

INSPECTION REPORT

JOHN DONNE CE LOWER SCHOOL

Blunham, near Bedford

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109615

Headteacher: Mrs S Butler

Lead inspector: Mr T Neat

Dates of inspection: 20 – 22 September 2004

Inspection number: 267113

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	3-9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	94
School address:	High Street
	Blunham
	Bedford
	Bedfordshire
Postcode:	MK44 3NL
Telephone number:	01767 640346
Fax number:	01767 640346
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J Francombe
Date of previous inspection:	8 February 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

John Donne is a Church of England, voluntary aided, rural lower school in the village of Blunham, near Bedford. Pupils come from Blunham, six other villages and the nearby town of Sandy. It is a first school and pupils transfer to a nearby middle school at the end of Year 4. John Donne is smaller than other primary schools having 63 pupils from Reception year age through to Year 4 and a further 31 pupils attending a Nursery unit part-time. The total of 94 on roll compares with the national average of 241 pupils. The 26 place maintained Nursery takes children from three years of age. Reception and Year 1 pupils are taught together. Year 2 is taught as one class, and pupils in Years 3 and 4 form a further class. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is one per cent, which is well below the national average. Not all the families entitled to free school meals claim this benefit. The great majority of pupils are from a white British background. There are no children who are at an early stage of learning English. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs is 14.0 per cent. This is below the national average of 17.9 per cent. The main difficulties these pupils have are autism and speech and language problems. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs [2.0 per cent] is above the national average. The attainment of children joining the school is broadly average but this varies considerably between year groups, depending on the number of higher attaining children and the number with special educational needs. The proportion of pupils joining and leaving the school at times other than the normal is broadly average. The school received an Achievement Award in 2002 for improvement in its performance in the national tests. It gained the Healthy Schools award in 2003.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20007	Mr T Neat	Lead inspector	English Science Information and communication technology Design and technology Physical education Special educational needs
9505	Mr D Haynes	Lay inspector	
11419	Mrs J Underwood	Team inspector	Mathematics Art and design Geography History Music The Foundation Stage

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

John Donne Lower School is effective. Pupils achieve well overall thanks to good teaching and the good pastoral support they receive. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school provides **good** value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- pupils attain good standards and achieve well throughout the school;
- there is a positive, caring ethos, characterised by very good relationships, in which all pupils are encouraged to take a full part and achieve their potential;
- the school provides well for pupils' personal development and, as a result, their behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good;
- the provision for the Foundation Stage is good in the main but children underachieve in writing;
- the governors work well and hold the school to account for its performance;
- the role of subject co-coordinator is underdeveloped;
- marking and target setting do not contribute fully to raising standards.

The school was last inspected in February 1999. Since then it has made good progress. Standards are higher and boys' achievement has improved. The provision for pupils' personal development is better, resulting in improved behaviour. The level of care and the arrangements to ensure the health and safety of pupils are also better.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils achieve well overall. Children achieve well in the Foundation Stage, except in writing where they can do better. Good teaching and the setting of appropriately challenging tasks for different ability groups lead to good achievement in Years 1 to 4 where nearly all pupils are working to their potential. The achievement of boys has improved since the last inspection and is now broadly similar to that of boys nationally. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Standards have risen since the last inspection. Typically, the standards attained in the national tests in Year 2 are above average in reading, average in writing and in the top five per cent in the country in mathematics. In science, standards are above average. The good demands made on pupils by the teachers contribute strongly to this. Current standards in Year 4 are above average in English and science, and well above average in mathematics and pupils achieve well. Standards are above average in music. The strong musical tradition in the school and the good subject knowledge of teachers are important factors here. Standards are average in Years 2 and 4 in information and communication technology, and in history in Year 4. There was insufficient evidence to make reliable judgements about standards in art and design, design and technology, geography, history in Year 2 and physical education.

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
reading	C	A	B	C
writing	C	C	B	C
mathematics	A*	A*	A	B

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

In the table above A* indicates that the results were in the top five per cent in the country.

The numbers of pupils in each group taking the national tests is small. The nature of successive year groups differs, sometimes greatly and the proportion with special educational needs rises and

falls. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs has been consistently above and sometimes well above the national average for the last five years. The effect of each pupil's performance is far bigger on the small year groups than in larger schools. This gives rise to marked fluctuations in the results the school achieves. It also makes comparisons of performance year on year, and with similar schools, statistically unreliable.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Attitudes to school and pupils' behaviour are very good. Attendance is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good. Teaching and learning are good. Stimulating teaching engages pupils' attention very well and the teachers' insistence on high standards of behaviour leads to good use of time in lessons. Teaching assistants are deployed well and this contributes strongly to the good provision for pupils with special educational needs. The marking of pupils' work does not help sufficiently in raising standards. Procedures to assess pupils' progress are satisfactory. Curriculum provision is satisfactory for pupils in Years 1 to 4 and good in the Foundation Stage. The care of pupils and the measures to ensure their welfare and safety are very good. The support and guidance they receive are good. There is a satisfactory partnership with parents, the community and other schools and a good partnership with colleges.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The quality of leadership by the headteacher is satisfactory. The quality of governance is good. There is a caring ethos, which helps all pupils to play a full part in school life and do their best. The finances are managed well. Target setting is not used to best effect. The role of subject co-coordinator is underdeveloped.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The majority of parents hold good views of the school. They like the way in which their children are helped to become mature and independent and the fact that pupils' behaviour is good. A few parents have reservations about the way in which the school is led and managed. Pupils like their school very much. They appreciate the way that teachers listen to their ideas and enjoy finding out new things in lessons. They are confident of finding an adult that they can trust to help if they were to be worried at school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- improve the provision made for developing writing skills, in order to eliminate underachievement in the Foundation Stage;
- further develop the role played by the subject co-coordinators in raising standards;
- increase the effectiveness of marking and target setting.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Achievement is good. The achievement of boys and girls is broadly similar. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good. Standards in Year 2 are above average in reading and mathematics, and average in writing. Standards in Year 4 are above average in English, and science, and well above in mathematics.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well throughout the school.
- Standards have risen since the last inspection.
- The achievement of boys has improved.
- There is underachievement in writing in the Foundation Stage.

Commentary

1. Pupils achieve well. Good teaching, the very good attitudes and behaviour of pupils and the supportive ethos of the school are the main reasons for this. The very good relationships between the adults who work at the school and the pupils also contribute strongly because pupils want to work hard to please their teachers.
2. Most children achieve well in the Foundation Stage thanks in good part to the provision of a wide and appropriate range of worthwhile activities in all areas of learning. Most are on course to achieve or exceed the learning goals set for personal, social and emotional development, mathematical development, reading, speaking and listening, but few will achieve the national goals for early learning in writing by the end of the Reception year. Most children are on course to achieve the early learning goals in physical development and many will attain the goals for creative development. It was not possible to judge attainment in children's knowledge and understanding of the world.
3. Achievement is good in Years 1 to 4. Good teaching and the setting of challenging tasks for different ability groups help to promote the good achievement. The pupils are working hard and almost all of them are attaining levels that are fully consistent with their ability. Inspection evidence indicates that music continues to be a strong area and pupils achieve well in this subject.
4. Standards have risen since the last inspection. In 2003, the most recent year for which validated data are available, pupils in Year 2 attained standards in the national tests that were above average in reading and writing, and well above average in mathematics compared to all schools. Typically, reading standards are above average in Years 2 and 4. Standards in Year 2 in writing over the last few years have been broadly average. Inspection evidence shows that in Year 4, standards in writing are above average, indicating that pupils achieve well by the time they leave. Inspection evidence shows that standards in mathematics are above average in Year 2 and well above average in Year 4.
5. In science, inspection evidence and recent teacher assessments demonstrate that standards are above average in Year 2 and Year 4. The good demands made on pupils by the teachers contribute strongly to this. Standards are above average in music in Year 2 and Year 4. The strong musical tradition in the school and the good subject knowledge of teachers are important factors here. Standards are average in Years 2 and 4 in information and communications technology, and in history in Year 4. There was insufficient evidence to make reliable judgements about standards in art and design, geography, history in Year 2 and physical education.

6. The numbers of pupils in each group taking the national tests is small. The nature of successive year groups differs, sometimes greatly and the proportion with special educational needs rises and falls. The effect of each pupil's performance is far bigger on the small year groups than in larger schools. This gives rise to marked fluctuations in the results the school achieves. It also makes comparisons of performance year on year, and with similar schools, statistically unreliable. The fluctuations in results often reflect the presence or absence of pupils with significant learning difficulties or those who are gifted academically. The percentage of pupils with statements has been consistently above and sometimes well above the national average for the last five years. The negative impact of the results of some of these pupils is greater than in schools with larger year groups. The overall trend of results in the Year 2 national tests over the last five years is below the national trend of improvement. However, the school's figures are significantly affected by the very high results gained by an exceptional year group in 1999.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.9 (17.3)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	15.6 (14.8)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	17.9 (19.3)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 14 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

7. The results of the pupils who were in Year 2 last year are likely to be lower than those gained by their predecessors in 2003. This is due to the greater proportion of pupils with learning difficulties in that year group.
8. Since the last inspection there has been a marked improvement in boys' achievement. The need to address the imbalance in gender performance was a key issue of the last report. The school has taken effective action. Evidence gathered during the current inspection and recent test results show that boys do as well as boys nationally in reading. The work done to raise boys' writing standards has been successful. The difference in their performance in mathematics compared with the girls has reduced rapidly over the last three years, so that it is now broadly similar to the national picture.
9. The achievement of pupils of different abilities is good. More able pupils do well. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher levels in the national tests in 2003 was well above average in reading, writing and science, and in the top five per cent in the country in mathematics. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes to school and their behaviour are very good. Attendance and punctuality are good. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good and very good for moral and social development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are keen to learn and join in all activities with enthusiasm.
- Pupils' willingness to show enterprise and take responsibility is very good.
- The school promotes very good relationships.
- Adults have high expectations for pupils' conduct.
- Pupils attend well and arrive on time.

Commentary

10. Pupils are interested in their lessons, show good concentration and work hard, in response to teachers' high expectations and their promotion of a strong work ethic. The pupils take a full and enthusiastic part in activities, some of which includes individuals agreeing academic and personal targets with their teacher. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. The teachers and their assistants relate very well to the pupils. As a result, the pupils enjoy school and want very much to please the adults by doing their best. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well in their personal, social and emotional development.
11. Behaviour in class and about school is very good. Relationships between pupils are very good. Pupils mainly play well together in mixed groups, no one is isolated, playtime 'friendship monitors' take their role seriously and older pupils care for younger ones. Pupils take on these and other responsibilities very readily. They develop respect for each other and there is little incidence of bullying, racism or other forms of harassment in school. Pupils maintain that bullying is rare and if any unpleasant incidents do occur they know what to do and know that the staff will deal effectively with the problem. Pupils have good levels of self-esteem. They talk confidently with adults and are not afraid to express their views in classroom discussions.
12. Attendance is good and has been consistently above the national average since the previous inspection. Punctuality is good and not considered a problem. Procedures are in place to contact parents on the first day of any unexplained absence. Registration is correctly completed but there is no central control of registers.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.4	School data	0.1
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.

13. Spiritual development is good. The opportunities pupils have to discuss those less fortunate contribute strongly to their awareness of themselves and others. The school supports national and international charities. Spiritual development is also well provided for by religious education lessons that include an appreciation of different faiths and beliefs.
14. Moral and social developments are very good. Pupils have a very clear understanding of what is right and wrong. They have the opportunity to make sensible decisions about their own lives and to be responsible members of the school community. Healthy eating is a current topic for the School Council. These qualities are reinforced through personal, social and health education lessons. There were no exclusions for the latest complete reporting year.
15. Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. A variety of visits contributes well to pupils' appreciation of their own culture. Pupils understand and accept that other people have different beliefs and cultures, but visits to or visitors from other cultures are rare. Opportunities to take part in a range of activities from other cultures, including art or listening to and playing music, are limited.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good. Teaching and learning are good. Assessment is satisfactory. Curriculum provision is satisfactory for pupils in Years 1 to 4 and good in the Foundation Stage. The care, support and guidance pupils receive are good. There is a satisfactory partnership with parents, the community and other schools and a good partnership with colleges.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good, overall, in each section of the school. The assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Stimulating teaching engages pupils' attention very well.
- Insistence on high standards of behaviour leads to good use of time in lessons.
- Classroom assistance is used well by teachers and it contributes strongly to the good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- The marking of pupils' work does not help sufficiently in raising standards.

Commentary

16. Pupils learn well as a result of the good teaching found throughout the school. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The small percentage of unsatisfactory teaching present at the time of the last inspection has been eliminated. Consistently good teaching in the Foundation Stage gets children off to a good start. In Years 1 to 4 more than three quarters of the lessons observed were good or better. Taking the school as a whole, more than eight of every ten lessons were good or better. Literacy and numeracy are taught well, which helps pupils to learn effectively in different areas of study. In other subjects too little teaching was seen to make valid judgements.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 25 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	3	18	4	0	0	0

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

17. The encouragement and engagement of pupils in their learning are strengths of the teaching. The lively manner of most teachers, coupled with well-chosen methods for gaining pupils' attention and judicious use of humour, result in pupils concentrating hard and applying themselves very well to their tasks. This was the case in an English lesson for pupils in Year 3 and 4, when the teacher and her assistant read the parts of two characters in a shared story - the ant and the grasshopper - very expressively. This increased pupils' levels of attention and their understanding of the text considerably.
18. The adults working with pupils insist on high standards of behaviour. The skilful management of pupils was evident in a Year 2 lesson in which the teacher brought her class quickly from laughter, about a humorous poem, to listening carefully to the instructions for their written task. This very good control allows the time available for learning to be used to good effect.
19. Teachers make good use of their assistants. This contributes strongly to the good support that pupils with special educational needs receive. Teaching assistants play a very valuable part in helping individuals. Their work is valued highly by teachers and pupils.
20. Teachers make sure that pupils understand exactly what they are intended to achieve in each lesson by discussion at the start and by asking pupils to write this down before they begin a written task. This gives pupils a good understanding of the criteria that are used to assess their work. However, teachers do not make enough use of the final part of lessons to help pupils to evaluate how well they have learned.
21. The good arrangements for assessing children's progress in the Foundation Stage enhance achievement. In Years 1 to 4, satisfactory measures are in place to assess and record pupils' progress. Assessment is used well to track the progress of pupils in English and

mathematics. Pupils' work is marked regularly, but not enough guidance is given to help pupils improve. The current procedures for assessing pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics are efficient and effective, but have been in use for only a relatively short time.

The curriculum

Curriculum provision is satisfactory for pupils in Years 1 to 4 and good in the Foundation Stage. Staffing, accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and gives them effective access to the curriculum.
- The Foundation Stage curriculum is good.
- Accommodation for Nursery children is good and provides a welcoming environment.

Commentary

22. The curriculum meets requirements for all subjects, including those of the locally agreed and diocesan syllabus for religious education. Children in the Foundation Stage enjoy a good curriculum, which provides them with a wide range of activities in all areas of learning. National literacy and numeracy strategies have been effectively implemented. Teachers provide a good, broad programme for personal, social and health education, including sex and drugs education. The school is very inclusive in its approach to offering all pupils access to activities and equal opportunities.
23. Good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs, as it was at the time of the last inspection. Strong features of the school's arrangements include a review at the start of every term of the progress and learning needs of each pupil on the register of pupils with special educational needs, which involves all staff. The monitoring of teachers' planning to check that appropriate tasks are set for the pupils concerned also helps to boost the progress they make.
24. All subjects have schemes of work devised from the national guidelines. Where appropriate, planning is based on a two-year cycle to take account of pupils in mixed age classes. Plans are regularly evaluated and amended to meet the needs of the pupils. Wherever possible links, with other areas of the curriculum are made. For example, note taking, a literacy skill, is used in history, or computers are used to generate pictures in the style of Jackson Pollack.
25. Teachers provide a varied programme of learning experiences for all pupils, including extra-curricular sporting activities. The village is used well as a resource for history, geography and science. This and visits to places of interest, visiting theatre groups and musicians help to enrich the curriculum and increase pupils' knowledge of the world around them.
26. A dedicated and enthusiastic team of teachers and support staff work well together. All of these adults are deployed well to meet the demands of the curriculum and to support pupils' learning effectively. Accommodation for the Nursery children is good, providing them with a spacious, well-organised, attractive and welcoming environment. The outdoor area for these children is used effectively to provide a valuable extension for classroom activities. However, as there is no shelter, use is limited in wet weather.

Care, guidance and support

Provision is **good**. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. The care of pupils and the measures to ensure their welfare and safety are very good. The support and guidance they receive are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Members of staff know children and families very well.
- There is a high level of personal support.
- There are very good relationships at all levels.
- Very good equipment and lunchtime supervision encourage pupils to play constructively and co-operatively.

Commentary

27. Child protection procedures are sound and all members of the classroom staff are aware of their responsibilities. However, this high level of awareness does not extend to lunchtime supervisory staff. Playground supervision is very good and there is a good selection of play equipment that pupils are actively encouraged to use. Year 4 'friendship monitors' provide good support for younger pupils.
28. Standards of maintenance and cleanliness are very good, and vandalism and graffiti are not a problem. This instils high values in the pupils who consequently show respect for property and resources. Teachers know their pupils and families well and provide a very good level of personal support, involving parents where necessary. Parents are very happy with the levels of care and welfare provided by the school. Pupils are at ease and confident in approaching all adults in the school. There is a clear and consistently applied reward system that encourages good achievement in all aspects of personal and academic development.
29. Induction arrangements for pupils joining the school are good and establish a constructive home-school relationship. Parents are invited to discuss any problems that arise shortly after their child has started school. There is a good range of opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities for the day-to-day running of the school. The school council has contributed to the development of the school and some of its suggestions have been implemented. The school council is currently involved in assisting the school to achieve a Healthy Schools award.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There is a satisfactory partnership with parents, the community and other schools and a good partnership with colleges. The views of parents were positive in response to the pre-inspection questionnaire and at the parents' meeting. This is similar to what was found at the previous inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are very supportive of the school.
- Links with the church are strong but not the wider community.
- There is an active parent-teacher association.
- A significant minority of parents do not feel that they are informed or consulted well enough.

Commentary

30. Parents' responses to the inspection questionnaire show that they are generally happy about all that the school has to offer and particularly value the caring ethos. An active parent-teacher association supports the school well by providing good social opportunities for parents and their children and by providing good financial support for learning resources.
31. Overall, the information for parents is satisfactory. The annual report on each pupil's progress is good; it is personal to the pupil and covers aspects of personal development. However, the report does not provide parents with a clear statement about what their child needs to learn

next. Those parents who approach the school for help or advice about learning at home are pleased with the assistance they receive, but the school does not actively reach out to all parents. There is no regular newsletter or communication about what pupils will be learning in the next term or sessions that parents can attend on curriculum subjects. The use of reading diaries is good and is an effective means of communication. Parents are welcome in school and a number of parents regularly assist during the teaching day and there are very good opportunities for parents to meet with teachers at the start or end of the day. There are good procedures in place to deal with the concerns of parents, but they seldom have to be used.

32. Partnerships with the community are satisfactory and are centred on village activities; links with the church are very strong. The parish priest leads assemblies and pupils and parents attend services in the church and take an active part in village life. The school has satisfactory links with other local schools and this helps pupils to transfer smoothly. Links with colleges are good, with the school providing placements for trainee teachers. The partnership with other schools in the local cluster group is not used effectively to enrich learning opportunities or life experiences for pupils.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The quality of leadership by the headteacher is satisfactory. The quality of governance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The governors work well.
- The school is committed to promoting the wellbeing and potential of all its pupils.
- The finances are managed well.
- Target setting is not used to best effect.
- The role of subject co-coordinator is underdeveloped.

Commentary

33. The headteacher has been in post for a relatively short time and it is too early to evaluate the impact of her work on standards, especially in view of the small size of year groups and the difficulties in identifying trends in a statistically reliable way. The strengths of the headteacher's leadership lie in her collegiate approach and the development of teamwork. She is making a good contribution by promoting an ethos in which everyone is encouraged to participate in the development of the school and do their best. Good arrangements for checking the quality of teaching and learning have a positive effect on pupil achievement. The headteacher is new to the analysis of attainment data, but her skills are developing satisfactorily.
34. The leadership of other members of staff is satisfactory, overall. The subject co-coordinators show strong commitment to raising standards and improving provision. They contribute well to the improvement of teaching and learning through their monitoring of lessons, although they have not received training to do this. However, they do not check teachers' planning and this reduces their knowledge of the overall quality of provision in their subjects. They do not draw up plans to show how they intend to help to raise standards.
35. The work of the governing body has improved since the last inspection and now has a good impact on the standards achieved by pupils. The governors are good at involving themselves in the life and work of the school and this has helped in the development of a strong partnership with the staff. Their monitoring of the work in every subject and their regular visits to classrooms ensure that they know much about the curriculum. Their analysis of attainment data and willingness to challenge the performance of the school are strengths of their work. Their recent request for an analysis of writing results over the last five years is evidence of the way in which they hold the school to account. The governing body fulfills its statutory duties.

The lack of systematic surveys of parental opinion means that governors may not be fully aware of how much support they have for making changes that may affect parents.

36. The management of the headteacher is satisfactory. The school runs smoothly day to day and the assistance of the administrative staff is very valuable in achieving this. Constructive changes to the work of the teaching assistants have helped to reduce the workload of teachers, freeing them to concentrate more effectively on promoting pupils' learning. There is strong commitment to the professional development of staff and this is organised well, enabling teachers and their assistants to keep up to date in their practice.
37. The system for setting targets is not fully effective. Teachers hold discussions with each pupil to help them to choose individual targets for improvement during the course of a series of lessons. This is not fully effective because it tends to be done only at the beginning of each term, rather than as soon as each target is achieved. Also, the school does not make enough use of the information gained from tests, showing weaknesses in pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding of English, mathematics and science, to set targets that tie in with what is to be taught during the subsequent weeks.
38. Overall, the management of the performance of staff makes a satisfactory contribution to raising standards, especially through the provision of objectives focussed on the progress pupils make. Currently, the period over which the objectives for the headteacher are set is different from that for other members of staff. This makes it more difficult to forge close links between the two. The school is taking action to address this.
39. The school plays a good part in the initial training of teachers, receiving several students on teaching practice each year. It also assists well in the training of nursery and childcare students.
40. The management of the school's finances is good. The finance assistant is very knowledgeable and provides the governors with good quality information, allowing them to monitor expenditure well. The recommendations of the recent auditors' report have been addressed. Governors play a major part in deciding how money will be spent.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	279,941
Total expenditure	283,527
Expenditure per pupil	3,294

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	23,138
Balance carried forward to the next	19,552

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

41. The provision in the Foundation Stage is effective and gives the children a good start to their education. Admission to the Nursery is in the term after the child's third birthday. Children move to a mixed Reception/Year 1 class in the term after their fifth birthday. At the time of the inspection, no children had turned five and all the Reception class was taught with the Nursery children. The provision for both sets of children was good. The majority of children have had some pre-school experience. Attainment on entry is broadly average overall but varies considerably from year to year, depending on the number of higher attaining children and the number with special educational needs. Most children are on course to attain the national goals for early learning by the end of the Reception year and a few will exceed them. All children, including those with special educational needs, make good progress and achieve well: some children make very good progress and achieve very well.
42. The quality of teaching by all the adults is good. They have a well-developed understanding of the needs of this age group, which leads to the provision of a wide range of worthwhile activities in all areas of learning. This provision is linked closely to the nationally agreed Foundation Stage curriculum. Topics are planned jointly with the mixed Reception/Year 1 class teacher to ensure continuity when the older children move into that class. Tasks are carefully matched to the relevant learning needs of each age group. There is a strong emphasis on developing language. Questioning is used very effectively to encourage children to explore language and extend their vocabulary. Very good relationships give children confidence to respond to adults and to share their thoughts. The small teaching groups enable tasks to be closely matched to the needs of each child. This has a positive effect on their learning and helps them concentrate. There is a good balance between directed and self-chosen activities. Assessment is used effectively to ensure children are challenged well.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in this area is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A wide range of opportunities helps children to develop the appropriate skills and achieve well.
- The adults' high expectations of behaviour have a beneficial effect on learning.

Commentary

43. Achievement is good. Most children are on course to attain the national goals for early learning by the end of the Reception year, with a significant number exceeding the expected level. The majority of children conform to the high expectations of good behaviour, even the youngest children who have only been in school for a few weeks. They know the routines well and settle quickly to work or activities. They are interested, well focused and remain on task. A calm working atmosphere pervades the area. Children are happy and confident, willing to respond to adults' questions. They know they must take turns and listen to each other, but do not always do so. The very good teamwork of all adults provides the children with good role models of co-operation. Children were observed playing together and sharing the building blocks, helping each other on the computer and tidying up with little adult supervision.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Provision in this area of learning is **good**, with the exception of writing.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Every opportunity is used to develop speaking and listening skills.
- The quality of teaching is good, giving a high priority to developing reading skills.
- Children's writing skills are less well developed than reading.

Commentary

44. Achievement is satisfactory, overall. Most children are on course to attain or exceed the national goals in reading, speaking and listening, but few will attain the goals in writing by the end of the Reception year. A strong emphasis is put on developing speaking and listening skills, the knowledge of letter sounds and reading. Many opportunities are provided for this and children enjoy their sound sessions and shared text or stories. Questioning is used effectively to stimulate verbal responses and most children reply in sentences, although the youngest children, recently admitted, often use a single word. Higher attaining children are beginning to recognise simple words and can answer questions about the story. They can sound out unfamiliar words, but cannot always run the sounds together to make the words. The lower attaining children can talk about the story but they recognise few letters. Despite developing appropriate reading skills most children lack the necessary skills to achieve the national goals in writing. Achievement in this aspect of communication, language and literacy is unsatisfactory. Children are encouraged to write but the writing area in the classroom is not exciting or stimulating and during observations no child chose to work in this area. Looking at the work of last year's Reception children showed that even the higher attaining children did not achieve the expected level in writing. It is expected nationally, that by the end of the Reception year higher attaining children will write two or three sentences in which simple words are correctly spelt. This was not the case in the work of the children whose work was scrutinised.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in this area is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Adults use every opportunity to develop an understanding of number through counting and number rhymes.
- Good teaching is leading to enthusiasm and interest.

Commentary

45. Effective teaching is leading to good achievement. Most children are on course to attain the national goals and many will exceed it by the end of their Reception year. Children confidently count from 0 to 10 and back to 0. Even the youngest nursery child joins in. They have a good understanding of some simple two-dimensional shapes: knowing the properties of a square and circle. Older children recognise that a rectangle is not a square and they can explain why. Mathematics is made exciting through number rhymes and counting activities, which the children love. They make good progress and learn well because of their enjoyment.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Very little direct teaching was observed. However, planning and photographic evidence showed that a wide range of topics and experiences is provided for the children. This broadens and enriches their knowledge of the world around them. It was not possible to make a judgement about

attainment in this area. During the inspection children were looking at senses. They were fascinated by unfamiliar fruits although few were keen to taste them. Computers are frequently in use and are a popular choice with the children. A range of programs covering different areas of learning is used. Children's control of the mouse and cursor varies, but is often good.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in this area is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good use is made of the outdoor area both for physical development and as an extension of the classroom.
- The quality of teaching is good, so children achieve well.

Commentary

46. Good teaching ensures that most children are on course to achieve the learning goals in this area. Children enjoy their sessions in the hall and respond positively to the teacher's demands. The children have access to a good range of outdoor learning experiences, not just for physical development, but in other areas of learning, because the area is resourced as an extension to the classroom. However, lack of shelter impedes its use during inclement weather. Opportunities are provided for children to use scissors to improve their cutting skills, to practise colouring within the lines or letter formation. Older children make good progress with their control of a pencil and their letters become more recognisable. Achievement is satisfactory.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

47. The small amount of teaching seen in this area was good, but it was not possible to make an overall judgement on provision. Many children are on course to achieve the learning goals by the end of the Reception year. Children enjoy music sessions and join in the familiar songs with enthusiasm. Activities offered during the course of the day usually include opportunities to experiment with mixing paint, making models or collages. A range of different media is explored over the year, including clay, which was used effectively by the children to make faces as part of a topic about "Myself".

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision for English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are better than at the time of the last inspection.
- Pupils achieve particularly well in reading.
- Punctuation is developed well.
- Teaching and learning are good, but there are weaknesses in the teaching of writing.
- There is no action plan to help boost standards and provision.

Commentary

48. Pupils achieve well as they pass through the school. Standards in reading are above average by the time pupils leave. Pupils achieve well because the provision made for developing these skills is good. Pupils enjoy reading and do so accurately and fluently. By comparison, standards in Year 2 in writing over the last few years are broadly average and pupils achieve

satisfactorily in the infant years. Inspection evidence shows that in Year 4, standards in writing are above average and that pupils achieve well by the time they leave. Data supplied by the local education authority confirm that pupils' achievement between Year 2 and Year 4 has improved and is good. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. Nonetheless, the results in writing remain weak compared with those in reading for a number of reasons:

- by the end of the Foundation Stage children's writing skills are not sufficiently developed;
- expectations of pupils are not always high enough;
- marking by teachers does not provide enough guidance about what pupils should do to improve;
- not enough is done to ensure that pupils' handwriting is consistent in quality.

49. The scrutiny of pupils' work shows that punctuation is developed well, thanks to the good demands made by the teachers. For example, Year 2 pupils begin to use speech marks and try to organise their writing into paragraphs. Year 4 pupils maintain these good standards in punctuation and their use of a range of marks, such as exclamation marks, is beginning to become established. More able pupils work well above the level expected when they use commas correctly in conjunction with speech marks. However, some more able pupils in Year 4 do not consistently use a joined handwriting script. Generally, too few reminders are given by teachers in lessons and in the marking of pupils' work to promote higher standards in handwriting.
50. Overall, the teaching of English is good and, consequently, pupils learn well. Good teaching was seen in each class. The stimulating approach adopted by the teachers engages the pupils and draws them into what is being taught, enhancing their learning. A further strength is the way teachers act as good role models of skills they want the children to gain, such as speaking clearly. The good management of pupils results in pupils behaving very well and working industriously. Opportunities are missed at the end of lessons to involve pupils in evaluating how well they have learned.
51. The co-coordinator is enthusiastic and committed to raising standards. Her work to improve teachers' planning, revise policies and provide training for staff about the teaching of writing skills has begun to improve pupils' achievements. Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving, but, the lack of a written plan showing how standards will be raised reduces the effectiveness of the co-coordinator's hard work.
52. Good improvement has taken place since the last inspection. The weaknesses identified in the last report, such as inconsistency in the use of reading diaries, have been remedied successfully. Overall, standards have improved. The performance of boys compared with girls has improved significantly, due to focused work done to achieve this. Teaching is better in Years 3 and 4.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

53. Satisfactory opportunities are created for pupils to develop literacy skills in a range of subjects, such as religious education and geography. The creation of an advertisement for selling a house by pupils in Year 4 by using computers enhances skills in both information and communication technology and English.

MATHEMATICS

The provision for mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in Year 2 and well above in Year 4. The achievement of pupils is good and for a significant number it is very good.

- The quality of teaching is consistently good, with tasks closely matched to the needs of all pupils.
- Teachers' marking does not provide pupils with enough constructive comments to help them improve.
- The role of the co-coordinator needs further development.

Commentary

54. Inspection evidence shows that current standards in Year 2 are above average, lower than previously, but still an improvement since the last inspection. Since a dip in 2000 standards have remained consistently above average. Standards in Year 4 are well above average.
55. Given the average attainment on entry to the school, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are achieving well. All pupils make good progress and a significant proportion makes very good progress and achieves very well.
56. Throughout the school there is a good emphasis on learning and handling numbers so pupils are confident to use this knowledge to solve problems. The work of lower attaining pupils is of good quality because of the good support given and tasks matched well to their learning needs. The setting of appropriate tasks for all pupils including the higher attainers provides a good level of challenge for pupils of different abilities. Pupils enjoy mathematics, particularly the quick-fire mental activities at the beginning of each session. They are well motivated and keen to respond to questions.
57. The quality of teaching is consistently good across the school and this is an improvement since the previous inspection. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic. Pupils focus well on the tasks set, particularly if they are practical. Questioning is used effectively to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding, challenging them to explain how they arrived at their answers. Very good relationships give pupils confidence to respond even if the answer is incorrect. One of the strong features of planning is the way tasks are set to closely match the needs of all pupils. However, there are occasions when additional tasks could have been planned for the higher attaining pupils.
58. The good support provided by the teaching assistants benefits pupils with special educational needs and helps them have equality of access to the curriculum. All teachers share the lesson objectives with pupils and then check if they feel they have been achieved. This practice helps the pupils to know what they are aiming to achieve, but not enough emphasis is placed on them evaluating how well their learning has gone. The final part of lessons is not always used effectively to extend pupils' learning. Assessment data are analysed to highlight weaknesses, but their use is insufficiently developed to provide targets for pupils to achieve over the course of a series of lessons. Marking does not provide pupils with enough constructive comments to help them improve. Often it is just a tick or sometimes a stamp that tells the pupil the target has been achieved. There is a lack of consistency in marking across the school.
59. The subject co-coordinator has had some opportunity to observe colleagues teaching. However, the role is underdeveloped and does not provide her with a clear overview of standards and curriculum coverage across the school. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

60. The use of mathematics across the curriculum is broadly satisfactory. It is used in design and technology and in science, particularly in the use of measures such as length and weight. Data handling is used to record information in science. Occasionally, coordinates are used in geography when drawing or interpreting treasure maps.

SCIENCE

61. The organisation of the timetable meant that it was only possible to observe one lesson. Therefore no judgement is made of the overall provision.
62. In common with other subjects, the standards in science vary significantly as a result of the changes in the nature of each small year group. Pupils achieve well as they pass through the school. In 2003, the last year for which validated data are available, standards in Year 2 were above average. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher level was well above average. This is due at least in part to the good demands made on pupils by the teacher. Inspection evidence shows that most pupils in Year 2 attain standards that are in line with those expected, and in Year 4 they are above the expected level. Standards have risen since the last inspection.
63. The timetable allowed only one lesson to be observed, but the scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' planning indicates that teaching and learning are of good quality. The high proportion of work done through the provision of first-hand, practical experience significantly enhances the learning of pupils. However, not enough of the experiments done in Year 2 encourage the discussion of how to make a test fair. In the lesson seen, good methods were used to get across the key teaching points, resulting in very high levels of interest and good progress.
64. Work in science makes a strong contribution to work in other subjects. It also gives a boost to pupils' personal, social and health education, for example, through the study of nutrition. A particularly good link is made with lessons in design and technology in Year 2. Pupils apply their above average knowledge of electrical circuits to designing and making devices which incorporate bulbs.
65. The pupils in Year 4 also show a good understanding of electricity. They work above the expected level in exploring the effects of changing components in the circuits they produce. Other strengths of their attainment include a good knowledge of the transportation systems in plants, their understanding of why light cannot pass through some materials and the presentation of their results in tables.
66. The work of the co-coordinator is satisfactory. Her monitoring of lessons resulted in the diagnosis that pupils were not doing enough investigative activities. The co-coordinator attended training to increase her knowledge and understanding of this aspect of science. As a result, she made changes to her own teaching and to the programme of work on which teachers base their planning. The dissemination of her knowledge to other teaching staff and the good support she gives to them has given rise to the strong emphasis placed on learning through experimentation noted during the inspection. However, action planning to develop provision and raise standards is underdeveloped. Also, the co-coordinator does not check teachers' plans, making it difficult for her to be sure that learning is sequenced appropriately and that the curriculum is covered successfully.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

67. Not enough lessons were observed to make judgements about the quality of teaching and learning and provision. Standards are average in Years 2 and 4, as they were at the time of the last inspection. The good number of computers and the wide range of programs available contribute well to the satisfactory achievement of pupils. The good level of resourcing makes it easier for teachers to plan well and gives pupils more opportunities to learn skills. The school now has a better ratio of pupils to computers than is found in most primary schools. Resources have improved well since the last inspection. In addition, there are other devices such as a digital movie camera and electronic microscope which significantly increase pupils' learning opportunities.

68. Discussions and the observation of lessons indicate that teachers are confident in their abilities and are keen to continue to improve their expertise in teaching information and communication technology. Their enthusiasm is mirrored by the very good attitudes of pupils. They work very well together, co-operating effectively in the shared use of the computers.
69. In the lessons observed, pupils were very attentive and behaved very well. The good demonstration of skills by the teacher and the skilful selection of questions helped pupils to improve their knowledge and understanding quickly. In a lesson for pupils in Years 3 and 4, the thoughtful choice of tasks for those not able to use the computer immediately prepared pupils well for the activity they would later undertake on the computer.
70. The co-coordinator has played a major part in improving provision. Latterly, she has used the school's 'e-learning credits' provided by the government, to further increase and upgrade the hardware and software which pupils use. The co-coordinator's role in monitoring planning, however, is underdeveloped.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

71. Teachers make appropriate use of information and communication technology across the curriculum. They try to provide opportunities for pupils to use computers frequently. All the classrooms have access to the Internet. This increases the use of computers to carry out research in a wide variety of subjects. Pupils in Year 2 write and amend stories on screen. In Year 3, pupils 'paint' pointillist pictures in art after the style of Seurat and in Year 4 work to enhance knowledge and understanding of geography includes work about houses. However, the provision of opportunities across the curriculum is not yet planned systematically. The digital movie camera is starting to be used to help in the evaluation of pupils' attainment in physical education.

HUMANITIES

72. Geography and history were not a focus of the inspection. Provision and standards in religious education are reported as part of a separate inspection. No lessons were observed in **geography** but the two seen in **history** were good. Examination of teachers' plans and pupils' work shows that the school is teaching a broad and balanced curriculum in these subjects. There was insufficient evidence to make a judgement about standards in geography, and in history, in Year 2. However, in history most pupils in Year 4 attain the levels expected for their age group. Many pupils are gaining satisfactory knowledge about different eras of history. They are encouraged to improve their historical skills through research and the use of the Internet. The school makes good use of the local environment to support learning in both subjects.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

73. Although the school makes proper provision for teaching **art and design** it was not possible to gather enough evidence to make judgements about provision, standards or the quality of teaching and learning. However, from teachers' plans it is clear that pupils experience a satisfactory range of media and study the work of well-known artists. For example, pupils in Year 2 use the computer to generate pictures in the style of Jackson Pollack.
74. Only one lesson of **design and technology** was observed. No judgement is made of provision. The products from design and technology lessons made last year were not available and too little work had been completed this year for judgements to be made about standards. The examination of teachers' planning indicates that a satisfactory range of learning experiences is provided. The lesson observed was of good quality. Pupils were allowed to develop their own ideas and learn from their mistakes. The very good management of the class and the very brisk pace of the lesson helped pupils to move forward quickly in making the purses they had designed.

75. **Music** was not a focus of the inspection, but there was sufficient evidence from two music lessons and singing in assemblies to judge that standards are above the expected level in Year 2 and Year 4. Most pupils in Year 2 can keep the beat, recognise long and short notes and sing in tune. Year 4 pupils are developing the skill of singing in two parts. They very effectively expressed the feeling of each verse in movement. Singing in assemblies was tuneful and enthusiastic, particularly in familiar choruses. Pupils have a range of opportunities to learn an instrument and to participate in church services and school productions. The latter is successfully directed by a capable and enthusiastic subject co-coordinator. The older pupils also take part in the 'Festival of Voices' held annually in London. All these activities enhance pupils' enjoyment, appreciation and understanding of music.
76. The examination of teachers' planning shows that pupils are provided with a broad range of learning opportunities in **physical education**. This subject was not a focus for the inspection and only one lesson was observed. This means that judgements about standards, provision and the quality of teaching and learning are not possible. In the lesson seen, the skilful organisation of the teacher helped to ensure that optimum use was made of the space available. However, the small size of the hall has a negative impact on achievement and makes the teaching of dance and gymnastics difficult. Teachers are forced to have half of the class watch the others perform and practise for substantial periods because of the lack of space.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

77. Provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship is **good**. Adults are strongly committed to pupils' personal development. Learning opportunities are planned well. There is a caring ethos and a committed approach to pupils' personal development by all members of staff. Time is set aside each week for personal development. During these sessions pupils have opportunity to share experiences and gain a greater understanding of social and moral issues. Health education, including sex education and drugs awareness is well planned as part of the science curriculum. In the one very good lesson observed the idea of citizenship was very effectively fostered as pupils discuss what being "democratic" means and related this to electing an editorial 'board' to produce a class magazine.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
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	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	4
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	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	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	3
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).