationally of pupils of a similar age.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral and social development, are very good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are very keen to learn. Attendance and punctuality are very good. Throughout the school, pupils' attitudes to learning, their relationships, and their behaviour are all very good, and have a positive effect on both the quality of their education and the standards of work they achieve. Pupils have a very good understanding of what they need to do to improve, because of the very good support they receive from all adults in the school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is very good. Teaching and learning are very good, with a high proportion of very good teaching throughout the school. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subjects they teach and work very well with the teaching assistants to ensure that lessons are interesting and capture pupils' imaginations. Higher attaining pupils have challenging tasks set for them in all classes. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) are also very well supported and make good progress toward their individual goals. A very good range of well-attended clubs and activities also helps to enrich pupils' education.

Very good links with parents have been maintained. Teachers and teaching assistants know, support, and care for pupils very well, and pupils are made to feel valued and involved in running the school. There are very effective links with other schools, and pupils are very well prepared for the next stage in their education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good overall. The energy and enthusiasm of the headteacher, teachers and governors have helped to build a very inclusive school where all are equally involved, where teaching is of a very good standard, and where children of all abilities are achieving well. The school is very good at identifying areas for improvement and developing new ideas for driving forward change. It has been particularly effective in ensuring that all groups of pupils, particularly the higher attainers, have work that is interesting and challenging. Governors are very supportive of the school and have a very clear understanding of what the school does very well and how they can help improve things further. Statutory requirements are fully met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents express very positive views about the school. They particularly like the quality of teaching, the way children are treated fairly, and how easy it is to ask questions, discuss problems or air complaints. The inspection team fully agrees with them.

Pupils say they enjoy their lessons, feel safe and secure, and are fully involved in the running of the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

There are no significant areas for improvement.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

The achievement of pupils is good. Boys and girls generally achieve equally well, and pupils with SEN achieve well in all age groups. By the end of Years 6, standards are well above average in English, mathematics and science.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has successfully addressed concerns about pupils' underachievement.
- The numbers of pupils attaining the higher Level 3 and Level 5 have increased in English, mathematics and science.
- All groups of pupils are achieving well.

Commentary

1. Following an inspection in October 2002, in which the school was judged to be underachieving, a number of improvements needed to be made to the curriculum, the assessment of pupils, and the quality of leadership and management. A subsequent check on the school's progress in February 2004 acknowledged that good gains had been made in raising pupils' attainment. Inspection judgements confirm this.

2. The school's recent success in addressing underachievement and improving attainment in Years 1 to 6 in English, mathematics and science has been due largely to the headteacher's strong focus on raising the expectations of staff, particularly in regard to the higher-attaining pupils. The impact of this focus was seen in the improved performance of these pupils in the national tests for Year 2 and Year 6 in 2004.

3. It is difficult to make an overall judgement about attainment on entry to school when this is based on very small numbers of children. Children start school at the beginning of each term and there are currently three children in the Reception class. 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. Overall, it is above average.

4. Children receive a very good start to their education in the Reception class. Very good induction procedures serve to ease the children's transition from home to school. They also serve to establish very good links with parents, who are very positive about the start their children receive to their education. Teaching is very good, and children also benefit from a very well planned curriculum and from very effective support from all the adults involved. There is a good balance between adult-directed activities and those the children select for themselves, with a strong emphasis on the development of literacy and numeracy skills. Children achieve well, and are likely to exceed the Early Learning Goals¹ in all areas of the curriculum

5. Unvalidated test results for 2004 show that standards attained by pupils aged seven in reading, writing and mathematics were well above the national average. In particular, the number of pupils achieving the higher Level 3 in writing was above the national average; in reading it was well above average, and in mathematics it was in the top five per cent of all schools. Additionally,

¹ ¹ Early Learning Goals - these are expectations for most children to reach by the end of the Foundation Stage. They refer mainly to achievements children make in connection with communication language and literacy, mathematical development, personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical and creative development. There are many goals for each area of learning. In language and literacy, for example, pupils should be able to write their own names and other things such as labels and begin to write simple sentences.

the trend in the school's average points score for all core subjects was above the national trend. Inspection evidence shows that the current cohort of pupils aged seven are attaining well above average standards in reading and above average standards in writing and mathematics at the start of the Year 2. Standards in science are also well above average. Very good leadership has brought about significant improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, and this has helped to raise standards, particularly for the higher attaining pupils. In addition, the very good use of assessment means that pupils' precise needs are well known and are effectively met in lessons.

6. The table below shows the average point scores attained in the Year 2 tests in 2004. One point represents about one term's progress, so the table shows, for example, that last year's pupils were on average around two terms ahead of all pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	18.1 (17.1)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	16.4 (15.8)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	18.6 (17.8)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 18 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

7. The school's standards in the national tests in 2004 for pupils aged 11 were above average in English, well above average in mathematics, and in the top five per cent of all schools nationally in science. When compared with pupils' prior attainment at the end of Year 2, standards were average in English, above average in mathematics and in the top five per cent of all schools in science. Closer examination of the results shows that the numbers of pupils achieving the higher Level 5 was well above the national average in English and mathematics, and in the top five per cent of all school nationally in science. The school had correctly identified that English results would not be quite as good as in the other two subjects. This was due to the performance of a small number of pupils who joined the school late with less well developed writing skills. However, teachers have taken effective action to ensure that these pupils make good progress, and the cohort narrowly missed being graded well above average, by 0.2 of a point. Inspection evidence shows that standards are likely to be sustained in the future, since pupils in the current Year 6 are achieving well and already attaining standards that are well above the national average in all three subjects.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.2 (28.9)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	29.2 (30.2)	27.0 (26.8)
science	32.1 (30.8)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 19 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

8. Value added is a measure of the relative progress made by pupils from Year 2 to Year 6 against the progress of pupils nationally and of pupils at 'similar' schools. In 2004 it was well above average for both measures. Pupils' progress is now tracked throughout the school in all subjects, and the system provides a secure basis for setting statutory targets at the end of Year 6. The school has set very challenging targets for 2005, which represent the school's high aspirations for all its pupils. Teachers are now making very good use of assessment data to set individual targets for improvement, so that work is appropriately matched to all groups of pupils, including those with SEN and the higher attainers.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes to their education and to their behaviour and attendance are all **very good**. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **very good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are enthusiastic about school
- Staff manage pupils' behaviour very well
- Pupils' personal development is very good
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is very good overall

Commentary

9. Pupils like coming to school. Their attendance rate is well above the national average, and their punctuality is very good. Registration is efficient and provides a purposeful start to the day. Systems for recording and monitoring attendance are very good.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	3.8	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.

10. This village school is an inclusive society in which all pupils are well integrated, whatever their difficulties. Classrooms are friendly, stimulating and challenging environments in which individual interests, talents and differences are respected and celebrated. A significant minority of pupils did not start in the Reception class, but all say they were welcomed and well supported by their peers on joining the school.

11. Behaviour, both in lessons and around the school, is very good, and pupils are keen to work hard and to learn. These are all factors that contribute to their good achievement. There is a wide range of initiatives designed to encourage pupils to take responsibility for aspects of school life, and these play a significant part in promoting good attitudes. As a result, pupils try very hard to please their teachers, enjoy school life, and appreciate its value. Bullying is not tolerated, and sanctions for misdemeanours are effective and rarely needed. There have been no exclusions.

12. Pupils' moral, social and cultural development is very good, as a result of the school's high expectations and their own sense of natural justice. Pupils understand their responsibilities for being part of a community and the need to care for their environment. Within school, pupils are proud to be appointed monitors and carry out their allotted tasks cheerfully and well. Very effective use is made of the school council to genuinely involve pupils in decisions about the running of the school. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons, including the Year 6 Junior Citizen Day, raise awareness of the difficulties and dangers to be faced outside the security of the school environment, and how best to deal with these. Pupils have a very good understanding of the diversity of British society. This represents an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection. Imaginative use of themed days, and projects such as the 'Spanish Day', reinforce very effectively what pupils have learnt and experienced about different cultural traditions. Spiritual development is good and this, too, indicates an improvement on the previous inspection. Teachers make good use of assemblies, discussions, and subjects such as art and music to develop pupils' spiritual awareness.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **very good**. Very good teaching enables all pupils to make significant gains in their learning and to **achieve well**. There is a very clear understanding of the purpose and use of assessment across the school.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is **very good** overall and pupils learn very well. Procedures for the monitoring and assessment of pupils' work are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have high expectations of standards and behaviour.
- Teachers use questions very well to extend pupils' understanding.
- Pupils work hard, enjoy their work, and have pride in what they achieve.
- Assessment is used very well to plan work based on pupils' prior attainment.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 22 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactor y	Unsatisfactor y	Poor	Very poor
3	11	4	4	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.

13. The quality of teaching is significantly better than that seen at the last inspection. Pupils benefit from very good teaching throughout the school. All the teaching seen during the inspection was satisfactory or better. Just under nine out of ten lessons were good or better, and nearly three quarters were very good or excellent. There were similar proportions of good and very good teaching in each of the key stages. This very positive profile matches the strongly favourable views of teaching expressed both by parents and by pupils in the questionnaires they completed before the inspection.

14. Teachers set high standards in their expectations, both of pupils' behaviour and of what they should be achieving in lessons. In turn, pupils respond well to the challenges they are set and this contributes to the very good learning that takes place. They settle to work quickly, without fuss, and take a pride in what they achieve.

15. The planning of lessons is very good. Lessons have clear learning intentions, which are shared with pupils so that all understand what they have to do and to achieve by the end of the activities. Teachers make very good use of questions to focus pupils' attention, extend their understanding, and clarify and consolidate previous learning, and they judge when to move pupils on to the next task. On occasions, when teaching is satisfactory rather than good, the lesson plan does not taken full account of pupils' previous learning. The combination of very good teaching and a very positive attitude to learning ensures that pupils make very good progress in the majority of lessons and achieve well. In addition, teaching assistants are effective because they liaise closely with the individual teachers and feel part of a professional team.

16. Teachers are successful in ensuring that all pupils are set work that is very well matched to their differing abilities. The school uses the information gleaned from assessment to track the progress of groups and of individuals such as higher attaining pupils and those with SEN. Careful and thorough analysis of the data helps to identify any areas of underachievement, and in turn informs the school development plan and the programme for staff training. Co-ordinators are skilled

at using information from assessment to inform their strategic planning and to monitor rigorously the quality of teaching and learning. Consequently, they have a clear picture of how pupils are progressing. This makes a major contribution to raising standards. Pupils also have their own personal targets to work towards, a strategy that gives them a very good understanding of their own learning and of what they need to do to improve.

The curriculum

The school provides a **good** curriculum based on a broad and balanced range of subjects. A very good range of interesting extra-curricular activities is available for the pupils. Overall, the accommodation and resources are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have very good equality of access and opportunity to benefit fully from the curriculum.
- There are very good opportunities for sporting activities and learning outside the school day.
- The Foundation Stage is a strength of the school.
- The outside play area for the Foundation Stage is too small.

Commentary

17. The school has fully embraced the principles of educational inclusion and makes very good provision to ensure that all pupils have full access to all subjects and activities, irrespective of their background, ability, gender or ethnicity. The curriculum is well planned, balanced and innovative. Teachers use the curriculum very well as a basis for interesting lessons that help to motivate pupils, foster their enthusiasm, and enhance the quality of their learning and achievement.

18. National Curriculum requirements and those of the locally Agreed Syllabus in religious education are fully met, as are requirements for provision for children in the Reception Year. Planning for subjects is now well founded on nationally recommended guidance, and pupils are very well prepared for the next stages in their education. The school has been innovative in making the curriculum interesting, relevant and fun for pupils, and, as a result, it is well matched to their needs and contributes to the good achievement throughout the school. Children with SEN are supported effectively by the co-ordinator and given individual help based on their individual needs. Equally effective is the support given in lessons by teaching assistants, who make very good use of the information in pupils' individual educational plans (IEPs) to support the learning activities. All pupils with SEN are involved in the full range of school activities.

19. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage is now very good and is a strength of the school. Children work from a very good, well planned, imaginative curriculum, which fully meets the needs of all the children starting in the Reception class. As a result, children achieve well and enjoy learning.

20. Learning is successfully extended through a very good range of special events, visits and extra-curricular activities to broaden pupils' experience and focus their learning. These include a variety of classes before and after school to boost the children's learning through mathematics and writing clubs. Pupils say they enjoy these activities and that they help them to learn. The school also provides a wide variety of sporting and artistic activities, such as netball, rounders and football, to broaden pupils' experiences.

21. The school has sufficient, appropriately qualified teachers and support staff to provide for pupils' needs. The accommodation is satisfactory, although some of the classrooms are rather small. The library is located in the entrance hall and is well used for teaching small groups of children. However, learning can be disrupted by adults visiting the school office or moving to other parts of the school. Governors have identified this concern and already have plans to address the problem.

22. The outside grounds are spacious and are used well to support the children's learning, with ramps to provide access by wheelchair. However, the outdoor accommodation for the Foundation Stage, although used very well, is too small and can reduce the range of vigorous movements pupils can make during activities requiring space.

Care, guidance and support

The school makes **very good** provision for pupils' health, safety and welfare. All receive **very good** advice and support. Consultation with pupils is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pastoral care is very good.
- Relationships are very good.
- The school seeks and listens to pupils' views and concerns.

Commentary

23. The health and safety of pupils are very high priorities for the school. Governors carry out comprehensive risk assessments, and security measures are regularly reviewed. The recent building works have not impinged on pupils' safety or welfare. Adults are trained to administer first aid, and procedures are good. The school is aware of the latest child protection legislation, and has already taken steps to comply with this.

24. Pupils trust adults with their confidences because of the mutual respect and very good relationships that exist between all members of the school community. Concerns are dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils are well aware of their academic targets and try hard to achieve them. They know exactly what they have to do to improve their work, and the 'Tracking Targets' lessons are well liked. Pupils develop the ability to evaluate the quality of their own work as they get older, through the use of peer assessment partners. In addition, they say they find teachers' comments about their work, and the marking of assignments, supportive and helpful. Although personal development is not formally monitored, teachers have a very good understanding of the pupils in their care.

25. Pupils feel the school genuinely seeks and listens to their views. Written suggestions from each class provide the agenda items for school council meetings. Class representatives, who are elected by secret ballot, are proud to put forward the views of their peers and produce written reports for the school governors. This gives pupils very good opportunities to engage in the democratic process, to share views and opinions with others, and to work towards consensus.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with parents, other local schools and the local community are all **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides very good quality information for parents.
- Parents' support for the school is very strong.
- Liaison with other local schools and with colleges of further education is very good.

Commentary

26. Parents are pleased that their children attend this popular village school, and they support the values it promotes. The school supplies them with information of very good quality, as well as opportunities to learn alongside the pupils. For example, the recent mathematics workshops and 'Family Learning Day' were very well attended. Parents, grandparents and childminders had the chance to work with their children on a mathematical challenge, supported by the teaching staff. In addition, the assessment workshops for parents are being repeated early in the New Year, as parents found them both helpful and informative. In return, parents offer their assistance in the classroom and run a number of activities, including the football and rugby clubs. The enthusiastic parent teacher association (PTA) organises a wide range of both social and educational activities, including the annual Summer Fair.

27. The school communicates with parents very well on a regular basis. This means that the parents are very well informed about school events, as well as their children's progress. The school also seeks the views of all parents through a questionnaire. Attendance at consultation meetings is very good. Parents like the style of their children's annual reports and find them helpful and informative, although targets for improvement are sometimes too broad. Parents of children with SEN or other difficulties are well informed, and are appropriately involved in IEPs and their reviews.

28. There are very good links with the community. The school is an important part of the local community and provides facilities for Brownies, Cubs, the pre-school, and the local badminton club. Local residents also play their part; for example, local artists help during Arts week, the vicar takes assemblies, and the community policeman talks to pupils about safety. Children take part in local sporting events, and the members of the 'Friendship Club' attend school productions.

29. Links with other schools and colleges are very good. Very good liaison with local pre-schools and playgroups ensures that children settle quickly and happily into the Reception class. There are transition units of work in English, mathematics, and science, whereby pupils undertake a piece of work that is carried on at their next school. This makes a significant contribution to the very good systems to ensure pupils' smooth transfer to secondary schools. There are also very good links with colleges of further education, with students from these colleges enjoying their work placements at the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

30. Leadership and management are **very good**. The headteacher and leadership team have been very effective in driving forward school improvement. Subject managers lead their subjects very well, and this has resulted in good achievement for all groups of pupils across the school. The governors fulfil their statutory duties very well and are very supportive of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the headteacher and other key staff is very good.
- Governors understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school very well
- Self-evaluation is now well established within the culture of the school.

Commentary

31. Leadership and management are both significantly better than they were reported to be in the last inspection, when the school was judged to be underachieving. Previously, there was a significant number of areas for improvement, including the rigorous analysis and assessment of pupils' standards. Also among the issues were the shaping of the school development plan to fully reflect the priorities for improvement, the need to develop the role of the subject leaders and classroom assistants, and the accountability of the governors. All of these priorities have been successfully accomplished.

32. The headteacher has shown vision and determination in successfully addressing the school's previous underachievement. She has been successful in building a very effective team within the school. Through careful planning, and by appointing and retaining staff with relevant expertise, she has created a strong team that is focused on raising standards and achievement. This has resulted in members of staff confidently leading their subjects and playing a key role in raising standards. The senior management team now work very well together, and the variety of experience they bring ensures that all pupils are included in all aspects of school life.

33. Self-evaluation is now well established within the culture of the school. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have introduced rigorous systems for monitoring the progress of classes and different groups of pupils. They now have a very good understanding of the strengths to be shared and the weaknesses that need to be addressed. Test results and other data for all pupils, including those with SEN and higher attainers, are now carefully analysed to identify where weaknesses may lie. The school has responded very well to this process by introducing effective measures which have had an impact on raising standards and increasing the number of pupils achieving higher standards.

34. The role of the co-ordinators has also been strengthened and is now very good. Co-ordinators monitor the quality of teachers' planning and the pupils' work, and provide useful feedback which is used to make improvements. They are also involved in a regular programme of classroom monitoring so that they can gauge the success of recent initiatives. The information gained is used to develop the curriculum and ensure that all groups of pupils, including the higher attainers, are given appropriately challenging work. Another important aspect of the school's improvement is the good partnership that exists between the school's leadership and management and local education authority advisers and agencies. These partnerships are consolidating the school's successful drive to improve standards, raise attainment, and eliminate underachievement.

35. Governors are very supportive of the school and the staff. They know the school very well and understand what needs to be improved, while appreciating the school's many strengths. The school development plan is a very useful tool to move the school forward and is regularly reviewed. It has clearly defined success criteria, which governors regularly question and challenge in their role as critical friends of the school. This structure has contributed to the high standards within the school and has given the governing body an effective overview of school development.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	384,005.00
Total expenditure	346,120.00
Expenditure per pupil	2,725.00

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	52,701.00
Balance carried forward to the next	37,885.00

36. The governors and headteacher work closely together to ensure that the school puts its available resources to good use and meets its agreed development priorities. The quality of strategic financial planning is very good and provides a clear projection for future developments and improvements in the school's facilities and resources. The carry forward figure is about 9.9 per cent, but this includes money set aside towards the cost of building and equipping a new classroom. The predicted carry forward for the current year is 3.9 per cent, which is well within national guidelines. Overall, the school gives good value for money.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for the Foundation Stage is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Work is very well planned to address the six areas of learning.
- Children make a very good start to their education and achieve well.
- Teaching in the Foundation Stage is of consistently high quality.
- The outdoor learning area is very small and limits some activities.

Commentary

37. At the time of the inspection there were only three children in the Foundation Stage. These children are taught in a combined Foundation Stage and Year 1 class. The curriculum is very well planned to ensure that the six areas of learning are covered well. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is of consistently high quality. In all lessons, the teacher made good provision for both Year 1 and Reception children. The six areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage are very well planned, and children are very well supported.

38. Children make very good progress in communication, language and literacy skills. They speak confidently in class and group sessions. Children show an interest in books and stories and are already beginning to read. They recognise their names and a number of commonly used words, and can write their names independently. One child was seen making a very good attempt at writing her surname, using her knowledge of sounds. Children are likely to exceed the early learning goals for communication, language and literacy by the end of the Reception Year.

39. Children's mathematical understanding is also well above average, and they are likely to exceed the early learning goals by the end of the year. They count accurately to 10 and beyond, and take turns at counting the number of children at registration and how many are having school or packed lunches. They recognise patterns of numbers that make 10 by sorting party bags and arranging candles on two birthday cakes in different ways.

40. Children make very good progress in their personal and social development. They have settled well into school and are happy and confident. Class routines are clearly established. Children know these, behave sensibly and settle to tasks quickly, so that the atmosphere created is calm and purposeful. As a result, they play together well and confidently learn to follow the routines of the mixed age class.

41. There is also very good provision for physical development, creative development and knowledge and understanding of the world. Children handle small tools confidently and with increasing skill. They enjoy the 'story cave', and showed pleasure in making garlands and sweets to celebrate Guru Nanak's birthday.

42. Children are confident in using computers and are able to use the paint programme to make pictures and to write their names. They are likely to meet or exceed the Early Learning Goals by the end of the year.

43. There is a secure outdoor area for Reception children, but this is very small and limits the range of activities on offer. Staff do make good use of it within its limitations. Children do not have immediate access to climbing and balancing equipment, and there is not enough space for wheeled toys to be used regularly. As long as there are only three children this is manageable, but more children will be joining the class in January. The school recognises the need to develop this provision and is currently investigating ways of doing so.

44. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is consistently very good, and sometimes excellent. The class has both Reception and Year 1 children, but the teacher ensures that both groups are very well supported. She has a secure understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and plans very effectively to cover the six areas of learning. Activities are challenging and enable children to make very good progress. There is very good teamwork between the teacher and teaching assistant, and this ensures that children are very well supported. Relationships are excellent at all levels. Procedures for assessing children's progress are very good and are used effectively to plan suitable activities. Each child has a learning diary, containing photographs and samples of work. The children's diaries are shared with parents, who are invited to add comments. These books form a very good record of children's progress. Improvement since the last inspection is very good.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- By the age of 11, pupils' standards in English are well above average.
- Pupils of all ages achieve well.
- Teaching in English is very good.
- Assessment procedures are very good, and assessments are used well to set targets and enable pupils to make good progress.
- English is very well led and managed.

Commentary

45. Pupils in all age groups achieve well in English. The youngest pupils receive a very good start to their education in the Reception class, and show a good understanding of the relationships between sounds and letters. This helps them make good progress in their reading skills. Pupils in Year 2 continue to make good progress as a result of very good teaching, and are on course to attain standards in reading that are well above average by the end of year. Teachers use questions very well to extend pupils' speaking and listening skills, and to provide them with opportunities to gain confidence in expressing their ideas and opinions. Higher attaining pupils are able to express opinions about the texts they have read. Standards in writing are good, and pupils have made good progress since the beginning of the year. The majority use joined script neatly and employ capital letters and full stops accurately.

46. Older pupils continue to achieve well in all aspects of English, and standards are well above average by the end of Year 6. Pupils in Year 3 show good understanding of how to set out play-scripts, and make good progress in writing their own short scenes. Older pupils understand how stage directions help the actors speak their lines. Year 6 pupils have used these devices very well when writing an imaginative and enjoyable modern version of 'Romeo and Juliet'. Pupils are confident speakers, and teachers devise many opportunities for them to present their work orally to the class. The pupils read very well and have a good knowledge of books and authors. They use their reading skills very well to research topics and find information on a range of subjects.

47. Teaching in English is very good. Teachers have very secure subject knowledge. They plan rigorously for pupils with different levels of attainment and use imaginative strategies that make lessons interesting and enjoyable for pupils. As a result, pupils with SEN, those with English as an additional language, and pupils who are gifted and talented are all well supported and make better than expected progress. Facilities such as the writers' club for more able pupils have proved effective in raising standards. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils will learn and how they will behave. As a result, lessons proceed smoothly and pupils behave very well. Teachers evaluate their lessons well and adapt their plans to take account of pupils' knowledge and understanding. Teaching assistants are well briefed and make a very effective contribution to pupils' learning. Relationships are very good at all levels.

48. Assessment in lessons is very effective. Adults interact with pupils very well and give them excellent feedback on how they can improve their work. Marking of pupils' work is constructive and again gives pupils good advice and support. Pupils have individual targets at the front of their books, and teachers regularly refer to these in their marking. In discussion, pupils show good knowledge of their targets. Individual targets are regularly reviewed, and revised as necessary. Teachers analyse test results to identify areas of difficulty. Assessments are used very effectively to set appropriate work for all groups of pupils.

49. English is very well led and managed. The subject leader has worked hard with colleagues to improve standards in English, and she regularly monitors samples of pupils' work. The school has made great efforts to ensure effective marking, and this is now well established. The subject leader has also observed colleagues teaching, with a focus on guided writing. She has a very good understanding of the school's strengths in English and has a good action plan for further development. The issues for improvement identified in the last inspection report have been addressed effectively. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

50. Pupils use their literacy skills effectively across the curriculum. Pupils read well, and this enables them to use reference books and the internet to find information on a range of topics. Teachers make good links across the curriculum. For example in Year 4, where pupils are studying the Victorians, they write lively and imaginative accounts of the lives of Victorian children after hearing the story of Dr Barnado. Year 5 and 6 pupils write about what it means to be a good Christian, and how faith influences the lives of believers.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Improvements in teaching and leadership have resulted in better standards and good achievement.
- Lessons are planned to provide challenging work for all groups of pupils.
- The learning support assistants are used effectively to support pupils' learning.

Commentary

51. At the time of the last report, the school was judged to be underachieving. In particular, there were not enough pupils attaining the higher Level 3 and Level 5 in mathematics. The school has made good progress since then. The most recent test results for 2004 show that the number of pupils aged seven years achieving the higher Level 3 in mathematics was in the top five per cent of all schools. At the age of 11, the number of pupils achieving the higher Level 5 was well above the national average.

52. Inspection evidence shows that pupils in the current Year 2 are achieving well and are already attaining above the national standard at the beginning of Year 2. Pupils in Year 6 are also achieving well and are attaining well above the national standard in mathematics. Pupils with SEN are supported very well in lessons and are achieving well. This is because the learning support assistants are well prepared and devise interesting and relevant activities.

53. The teaching of mathematics is very good throughout the school. Teachers assess the pupils' progress very well and plan lessons that cater for all ability groups. The very best teaching makes skilful use of questioning and discussion to ensure that all pupils have full access to learning. For example, in a very good lesson in Year 6, the teacher moved from group to group questioning pupils to clarify their understanding of new ideas and constantly challenging their thinking. In addition, teachers and teaching assistants use a wide range of teaching methods to capture pupils' imaginations. For example, Year 1 pupils excitedly prepared for a 'mathematical party'. They happily wore party hats and received 'presents' to help them understand the combination of numbers that add up to ten. All pupils have targets, so they know what they are expected to learn. On occasions where teaching is not as good as this, the lesson plan has not taken full account of pupils' previous learning.

54. Behaviour in lessons is very good and pupils are well motivated to learn. They are aware of teachers' high expectations of work and behaviour, and their attitudes to work are very good.

Investigational learning is well developed across the school, and homework is used regularly to consolidate the pupils' learning.

55. The co-ordinator's very good leadership and management of the subject have been instrumental in ensuring that all groups of pupils are achieving well. She liaises closely with colleagues to ensure that expectations are high, planning is secure, and resources are available. She has observed the quality of teaching and learning across the school and consequently understands where improvements need to be made. The introduction of detailed and rigorous systems to track pupils' progress, and the regular assessment of pupils' attainment, ensures that work is challenging for all groups of pupils.

Mathematics across the curriculum

56. Pupils confidently use graphs, bar charts and calculations so they can interpret data more easily. The school's 'mathematics days' provide pupils with exciting tasks which are fun and challenging. For example, pupils have studied the symmetry of Islamic art, designed their own 'mathematical hats, and developed their skills of estimation when accurately measuring the ingredients for recipes.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The standards that pupils attain by the age of 7 and 11 years are well above average.
- Scientific investigations are taught very well and pupils' achievements are very good.
- Leadership in the subject is very good.

Commentary

57. In the previous inspection, pupils' standards and achievement were judged to be only satisfactory across the school. The quality of teaching was also satisfactory, although teachers' planning did not address the full range of pupils' attainment. In particular, the higher attaining pupils were not challenged. However, these weaknesses have been very effectively tackled, so that pupils now confidently carry out investigations and experiments, and work is now carefully matched to the differing ability groups. Inspection evidence shows that standards are now well above average at age 7 and 11 years. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

58. Teaching and learning are now very good throughout the school. A particularly strong feature of teaching is the emphasis on investigative skills, so that pupils think and work in a scientific way, using relevant vocabulary and applying their knowledge to predict what they think will happen in an experiment. Teachers have high expectations and support all pupils well, so that those who have SEN are fully included in lessons and those who are more able have work that is challenging and interesting. Teaching assistants are used very well, not only to support pupils with SEN but also to encourage all pupils to achieve well.

59. The curriculum is of good quality, with opportunities for pupils to carry out their own experiments and to plan their own investigations. Pupils are very enthusiastic about science and understand how to record their findings, analyse them, and draw simple conclusions. Assessment procedures have also been improved and are now very good. The resulting information is being used very well to set targets and plan the next steps in individual learning.

60. Leadership and management are very good. Planning across the school is of a high standard and the coordinator has successfully dealt with the key issues from the last inspection in a rigorous way, which has helped to raise standards. Pupils' progress is tracked closely, and any weaknesses

identified are dealt with promptly. Effective and rigorous monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning have identified some aspects for improvement, and action has been taken. This has led to improvements being made to the curriculum to ensure that the needs of all pupils are met.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

No firm judgement can be made about provision in information and communication technology (ICT) because of the limited range of available evidence.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is of good quality.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well in other subjects to enrich learning.
- The school is planning to update computers so that progress can be sustained as more powerful software becomes available.

Commentary

61. It was not possible to see the direct teaching of ICT during the period of the inspection. Additionally, there was limited evidence of pupils' previously completed work because the inspection took place early in the school year. Consequently, no overall judgements can be made about the standards attained by pupils. However, there is evidence of good levels of attainment in pupils' use of word-processors and databases, and of the Internet for research and communication.

62. Teachers ensure through their planning that all groups of pupils have equal access to suitably challenging activities. The curriculum is of good quality, and the new software is significantly increasing the opportunities for individual pupils to practise new skills and to develop their competence in the use of information technology. However, the coordinator has recognised the need to start updating the current computers so that progress can be sustained as more powerful software becomes available. The school is already planning the purchase of a class set of wireless laptop computers, so that pupils have easy access to practise what they have learned and to carry out research, without interrupting their learning.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

63. Scrutiny of teachers' planning and of examples of previously completed work shows that ICT is used well in other subjects to enrich learning. For example, in literacy, younger pupils develop simple word-processing and reading skills. Older pupils continue to develop their word-processing skill and are able to merge text, graphics and digital images. In numeracy, younger pupils develop their skills in counting, matching and sorting, and using simple databases. Pupils are able to access the Internet for research in geography, history, art and religious education, and can send and receive email. Video imaging has been used by pupils to improve their performances in physical education.

HUMANITIES

64. In **humanities**, work was sampled in **history** and **geography**, with only one geography lesson being observed. The scrutiny of work shows that tasks are carefully matched to the full range of pupils' abilities. However, it was not possible to form a secure judgement on provision or standards in these subjects.

65. Scrutiny of previously completed work shows that pupils cover a wide range of historical topics. By the end of Year 2, pupils can compare the past with the present through a range of activities, including a Victorian Day and interviews with their grandparents. The older pupils successfully use books, artefacts and the Internet to find out what life was like under the Tudors and during World War 2. Good links are made with literacy. For example, pupils have written interesting diaries of the wives of Henry VIII.

66. The school makes good use of the local community to support work in **geography**. By the age of seven, pupils can draw their own simple maps to locate features in their own locality. Older pupils in Year 4 build on these skills by comparing the similarities and differences in human and physical features of Mousehole with those of their own village. By the age of 11, pupils are able to make detailed comparisons between Hermitage and distant locations in other countries, such as St Lucia. Pupils make good use of ICT to support their learning. For example, pupils in Year 5 have successfully analysed the results of a survey about leisure activities, using pie charts and block graphs.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in religious education are above average.
- The requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus are met.
- A good range of work is covered.

Commentary

67. During the inspection, it was possible to observe only one lesson in religious education, and it is not possible to make a secure judgement the quality of teaching overall. However, evidence gained from talking with pupils, from a scrutiny of teachers' planning, and from work in pupils' books shows that standards in religious education are above average. Overall, achievement is good.

68. The school is successfully combining the requirements of the local Agreed Syllabus with aspects of national guidance on 'Living as a different faith in multi-cultural Britain'. The curriculum is well balanced and covers a good range of Christian and non-Christian faiths. Pupils learn about other religious beliefs and also how to apply these principles to their own lives. In a Year 1 lesson, for example, pupils found out about Guru Nanak's birthday. They enjoyed learning about Sikh clothes and how the festival is celebrated. The teacher then linked the story well to pupils' own experience of celebrating birthdays.

69. Pupils' written work shows that teachers take great care to emphasise how stories from different religious traditions relate to the lives of believers, and this helps pupils to appreciate the importance of the stories. Tasks are well planned to match pupils' understanding and are related to their own ideas, feelings and experiences, with carefully planned activities that lead on from one another. Pupils show good attitudes, and are encouraged to reflect upon their own feelings and views and to articulate them. Year 6 pupils, for example, have thought about what it means to be a good Christian, and how faith influences the lives of believers.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

70. In the case of art and design, design and technology, music and physical education, it is not possible to make a secure overall judgement on provision, including teaching and learning, and on standards. In addition to observing three lessons, inspectors talked to teachers about their work, spoke to pupils about what they had learned, and examined pupils' work.

71. It is evident from a scrutiny of work on display, and from discussion with pupils and an examination of completed work, that pupils experience an interesting **art and design** curriculum. Teachers plan effectively, using the nationally recommended guidelines, and make good links with other subjects. In the single art and design lesson observed during the inspection, the oldest pupils learned about the work of Salvador Dali. They used one of his paintings as a visual reference for creating their own 'dream' paintings. Pupils use sketch books well to experiment with techniques and to collect ideas. Work on display shows that pupils use a good range of media and artistic techniques, which represents good improvement since the last inspection. This makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development and the expressive arts.

72. In **music**, the pupils experience an appropriate range of musical activities. Year 4 pupils were observed exploring rhythmic patterns, and they used this knowledge to compose a song in the style of a 'rap'. In assemblies, pupils listen to music and sing tunefully to piano accompaniment, using clear diction. Pupils are also given very good opportunities to extend their musical skills by learning to play musical instruments such as recorders, guitars, keyboard and violin. Additionally, pupils confidently use ICT to compose simple tunes.

73. In **design and technology** there is a clear emphasis throughout the school on the design, making, and evaluation process. The pupils are encouraged to make plausible designs for their products, choose appropriate materials, and work out how the products are best made. They consider a range of techniques and decide which are the most suitable for whatever they are making. The wide range of activities available ensures good coverage of the subject. This represents good improvement since the last inspection, when the planning process was not sufficiently developed and was judged to be unsatisfactory. A particularly good feature is the extent to which pupils evaluate their designs and recognise the need to modify them. Good links are also made with other subjects, such as science, and this makes the topics realistic, challenging and enjoyable.

74. Pupils experience a varied **physical education** curriculum, including aspects of movement, gymnastics, dance, swimming and team games. No firm judgement can be made about the standards attained or pupils' achievement in physical education because of the narrow range of activities seen during the course of the inspection. However, standards in swimming are good. The teaching of physical education was observed in one class. In this lesson, the quality of teaching was good. Pupils worked hard and showed good levels of skill in movement, balance and control. The teacher encouraged pupils to demonstrate to others what they could do, and constructive comments from their peers helped improve their own performance as well as that of others. There is good equality of access and opportunity for all pupils, including those with SEN, who are well supported.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in PSHE is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are learning to play an active role as citizens.
- Pupils' views are valued.

Commentary

75. The school focuses well on PSHE, and the adults' caring and very inclusive approach to all pupils makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development. Teaching is very good overall. Lesson planning is thorough and detailed, and helps ensure that all groups of pupils achieve well. Assessment and record keeping are now of very good quality, and this ensures that work is challenging, particularly for the higher-attaining pupils. All pupils have targets, which help their personal development. These are closely focused, so that pupils see them as being achievable within a relatively short time.

76. Pupils are encouraged to become mature and responsible within the setting of the school community. Healthy living is promoted throughout the school, and pupils are made aware of the value of exercise. Pupils are encouraged to express their views and opinions, to listen to each other, and to take decisions about the running of the school. The election of the school council gives pupils a very good understanding of the democratic process.

77. Teachers make effective use of 'circle time' and collective worship sessions to promote good attitudes. Older pupils take on many responsibilities which help the school to function as a well-ordered community and at the same time promote very good social attitudes. For example, pupils have set up their own school shop and help to look after the youngest children at break time. Pupils are conscientious and clear about their duties. The school council meets regularly and passes its recommendations for improvement to the headteacher and governors.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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