

INSPECTION REPORT

HOUGHTON REGIS LOWER SCHOOL

Houghton Regis

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109459

Headteacher: Mrs Jean Gamble

Lead inspector: Ms J Mackie

Dates of inspection: 20-23 September 2004

Inspection number: 267079

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First School
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3-9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	239
School address:	St Michael's Avenue Houghton Regis Dunstable Bedfordshire
Postcode:	LU5 5DH
Telephone number:	01582 867487
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Graham Morgan
Date of previous inspection:	18-21 January 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school serves the local community which comprises both owner-occupied and local authority owned housing. There are 239 pupils on roll which includes 40 children who attend the Nursery for half a day only. Numbers in the Nursery will increase to 52 over the year. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average, as is the proportion of pupils with special educational needs. The needs include moderate learning difficulties, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and speech and communication needs. Whilst pupils are largely of a white-British heritage, the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is rather higher than that found in similar local authorities. Ten per cent of pupils have English as an additional language, although they are all fluent in English. One recent arrival has limited English. The vast majority of children who join the school in Year 1 remain for the full four years before moving on to their Middle school. The attainment of the current Year 4 children on entry to the Nursery and Year 1 was below average. Attainment currently for those entering the Nursery is broadly average in most areas of learning although they are below average in some aspects of language. Standards on entry to Year 1 have risen and are now average. The school was awarded a Basic Skills Quality Mark in 2000 and again in 2003.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
7871	Ms J Mackie	Lead inspector	Science Information and communication technology Design and technology
9619	Mr B Miller	Lay inspector	
22657	Mr M Madeley	Team inspector	English Art and design History Geography Music Physical education Religious education Special educational needs English as an additional language
33454	Ms L Smith	Team inspector	Mathematics Foundation Stage

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Houghton Regis Lower is a satisfactory school that offers satisfactory value for money. Whilst standards by Year 4 are below average, these pupils have made good progress from their attainment levels in Year 2 and on entry to school. Teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now resulting in satisfactory achievement for pupils in every year group and not just those in Years 1 and 2. Children get a good start to their education in the Nursery and Reception classes. The headteacher has established a strong ethos within the school, where all pupils and adults are valued.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- children are achieving well in the Nursery and Reception classes as a result of good teaching;
- the school has nurtured very good attitudes to learning amongst the pupils and their behaviour is also very good;
- whilst teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, higher-attaining pupils are not always fully challenged in some classes;
- whilst procedures for assessing the pupils' progress are satisfactory, the information is not used consistently to inform teachers' planning for the next stage of learning;
- procedures for monitoring the work of the school lack rigour;
- the school ensures that the pupils are secure and well cared for;
- links with parents are very good and this is reflected in the good attendance and punctuality of the pupils.

The school has shown satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The improved test results in Year 2 this summer have reversed a downward trend in standards over the last few years. Provision in the Nursery and Reception classes has improved considerably. The proportion of satisfactory and better teaching across the school has also improved. More resources are available for the teaching of reading, mathematics and science, which enables the teachers to provide a wider range of activities for the pupils.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
reading	D	E	C	B
writing	E	E	C	B
mathematics	D	E	C	A

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals*

Achievement overall is satisfactory. The achievement of pupils in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory and pupils in Year 2 are now reaching average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. This is a stronger position than that indicated by the 2003 results and is closer to the improved results in 2004. Standards in Year 4 are below average as there is a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in this year group. Achievement is, nevertheless, satisfactory and standards have improved on those achieved by this year group in their Year 2 tests in 2003, which were well below average. Pupils are steadily acquiring basic skills of language and number, with those in Years 1, 2 and 3 generally showing greater confidence than those in Year 4. Information and communication technology skills are at the expected standard. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes are achieving well and are likely to meet the national goals for early learning by the end of the Reception year.

There are no significant differences in the achievements of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers but there are some occasions when higher-attaining pupils do not achieve quite as much as they could.

The pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall. The pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and they behave very well. Attendance has improved this year and is above the national average. Pupils arrive in school punctually which ensures a brisk start to the morning.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory overall. It is good in the Nursery and Reception classes. Teachers regularly plan interesting activities for the pupils, who respond eagerly. In some instances, however, higher attainers are not always challenged as fully as they could be because assessment information is not used consistently to inform planning. The curriculum is satisfactory and is enhanced by a good range of visits and extra-curricular activities. The school provides a safe and secure environment for the pupils and has established very good links with parents.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher is fully committed to the pupils within her care and has established a strong team ethos amongst the staff. The work of the school is monitored regularly and some appropriate actions to secure improvement have taken place. As a result, there has been an improved performance in the tests in 2004. At present, however, the monitoring procedures lack sufficient rigour to improve the quality of teaching and standards still further. The governing body is very active and complies fully with its statutory responsibilities. Governors take their responsibilities seriously through providing both support and challenge to the school.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very happy with the school. They appreciate the open door policy of the headteacher and the effective communication between the school and home. They feel that teaching is good and that their children are safe and secure. Inspection findings largely endorse these views although teaching was judged to be satisfactory overall. The pupils are also positive about the school. They enjoy being at school, feel safe, and think that teachers expect them to work hard. A number feel that they are not always given enough opportunities to do things on their own.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- ensure that assessment information is used consistently to inform planning and set challenging targets for all pupils, particularly the higher-attaining pupils;
- develop a more rigorous approach to monitoring the work of the school, particularly the analysis of data, and establish a programme of development to enhance the skills of senior staff in this process.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is satisfactory overall. Pupils in Years 1 to 4 show satisfactory achievement. Standards by Year 2 are average but those in Year 4 are below average because a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and learning difficulties are in this year group.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The Year 2 results for 2004 have shown a marked improvement on those of 2003.
- Whilst achievement is satisfactory overall, a few higher attaining pupils do not always achieve as well as others in their class.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes are making good progress in their learning.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	15.7 (13.4)	16.0 (15.7)
writing	14.9 (13.0)	14.8 (14.6)
mathematics	16.6 (14.2)	16.4 (16.3)

There were 41 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

1. In the 2004 national tests, the pupils in Year 2 achieved results overall that were in line with the national average and above the average for similar schools. These results are much improved on those in 2003 and have reversed an overall downward trend since 1999. Performance has improved in all three areas and particularly in mathematics. The improvements have resulted from initiatives such as the strong focus on writing and increased levels of adult support in the classroom. In addition, the arrangements for taking the tests were altered so that the pupils remained in their classrooms this summer which provided a more familiar setting for them than sitting in the hall, which was the previous practice. There was no evidence of significant differences in the achievements of boys and girls in the inspection but the test results suggest that girls have not done quite as well as boys when compared to the national boy/girl differential. Inspection findings show that attainment levels reflect the improvement shown by the 2004 results, with Year 2 pupils now achieving average standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
2. The good teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes enables the children to achieve well and make good progress. As a result, even though some children enter the Nursery with limited language skills, the vast majority are likely to meet the national goals for early learning by the end of the Reception year in all aspects of learning. The good foundations established for these young children provide them with a firm basis for their Year 1 education. The current Year 2 pupils have progressed satisfactorily from their starting points in Year 1 and they are achieving in line with their capacity for learning. The improved provision in Years 3 and 4 since the last inspection has resulted in achievement for these pupils now being satisfactory as well. Although standards remain below average in English and mathematics, progress has been good for the Year 4 pupils given the prior attainment of this group in Year 2. The higher standards indicated by the 2004 results have been sustained in Year 3.
3. The language and number skills of the pupils are developing adequately. Whilst opportunities are made available to the pupils within lessons other than English and mathematics, this process is not fully embedded. It is a priority for the school and appropriate steps are being

taken to ensure that provision is more co-ordinated and effective. The pupils' skills in information and communication technology are average in Years 2 and 4. Achievement overall is satisfactory in science which is an improvement on the position in the last inspection. Additional resources have enabled the staff to provide a more suitable range of practical activities for the pupils, who enjoy them very much. In religious education and in the small number of lessons seen in other subjects, achievement is satisfactory and standards are average.

- Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress towards the targets set for them. They receive good help from the learning support assistants, who are knowledgeable and skilled in working with these pupils. Teachers also work hard to support these pupils but there are times when tasks in lessons are not set at the right level for them. Given the improvements in teaching and learning, the achievement of the higher-attaining pupils is now broadly satisfactory although there are some occasions when they could do more in class as tasks are not always challenging enough.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils have very positive attitudes to school and their behaviour is very good. The school promotes the pupils' personal development very well with strengths in social and moral development. Cultural and spiritual development are satisfactory. Attendance is good and punctuality is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils approach tasks with high levels of enthusiasm, interest and concentration.
- Because of the very effective way in which the school promotes good relationships, including racial harmony, pupils have a very clear understanding of their individual and corporate roles and responsibilities within the school community.
- Pupils respond very well to the school's very high expectations of behaviour and understand the consequences of their actions.
- Most pupils are confident and have high self-esteem.
- Within cultural development, the multi-cultural aspect remains underdeveloped.

Commentary

- The rate of attendance has improved since the last inspection. The main reasons for authorised absences were family holidays taken in term time and sickness. The former have been significantly reduced over time by closer monitoring procedures, the good efforts of parents and carers and intervention by the Education Welfare Officer, where necessary.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.8	School data	0.0
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

- Pupils enjoy coming to school and develop good relationships with others in their class. Very good foundations are established in the Nursery and Reception classes with children settling in well and learning how to get on with others very quickly. Pupils of all ages show very good attitudes to their work and their life in school. This is reflected in their very good punctuality, enjoyment of lessons and in their participation in extra-curricular activities, particularly sport and music. Pupils say that they like being at school and that they often find out new things in lessons. A number also say that they are not regularly trusted to do things on their own. The school is aware of this and is currently working towards developing more independence amongst the pupils during lesson time.

7. Pupils are very well behaved and co-operative in lessons. They listen to adults and follow instructions because staff set very high expectations for their conduct. Pupils are encouraged to take different responsibilities as they progress through the school. Older pupils, for example, are often seen acting as Playground Friends and helping the younger children, particularly at lunchtimes. This leads to most pupils gaining in confidence and developing high self-esteem. The school promotes racial harmony and incidents of bullying and racism are rare. Where they do occur, the school is quick to deal with them effectively.
8. Pupils with special educational needs behave very well when they are working in small groups. They often find concentrating in whole class sessions difficult but they receive good support from helpers and this keeps them on task, listening to the teacher and contributing to discussions.
9. The pupils respect the views and beliefs of others and understand that this is important. Good moral development is fostered through clear rules and reminders of why pupils should consider the needs of others. There is plenty of opportunity within and outside the school for pupils to develop good social skills. Examples include the raising of money for a number of charities, both local and international, and the choir singing to the local senior citizens, particularly at Christmas. The pupils' spiritual development has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. In addition to assemblies, physical education, personal development lessons and extra-curricular activities such as the gardening club make a valuable contribution to this aspect of school life. The provision for multicultural education is an area where there remains scope for further development and is one the school does not actively monitor. Opportunities are missed to make references to or use resources which reflect the multi-cultural society in which we live.
10. Pupils are proud of their school and have a good understanding of how they can make it a better place for the whole school community. There have been no exclusions in the past academic year.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. The curriculum is satisfactory and is enhanced by a good range of enrichment activities. The overall arrangements for the pupils' care and safety are very good. Accommodation and learning resources have improved and are now good. Links with parents are very good and those with other schools and the local community are good.

Teaching and learning

Whilst teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, there are examples of good teaching and learning in each class. Assessment is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning in the Nursery and Reception classes are good, enabling the children to achieve well.
- Teachers provide a good range of activities which capture the interest of pupils.
- Teachers insist on high standards of behaviour.
- Teachers do not always fully challenge higher attainers.
- The extensive assessment information is not always used consistently to maximise achievement for all pupils.
- Learning support assistants are deployed effectively to help the pupils with their work.

Commentary

11. Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection when less than 90 per cent of teaching was satisfactory or better. The weaknesses, which were identified particularly in Years 3 and 4, are no longer evident. Notwithstanding these improvements, no lessons were seen where teaching and learning was very good.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 40 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0 (0%)	0 (0%)	18 (45%)	21 (52.5%)	1 (2.5%)	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.

12. The imaginative planning and effective use of resources in the Nursery and Reception classes enable the children to make good progress overall. The teachers are sensitive to the needs of the children and use assessment information well to ensure that the activities planned provide an appropriate level of challenge. Personal and social development is particularly well nurtured and this provides the children with a good basis for the next stage of their education. Mathematical development is promoted satisfactorily.
13. In the main school there is also a good number of examples where teachers have used resources effectively to motivate the pupils. In a Year 4 English lesson, for example, the teacher provided the pupils with a selection of newspaper articles which were used to good effect in highlighting eye-catching, opening sentences. The pupils were fully attentive and then set about their own tasks enthusiastically although some lower attainers subsequently found the text difficult. Similarly, in a Year 2 mathematics lesson on shapes, the teacher hid different three-dimensional objects in a feely bag and exposed just one side of each, challenging the pupils to identify which shape it was. The class were well-focused and eager to offer their ideas. This stimulating introduction set the scene well for the ensuing group activities. Teaching and learning overall in English and mathematics in Years 1 to 4 are satisfactory.
14. Teachers act as good role models and insist on high standards of behaviour and work. Expectations are well established within the Nursery and Reception classes and these are sustained throughout the school. The positive attitudes established towards learning and the good relationships between pupils and adults in the class enables lessons to progress as planned with very few interruptions resulting from inappropriate behaviour. Teachers regularly use praise and encourage the pupils to do their best and they respond accordingly.
15. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Learning support assistants use their knowledge of these pupils' needs effectively to help them achieve their targets by ensuring that the pupils are attentive to the teacher and encouraging them to complete their tasks. For example, pupils made good progress in identifying the middle letter sound during an English lesson because the assistant pronounced the word slowly and clearly for them. In a few lessons teachers did not involve these pupils much in question and answer sessions and tasks are sometimes too difficult for them. The pupils' needs are assessed accurately by the co-ordinator and outside agencies and the results are used suitably to inform the targets on the pupils' individual education plans.
16. Teachers' planning is detailed and mostly identifies a suitable range of activities to meet the varying needs of the pupils within the class. On some occasions, however, most notably in mixed-age classes, the needs of the higher-attaining pupils are not adequately met. This means that, although these pupils do generally make satisfactory progress in lessons, they are not always fully challenged. This shortcoming results from the inconsistent use of assessment information to plan the next steps in the pupils' learning. The school has extensive procedures in place to record both the day-to-day outcomes of learning for the pupils and to set targets for the future. The pupils' progress within National Curriculum levels is tracked and targets are reviewed on an annual basis. Systems for recording progress are,

however, unnecessarily complex and, as such, the information is not used as systematically as it could be to inform planning which regularly meets the needs of all pupils.

The curriculum

The school offers a satisfactory curriculum that broadly meets the needs of its pupils. The pupils' learning is enriched by good extra-curricular activities and visits. Staffing, accommodation and resources are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Children prosper in the Nursery and Reception classes because the programme is well planned.
- Children enjoy the wide range of clubs and activities after school.
- Links with other subjects are not yet fully planned to improve and consolidate pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.

Commentary

17. The school meets the statutory requirement to teach the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. The well-planned curriculum for children in the Nursery and Reception classes closely follows national guidance for this age group. The children make positive progress because the programme is of good quality. In the main school, national guidance for literacy and numeracy is used satisfactorily to plan lessons. Whilst the needs of most pupils are met adequately, the curriculum does not always cater fully for the higher-attaining pupils. The school has started to plan links between subjects but these are not yet as effective as they could be in consolidating the pupils' language and number skills. For the vast majority of other subjects a clear outline of topics is in place. They are carefully thought through both in school, and with the Middle School, to try to avoid any repetition of learning, especially for the mixed-age classes. Pupils are provided with satisfactory opportunities to take on responsibility and show initiative but this aspect of curriculum provision is not as developed as seen in some other similar schools. Because the locally agreed syllabus in religious education has recently been modified, the school has prepared only the first year of a two-year programme in this subject, which is subject to review.
18. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. The pupils' needs are assessed well. The co-ordinator writes a satisfactory programme for each pupil that generally incorporates literacy, numeracy and social targets. Most targets are clear and their achievement easily measurable but this is not the case for everyone. The targets are sometimes not referred to by class teachers in their lesson planning and this limits the progress that these pupils make.
19. The school has a good programme for personal, social, health and citizenship education because it has been adapted with the needs of its pupils in mind. It is well thought through and used in every classroom weekly. Themes like 'being a friend' help to build the very positive attitudes that the pupils show towards each other. The science programme and the 'Life Bus', which visits annually, play important roles in teaching pupils about substance abuse. Pupils have learned about medicines and that smoking and alcohol are bad for them.
20. Teachers offer a good range of out-of-hours clubs, which are very well attended by pupils. Whether it is gardening club, maths games, dance or soccer training, pupils of both genders are enthusiastic to join in. The school competes regularly against other schools in soccer, netball and swimming amongst others and has frequently met with success. Musical participation is strong with high numbers of pupils learning instruments and an enthusiastic choir, which sings at school festivals and for the public. Visits to places of educational interest are appreciated by the pupils and provide good opportunities to extend and consolidate

learning that has taken place within the classroom. Pupils were very enthusiastic about their visit to the farm, for example, and recalled in detail the historical objects that they had used.

21. Teachers have adequate expertise in most subjects of the curriculum, though a few lack the in-depth scientific knowledge required to develop the pupils' understanding fully. Members of the learning support staff are well trained and experienced. The school has good accommodation and uses it well. The grounds are used for geography and science as well as physical education lessons. The Nursery and Reception classes and outside areas are of high quality and used well to help children learn. The school has installed ramps to the building and updated toilet facilities to improve access for disabled pupils. The current access plan identifies the installation of ramped entrances into all classrooms as next steps in providing equality of opportunity for all pupils. The school uses its good range of resources to enliven learning for pupils. For example, both staff and pupils are confident when using the interactive white board.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides very good levels of care and attention to the welfare, health and safety of the pupils. Provision of support, advice and guidance for the pupils is good. There is good involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides a very warm, caring and purposeful learning environment where all pupils are highly and equally valued.
- Pupils have a good and trusting relationship with at least one adult in the school.
- Pupils have access to well-informed support and guidance.
- The school is active in seeking the views of the pupils on school improvement.
- Very good arrangements with pre-school groups in the area ensure the smooth transition of children to the school.

Commentary

22. This is a very caring school where members of staff treat pupils fairly and with respect. This ensures that pupils are comfortable about approaching individual teachers or support staff for help or guidance. Pupils say that the teachers always take time to listen to them and that they can always have their say. Pupils are very satisfied with the school and what it provides.
23. The members of staff know the pupils and their families very well, are sensitive to their needs and are able therefore to provide good support and guidance. Parents say that the school is helping children to become mature.
24. The good personal, social and health education programme and satisfactory assessment procedures enable staff to provide targeted support for individuals, including those with special educational needs. The school has established very good links with special needs support agencies, who respond quickly to requests for an assessment of an individual pupil's needs and give advice to teachers and learning support staff on how best to help the pupils.
25. Health and safety arrangements are very secure and risk assessments are helping to produce a safe environment for the pupils in school and when on educational visits. The child protection procedures that are in place are effective and well known to all staff. There are good links with most outside agencies.
26. The school actively encourages the pupils' views both in informal and formal ways. There is a school council that considers matters as diverse as new playground games and the maintenance of the outside grounds and gardens. This opportunity to discuss school matters contributes very well to the pupils' personal development and is an improvement since the last

inspection. Pupils with special educational needs contribute to their annual reviews and all pupils are involved in setting personal and learning targets.

27. The school has very good relationships with feeder pre-school groups and members of staff carry out home visits to those families whose children are starting in the Nursery. These liaisons result in very good transition arrangements as they significantly reduce any anxieties that children or their parents might have. The transfer arrangements enable the school to respond well to the individual needs of the children and ensure that their first experience of school is a happy one.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has very good partnerships with parents. Links with other schools and the local community are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are kept very well informed about the school and their children's progress.
- There are very good procedures for ensuring parental satisfaction and to deal with any concerns or complaints.
- The good links with other schools ensure a smooth transition for pupils to their next stage of education.
- The contribution made by the majority of parents to their children's learning at home and in the school is good.
- There are no formal structures for collecting the views of parents on school improvement matters.

Commentary

28. Parents continue to be highly satisfied with the work of the school. They say that their children enjoy coming to school and that the school is led and managed well. Staff members are always available at the beginning and end of each day to deal with any concerns or complaints that parents may have. This informal contact results in very high levels of parental satisfaction and ensures that any problems are dealt with swiftly and effectively.
29. Parents are very well informed about the school through the prospectus, regular newsletters and school notice boards. They appreciate the opportunities to discuss their child's progress at both formal and informal meetings with teachers. A helpful end-of-year academic report, containing targets to help improve, accompanies these meetings. The governors' annual report meets statutory requirements and this is an improvement since the previous inspection. The vast majority of parents say the school seeks their views and takes account of their suggestions and concerns. However, there is no regular consultation process which would ensure that the school captures parents' views at frequent intervals on matters of school improvement, such as the priorities identified within the school improvement plan, for example.
30. The school has engaged a good number of parents and other volunteers from the community to come and help in school. Some listen to children read, work alongside their child on a project and others help on school trips. The vast majority of parents contribute to their children's learning at home supported by useful curricular information and workshops provided by the school. The school, however, has identified the need for a continuous support programme to help a number of parents who are either unable to or do not help their children with homework.
31. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept informed of their children's progress through regular meetings and informal contact with the class teacher. They are invited to and involved in the review their child's individual education plan. Parents with children in the

Nursery and Reception classes are appreciative of the efforts made to settle their children and feel that levels of communication are good with the staff.

32. The school links well with other local lower and middle schools to ensure that best teaching practice is shared and to take part in joint initiatives. These links provide opportunities for staff professional development, the sharing of pupil information and to discuss areas of concern to ensure a smooth transition for Year 4 pupils to the next stage of their education.
33. The good links with the community include a close liaison with the Education-Business Partnership, police, school nurse and Church, all of whom have a positive effect on the pupils' personal development. However, opportunities are missed to provide local community groups access to and use of the school premises.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The leadership of the headteacher and other key members of staff is satisfactory. Governance of the school is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has established a positive ethos within the school which is much valued by pupils, staff and parents.
- There is a strong team commitment to the pupils and their achievements.
- Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school lack the rigour required to secure more rapid improvement.

Commentary

34. The headteacher has continued to be a significant driving force within the school since the last inspection. She is highly visible around the building and this, plus her caring approach to both pupils and staff, makes a major contribution to the positive ethos within the school. This feature was particularly commended by the parents who feel that the school is well led and managed. The staff, both teaching and non-teaching, share the values of the headteacher and work with a common sense of purpose towards agreed goals. Their commitment is reflected by the fact that there has been no change in members of staff over the past two years. Inclusion¹ is a high priority and this is evidenced by the increased level of support staff to help particularly those pupils with special educational needs. The headteacher has focused on improving quality of education and standards and is aware that, although progress has been made this year, more now needs to be done to consolidate this improvement.
35. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis with procedures underpinned by a good range of policies which are implemented consistently. Good support is provided by administrative staff in the office. Monitoring of the work of the school is undertaken regularly through the analysis of data, lesson observations, and scrutiny of planning and of the pupils' work. The evaluation of the findings has resulted in the identification of some key priorities for improvement, such as the development of writing, and steps are being taken to tackle them. The actions to date are beginning to raise achievement as indicated by the improved results in 2004, although prior to this, improvement has been modest. There is a lack of consistency in the approaches to monitoring within English, mathematics and science as subject leaders are not fully confident about how to analyse data to identify comparative progress of different groups of pupils or to evaluate the impact of the implementation of strategies to improve achievement. As a result, some of the success criteria within the school improvement plan are rather broad and link more closely to task completion rather than to pupil achievement.

¹ Inclusion refers to the procedures adopted by the school to meet the educational needs of all pupils, whatever their gender, ability or background.

36. The governing body has worked hard to ensure that all statutory requirements are fully met. Omissions in the annual report to parents identified in the last inspection have been rectified. There is an effective race equality policy in operation. Governors have played an active role in developing a strategic plan which covers all aspects of the school's work for the next few years. The Chair of Governors knows the school well and has established a business like relationship with the headteacher with regular weekly meetings. Governors visit the school in accordance with a monitoring programme and this has helped them to broaden their awareness of the school's strengths and areas for development. The governing body does hold the school to account for both standards and quality of education, although it is very largely guided by the headteacher's views and analyses. Governors have challenged the school to set targets which reflect their aspirations for the school.
37. The leadership and management of the special educational needs provision are satisfactory. The division of duties between the co-ordinator and the headteacher is an unusual one. Whilst there is a great deal of informal contact between the two staff, monitoring and evaluation of provision overall is not undertaken as systematically as it should be. There is no designated person within the Nursery and Reception classes who has overall responsibility for provision for this age group. Nevertheless, the staff work well together as a team and have made significant improvements over time.
38. Finances are properly managed on a day-to-day basis and there is a good working relationship between the administrative staff, the headteacher and the chair of the governing body, who also chairs the finance committee. Finances have been directed appropriately at areas of need such as improving resources and providing additional learning support time. The budget is tight and the school has worked closely with the local authority to ensure that this year's budget covers all of the needs of the school without compromising provision. There will be close monitoring to ensure that the school remains solvent throughout the year. The school takes into account the principles of best value when considering expenditure.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	556,414
Total expenditure	581,800
Expenditure per pupil	2,357

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	33,171
Balance carried forward to the next	7,785

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

39. The overall provision in the Foundation Stage is good and has improved since the last inspection. Weaknesses found at that time have been successfully tackled. There is now an equality of provision for children who attend afternoon and morning sessions. Imaginative planning and a good range of resources ensure that all children achieve well. The planned use of the outdoor environment to develop the children's skills across all the areas of learning is now very effective and enables the children to work on a larger, more active scale than is possible indoors. The team of teachers and non-teaching staff plan well together. Their skilful and well planned observations of children ensure the next steps for learning are accurately identified and this helps children to progress well.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children have very good attitudes to their work and they behave well.
- Classroom routines are well established.
- Effective communication with parents and carers encourages the children to feel secure.

Commentary

40. Many children are well on course to exceed the national goals for early learning in personal, social and emotional development by the end of the Reception year. Teaching and learning in this area is very good. From their first days in the Nursery, parents are welcomed in a friendly manner to settle their children into the classroom. Across the six areas of learning children in both the Nursery and Reception classes are encouraged to talk about themselves and bring in items from home to support their learning. This helps them to feel valued and secure because staff respond to their interests as well as their learning needs. Classroom routines are quickly established and children are shown how to persevere with tasks through the sensitive and timely intervention of the staff. This helps to develop a very positive attitude to learning. The calm, reassuring manner of staff and the frequent use of positive praise and encouragement means that children in both the Nursery and Reception classes develop a high level of self esteem.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Although children enter the Nursery with below average standards in some aspects of this area of learning they achieve well because of good teaching.
- Children develop their language skills well because a good range of opportunities is planned across all areas of learning.

Commentary

41. Most children are on target to reach the national expected goals for early learning by the time that they leave the Reception year. The children are given good opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills confidently across all areas of learning. The skilful intervention of staff enables the children to talk about their activities and feelings with confidence. Children

listen well because they are engaged by the interesting activities presented by staff. In one session in the Nursery a book was shared with children very effectively. The Nursery nurse shared the story in a lively manner and children were encouraged to join in with the text and to predict what might happen. The children were highly involved and attentive and demonstrated a good level of early reading skills. Similar levels of engagement were noted in the Reception class.

42. Children are regularly shown how to develop early writing skills across a range of activities. Their efforts are valued and outcomes are praised by staff. Some children can already recognise and write their names and some are beginning to learn the sound of some letters and to form letters correctly. Learning is particularly effective as these skills are reinforced well in other areas of learning, especially through creative development.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A suitable range of resources and activities are offered to promote children's mathematical development.
- Opportunities are missed for adult intervention in practical activities to develop mathematical knowledge and concepts.

Commentary

43. Children enter the Nursery with average skills. There is an adequate range of opportunities for pupils to develop their mathematical knowledge and understanding throughout the Nursery and the Reception classes. The children make satisfactory progress and their basic knowledge of number and shape is satisfactory. The children are given opportunities to handle and thread regular two-dimensional shapes and some children are able to name the shapes. The teachers provide satisfactory opportunities for mathematical development through play. For example, children in the Reception year learn to find and match numerals in the sand pit, and, in the Nursery, to build taller and shorter towers with large building blocks. Teaching overall in this area of learning is satisfactory, but the planning for adult intervention in the children's mathematical play is not as extensive as it could be and consequently some opportunities for developing their learning are missed.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Provision in knowledge and understanding of the world is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children have access to a good range of information and communication technology resources to support their learning and achieve well because they are well taught.
- There is a good range of well-planned activities which challenge and motivate the children.

Commentary

44. In the Nursery and Reception classes, children achieve well and the majority should reach the national goals for early learning by the end of the Reception year. Teaching and learning in this area of learning are good.
45. The good range of curricular opportunities offered enables the children to explore and ask many questions about the world around them. Imaginative use of the outdoor area supports good achievement for pupils in this area of learning. For example, some children working

enthusiastically in the gardening area were encouraged to use a range of tools safely and to explore and ask questions about the insects and the plants that they found in the earth. Skilful intervention by adults heightened the children's curiosity and helped them to find answers to their questions. Children have access to the school's computer suite and are taught well. This enables them to develop a good level of skill. For example, children used the programme 'Dazzle' to draw and print out an autumn tree. Clear and effective teaching about the skills needed to manipulate the programme meant that the children were all able to complete the task independently and produce a picture that they were pleased with.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides a good range of activities both indoors and outdoors.
- The development of good outdoor provision means that pupils progress well in this area of learning.

Commentary

46. The good range of opportunities for children to develop their skills of control and manipulation are offered across all areas of learning and the majority of them should reach the national goals by the end of the Reception year. Experiences are well planned to include threading, painting, cutting with scissors and pouring from containers in the sand and water trays. This ensures that pupils demonstrate a good level of control when manipulating equipment.
47. Teaching and learning in this area of learning are good. This has improved since the last inspection because the development of the outdoor area allows frequent opportunities for pupils to work outside with larger equipment. Consequently pupils develop their co-ordination and physical control well.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Imaginative, well resourced opportunities are provided for role play, which result in children achieving well.
- There are good opportunities to use a wide range of materials.

Commentary

48. The children achieve well and make good progress in this area of learning. The majority should reach the national goals for this area of learning by the end of the Reception year. Teaching and learning are good and the children are offered a wide range of experiences. They are shown how to experiment with paint and use a variety of textures and resources to make pictures, for example, after close observation of autumn trees. The provision of an imaginative role play area encourages children to explore different roles and contexts confidently and to develop their speaking skills well.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

The quality of provision is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Reading and writing initiatives are starting to raise standards.
- Lower-attaining pupils benefit from small group sessions taken by learning support assistants.
- The teaching does not consistently challenge the most able pupils.

Commentary

49. In the national tests for Year 2 in 2004, the pupils' attainment in reading and writing was in line with the national average. Compared to similar schools, attainment in reading and writing was above average. Test results for 2004 are much better than those in 2003 in both reading and writing, reflecting the impact of the school's recent initiatives. Pupils' attainment in both reading and writing, whilst fluctuating over previous years, has shown an overall decline from 1999 to 2003. The 2004 test results have stemmed this downward trend.
50. Pupils' attainment in Year 2 is now average overall. Pupils in this year group entered Year 1 with below average speaking and listening skills. They remain below average because they have too few chances to develop these skills in lessons. The pupils' reading ability is average because they read regularly and are gaining the reading skills through good letter sound work in class. They are steadily learning how to develop their ideas into longer stories during 'extended writing' sessions.
51. Pupils' attainment in Year 4 is below average. The cohort showed well below average attainment when tested in 2003 and have made good progress since then. The new resources for reading have engendered a new interest in books but these pupils still find it difficult to talk about the authors and the books that they like in any detail. Their writing is now more complex but spelling, and basic use of punctuation, both remain weak for about a third of them. The higher standards reached in 2004 have been sustained in Year 3.
52. Achievement overall is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in small group sessions led by learning support assistants because they are skilled at teaching letter sounds and at encouraging the pupils to concentrate and do their best. During lessons these pupils make satisfactory progress. Teachers try to target questions at their level of understanding but they do not always find this easy when they are also trying to challenge the higher-attaining pupils.
53. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Pupils are keen to learn and attentive because their behaviour is well managed by teachers. They responded really positively, for example, to a drama stimulus in a Year 1 class when they successfully retold the story of the 'Red Bird'. However, too few of these types of opportunity are planned to promote the pupils' speaking and listening skills. Old newspapers used in a Year 4 lesson excited the pupils and they worked well in small groups. One fifth of the pupils found the task hard, however, because they could not easily read the text and the teacher had to provide a lot of support for this group. At the end of the lesson, all pupils were keen to contribute their ideas. Teachers plan carefully and explain fully what the pupils are to do in lessons but there are occasions when the purposes are not so clear. Because of this the pupils are sometimes unsure about what they are expected to have achieved by the end of the session. The pupils' work is assessed regularly and the results are used well to decide which pupils will undertake additional support programmes. They are not always used as well for other pupils; for instance, in a few lessons higher-attaining pupils were not challenged sufficiently. The use of information and communication technology to support learning in English is limited.

54. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Initiatives such as the introduction of writing targets and writing assessment books for all pupils are beginning to have a positive influence on the development of the pupils' writing because they know what they have to do to improve. The support strategies for the least able, such as the Reading Partnership and Additional Literacy Support programme have improved these pupils' confidence but have not been evaluated in sufficient depth to decide whether or not they have been of value given the investment in time and resources. The subject action plan is very detailed but is too orientated towards tasks to be completed without linking them clearly to their expected impact upon standards. Given the rise in standards, particularly in writing in 2004, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The initiatives for improving reading and writing are beginning to have a positive effect.

Literacy across the curriculum

55. The pupils' use of their literacy skills in other subjects is satisfactory. This is a priority for the school but the impact of initiatives to date has yet to be fully realised because they do not systematically build on previously learned skills. Pupils are, however, using reference books more frequently to access information on a range of topics. Older pupils have been shown how to set out written accounts of practical experiments in science and they are able to present a logical description of what they have done as a result. The development of the pupils' writing in some history and geography books is limited, however, by an overuse of work sheets and teachers sometimes miss opportunities to display key technical words in science which would act as helpful prompts for the pupils both in terms of spelling and understanding.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics overall is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use resources well to help the pupils learn.
- Learning Support Assistants are often used well to support groups of pupils in lessons.
- In some lessons teaching is not closely matched to the needs of higher-attaining pupils.
- The progress and standards attained by pupils are not monitored in sufficient detail in order to identify groups of pupils who could achieve more.

Commentary

56. In the 2004 Year 2 tests the pupils achieved results that were in line with the national average and above the average of similar schools. The results for 2004 show a marked increase on those for 2003 with 85 per cent of pupils achieving the expected level 2B and above, and 24 per cent of pupils achieving the higher Level 3. Results have been variable over time but the improvement in 2004 has more than compensated for the significant decline shown in 2003. Standards of work seen in the current Year 4 are below average as only a comparatively small proportion of pupils are working at the higher level 4. Given that these pupils entered Year 3 working well below the national average their progress over time has been good as a result of improvements in teaching since the last inspection.
57. Teaching and learning in Years 1 to 4 are satisfactory overall with some good features. Achievement is satisfactory. This is an improvement since the last inspection when teaching and learning in mathematics were judged to be unsatisfactory in Years 3 and 4. The pupils have a secure grasp of mental calculation strategies because teachers plan imaginative activities closely matched to pupils' needs in respect to this aspect of the curriculum. Teachers in each class plan the mental and oral starter for numeracy lessons well. They use a range of visual aids to engage the pupils' attention and to cater for a range of learning styles. In a Year 2 lesson, the teacher used a swinging spider on a rope to encourage the

pupils to count mentally, and in a Year 3 lesson individual pupils had to wear a hat with a mystery number displayed on it. The rest of the class had to ask questions to identify the number. Because the pupils were well motivated by this activity they were eager to participate and ask questions which used their knowledge of different number operations.

58. In all classes teachers use a variety of resources and practical activities to enhance the pupils' learning. In one Year 2 lesson, the pupils had to identify three-dimensional shapes gradually drawn from a bag. This reinforced what the pupils knew about the number of edges and the shapes of the different faces of the three-dimensional objects. The pupils were well motivated by the challenging way that the teacher presented the task and achieved the learning objective adequately.
59. Teachers plan their lessons carefully and mostly identify a suitable range of activities that match the needs of different groups of pupils. Learning Support Assistants are often deployed well by teachers to support the learning for lower attainers. The assistants are clear about the learning intentions for the lesson which enables them to move learning forward effectively for these pupils. In one lesson the assistant worked with a group of lower-attaining pupils to help them to use a number line to solve simple addition sums. Skilful questioning and gentle encouragement helped the pupils to clarify their understanding and complete the task. These pupils achieved well. In some lessons, however, there was insufficient challenge for higher-attaining pupils and consequently these pupils did not make as much progress as they could have done. Assessment information, whilst detailed, is not yet being used consistently to inform the planning of the group activities for these pupils.
60. Scrutiny of pupils' work across the school shows that pupils are often asked to apply their computational skills to word problems sometimes involving money and measures. Pupils show that they can use their mathematical knowledge to solve these problems satisfactorily. This has been an area for development for the school recently and is an improvement since the last inspection. There was little evidence, however, that pupils were asked to apply their mathematical skills and knowledge to conduct open-ended investigations. There is not much evidence to show the use of information and communication technology to support learning in mathematics.
61. Leadership and management of mathematics are satisfactory. The subject leader has undertaken a range of activities to monitor the effectiveness of teaching and improvements have been secured. Detailed analysis of the pupils' performance in end of year tests has provided an overview of strengths and weaknesses in the pupils' knowledge. This information has been shared within the school to inform teaching programmes for different year groups and set future targets for improvement. There is little evidence at present, however, that data is analysed and used to track the performance of different groups of pupils within the school, for example higher-attaining pupils. Given the improved results in 2004 and stronger teaching, overall progress since the last inspection is satisfactory.

Mathematics across the curriculum

62. While there are opportunities for pupils to apply mathematical skills in science and geography, there is evidence that planning of these subjects does not regularly take account of the pupils' current attainment in mathematical skills. For example an opportunity for children to apply their measuring skills in science in Year 2 was limited because the pupils' mathematics lesson on measuring was timetabled for later in the week.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Improved resources have resulted in a good level of practical work which the pupils enjoy.
- Whilst teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection, some teachers are not fully secure with some aspects of the subject.
- Assessment information is not used sufficiently to inform planning.
- Monitoring of developments within the subject lacks rigour.
- The subject is enriched by a good range of visiting workshops.

Commentary

63. The results of the 2004 teacher assessments for pupils in Year 2 were below the national average but in line with the average of similar schools at the expected Level 2. The 2004 teacher assessments are marginally lower than those of 2003. Inspection findings show that achievement in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory and that the pupils in the current Year 2 are reaching average standards as a result of the increased opportunities to engage with practical work. Standards in Year 4 are below average given the comparatively small proportion of pupils likely to reach Level 4. Nevertheless, achievement in Years 3 and 4 is now satisfactory as teaching has improved since the last inspection.
64. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The teachers plan interesting lessons for the pupils and give them access to a broader range of practical activities than was the case in the last inspection. The pupils respond positively to these and eagerly engage in the tasks set. Younger pupils, for example, described with enthusiasm their work with water balloons and what happened to them when they were put in the freezer. They were able to explain why the frozen ball of water gradually melted when it was left in the classroom.
65. In general, investigational skills are being introduced satisfactorily as noted in a Year 2 lesson focused on exploring the different speeds at which cars move down ramps. The pupils were being encouraged to think about fair testing and they were subsequently able to say why it was important to have ramps with the same slope when comparing the speeds of different cars moving down them. Older pupils were observed working closely with sticks of celery and different coloured dyes, exploring how water is carried to the leaves. The teacher had used questioning effectively to generate a good discussion and had reinforced this with an introductory task where the pupils used magnifying glasses to observe a cross section of a celery stem. As a result, the pupils made good progress in their ability to apply their findings from their observations to predict how transportation might happen.
66. Language and number skills are being developed satisfactorily with pupils in Years 3 and 4 able to write an account of experiments that they have carried out, for example. Technical vocabulary is introduced and reinforced verbally in lessons. Whilst pupils are measuring and recording their findings in simple tables, this work is not always well co-ordinated with mathematics planning. Pupils in Year 2, for example, were measuring in science before they had covered this in their mathematics lessons. Opportunities are missed to reinforce key scientific terms by having them displayed in the classroom. This is particularly important given the fact that a number of pupils, most notably in Year 4, have weaker language skills which require regular reinforcement. There is limited use of information and communication technology to support learning in science.
67. Teachers' planning is based on national guidance and work in Years 3 and 4 now provides adequate development from work covered in earlier years. Where teachers are not fully secure with the subject matter, learning objectives shared with the class are sometimes over complex with language that the pupils do not fully understand. Some work sheets also reflect

a lack of understanding of scientific principles such as the difference between materials and artefacts, for example, and this is confusing for the pupils. As a result, teachers do not always find it easy to use the assessment information recorded to inform planning for the future effectively.

68. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The co-ordinator has taken effective steps to secure a much broader range of resources which are now being used extensively in lessons to develop both knowledge and understanding of the subject. A good number of visits are arranged which enrich the science provision and are valued by the pupils. Monitoring of lessons and pupils' work is being undertaken and, for example, steps have been taken to tackle writing skills as a result. In general, however, the evaluation of the findings lack the rigour required to secure more rapid improvement. The forward planning that does take place is currently too informal and has led to development within the subject that is modest over the last six years. Given the improvements in teaching and learning in Years 3 and 4 and the greater volume of practical work, however, improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is some good teaching in the subject.
- Provision is enhanced through the information and communication technology suite and the support of the teaching assistant based there.
- Assessment information is not used sufficiently to plan next steps in learning for the pupils.

Commentary

69. Achievement is satisfactory overall and pupils are reaching standards that are average in Year 2 and Year 4. In the Year 1 and Year 2 lessons, teaching and learning were good with the teachers showing a secure command of the subject through the effective use of the interactive whiteboard. Their clear explanations enabled the pupils to tackle their own work with confidence and make good progress in their skills of drawing using selected art programmes. The teachers effectively reinforced skills such as saving work by demonstrating systematically how this should be done. As a result, the majority of pupils were able to follow instructions and complete the task on their own.
70. Teaching and learning in Years 3 and 4 are satisfactory overall. The teachers show the same confidence in their subject knowledge and use the interactive whiteboard regularly to demonstrate and reinforce new techniques and skills. Pace is generally more modest in these lessons as not enough prior consideration has been given to meeting the full range of needs of the pupils within the age group. Quite a number of Year 4 pupils were hampered in their work on the Internet, for example, because they were not able to spell correctly and thus had difficulty in accessing websites quickly. Language difficulties also meant that they needed a good deal of support in reading and understanding some of the materials that were subsequently found. Systematic intervention from the teachers plus the invaluable support from the teaching assistant meant that these pupils did eventually make satisfactory progress. Middle and higher-attaining pupils required limited support in this work. In general, the older pupils show a satisfactory range of skills within information and communication technology which have developed on from those in Years 1 and 2. For example, they are able to copy and paste pictures from the Internet and add captions. They can also use art packages to produce sophisticated symmetrical pictures. Teachers plan in line with national guidance and this gives the pupils access to the full range of the programme of study.

71. The recent development of the information and communication technology suite means that all pupils now have regular access to computers on a weekly basis which has ensured that the pupils have been able to keep abreast of the improvements nationally and thus sustain the average standards identified in the last inspection. The well-equipped suite is well-maintained by the teaching assistant. Pupils have been taught how to work in the suite sensibly and they generally share well.
72. Whilst much has been done, weaknesses in the current use of assessment information are hampering further improvement in provision. Teachers are not making full use of the information available to them of what pupils have achieved previously. For example, the work in Year 1 was very similar to that being undertaken in the Reception class. Some Year 4 pupils are repeating work from the previous year and, whilst reinforcement is often helpful, some pupils, particularly the higher attainers, could be doing more.
73. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Much has been done to improve facilities and teachers make regular use of them. Some monitoring has taken place but has not been sufficiently systematic to inform progress with the subject development plan. Overall progress since the last inspection is satisfactory.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

74. There is limited evidence of the use of information and communication technology being used to support learning in other subjects. This is recognised by the school and is a current area for development.

HUMANITIES

75. **Geography** and **history** were not priorities for the inspection and only three lessons were observed in total in these two subjects so no overall judgements can be made about provision. A scrutiny of last year's pupils' work and a review of teachers' planning indicate that National Curriculum requirements are met.
76. The school uses the locality well in **geography** to enable the pupils to become familiar with the vocabulary of the subject and how the features that they see are recorded on a map. The map of the area showing where each pupil in the Year 2 class lives is a good quality display and helps the class to reinforce their familiarity with their own locality. Most pupils can identify where they live and can also describe their route to school. In the two lessons observed, teaching and learning were satisfactory in one and good in the other and standards were average.
77. The range of topics taught in **history** helps pupils appreciate not only British history but also the important role played by ancient Greece and Egypt. Good displays around the classrooms stimulate the pupils' interest in the past. In the lesson observed the teacher made good use of diary extracts to help the pupils to understand that the English language had changed from the times of Samuel Pepys. There was evidence of some research skills used by older pupils to find out about Ancient Greece. However, there was little evidence of consolidating and improving pupils' writing skills through history across all age ranges.

Religious Education

The quality of provision is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are not yet completely successful in trying to adapt their teaching to recent changes to the locally agreed syllabus.
- Pupils celebrate a good range of religious festivals.

- Assessment of what pupils know is not yet secure.
- Good resources support pupils' understanding of other faiths but there are too few visits to places of worship.

Commentary

78. Pupils' attainment in Year 2 is in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. They know the main Christian festivals and their stories. Pupils' attainment in Year 4 is also in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Teaching has ensured that the pupils have broadened their knowledge of faiths and are able to recall, using the correct vocabulary, detail from Hinduism and Judaism as well as greater detail about Christmas and Easter. They can also recall the stories of Rama and Sita, Moses and Abraham. Achievement is satisfactory and pupils of all ages and abilities progress satisfactorily from their different starting points.
79. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Resources are used well to help pupils. In a mixed age Year 3/4 lesson on Judaism, the pupils were stunned at the beauty of the Torah cover and intrigued by the writing on the scrolls. The teacher used this moment very well to encourage pupils to respect the sacred books of all religions. Year 4 pupils looked carefully at photographs and showed that they had gained considerable evidence from them when questioned by the teacher. In Years 1 and 2 pupils listened attentively to the story of David and Goliath because the teachers used their story telling skills well to engage their interest. However, the lessons were not well planned because the story and subsequent questioning did not help the pupils make links between other people's values and their own.
80. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The co-ordinator has rewritten the school's curriculum for religious education following the changes to the locally agreed syllabus. Though this year's plan is complete, it is not yet finished. More work needs to be done to avoid repetition of subject matter, challenge older pupils and assess what pupils know. A good range of resources has been purchased to reinforce the pupils' understanding of other faiths but too little has been done to secure links with religious groups in the area so that pupils might benefit first-hand from visits to places of worship. The co-ordinator has only an informal grasp of standards and the quality of teaching and learning. This is because she has not had release time to date to monitor the subject or undertake the development work required to implement the newly agreed syllabus successfully.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

81. Art and design, design and technology, music and physical education were not a focus for the inspection and only a small number of lessons were observed across the four subjects. Consequently no judgements about overall provision can be made. A review of teachers' planning and class timetables indicate that the programmes generally meet National Curriculum requirements. The school is starting to link **art and design** with other subjects.
82. In the **design and technology** lesson observed in a mixed Year 3/4 class, clear demonstration by the teacher highlighting specific techniques, enabled half the class to make good progress in constructing a coiled clay pot. The rest of the class worked enthusiastically with an assistant to develop their skills with textiles through the stitching of a design onto fabric.
83. **Music** plays a major role in the school and contributes well to the pupils' personal development. During assembly the pupils sang tunefully and they also enjoyed doing the accompanying actions. Singing fosters a good sense of belonging in this school. The choir enhances this experience for those who take part. The members learn complex rhythms and enjoy performing at festivals and for their parents. In addition, the school uses the local music service to provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to learn an instrument. A large percentage of pupils, higher than that normally found for this age group, take up an

instrument. The demand has been so great that the parents' association has purchased additional instruments so that all the pupils who want to can learn the cornet.

84. In **physical education** pupils in a Year 1 lesson knew why they had to warm up before exercise. They enjoyed a vigorous series of stretches because it was set to music and well led by the teacher. In a good Year 3 lesson the teacher demonstrated the 'push' hockey stroke well, which enabled the pupils to learn to do it themselves. Both teachers had good awareness of health and safety, which was shared well with the pupils. As a result, due care and attention were taken when apparatus and equipment were moved around the hall.
85. The members of staff offer a good range of after-school clubs, which are very well attended by pupils. They learn to play fairly, how exercise affects their bodies and many of the skills needed to play soccer, rugby, netball and dance, along with other sports. Teams compete against other schools in the major team games and have consistently met with success. These activities make a good contribution to the pupils' personal development.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

86. The school promotes personal, social and health education and citizenship well across the school with very good foundations being established in the Nursery and Reception classes. There is a comprehensive curriculum planned for Years 1 to 4. The programmes taught are linked effectively with other aspects of the life of the school which results in pupils developing well. For example, through the theme of 'Bodily Self' pupils learn about hygiene, healthy food and exercise. This learning is supported by the school's recent application for the 'Healthy Schools Award', and the introduction of fruit at snack time. Through the theme of 'Social Self', pupils are taught to develop a positive self image, and some responsibility for nurturing friendship. There are many reward systems in place to develop the pupils' self image. For example, every week teachers in each class select a pupil who has made a particularly good effort and they wear a special band to celebrate their achievements. Pupils wear their band with pride and in some classrooms photographs of the pupils are also displayed, which reinforces the positive attitudes and self-esteem being encouraged.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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