INSPECTION REPORT

HOLY CROSS RC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Parson's Green
Fulham

LEA area: Hammersmith and Fulham

Unique reference number: 100345

Headteacher: Gerard Mulligan

Lead inspector: Peter Kerr

Dates of inspection: 13 - 16 September 2004

Inspection number: 267049

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

© Crown copyright 2004

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	3 -11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	226
School address:	Basuto Road Fulham London
Postcode:	SW6 4BL
Telephone number:	020 77361447
Fax number:	020 73719954
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Clare Whitehead
Date of previous inspection:	December 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This voluntary aided Catholic primary school caters for 226 children aged three to 11, including 29 children who attend the nursery part-time. A wide range of ethnic and racial backgrounds and languages is represented. Most of the children speak English fluently, but 11 are at the early stages of learning English. Eight of these are in the nursery or reception classes. The main first languages are French and Spanish. The children come from a wide range of social and economic circumstances, with more above average than below average. An average proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals (25%). Current attainment on entry to the school is also broadly average. The school has identified 36 children as having special educational needs, mostly learning or behavioural needs, but including one child with physical disabilities. All the school except for one very small room is accessible to wheelchair users. Five children have statements of need. A smaller than average number of pupils join and leave the school during any given school year. The school aims to maintain and advance the Catholic religion, to foster inclusiveness and to provide a broad and balanced curriculum. In common with many London schools, the school finds it difficult to recruit suitably qualified and experienced teachers for the full age range in the school.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
23583	Peter Kerr	Lead inspector	Mathematics Science Music Physical education
9079	Ann Moss	Lay inspector	
10611	Martin James	Team inspector	Special educational needs English Information and communication technology Geography History
3574	Kanwaljit Singh	Team inspector	English as an additional language Foundation Stage Art and design Design and technology

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Associates

Demeter House
Station Road
Cambridge
CB1 2RS

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet *'Complaining about Ofsted Inspections'*, which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	**6**
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	**8**
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	**11**
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	**15**
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, AND SUBJECTS	**18**
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	**29**

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Holy Cross is a good school. Pupils achieve very well and the quality of teaching and learning is good. A good curriculum is provided, with very good enrichment opportunities. Leadership and management are good and the school gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Achievement is very good in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) and pupils use these skills well to support their learning in other subjects.
- Very good leadership by the headteacher fosters a very warm family atmosphere throughout the school and very good attitudes and behaviour.
- The pupils' personal development is good overall, with very good spiritual and moral development; their appreciation of cultural diversity is an area for further improvement.
- Continued staff training is needed to secure satisfactory provision in the Foundation Stage.
- Pupils enjoy a wide range of enriching experiences beyond the classroom.
- Very good provision for gifted and talented pupils and those with special educational needs enables them to achieve to their potential.

Good improvements have been made since the last inspection. High standards have been maintained in the core subjects, with very good improvements in ICT. All the key issues have been successfully addressed. Provision in the Foundation Stage is not as good as it was because of the inexperience of new staff but good support is in place to secure the necessary improvements.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	C	A	A	A
mathematics	A	A	A	A
science	B	A	A	C

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.

Overall, achievement is very good. The school maintains high standards compared to all and to similar schools. In 2003[1], the school's results were well above the national average in all three core subjects at the end of Year 6. Compared to similar schools, the English and mathematics results were well above average and the science results were average. The school's results in 2004 were even higher than in 2003, confirming very good achievement. Achievement in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. The children are on course to achieve the goals children are expected to reach by the end of reception in personal, social and emotional development, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative and physical development. Achievement is good at the end of Year 2 and standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Achievement in the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT is very good throughout the school and pupils apply their skills well. Achievement is good in science overall, but is not as good in experimental skills as in the knowledge-based aspects. Achievement is good and standards are above age-related expectations in history, geography and art and design.

[1] 2003 is the latest year for which national data is available for valid comparisons to be made.

Pupils' personal qualities including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. The pupils have very positive attitudes to work and very good relationships. They behave very well, develop a very good level of spirituality and have very good moral values. Their social development is good and they have a good awareness of their cultural heritage. They have a less-developed appreciation of the cultural diversity of the wider society. Attendance is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good quality of education.

Teaching and learning are good overall. The teaching of basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT is particularly effective and pupils are encouraged and supported to use these skills across the curriculum. Assessments and marking are used very effectively to support the pupils' learning in these subjects. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory but its success depends on continuing support and training. The curriculum is good and is very effectively enriched with a wide range of stimulating clubs, visits and activities. The school provides a very good standard of care and good guidance and prepares the pupils well for their secondary education. Links with parents and the community are good and support the pupils' learning well. The information given to parents is satisfactory overall, but some parents are dissatisfied with it.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good.

The headteacher provides very good educational and pastoral leadership and is well-supported by senior staff. Teamwork within the school is excellent. All the staff, governors and voluntary helpers work together very closely and amicably for the benefit of all the children. The governors know the school well, carry out their statutory duties conscientiously and give good support to the headteacher and staff. Financial planning, management and control are good and sound principles of best value are applied to all spending decisions.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Most parents are very supportive of the school and greatly appreciate all it does for their children. They particularly like the range of activities provided outside of lessons. A substantial minority of the parents are not satisfied with the information they receive about the work of the school. The inspection found that information given was satisfactory, but the school is working to improve the way it is disseminated. The pupils like their school and enjoy all the opportunities they are given to learn and become responsible adults and citizens.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise achievement in the Foundation Stage by continuing to support and train the staff.
- Do more to develop the pupils' appreciation of cultural diversity within society at large.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Achievement is very good by the end of Year 6 and standards are well above average. Achievement is good at the end of Year 2, with above average standards. Achievement is satisfactory and standards as expected at the end of reception.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good by the end of Year 6 in the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT, and pupils use these well to support their learning in other subjects.
- Achievement in the Foundation Stage, although satisfactory, is lower than at the last inspection.
- Standards are above expectations in geography, history and art and design and pupils perform well in dance and drama.

Commentary

1. Children enter the nursery with attainment typical for their age personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative and physical development. They make satisfactory progress in the nursery and reception classes in all the six areas of learning to reach standards typical for their age by the end of the reception year.

2. Achievement is good at the end of Year 2. The table below shows that the average points scored in 2003 were well above the national average in all the core subjects and considerably higher than in 2002 in reading and writing. The school analyses these result meticulously and takes steps to remedy any weaknesses that are identified. For example, the 2004 results show an improvement in all three subjects, arresting the decline in mathematics. Similarly, the 2003 results in writing reflect measures taken to reverse a dip in 2002.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2003[2]

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.9 (15.1)	15.7 (15.8)
Writing	17.1 (13.4)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	17.4 (18.2)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 28 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

3. The standards seen in Years 1 and 2 during the inspection confirm the positive trend in standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards are on course to be above average in all these subjects by the end of Year 2, representing good achievement. Standards in science, ICT history, geography, art and design and drama also exceed expectations at this stage.

4. The school maintains high standards at the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science. The school's results in the national tests are well above the national average overall, with a positive trend over time. The 2003 results show an improvement since 2002. The 2004

[2] The 2004 results are not published in this report because national data is not available for comparison.

results are even higher, with a substantial increase in the proportion of pupils achieving the above average Level 5.[3]

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	29.5 (28.6)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	29.8 (28.8)	26.8 (26.7)
science	30.3 (29.2)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 24 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. The inspection found that achievement in mathematics and English is very good. The standard of work in the pupils' books confirms that they have very good literacy and numeracy skills, and use these well to support their learning in other subjects. Achievement is good in science. The pupils have a very good knowledge base; they have good basic experimental skills, but the more able pupils do not achieve sufficiently advanced skills in this area. Standards are above average and achievement very good in all aspects of ICT because of skilled specialist teaching and very good provision of equipment across the school. The pupils use these skills well to support their learning in other subjects.

6. The pupils' very good literacy and numeracy skills contribute towards above average standards and good achievement in history and geography, in which they produce accomplished pieces of written work accompanied by a range of tables, charts and graphs.

7. The art work on display is of a good standard, and the pupils sing well in assemblies and liturgies and show high levels of confidence and competence in drama productions and in expressive dance. This reflects the well-established tradition of successful specialist teaching in these areas. The school also has a tradition of high standards in musicianship, but as the established practitioner has moved on recently, no evidence of these accomplishments was available during this inspection. The school's record of participation in a range of sports and outdoor adventure activities shows that pupils have good opportunities to discover and develop talents in physical education, but too few lessons were seen to judge overall standards this subject.

8. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well because of the good quality of provision which ensures that the support and guidance they receive is commensurate with their needs. More able pupils, including those with particular gifts and talents, also achieve very well. Individual strengths are identified and supported, and special provision made where appropriate, for example through extra lesson in mathematics or instrumental tuition. Pupils whose mother tongue is not English achieve as well as their peers. Older pupils make rapid progress and achieve very well; children in the Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress as the staff is less experienced at giving appropriate support.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Attendance levels are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' very good attitudes to learning and very good behaviour in the classroom help them to achieve well.

[3] The 2004 results are not published because validated national data is not yet available.

- The caring ethos of the school and the very good example set by the staff contribute to the very good relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff.
- The spiritual, social and moral aspects of the pupils' development are fostered very well; the cultural aspect is satisfactory, but more could be done to encourage an appreciation of cultural diversity.
- Pupils are willing to show initiative and take responsibility, but have restricted opportunities to do so.

Commentary

9. Pupils have very good attitudes to their work and collaborate very well with other children. They listen attentively, undertake tasks enthusiastically and are keen to answer questions. This is because teachers plan lessons that pupils find interesting and set appropriately challenging tasks for pupils of all abilities.

10. Standards of behaviour are very good in the classroom and around the school. All pupils discuss their personal targets and agree class rules. They are fully aware of the high standards expected and insisted upon by all staff. The caring ethos of the school results in pupils knowing right from wrong and showing consideration for others. They work happily together and show increasing maturity and self-awareness as they progress through the school. The pupils play harmoniously together at playtimes and no signs of aggressive behaviour were seen during the inspection. Pupils confirmed that bullying occurs very rarely, and that any instances of inappropriate behaviour are dealt with quickly and efficiently. Racial harmony is promoted very well. There have been no exclusions in the past two years.

11. Provision for personal, social and emotional development in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. The children socialise well and learn good behaviour patterns, but do not have enough opportunities to develop independent learning skills. Pupils are encouraged to take on a range of responsibilities appropriate to their age, which they willingly do. These range from acting as monitors to helping the very youngest children at lunchtimes. They also participate in many educational trips. However, opportunities for pupils to show initiative in their own learning in lessons and to explore things for themselves are fairly limited. The pupils also have only limited participation in decisions about the day to day running of the school. This is acknowledged as an area for further development and measures being taken include plans to set up a school council.

12. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. The very good ethos of the school promotes spiritual development very well and every pupil is really valued. Residential visits and the many opportunities pupils have to work and play together support their social and moral development very well. They co-operate well when raising funds for others less fortunate than themselves, for instance. The very good examples set by staff result in pupils clearly knowing right from wrong. They show respect for the feelings of others and enjoy the activities they engage in. All members of staff give a very positive lead in engendering very good relationships, for example by giving praise and encouragement at every opportunity as well as laying down guidelines and acting as very good role models.

13. Pupils have good opportunities to understand their own culture. There are good examples of visitors to school promoting understanding of cultures in far-off lands, but, although lessons in subjects such as geography provide some opportunities to appreciate cultural diversity, not enough is done to promote pupils' understanding of the different cultures that make up contemporary British society.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)[4]

[4] The 2002-3 figures are published because national figures are not yet available for comparison. The school's authorised absence rate was 5.4 percent in 2003-04 and there were no unauthorised absences.

Authorised absence	
School data	6.9
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.1
National data	0.4

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

14. The table shows figures for the year 2002-2003, which are unsatisfactory. Attendance levels improved in 2003-4 however and are now broadly in line with the national average, which is satisfactory. The vast majority of pupils arrive punctually at the start of the school day.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good standard of education. Teaching is good overall; it is good in Years 1 to 6 and satisfactory in the nursery and reception. Children make reasonable progress in the Foundation Stage. Their rate of learning accelerates as they move through the rest of the school and is good overall. A good curriculum is provided in Years 1 to 6, with very good opportunities for pupils to learn and develop outside of lesson time. The Foundation Stage curriculum is satisfactory but in need of continuing improvement. A very good standard of care and good quality guidance are provided and good links with parents and the community support the pupils learning well.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good overall, with satisfactory learning in the Foundation Stage and very good learning in some lessons. Assessment is good throughout the school, and very good in English, mathematics and ICT in Years 1 to 6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good overall quality of teaching in Years 1 to 6 enables pupils to learn well.
- Teaching in the nursery and reception, though satisfactory, is in need of continuing support to ensure effectiveness in the medium and long term.
- The teaching of ICT is very good, and it supports pupils' learning across the curriculum.
- Assessments and marking are used very well to support the very good teaching of basic skills.

Commentary

15. Because the inspection took place very early in the school year with four out of eight teachers new to their posts, inspectors relied on evidence beyond lessons to judge the quality of teaching and learning over time. The main evidence was work completed by pupils throughout the school during the past year. This showed that teaching and learning was good in all the subjects for which sufficient evidence was available – English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology, history and geography. Lessons are clearly well planned and based on a secure knowledge of the pupils' prior attainment. Many teachers make very good use of marking to give pointers for improvement as well as praise and encouragement. The pupils' work rate is very good and they take pride in the presentation of their work. The individual targets pasted into the pupils' English and mathematics books show that they, and in many cases their parents, are fully involved in the learning process.

16. The table below shows the grades given for the quality of teaching in the lessons seen. More than half of the lessons were good or better and 15 per cent were very good. These are good figures considering the inexperience of the staff and the timing of the inspection. Taken together with other evidence, the lesson observations confirm good teaching and learning over time.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 33 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0 (0%)	5 (15%)	12 (36%)	14 (42%)	2 (6%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

17. Examples of good teaching were observed in each key stage. In the best lessons seen, the pupils engaged in active learning through discussion and discovery as well as through listening to the teacher and working at set tasks. The teachers use a good range of resources, including ICT, to engage the pupils' interest and stimulate their thinking. The pupils respond very well to opportunities to engage in discussion and to collaborate on practical tasks. They have a mature approach and a good awareness of their own learning. Assessment is good overall. Teachers use assessments very effectively in English, mathematics and ICT to ensure that pupils of all abilities are appropriately challenged.

18. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught very effectively. All the teachers have good subject knowledge in these areas. They show good questioning skills and provide a wide range of varied activities for pupils' to consolidate, extend and apply their speaking, reading, writing and mathematical skills. Good opportunities are planned to ensure that pupils use their literacy and numeracy skills wherever possible in other subjects.

19. Most of the very good lessons observed involved the teaching of ICT skills by the subject co-ordinator, who teaches the subject throughout the school, including in the Foundation Stage. These lessons proceed at a very brisk pace. They keep the interest and attention of all the pupils throughout and lead to practical application of the newly acquired skills, ranging from word-processing to data-handling and control technology. The pupils show high levels of interest and motivation in these lessons, work hard and enjoy continuous success and progress. The staff have developed good ICT skills and use the new technology well in preparing and presenting lessons.

20. The unsatisfactory teaching was restricted to the Foundation Stage, where the staff lack the experience and expertise to consistently match activities and methods to the children's stages of development. When closely supported, the staff perform well, acting effectively on advice and securing at least satisfactory and sometimes good learning.

21. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 who have English as an additional language receive good support from teachers and teacher assistants in lessons to learn as effectively as their peers. Each pupil's stage of fluency in English is assessed and recorded and the information gained is used to provide appropriate additional support. As a result of this good teaching, the pupils make rapid progress. One pupil who joined the school only two years ago is now fluent and another, within one year, has gained sufficient fluency in English to gain good access to the curriculum. The support for children with English as an additional language in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. It enables them to keep up with the other children in activities, but their needs are not as consistently well-catered for as in the rest of the school.

22. The teaching provided for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Clear targets for improvement are provided, and these are used very well by both teachers and learning support assistants to provide a most suitable range of activities and tasks. The pupils are keen to participate; they are given much well-directed support by adults and this helps them to achieve very well in relation to the targets set for them. More able pupils and those with special gifts or talents also learn well because teachers identify strengths and give additional support for those pupils who need it. In mathematics, pupils are taught in groups according to prior attainment so that the more able can tackle increasingly challenging tasks. Pupils also have good opportunities to excel in music, drama and sport through specialist teaching.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good overall. It is good in Years 1 to 6, with a very good range of extra-curricular activities, and satisfactory in the Foundation Stage. Resources and accommodation are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum for Year 1 to Year 6 pupils is well balanced, broad and stimulating; it prepares the pupils well for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils use their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills very well across other subjects.
- The very good range of extra-curricular activities enriches pupils' learning experiences.
- Provision for personal, social and health education is good.
- Links with secondary schools to extend pupils' learning are very good.
- Provision is very good for pupils who have special education needs and good for those who speak English as an additional language.
- Staff in the Foundation Stage require continuing support to provide a satisfactory curriculum.

Commentary

23. A good range of stimulating and worthwhile learning opportunities is provided for pupils in Years 1 to 6, covering all aspects of the National Curriculum. The national strategies for literacy and numeracy have been implemented well and are very effective in raising pupils' achievement in English and mathematics. Pupils receive very good opportunities to practise their literacy skills in other subjects such as history, geography and science.

24. Provision for children in the nursery and reception classes is appropriately based on the Foundation Stage areas of learning. The staff here are relatively new to teaching this age group. Temporary external support enabled them to provide a satisfactory curriculum during the inspection. They assess children's attainment well, but the information is not consistently used to plan activities that suit the children's stages of development. The school has taken appropriate steps to provide continuing training and support, which the inspection found to be already having a positive impact.

25. The very good range of extra-curricular activities contributes very well to the pupils' learning. A wide range of clubs, for example in drama, dance, art, football, ICT and homework, is offered. Numerous visits to places of interest and visitors such as artists, authors and illustrators, support the curriculum very well. The residential visits to Buckden Towers [5] provide excellent opportunities to develop personal, social and health education. The pupils' participation in local tournaments in football, cricket and athletics extend the pupils' physical and social development very well.

26. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Clear procedures closely follow the official 'Code of Practice' on identifying and assessing pupils' needs. Good quality individual education plans are provided for pupils, with clear targets to help them improve. Considerable care is taken to ensure that the work provided is closely suited to the pupils' needs, and teachers and learning support assistants complement each other very well in providing support. The pupils are involved in the full range of school activities and are most happy to participate.

27. Those pupils for whom English is as an additional language take part in all school activities, and steps are taken to make them feel fully included. For example, there are many notices, signs and books in French, which is the main first language for most of these pupils. Children in reception class are taught to say hello in many other languages, Year 1 pupils are taught German and Year 2 French. This shows that the school values other cultures and languages.

28. Links with the local secondary schools are used well to develop the curriculum, particularly in mathematics, ICT, and sports. The school's programme for developing pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education, including sex and relationship education and drugs awareness education is good.

[5] Buckden Towers is a residential establishment in Cambridgeshire that the school uses to provide spiritual retreats and a range of other activities for pupils (and also for parents on occasions).

29. The accommodation is enhanced well by engaging displays of pictures, artefacts and pupils' work. This stimulating environment adds positively to the pupils' desire to learn. The school has made good progress in rectifying the deficiencies in the curriculum highlighted in the previous report; for example, the provision for ICT is now good and the design and technology curriculum is now covered well.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides a very good standard of care and welfare and good support for pupils' learning and personal development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils feel very secure and cared for. They have very good and trusting relationships with all adults in the school.
- Pupils are introduced to school life well.
- Procedures for ascertaining and acting on pupils' views are under-developed.

Commentary

30. The school provides a happy environment that is conducive to learning. Close attention is paid to health and safety issues. Pupils' healthy and safe living is promoted through the Healthy Schools Initiative and through personal, social and health education lessons. Child protection procedures are very good and there is good liaison with other agencies. Designated members of staff are fully up to date in aspects of first aid, and risk assessments are undertaken regularly.

31. Teachers and support staff know the pupils and their families very well. They are sensitive to the pupils' individual needs and are thus able to provide good support and guidance. Assessment procedures are good overall, but there are no formal procedures for tracking and supporting the pupils' personal development. However, informal procedures are effective. The very good relationships between pupils and staff encourage pupils to raise any concerns they may have, knowing that they will be dealt with sympathetically. Targets are reviewed regularly, enabling staff to monitor the pupils' progress in basic skills. The pupils enjoy coming to school and they say that the staff are 'very nice and very kind'. The parents spoken to during the inspection period described the school as being 'like a family'. All pupils are highly valued, but their views are not sought on a regular, formal basis. The school is aware that this is an area for development and is organising the setting up of a school council to enable them to listen more to the ideas of the pupils and to act on them when appropriate.

32. Good induction arrangements ensure that children settle happily into the nursery and reception classes. Pupils who start school at times other than the beginning of the school year are well looked after and made to feel welcome, enabling them to settle quickly into the school. Good links with local secondary schools ensure that pupils are well prepared and are able to move confidently to the next stage in their education.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The partnership with parents and links with the community and other schools and colleges are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most parents are very supportive of the school and appreciate what it provides for their children.
- A number of parents do not feel well informed about what is happening in the school and feel that they are not consulted often enough.
- Parents support their children's learning at home very effectively.

Commentary

33. Most parents are very satisfied with the school. They feel it is well led and managed and are comfortable about approaching it with any concerns. They say that their children are encouraged to be mature, and they appreciate the good range of extra-curricular activities. They value the school's caring attitudes highly and say that the school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best. The inspection team agrees with all the positive views. However, some parents who attended the pre-inspection parents' meeting and responded to the questionnaire stated that they do not feel well enough informed about what is going on in the school. The school admits that administrative problems at the end of last term led to some correspondence not being distributed correctly. It is now making rigorous efforts to provide even better information and to improve communication in general. Overall, the informal communication network works well and every class has a parent representative who can be approached if there are any concerns. Parents are kept informed about the school through the prospectus, newsletters and frequent other correspondence. They receive regular information on the curriculum and topics to be covered in lessons. They also receive information about their children's progress through consultation evenings, and the annual reports are satisfactory.

34. A few parents are worried about bullying at the school. The inspection found that there are very few incidents of bullying. Pupils say that behaviour has improved recently and that any instances of bullying, if and when they happen, are dealt with quickly and efficiently by staff.

35. Parents appreciate all the many residential visits offered to their children, including the Year 6 visits to Ireland. Many help on these and several are very involved with the visits to Buckden Towers Retreat. Many parents welcome the opportunities provided by the school to support their children's learning of basic skills and have participated with enthusiasm. They also appreciate being involved in target setting and say that this home-school contact works well. The views of parents are sought by the school and they have recently been involved in discussing the healthy eating programme and the change in the lunchtime arrangements. The Parents' Association has raised substantial amounts of money to buy equipment to help in their children's learning.

36. Good links with the local community are used to the pupils' benefit. The school is now used for meetings and road safety training. Members of the local community such as the fire brigade and police come in to talk to the children. The wider community is also used well as an education resource. For example, pupils visit museums and a Hindu temple. Links with local schools are productive and support pupils' learning as the school gains access to additional

the electricity moved round the circuit, and a good level of discussion encouraged before the correct answer was decided upon.

66. Good leadership and management over time have contributed to consistently high standards. The present co-ordinator is new to the school and the subject, but the school is providing the training and support needed to enable her to maintain and develop the effectiveness of this role.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are higher than expected by both Year 2 and Year 6

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards exceed average expectations at both Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils' achievement is good.
- Teaching and learning are good; teachers make good use of resources to develop pupils' understanding.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good; they enjoy the subject.

Commentary

75. Pupils achieve well throughout the school. By Year 2, they have a good understanding of chronology and use this to put items such as houses and toys in historical sequence. They use appropriate historical terminology, such as 'old', 'new' and 'long ago'. The pupils' writing reflects a secure knowledge of a number of historical figures and related historical events, such as Florence Nightingale's role in the Crimean War. By Year 6, the pupils have a more mature understanding of a range of historical periods, such as the Ancient Greeks, the Tudors and the Victorians. They recall the lives of famous people such as Henry VIII, and speak with confidence about their roles in history. They are also knowledgeable about aspects of Roman history through their experiences on their 'Roman Day', illustrating the effectiveness of the enjoyable practical experiences that are provided.

76. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers successfully use photographs, artefacts, computerised displays and visits to foster the pupils' interest, and this good use of resources helps pupils to make good gains in their knowledge. Suitable writing activities are regularly undertaken to enhance pupils' work in the subject. Teachers know their pupils well, and they regularly provide challenging activities for them. The headteacher is currently acting as the co-ordinator, ensuring that the good rate of improvement since the last inspection is maintained.

77. Pupils clearly enjoy the subject. They study artefacts, books and pictures with enthusiasm and settle well to the variety of tasks provided. They particularly enjoy searching the Internet for information on their present topics, demonstrating the effectiveness of the use of ICT in this subject. The pupils' very good attitudes enable them to concentrate on their work and to make good progress. Most pupils take pride in the presentation of their work, taking care with the appearance of both drawings and writing. Teachers add suitable comments of praise and advice to further encourage their pupils, and they provide interesting and colourful displays of their work to enhance the working environment.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

78. Art and design, design and technology, music and physical education were sampled through a scrutiny of past work, photographic and documentary evidence and discussions with staff and pupils.

79. In **art and design,** standards throughout the school are above the national expectations. The pupils' sketches, drawings, collage work, textiles and paintings in the style of famous artists are well displayed throughout the school and provide good stimulus. Resident artists are invited to work with teachers and pupils. The pupils have had an opportunity to learn about various styles of paintings and the work of famous artists such as Picasso, Renoir and Modigliani. A striking mosaic of Picasso's 'Weeping Woman' completed by Year 6 pupils in the art club is very effectively displayed in the school.

80. In the lesson observed in a Year 2 class, in which the teaching and learning were good. The pupils were working at a higher than expected level for their age. Half the class observed sea shells and used oil paints and pastels to good effect to paint their pictures. They mixed colours well and used 'smudging' techniques to enhance effects. The other half of the class made view finders and were learning to draw and sketch what they saw through them. The teachers' own knowledge and understanding of the work involved and the good teaching of skills guided pupils well. Resources were used well and the teaching assistant competently supported the pupils, who showed very positive attitudes to their work. As a result, all the pupils achieved well. The aesthetics of the subject supports the pupils' spiritual development and their exposure to the variety of works of art extends their appreciation of different cultures. The art club is used well to promote learning and the co-ordinator provides good leadership and manages the subject well.

81. The school has improved the curriculum for **design and technology** since the previous inspection. All aspects of the subject are covered but it was not being taught during the inspection so the quality of provision and outcomes cannot be judged.

82. In **music**, a new specialist teacher has just started at the school, replacing an experienced practitioner who had established a tradition of singing, instrumental playing and performance. At this stage in the tenure of the new specialist, it was impossible to judge either the quality of teaching and learning or standards overall. The pupils sang well in assemblies and liturgies that were observed, and in the production of the 'Wizard of Oz', part of which was seen during the inspectors' initial visit to the school the previous term.

83. **Drama** continues to contribute significantly to the pupils' personal development and educational progress. The pupils performed very confidently in the Wizard of Oz, and in the role-play scenarios that the part-time specialist teacher taught during the inspection. Year 6 pupils also put on an impressive creative **dance** tableau as part of a liturgy observed during the inspection. Both boys and girls were equally absorbed in the movements, creating a truly spiritual atmosphere for the rest of the school.

84. In the lessons that were sampled in **physical education**, the pupils enjoyed their work and were making good progress. They strove to improve and took pride in their achievements. Pupils with special educational needs are fully included in lessons – for example, a pupil with physical disabilities has physiotherapy sessions in the hall during the physical education lessons in order to be fully included in the class. Parents are very pleased with the range of sporting activities provided.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

85. During the inspection, no lessons were seen in **personal, social and health education and citizenship (PSHE).** A comprehensive programme of PSHE is provided. Sex education, drugs awareness and the importance of healthy living, including diet and exercise, are covered. The school has taken steps to provide healthier alternatives to the previous school meals at lunchtime. Most parents appreciate this, although some have reservations. The older pupils have the option of eating outside and this occasion adds to the family feel of the school. PSHE lessons are used as part of the school's programme to deal with sensitive issues such as bullying. Pupils report that this helps to resolve problems.

86. The pupils' personal, social and health education benefits greatly from the wide range of educational visits organised for them, including the retreats to Buckden Towers. Demanding physical activities as well as periods of quiet reflection are provided on these occasions.

87. Although very good informal channels of communication mean that pupils feel that their voice is heard, there are no formal procedures through which they can express their views and take part in the debate on how the school can continue improving. The headteacher recognises

that this is an area for further development and has set in motion plans to establish a school council for this purpose.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement	*Grade*
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	**2**
Pupils' achievement	2

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	**2**
Attendance	4
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	**3**
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3

The leadership and management of the school	**3**
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

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