

INSPECTION REPORT

DALLAS ROAD COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Lancaster

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119130

Head teacher: Mrs Helen Belbin

Lead inspector: Mr Andrew Scott

Dates of inspection: 31st January – 3rd February 2005

Inspection number: 267173

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	417
School address:	High Street Lancaster
Postcode:	LA1 1LD
Telephone number:	01524 64520
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Angie Kay
Date of previous inspection:	19 th April 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This is a large school situated very close to the centre of Lancaster. It has 417 pupils who mainly come from the immediate neighbourhood. Most pupils come from white British families but a significant minority come from other ethnic backgrounds, including about 13 per cent of Indian descent. There is a broad mix of social backgrounds, including children from overseas whose parents are working at Lancaster University, St Martin's College or the city hospital. Overall, pupils come from average social backgrounds. Pupils start school with a wide range of abilities but their knowledge and skills are average overall. An increasingly significant number of pupils leave or join school after the age of four and this sometimes impacts on standards. About 15 per cent of pupils have special educational needs, which is broadly average. There are ten pupils with statements of special educational need who mainly have speech and communication problems. About 17 per cent of pupils do not have English as their first language.

In recent years, the school has succeeded in receiving a number of awards. These include the Basic Skills Quality Mark, a Schools' Achievement Award and the Listening Schools' Award, all in 2003. The school also received the Investors in People Award in 2004 and has just been awarded Healthy Schools Status, Level 3. The school is part of the Excellence in Cities initiative which has benefited, for example, the development of the orchestra and choir, as well as provision for gifted and talented pupils.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
27545	Mr Andrew Scott	Lead inspector	Information and communication technology, religious education, geography
32678	Mrs Kathryn Dodd	Lay inspector	
20404	Mr John Evans	Team inspector	English, history, physical education, English as an additional language
15015	Mr Michael Wehrmeyer	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage, mathematics, art and design, design and technology
30745	Mrs Patricia Thorpe	Team inspector	Science, music, special educational needs

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	9
Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	12
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	17
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS	20
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	32

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an effective school. The very good leadership of the head teacher has produced a happy, relaxed yet focused learning environment where pupils work hard and are eager to succeed. Pupils achieve well throughout the school and standards by the end of Year 6 are above average in English, mathematics and science. The high expectations of pupils' behaviour and very good level of care by all staff combine to produce excellent relationships both in and out of lessons. There are very productive links with parents and beyond the school. The school gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The very warm, welcoming and positive atmosphere of the school promotes excellent relationships among staff and pupils, and very good behaviour and attitudes to work
- The clear-sighted, astute and enthusiastic leadership of the head teacher, well supported by key staff and governors, has ensured that the school has made very good improvement since the last inspection, and that the priorities are right for further improvement
- The very good care for the personal development and well-being of pupils ensures that they feel very respected and valued, and develop as mature, responsible and considerate individuals
- Pupils achieve well because of effective teaching and a stimulating curriculum; however, teachers do not make the best use of assessment data to address the needs of all pupils, especially more able pupils
- The very effective partnerships with parents, other schools and the community broaden pupils' horizons and enrich their learning experience
- Teachers could do more to further writing, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) through other subjects

The school has made very good progress since the last inspection. Achievement by children in the reception classes and by pupils in Year 2 has improved. Standards have improved in ICT and are now average. Pupils with English as an additional language now achieve as well as other pupils. Attendance is now well above average. Pupils' personal development has greatly improved, including their behaviour and attitudes to work. Pupils benefit from better care and welfare, as well as more fruitful partnerships with parents, other schools and the community.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Key: A - very high; A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average; E* - very low*

Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.

Pupils' achievement throughout the school is good. Children enter school with average skills and knowledge. They achieve well in the reception classes and are on target to exceed most of the goals expected of them by the end of the year. By Year 2, pupils also achieve well but their attainment is average in writing and mathematics. A school focus on reading,

speaking and listening has produced above average standards, although attainment in all subjects has been influenced by the recent departure of several more able pupils. By Year 6, pupils achieve well and standards are above average in English, mathematics and science, as they have mostly been in recent years. However, the achievement of pupils, especially more able pupils, could be even better if teachers matched work more consistently to their capabilities. Pupils' attainment is average in all other subjects judged, including ICT and religious education. Pupils with special educational needs, and those who do not have English as their first language, achieve as well as other pupils.

Provision for pupils' personal development is very good. Pupils benefit from very good opportunities to develop as individuals and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. They have very positive attitudes to work and they behave very well. Their enthusiasm for school is apparent in the well above average level of attendance and good punctuality.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teaching is good in all year groups, and lessons vary from satisfactory to excellent.

Teaching is especially good in most aspects of English, mathematics and science, as well as in the Foundation Stage. Teachers promote literacy, numeracy and ICT satisfactorily through other subjects but do not make the most of all the opportunities to do so.

The school's curriculum is good. There is ample time for each subject and very good enrichment outside lessons. There is very good provision for pupils' personal development and pupils benefit equally from the curriculum. The school takes very good care of its pupils and greatly respects the opinions of pupils in its development. As a result, pupils feel safe and valued. Partnerships with parents, other schools and the community are very good, and support pupils' learning very well.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. The leadership of the head teacher is very good. Her energetic and purposeful approach has motivated staff and pupils alike, and ensured that the school is successful and in a good position to improve further. The leadership of key staff is good, and effective at developing the school. Management of the school is good, because key staff monitor their areas of responsibility efficiently and create very appropriate action plans. Very good financial management ensures that money is wisely spent on the school's priorities. Governance is good, with governors meeting all legal requirements and providing valuable support and guidance for the school's development.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have a high opinion of the school. They particularly appreciate the quality of teaching and the high expectations by teachers of pupils' work and behaviour. They believe their children develop well as individuals and make good progress. The inspection team agrees with several parents, however, who feel that the level of challenge in some pupils' work is not always high enough. On the other hand, the team found little evidence to support the concerns of some parents and pupils about incidents of poor behaviour or bullying. All in all, pupils are very happy with their school. In particular, they appreciate their teachers, the happy atmosphere and the high degree of care.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- use assessment data more skilfully to meet the needs of all pupils, especially more able pupils
- develop further writing, numeracy and ICT across the curriculum

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

The achievement of pupils throughout the school is good. Standards in English, mathematics and science are above average by Year 6. Pupils with special educational needs and pupils with English as an additional language achieve as well as other pupils. However, more able pupils could achieve more in some subjects. There is little difference between the achievement of boys and girls. Compared to the previous inspection, standards throughout the school have remained very similar.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in English, mathematics and science are better than average by end of Year 6
- Children achieve well in the Foundation Stage because of effective teaching
- The good, often very good, provision for pupils with special needs enables them to achieve well, but work does not always challenge the high attainers to do their very best
- Pupils have developed good skills in independent learning which benefit, for example, problem-solving in mathematics and investigative work in science, though they need more chances to use their writing, numeracy and ICT skills in the full range of subjects

Commentary

1. Children begin school with skills and knowledge that are broadly average. By the time they enter Year 1, children are likely to exceed the goals expected of them in personal, social and emotional development, mathematics development, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development. This is due to the excellent relationships in the reception classes, good teaching and exciting activities provided. Children are on course to achieve their goals in language and literacy, although their speaking and listening develop well. In physical development, children are likely to attain their learning goals, despite some constraints on the provision for outdoor play.
2. In the national tests of 2004, the standards attained by pupils in Year 2 were average in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards were also average compared to similar schools. Teachers' assessments of pupils' standards in science showed similar results to the other subjects. Standards overall have kept in line with the national trend in recent years. However, standards in mathematics were well above average between 2001 and 2003. There is little significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls, although girls have tended to perform slightly better in writing.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.3 (16.2)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	14.5 (15.0)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	16.6 (17.8)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 57 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. Pupils' achievement in the current Year 2 is good because of effective teaching in Years 1 and 2. Standards are not as high as in some previous years, as there has been a significant number of pupils who have left and come to the school during these years. Nevertheless, standards in reading, speaking and listening are above average, because of special emphases in lessons on discussion and word skills. In writing, standards are average. Pupils are good at constructing sentences and adding punctuation, but handwriting and spelling are not as strong as they might be. In mathematics, pupils also reach average standards. More able pupils do not all achieve the higher levels, however, as work is not always carefully matched to their prior attainment. In all other subjects, where judgements were possible, pupils' attainment is broadly in line with that expected for their age. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs and those whose first language is not English is similar to that of other pupils.
4. In the national tests of 2004, pupils in Year 6 achieved above average standards in English and mathematics. More able pupils, in particular, achieved well in these subjects. Standards in science were average. The standards in these subjects were the same when compared to schools with a similar number of pupils with free school meals. However, standards are well above average compared to schools where attainment was similar at Year 2, and above average in science. This represents very good progress over time for that year group. Standards in recent years have risen faster than the national trend. There has been little significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls, although girls have slightly outperformed boys in English and science.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.1 (28.1)	26.9 (26.8)
Mathematics	28.1 (27.8)	27.0 (26.8)
Science	29.0 (29.0)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 57 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

5. The standards of pupils in the current Year 6 are above average in English, mathematics and science. In English, pupils speak fluently and listen well, because teachers provide good opportunities for discussion in lessons. They read well and their writing is satisfactory; their spelling and handwriting are not strong, however, and they do not have enough chance to write. In mathematics, pupils have good mental agility which aids problem-solving, but would benefit from more chances to use their numeracy skills in other subjects. Similarly, in science, pupils are adept at carrying out experiments using their own strategies. In both subjects, though, pupils capable of high attainment could do better if work were matched more carefully to their capabilities. In all other subjects judged, including ICT and religious education, attainment is in line with expectations for pupils of this age. Pupils do not have enough chance to use their ICT skills in other subjects, and this limits their achievements. As with younger pupils, pupils with special educational needs and those who do not have English as their first language achieve well.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to work are very good. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall. Attendance is well above average and punctuality is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The strong sense of social harmony in school promotes excellent relationships between all members of the school and generates very good attendance
- The positive climate for learning results in pupils having very good attitudes to learning
- The school has very effective ways of promoting good behaviour and ensures that pupils are very aware of the differences between right and wrong
- The school is very good at promoting pupils' appreciation of their own and other cultures

Commentary

6. The very good provision for pupils' social development stems from the distinct sense of community fostered throughout school. Teachers encourage pupils to interact extremely thoughtfully with one another, and even the very youngest children learn to show respect for the opinions of others and know how to listen to one another and to take turns. The school provides very good opportunities for pupils of all ages to take responsibility around the school. This they do willingly. Older pupils carry out their duties as lunchtime 'buddies', for example, with enthusiasm and sensitivity. They help to co-ordinate games and ensure all pupils feel happy, safe and included. They are well prepared to fulfil their role and take it seriously. The very effective school council, the many visits into the local community, links with other schools, visitors into school and the very good range of extra-curricular clubs all make a significant contribution to pupils' social development.
7. Pupils are eager to learn because of the good quality of teaching, the support and the warm, accepting ethos that prevails throughout the school. Pupils feel respected and valued and so enjoy school, show great interest, work hard and are keen to do well. This is a distinct improvement since the last inspection and parents rightly see this as a strength of the school. In the reception classes, for example, children are able to work on their own or in groups without the need for constant adult supervision. One group was intent on constructing various boats out of Duplo for the Gingerbread Man in their story. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, pupils worked harmoniously in groups to discuss the best strategies for solving a particular problem.
8. Behaviour has improved since the last inspection and is now very good. Pupils are very friendly and behave very well both in lessons and around school. A high expectation of behaviour is evident from all adults. Pupils clearly understand this because they are consulted on what their codes of conduct should be. Consequently, pupils behave well not because they are told to but because they have discussed the differences between right and wrong, and fully appreciate them. Adults set very good examples, showing respect and concern for each individual and, equally, pupils are keen to support one another to behave well. Pupils' achievements, very good behaviour, high attendance and positive relationships are valued highly and are celebrated through well-established reward systems, which are popular with pupils and motivate them to do well. The number of exclusions from school has reduced significantly over recent years because of the very effective ways in which the school manages behaviour. There was one exclusion in the last academic year, but none so far this year.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	264	1	
White – any other White background	13		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1		
Mixed – White and Black African	3		
Mixed – White and Asian	3		
Mixed – any other mixed background	7		
Asian or Asian British – Indian	45		
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1		
Black or Black British – African	2		
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1		
Chinese	9		
Any other ethnic group	7		

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

9. Pupils' cultural development is very well promoted and enhanced by the links established with the local community. The school held an International Week recently, for example, where customs and traditions were shared through such activities as Indian dancing and African drumming. Such events provide very good opportunities for pupils to learn and appreciate the diverse cultures and traditions that make up their school community and that of the wider world. Parents particularly value this aspect of the school's work. Many pupils learn to play a musical instrument and go on to play in the orchestra. Opportunities are often provided in lessons and assemblies for pupils to reflect on issues affecting their lives and broader issues. Pupils talk about such things in a way that helps them understand the impact of their own actions on the feelings of others as, for example, in the case of bullying.

Attendance

The school has very effective methods of monitoring attendance and works closely with parents to resolve any concerns. As a result, attendance has improved since the last inspection and is now very good.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.1	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.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education that the school provides for pupils is good. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. The curriculum is good and there is very good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education. The excellent relationships between staff and pupils ensure that all pupils are very well looked after and cared for. There are very good partnerships with parents, other schools and the local community, all of which benefit pupils' learning.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is **good**. Assessment is **satisfactory** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The excellent rapport between staff and pupils creates a very positive and lively learning environment in lessons
- Teachers explain concepts clearly and use good teaching strategies so that pupils understand new learning and develop new skills readily
- Good planning means that most pupils are well challenged in their learning; however, despite good systems of assessment, teachers do not always make skilful use enough of data to ensure that all pupils, especially more able pupils, are suitably challenged in all subjects
- The effective contribution from support staff throughout the school supports good learning, particularly that of less able pupils and those with special educational needs

Commentary

10. Teaching is as good overall as it was at the time of the last inspection. However, teaching is now consistently effective throughout the school, showing an improvement in the reception classes and Years 1 and 2. Pupils are keen to learn because teachers succeed in cultivating their interest and expect high standards of behaviour. Teachers have a gentle, encouraging and supportive manner so that pupils feel at ease and respectful towards one another and the adults in the room. Teachers clearly value the contributions of all pupils, whether articulated briefly or at length. In a Year 3 music lesson, the teacher waited patiently for one boy's impressive explanation for the derivation of the word 'glockenspiel'. Teachers praise selectively and sensibly so that pupils appreciate when their efforts are worthwhile and relevant. As a result, classrooms are happy and well-focused places.
11. Teachers are effective at introducing new learning and adept at explaining new concepts. In a Year 4 English lesson, for instance, pupils developed their creative vocabulary apace, well stimulated by the richness of language used carefully by the teacher. Teachers fashion their questions carefully to suit pupils of all abilities, to check whether they have understood and to consolidate learning. They develop opportunities through discussion to extend speaking and listening skills, and also to encourage pupils to think for themselves. This has a beneficial impact on problem-solving in mathematics and investigative work in science. Teachers also use resources to good effect to elaborate and amplify their explanations. A discussion in a history lesson with a 'real-life' Florence Nightingale certainly opened the eyes of pupils in Year 2.
12. For the most part, teachers plan lessons effectively. Teachers liaise closely with their colleagues in the same year groups so that pupils receive the same level of work. In English and mathematics, generally the setting of pupils into ability groups is successful, allowing teachers to pitch the work at a more appropriate level and, within these sets, teachers usually modify their expectations of pupils. In a Year 4 mathematics lesson on holiday prices, for example, less able pupils added and subtracted sums up to £300, while more able pupils calculated the cost of a week's car-hire based on a daily rate. The pace of learning is generally

purposeful and brisk. Lessons tend to hum along because teachers are well organised and so activities blend seamlessly together.

13. However, teachers do not consistently use this information to challenge more able pupils regularly enough in all subjects. In ICT, for example, teachers rarely vary their expectations of pupils. This is fine for most pupils, and teachers ensure that less able pupils receive extra adult support. However, pupils who are more computer literate do not have enough chance to explore ICT at their own level. In all subjects, teachers sometimes spend too long in lessons with a particular group and so other groups of pupils do not always work at a fast enough rate. Marking is satisfactory but could be used more productively to guide pupils about how best to improve.
14. Teaching assistants play a valuable role in lessons. They are well briefed by teachers so that they know exactly what they have to do and with which pupils. Their sensitive and thoughtful guidance in lessons is reassuring for less able pupils and those with special educational needs, in particular. They guide learning rather than direct it and pupils appreciate the deftness of the helping hand. When pupils are taught separately in small groups by the special education needs co-ordinator, teaching is particularly effective.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 55 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1(2%)	15 (27%)	24 (44%)	15 (27%)	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.

The curriculum

The school provides its pupils with a good curriculum. It enriches pupils’ experiences with a very good range of extra activities that boosts their skills in sports, arts and personal development. The staffing and resources for learning are good but the accommodation is only just satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The provision for pupils’ personal, social and health education is very good and a key part of the school’s philosophy
- The school succeeds well in ensuring that pupils benefit equally from the curriculum
- Children in the Foundation Stage enjoy a curriculum that is well planned and stimulating
- Although satisfactory, the development of writing, mathematics and ICT is not sufficiently developed through other subjects
- The very good range of after-school clubs, visits and visitors broadens pupils’ scope of learning and enriches their experiences
- The accommodation is adequate but does little to enhance pupils’ learning

Commentary

15. The quality of the curriculum has been maintained since the last inspection, with some improvements. The school cares deeply for the development of pupils as individuals. Teachers plan effective, weekly lessons in which pupils are able to consider social issues and how to overcome problems. For example, pupils in a Year 1 lesson contemplated how to manage the selfish behaviour of some fictional friends. “We thought Spike should ask Cyril why he isn’t tidying up,” opined one group. “Cyril should

apologise to Spike,” contributed another. Around the school, informal provision is even stronger. Teachers have high expectations of personal commitment and encourage a sense of citizenship through, for example, classroom rules and personal targets.

16. Teachers are keen for all pupils to have the same opportunities in the curriculum, regardless of which class they are in within a year group. The learning for all subjects is well based on good schemes of work and classes in the same year groups follow an identical curriculum. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good because their individual learning plans are detailed and sharply focused, and effective support during lessons ensures that they fully understand the work set. Similarly, staff succeed in enabling pupils who do not have English as their first language to learn English quickly so that it is not an impediment to their learning. This represents a clear improvement since the last inspection. However, the school could do more to ensure that more able pupils receive a consistently challenging curriculum in all subjects.
17. In the reception classes, a full and varied curriculum gives children a good start to their schooling. Teachers ensure that there is a good blend of directed teaching and exciting activities where children can explore and learn through experience and interaction with other children. For example, they explored the outside to select materials for an art display. Children learn about festivals and traditions in other cultures. The new outdoor area is a significant improvement to the scope of their physical development, although the opportunities for learning are not yet being fully exploited.
18. Teachers do not plan enough to link subjects together to develop pupils' skills more fully. This is especially true of writing, mathematics and ICT. Teachers expect too little recording on paper from pupils in, for instance, geography and religious education, and so miss opportunities for pupils to improve factual writing. Similarly, most subjects do not include ICT enough as an intrinsic part of their curriculum so that pupils can display findings, for example, in graphs or word-processed accounts. Nevertheless, pupils sometimes use ICT to good effect, as when researching facts for history. The curriculum also allows for good development of speaking and listening in all subjects.
19. Pupils benefit greatly from the many activities available after school. There are numerous clubs which are often over-subscribed. There are many sports, such as rounders, football, netball and tag rugby, and the school competes regularly with other local schools. There are plenty of non-sporting activities, such as choir, computers, chess and drama; there is an orchestra of about 20 pupils, although it is weighted heavily in favour of violins and clarinets. Visits and visitors bring reality to learning. A recent visit by a local Buddhist group gave pupils in Year 2 a first-hand awareness of Buddhist worship. The outdoor education programme gives older pupils a vital chance to acquire important physical skills like canoeing and climbing. However, the everyday curriculum is not as enriched as it might be, and many lessons follow a routine pattern.
20. The school building is large, light and warm inside, and classrooms are of a good size. The computer suite is adequate and there is one good room to teach groups of pupils with special educational needs. The hall can stage dramatic productions, and all pupils can attend assemblies together thanks to a balcony. Other aspects of the accommodation, though, are less suitable. The library, for example, although well stocked, is not easily accessible for pupils and is also used as a storage area. The reception classes are housed in temporary buildings and the offices for the head teacher and key staff are unacceptably small. However, the school has good plans in place to overcome most of these issues in the foreseeable future.

Care, guidance and support

The school makes very good provision for ensuring pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. Support and guidance, based on the monitoring of pupils academic and personal development, are very good. The school has very good procedures for involving pupils in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils feel very secure and well cared for because of the excellent relationships between pupils and adults
- Very good support and guidance for pupils' personal development help them to develop well, although teachers do not give pupils clear enough guidance about how to improve their work
- Pupils know their views matter and are given very good opportunities to contribute to school decision-making
- The very good induction arrangements for all children when they join the school ensure they settle quickly
- The monitoring of health and safety procedures and practices is not consistently rigorous enough

Commentary

21. Parents are rightly confident that their children are in very good hands. Relationships between pupils, teachers and support staff are excellent. Staff give a very high priority to caring for pupils' welfare, well-being and personal development and, as a result, pupils feel that they always have someone to turn to when they are worried and in need of support. The very positive atmosphere makes pupils feel happy, safe and valued at school. The overall provision has improved markedly since the last inspection.
22. The quality of relationships and concern for the individual ensures that very close attention is given to pupils' personal and social needs. The learning mentor and pastoral support team work very well with pupils, their families and other external agencies to ensure that the need for extra support is identified and appropriate action agreed early on. Parents rightly view this as a strength of the school. As a result of this provision, measurable improvements have been made, for example, in pupils' attendance, which is now very good. Attitudes to learning are much stronger and there have been fewer incidents of poor behaviour. The systems for gathering assessment information on pupils' academic progress are good and the school analyses pupils' progress very well. Reasonable targets for improvement are identified for classes and groups, but these are often too broad for pupils to focus on. Pupils do not benefit from enough individual guidance which highlights exactly what they need to do to improve their academic work. However, pupils with special educational needs have precise and achievable targets that boost their progress.
23. The school fully values the views of pupils and has established very effective ways to involve them in its work. As a result, the school achieved the award for 'Listening School' status in 2003. Pupils know that their views matter, and are taken seriously and acted upon. The school council is particularly well organised to ensure it fully represents the views of all pupils. It makes significant contributions to several aspects of the school's work. This includes reviewing policies for anti-bullying and codes of conduct, as well as teaching and learning.
24. Children starting in reception, and their parents, are very well supported through a very organised programme of induction. Parents appreciate the efforts made by staff to get to know them and their children, even before starting school, and say this helps their children to settle quickly into their new surroundings. Very careful consideration is also given to the support required for those pupils who join at other times in the year and for those who have special educational needs. Furthermore, pupils are prepared well for their move to secondary school.
25. Overall, there are good procedures to ensure that pupils work in a healthy and safe environment. Governors fulfil their duties effectively in completing regular risk assessments, for which actions are well prioritised and followed up. However, the monitoring of health and safety practices is not rigorous enough to ensure that the policies and procedures are being followed as required. Whilst there are no immediate concerns about safety, it is important in the long term that these procedures are followed as closely as possible. The policy for ensuring pupils' safety whilst using the Internet is satisfactory.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents' views on the school's work and development are regularly sought and highly valued
- Parents play a very effective part in supporting pupils' learning at home and school, encouraged by very good quality information and educational support programmes
- Very good community links, including visits and visitors, enrich pupils' learning
- The school works very effectively with other schools, sharing ideas and promoting best practice across a wide range of activities and initiatives

Commentary

26. The partnership between home and school has improved since the last inspection and is now very good. The school ensures that parents are kept up to date with all that happens through regular newsletters, for example, and their website. The openness of the head teacher and staff promotes an atmosphere in which parents feel very comfortable about approaching the school with concerns. As a result, parents show a genuine interest in pupils' learning and an eagerness to be involved in school life. The Parent Focus Group is particularly effective. Membership reflects the diverse background of pupils, which ensures that the views of all groups within school are represented. The group works very hard to help with improvement as, for example, with the home-school agreement and the website. Parents appreciate that they are consulted before decisions are made about the development of the school. Consequently, their views genuinely influence the actions of the school.
27. The school is very good at involving parents in their children's learning. Regular information is sent home so that parents know what their children will be studying. Very good curriculum evenings and other courses are offered, including support with behaviour and health and safety. These sessions have been well attended. Further support for parents is provided by the learning mentor. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept well informed and involved in reviewing their child's progress and setting future targets. A good number of parents regularly give practical help in classrooms and on educational visits. They are also a very fruitful resource for enriching pupils' learning. Parents of different faiths, for example, help pupils to fully appreciate the multi-cultural nature of their community. An active Parent Teacher Association organises good social activities and raises valuable funds for extra books, for example, and a public address system.
28. The school works very hard and successfully to promote itself as part of the community. Some parents understandably describe the school as "the thread that holds the community together". Close links are fostered with local businesses, community professionals and other groups. A very good range of opportunities exists for pupils to become involved in local events, go on visits and welcome visitors into school. They assist with local charitable activities. This helps them develop and appreciate a sense of belonging to the diverse nature of their community.
29. The school has established very good links with other schools, both locally and further afield. Pupils benefit from the many joint sporting and musical activities, which contribute very well to their social development. Pupils have valuable opportunities to use facilities and resources at other schools to broaden their experiences. These include language workshops at a local secondary school. The impact of the Excellence in Cities initiative is very good. There has been specialised support for very able pupils, and vital funding for the development of the choir and orchestra. The school is happy to share the key elements of its provision for pastoral care, which is held in very high regard by schools in the locality.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. The leadership of the head teacher is very good. The leadership of key staff, the management and governance of the school are all good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the head teacher is a powerful influence on the ethos of the school and reflects consistently high aspirations
- The leadership of other key staff is good and there is very effective teamwork
- The governors of the school have a good overview of the school and work hard in the development of key priorities
- Senior staff monitor the school's progress well and devise good plans for the future, though a few specific weaknesses have not been rectified yet
- The financial management is astute and ensures that all spending is well prioritised

Commentary

30. The head teacher provides strong leadership characterised by an unswerving commitment to high standards. Her leadership is innovative, knowledgeable and determined, and her vision for the school is imaginative and encompassing. She successfully unites staff as a team sharing her commitment to the needs of individuals and the pursuit of high achievement. This is reflected in the school's warm, positive ethos, pupils' very good attitudes to learning and the strong sense of supportive community that prevails. The head teacher's very effective leadership has inspired and carried forward improvement in many key areas of the school's work, for example pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour, provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language, standards in ICT and the achievement of children in the Foundation Stage.
31. Teamwork is a strength of the school. This is due to the head teacher's astute delegation of responsibility, and the shared commitment of all staff to the well-being and achievement of the school and its pupils. Senior staff, including subject leaders, form a nucleus of expertise which informs and energises the school. The head teacher and assistant head teacher have a particularly effective partnership. Teachers and classroom assistants are well informed and committed to improvement, and there are good systems to ensure their involvement in the school's self-evaluation and decision-making. All staff provide very good models of co-operation, consideration and shared enterprise. These qualities are mirrored in the very good behaviour and work attitudes of the pupils. The management of special educational needs is very good. The co-ordinator makes regular, comprehensive assessments of pupils' progress and future needs. She works closely with teachers and gives them very clear guidance and support. Therefore, leadership and management overall have remained as effective as they were at the last inspection.
32. Governors are strongly supportive of the school and carry out their statutory duties well. They challenge and support key staff appropriately, contributing to the shape and direction of the school's work. Governors have a clear and accurate grasp of the school's main strengths and weaknesses and are fully involved in determining priorities and forming plans for improvement. There are good systems in place to ensure that governors remain fully informed about the school's work and activities and there is a sound committee structure to enable discussion and good decision-making. However, there are too few opportunities for governors to visit classes and see for themselves this aspect of the school's day-to-day work. In addition, governors are not always questioning enough about relative weaknesses in provision, as in writing or attainment in all subjects for example.
33. There are good arrangements for senior staff to monitor the quality of teaching and for all subject leaders to monitor provision. This gives teachers a secure, accurate picture

of standards and the main strengths and weaknesses in all subjects. The school uses this information, together with detailed assessments of pupils' attainments against national standards, to set accurate targets and determine well-founded priorities for improvement. The school's systems for self-evaluation are thorough, accurate and informative. They have underpinned substantial improvement, for example, in pastoral care and the development of pupils' thinking, speaking and listening. However, some specific weaknesses, such as those in handwriting and spelling, have received too little attention. Procedures for the induction of staff are very good. The school has undergone significant staff change in recent years and has managed it well.

34. Financial management is very good. The school finance officer and her colleagues bring valuable expertise to financial management. This helps to ensure that governors receive high quality financial information on which to base their decisions. The head teacher and governors manage finances expertly and meticulously in relation to agreed priorities and give full consideration to the principles of best value.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1,003,590
Total expenditure	995,863
Expenditure per pupil	2,394

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	41,588
Balance carried forward to the next	49,315

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

35. Provision is good in the Foundation Stage. The staff share a common vision of providing a stimulating and creative learning environment, at the same time as maintaining the rigour to raise standards. The adults' care and concern for the progress of the children are one of many reasons why they achieve so well. Teaching is consistently good, and often very good. The curriculum is imaginative and planned in such a way that all children are supported and challenged well. Thirty children enter each of the two reception classes in September, most having benefited from nursery provision elsewhere. Children settle very well because of the sensitive way that all staff help the parents and children through the starting period. Parents provide very good information to enable staff to begin planning relevant work. This is achieved by means of home visits before the children start and continual contacts after that. Parents very much appreciate this high level of support and communication.
36. Children start school with skills and knowledge that are broadly average. Staff assess the children's progress continuously and are always alert for opportunities to move children to the next stage in learning. Teachers achieve a very good balance between the more formal teaching sessions and the wealth of activities that children select and explore by themselves. Support assistants work very effectively with individual children, or with small groups, and tasks are well matched to the abilities of the children. Good leadership and management have enabled the school to achieve this significant improvement of provision since the previous inspection.

Personal, social and emotional development

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The relaxed and happy rapport between children and adults creates an atmosphere for very effective learning
- Very good planning makes the most of opportunities for children to interact and mature

Commentary

37. This area of learning receives a high profile at the start of the year. Staff are very good at helping children to settle in quickly, feel secure and begin learning. As a result, children achieve well, are reaching the early learning goals rapidly and are likely to exceed them by the end of the year. Through very good teaching and a well-planned, lively environment, children develop excellent relationships with adults and other children as they explore the learning opportunities in and out of the classroom. They adapt well to the consistent routines, and this is evident in the way they listen to adults.
38. Behaviour is very good. As staff are skilled in knowing how young children learn, they plan a very effective range of activities to develop confidence and social skills. These lead to good sharing, and a growing interest and concentration, as well as a strong desire to learn. Children are encouraged to take responsibility. They become confident at working independently on their tasks in preparation for the more formal routines in Year 1. They take turns at being monitors, for instance, by helping to give out drinks

and taking the register to the office. They learn to see the importance of keeping the environment neat and safe, and they tidy up enthusiastically.

Communication, language and literacy

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Reading and writing are taught well
- Staff are adept at providing opportunities to enhance children's communication skills, although opportunities are sometimes missed to extend children's speaking

Commentary

39. Teachers plan carefully to provide a structured range of activities specifically to develop children's language skills, which are just average when they start school. Teachers begin to expand children's interest in books early in the year. By the middle of the year, children are talking about authors, and understand plot and narrative because they get so many opportunities to act out stories like the Three Bears or Red Riding Hood. Children make good progress in learning to identify some of the words they see in books. With very good assistance from the nursery nurses, teachers encourage children to learn shapes of letters and how sounds make words. Children are able to form letters and write simple words, such as 'hills', correctly. They are beginning to understand when to use full stops and how to make words plural.
40. Children chatter informally to each other while playing with the wide range of stimulating material, or dressing up as characters. Occasionally, staff do not sit close enough to children to put in a word of direction or clarify new words. The pace of lessons is good, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. Staff provide challenging activities, well matched to individual needs of the children, particularly those with special educational needs or who have English as an additional language. The learning is fun and highly effective, always based on the lively theme of the week. Teachers take children in stages through the planned stepping stones, and assess their progress well. Children achieve well, and most are likely to reach the expected levels as they start Year 1.

Mathematical development

Provision in mathematical development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching enables children to learn well through hands-on experience
- The very good support for children who have special educational needs and for those who have English as an additional language enables them to achieve well
- The increased, improved resources contribute well to learning

Commentary

41. Teachers use practical activities well to help children's understanding of number, shape and size. Children handle a wide range of material, such as water, sand and Plasticine. By reflecting on what they see and feel, they gain the basic experiences to help their understanding. Consequently children achieve well. Most move from an average starting point to exceed the early learning goals by the time they start Year 1. Lessons

start in a lively manner with the singing of number rhymes like 'Ten in a bed' with great fun and expression.

42. Resources are attractive and motivate children. It was clear from the children's faces in one lesson that sorting numbers is more fun when it is dinosaurs that have to be counted. Teachers ask searching questions like "Why is less smaller than more?" so that children really have to think hard when trying to solve problems. Staff take great care to set out equipment, so that children can work productively in small groups, without the need for constant supervision.
43. When working with individual children, teachers match activities particularly well to the needs of each child. This is particularly important for children who have special educational needs, or who have English as an additional language, and so they achieve well. Teachers consolidate the learning of all children through free choice activities where children can try out for themselves the things they have just learned. The re-direction of children from activity to activity is much improved since the previous inspection. Teachers are precise in their assessment of children's progress and use the resultant data well. Therefore, by the end of the reception year, many children are likely to be able to record simple addition and subtraction sums, for example, and solve simple practical problems.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Stimulating resources and experiences enrich children's learning
- Children achieve well because of careful planning by teachers, linked closely to individual needs

Commentary

44. Good teaching and the wide range of activities enable children to make good progress. They love learning about animals and how to look after them. They identify with the Three Bears, for example, and happily act out the story. In this way they learn about growth, relationships and the passage of time. Teachers generate a strong curiosity in children so that they begin to look more closely at things. The story of Red Riding Hood is a good starting point for geography, design and science. Alongside the adults, children constructed a giant map of the wild wood and the features in it. They designed and made bridges and clumps of trees. In the streams and ponds, they designed boats and tested them for floating and sinking. The outdoor area is beginning to contribute well to learning, as in geography, for example, where the children create, mark and follow various routes.
45. By careful questioning, teachers help children to learn simple ideas about religious festivals, special places and people. Children learn that special events are celebrated in similar ways in many cultures. Children develop satisfactory basic skills on computers but the full potential of ICT is not exploited. However, it is part of the action plan of the Foundation Stage to redress this balance. Teachers assess children's progress well, building up precise records to hand on to the Year 1 teachers. These enable staff to match the tasks much more closely to children's needs than in the previous inspection. Children achieve well, and are on target to exceed most of the early learning goals by the end of the year.

Physical development

Provision in physical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children develop their physical co-ordination well but do not yet benefit fully from the outdoor play area
- Good teaching enables children to acquire the necessary dexterity to write and draw well

Commentary

46. Many children start the reception year with under-developed skills in running, jumping and climbing, and many are insecure about playing on large equipment such as tricycles and wheeled vehicles. Good teaching develops these skills well. Children achieve well in gaining confidence and balance, and in better co-ordination. The new outdoor play area has improved the teaching facilities since the previous inspection, although the outdoor curriculum is not yet as effective as the indoor provision. This means that children's overall achievement is satisfactory. The school is well aware of this and plans are already in place to improve this situation. Most children are on course to achieve their learning goals by the end of the year.
47. Children's fine finger control of small items, such as holding pencils, brushes and other small objects, is also limited at the beginning of the year. Consequently, teachers provide many opportunities for children to handle a wide range of items that improve their finger movement and grip. This leads in time to children forming letters and numbers accurately and having good control when holding a paintbrush. By the end of the reception year, children's skills should attain the level expected for their age. Teachers carefully track children's progress through the stepping stones to learning and adjust the activities accordingly. This is especially important for children who have special educational needs, to achieve success.

Creative development

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching of skills is combined well with exciting opportunities to learn through play

Commentary

48. Most children start the nursery with an average level of creativity. Teachers plan a wide range of stimulating and fun activities to enable children to expand and explore their imagination. The art corner is a busy studio where children explore colour-mixing and composition. With much improved resources since the previous inspection, there is a now wealth of opportunities for imaginative play in the 'home corners' and other role-play situations. These are particularly valuable to build the confidence of children with special educational needs. All children achieve well and are on track to exceed their learning goals.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve good standards in speaking, listening and reading
- Teachers and teaching assistants are effective in their work
- Assessment procedures are good but teachers do not use them rigorously enough to improve pupils' writing skills
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good
- The leadership and management of the subject are good
- The school library has limitations in developing pupils' independent learning

Commentary

49. Pupils achieve well throughout the school. The recent, well-planned initiative to raise the quality of speaking and listening has borne fruit. All pupils are articulate for their age. They listen carefully and accurately and, as a result of teachers' strong emphasis on thinking skills, with increasing discrimination. Improvement in speaking and listening goes hand in hand with the school's effective promotion of pupils' social and personal development. Most pupils chat confidently, readily explaining and justifying their points of view. A very good example of this was seen in a Year 6 lesson, where pupils debated the pros and cons of using mobile phones in school. Pupils expressed their opinions lucidly, drawing on evidence to support them, and showed respect for the views of others. All pupils read well for their age, with accuracy, fluency and understanding. This reflects the consistency of teaching and teachers' care in matching books to pupils' needs in terms of interest and challenge. The good standards at the time of the last inspection have been maintained.
50. The quality of teaching is good, especially in Year 6. In most lessons, teachers focus sharply on improvement. Teachers explain the purpose of the lesson to pupils, sharing with them in clear, practical terms what they are expected to learn. This makes pupils active partners in their own learning, motivating and enabling them to improve. The school's consistent drive to build pupils' personal and social skills and promote their self-esteem also pays dividends here. Teachers ensure that pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language share in the overall good achievement. Support staff work sensitively and effectively in lessons. They establish very good relationships with pupils and provide strong examples of effective teamwork. Teachers support pupils well during group tasks but, in some lessons, focus their attention too much on specific groups. As a result, some pupils do not receive as much attention as they should. This slows their progress.
51. Teachers assess pupils work accurately. However, they do not do enough to track each pupil's changing needs or spell out the differences between pupils working at the same level. This means that, while pupils achieve well overall, individual achievement is not always maximised. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to write in a suitable variety of different forms, including stories, poems, play-scripts and factual accounts. They give useful attention to writing skills such as building sentences and using punctuation. However, they do not place enough emphasis on enabling pupils to write

fluently and at length. In addition, minor weaknesses in spelling and handwriting limit pupils' attainment in writing. Many pupils in Years 3 to 6 make too many spelling mistakes with commonly occurring or straightforward words. Some older junior pupils have not yet established a well-formed, joined style of handwriting.

52. The good quality of teaching and the school's strong sense of community promote very good attitudes to learning. In conversation, pupils strike a very good balance between assertiveness and consideration for the listener, readiness to express their own opinion and openness to viewpoints different from their own. Pupils of all abilities are polite and very well behaved. In lessons, they work hard, showing good work habits and good personal organisation. They take pleasure in each other's contributions and, when working together, support each other constructively.
53. The recently appointed subject leader is well informed and strongly committed to improvement. She sets a good example in her own teaching. There are satisfactory procedures for identifying strengths and weaknesses in pupils' attainment and good arrangements to monitor pupils' progress and the progress of whole-school initiatives. The school has pursued its identified priorities very successfully, bringing distinct improvement. The initiative to develop thinking in tandem with speaking and listening is a good example. Subject leadership promotes strong and effective teamwork, uniting teaching and support staff in the pursuit of improvement. This is reflected in the consistency of teaching through the school. However, there has not been enough focus on improving pupils' attainment in writing.
54. The school library has a suitable range of books to cater for pupils' different attainments, needs and interests. However, it is located away from the main building, making it difficult for pupils to refer to books and search for information as an integral element of their class work. This limits opportunities for pupils to practise and improve their research skills. As result, these are not as strong as the other aspects of their reading. The library is used for a range of different activities, including general storage and, as such, it is cluttered and is neither as functional in its layout nor as attractive and stimulating as it should be.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

55. The use of language across the curriculum is satisfactory. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to use and improve the range of their speaking and listening. For example, in a successful Year 5 geography lesson, pupils enacted a public meeting about transport policy, assuming the roles of members of a local community. However, there is too little emphasis in teaching on providing opportunities for pupils to write at length about topics they have studied, or on accurate spelling and well-formed handwriting. There is some relevant use of ICT in lessons, for example to research topics for debate, but this aspect of pupils' learning is not developed enough.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well and reach above average standards by the end of Year 6
- Teaching is good with particularly high expectations in Years 5 and 6

- Very good management has moved the subject forward well
- The system of setting pupils in ability groups is working well, but there is scope for further challenge for the most able pupils
- The development of numeracy within other subjects is not as thorough as it could be

Commentary

56. Standards are much the same as they were in the last inspection, although they have been higher for some of the intervening years. Standards seen in the present Year 2 are average. This is because the composition of the year group has altered during the year as some of the pupils capable of reaching the higher level in national tests have left the school. However, pupils are currently making good progress in lessons and achieving well. Year 6 pupils have maintained a consistent pattern of above or well above average standards since the previous inspection. Standards in the present Year 6 are again above average. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because teachers and support staff are effective at building up the pupils' skills and confidence consistently.
57. Teachers are very successful at motivating pupils. They encourage pupils to have confidence in their own thinking skills. This is a key strength of the teaching and has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers explain the aims of lessons thoroughly so that pupils clearly understand what they have to learn. As a result, pupils have developed a very positive attitude to mathematics. Teachers realise the importance of creating an effective atmosphere for learning. In Year 5 and 6 lessons, for instance, they encourage pupils to use their personal whiteboards so that they are all actively engaged. Pupils discuss with their partners the different strategies to use when solving money problems, as when helping the teacher organise her party budget! However, pupils tend not to write these explanations in their books often enough and so do not consolidate their learning as firmly as they might. The subject leader is well aware of this and has plans to improve the situation in the near future.
58. Very good leadership and management of the subject have ensured that mathematics remains a key part of the school's agenda. This has been supported by a strong commitment by the staff. The subject leader monitors closely all aspects of the subject enabling areas of concern to be identified and acted on quickly. For instance, the action plan involves the better use of ICT, including its use as a learning tool for pupils to learn independently. The comprehensive procedures for assessment of pupil progress are used well to indicate the value added from year to year, as predictors of pupils' likely attainment in tests, and to target support most effectively. However, pupils are not given specific individual targets for improvement so that they can focus on improving any shortcomings.
59. The setting arrangements benefit all pupils because they can work comfortably within the range of their abilities. This allows a good challenge for all pupils and, because of this, they achieve well. However, exercise books show that more able pupils sometimes have the same level of work as average pupils. This means that these pupils, therefore, do not always achieve as well as they might. The school has recently acquired challenging work materials for the brightest pupils and these are ready for use.

Mathematics across the curriculum

60. Teachers use a satisfactory range of opportunities to enable pupils to practise their mathematical skills in other subjects. In ICT, for instance, the use of computers helps pupils to produce different graphs and charts. Older pupils develop a suitable

understanding of different elements within data-handling by using spreadsheets. Sound use is made of various measurements in science and design and technology. However, numeracy is not fully developed enough in all subjects, including science, geography and design and technology.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well by Year 6 and attain above average standards
- Effective teaching motivates pupils and promotes a more investigative approach to learning
- There are times when higher attaining pupils could do better
- Teachers succeed in ensuring that pupils enjoy their science lessons, behave well and have very positive attitudes to work
- Effective leadership and management mean that the subject is developing well

Commentary

61. Standards are similar to those found when the school was last inspected. Standards by Year 2 are average. Teachers in Years 1 and 2 build on the skills acquired in the Foundation Stage and develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of key scientific facts. Teachers plan lessons around experiences and objects that pupils are familiar with, such as the use of electricity and how a simple circuit works. Pupils learn to use simple scientific language when discussing their ideas and recording their work. Standards by Year 6 are above average, especially because pupils are good at carrying out experiments. Achievement is good for pupils throughout the school.
62. Teaching and learning are good overall, and have improved since the last inspection. Teachers now provide pupils with many more opportunities for practical explorations in lessons, reflecting the school's current focus on improving pupils' investigative skills. This provides good challenge for pupils and encourages them to think for themselves. However, this approach has not yet had sufficient impact to improve overall standards further. Activities in lessons are well planned and structured so that pupils build their knowledge, understanding and skills at a good rate.
63. Teachers ensure that pupils use a broader range of scientific terms and hone their recording skills. Pupils are expected to structure their work logically and understand all the elements of a fair test, for example. However, more able pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to plan and carry out their own investigations at their level nor are they often encouraged, upon reaching an accurate conclusion, to explain their reasons.
64. Pupils enjoy their work in science and are enthusiastic about learning new things. This was evident in Year 3 when pupils were keen to discover the most absorbent material to use when a glass of water was 'accidentally spilt'. Pupils develop very good social skills by working with groups or partners. In devising an electrical circuit to make a bulb light up, pupils in a Year 2 lesson listened to one another intently and reasoned their way to an appropriate conclusion.

65. The leadership and management of science are good. The subject leader has only recently taken over the role but has already checked provision across the school and identified suitable areas for development, such as use of assessment. Pupils are provided with a well-balanced curriculum covering all areas. Teachers plan good links with other subjects such as mathematics, literacy and music so that learning in one reinforces learning in another. Visits and visitors contribute positively to pupils' learning. Good, written tests are undertaken by pupils at the end of each unit of work and the results tell teachers how well pupils are doing and what they need to concentrate on next.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective leadership and management of the subject have ensured that pupils' standards have improved well since the last inspection
- Improvement in teachers' skills and knowledge has resulted in better teaching and learning, although provision for more able pupils is not as good as it might be
- A good range of resources and the computer suite help to motivate pupils to have very positive attitudes towards ICT
- Teachers do not make the most of opportunities to develop ICT through other subjects

Commentary

66. The school has done well to develop ICT over recent years. In the previous inspection, standards and the provision for ICT were judged to be unsatisfactory. Now standards are average throughout the school and show every sign of improving further. The subject leader, well supported by colleagues, has focused on and driven through the right priorities for development. Pupils are now confident and comfortable at a computer keyboard, accessing and using programs with relative ease. By Year 2, pupils are adept at creating their own designs, such as Joseph's multi-coloured coat. Their word-processing skills are sound, enabling them to produce simple sentences for their poems. By Year 6, pupils understand how to use spreadsheets, research information for the Internet and produce bright, informative multi-media presentations on, for example, Space.
67. A particular priority has been the development of teachers' expertise in ICT. Training has been patently successful, because teachers now present and explain new learning clearly, and use the interactive whiteboard competently to illustrate new techniques. As a result, pupils are clear about how to carry out new learning, for example, in the use of spreadsheets. Teachers' confidence galvanises pupils, who thoroughly enjoy their lessons and sustain very good concentration when on task; there is a healthy buzz of activity in all lessons. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and would be better if teachers tailored the work more skilfully to meet the individual needs of pupils. Less able pupils, for instance, receive good support, but more able pupils do not have enough freedom to explore ICT and develop faster, at their own pace.
68. The distinct improvement in resources and facilities has certainly helped to motivate pupils. The computer suite is comparatively small, yet large enough to accommodate a whole class, giving all pupils good hands-on access to computers. The interactive

whiteboard is a boon to teachers so that they can give clear demonstrations, and four more boards are on order for classroom use. There is ample software and other hardware to enhance and reinforce learning. There are good programs, for example, for pupils to investigate simulations and learn how to carry out simple programming, as in sequencing traffic lights.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

69. Teachers develop ICT satisfactorily together with other subjects. Pupils in Year 4 have furthered their skills in art and design by creating their own wallpaper pattern using a stamp tool in a paint program. Pupils in Year 6 have developed formulae in spreadsheets to help with mathematical calculations. However, such activity is not an intrinsic enough part of everyday learning. During the inspection, for example, few pupils were observed using computers during literacy, numeracy and other lessons, and there was limited evidence in pupils' exercise books or on display.

HUMANITIES

70. Few lessons were observed in geography and history during the inspection, and there was too little work available in both subjects on which to base judgements about attainment. Therefore, it is not possible to make judgements on provision in either subject.
71. Pupils follow a suitable curriculum in **geography**. Learning develops sensibly and progressively over time. In Year 2, pupils have a basic awareness of maps and symbols for a make-believe island and appreciate some essential differences between island and city life. By Year 6, pupils are able to locate and identify rivers on UK and world maps. They can illustrate clearly how the water cycle works. The one lesson seen in Year 5 was very good because pupils had the chance to debate formally the environmental issue of traffic pollution. The teacher sensitively ensured that the arguments were considered and relevant, and that pupils had ample time to mull over the pros and cons intelligently. Periodic events such as the 'One World Week' serve to strengthen pupils' awareness of the wider world and some of the various cultures that exist.
72. In **history**, a lesson seen in Year 2 was very good. The teacher made excellent use of a human resource, the head teacher, to bring history alive. The presence of 'Florence Nightingale' in the classroom inspired pupils to ask questions enthusiastically about life in the hospitals of Scutari. Pupils in Year 4 have been using the school building as a resource, delving back into the archives to trace the original layout and use of rooms. One group of pupils explored the top floor to investigate how it had evolved as part of the girls' grammar school. Visits to places of interest, such as local museums, also help to give all pupils a flavour of the past.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The relaxed and focused atmosphere in lessons ensures that pupils are keen to learn
- Learning is developed well through role-play and discussion, but not reinforced enough through writing
- Although their knowledge of religion is satisfactory, pupils do not always benefit enough from first-hand experience

Commentary

73. The subject has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection with standards remaining average. Teaching is satisfactory throughout the school. Teachers' encouraging and supportive approach means that pupils listen and participate in all activities and so learning is consistently satisfactory. By Years 2 and 6, pupils have an adequate knowledge of key elements of major religions, appreciating some of the differences and similarities between them. Pupils in Year 2 understand that most faiths have one god and a similar morality, for example, but that worship and symbolism can be quite varied. By Year 6, pupils know the meanings behind symbolism, that candles represent wisdom in Buddhism, for example.
74. Teachers encourage pupils to debate religion and act out its effect on everyday life. As a result, pupils acquire a balanced view and acquire a healthy respect for the differences between

people's beliefs. In a discussion, pupils from Year 6 with Christian, Muslim and agnostic beliefs were comfortable and respectful when talking about God and the possible absence of one. In assemblies, pupils regularly interpret current themes, such as unity, so that the pupils watching can understand them with greater empathy and insight. However, in lessons, pupils do not commit much of their knowledge to paper. This does not help to consolidate learning effectively, and limits opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in writing and illustration.

75. Pupils benefit from some close encounters with representatives from different religions and from visits to places of worship, but not often enough. Pupils in Year 2 gained a valuable insight into Buddhism with a recent visit by a local Buddhist group. Pupils learned about the importance of prayer and meditation, and why worshippers consider incense and beads important. Pupils in Year 5 have visited the nearby mosque and discovered key elements of Islamic worship, such as the prayer mat. Nevertheless, direct contact with religion could be stronger. Local clerics come to lead assemblies infrequently and there are few opportunities for them to talk to pupils about their religions. Assemblies espouse themes of morality and social awareness very successfully, but do not always have clear links with organised religion.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

76. It was not possible to gather enough evidence to be able to judge the quality of provision in design and technology or physical education
77. No lessons were observed in **design and technology** during the inspection. The subject receives adequate time and attention during the year and teachers ensure that activities dovetail together well so that pupils develop skills smoothly and progressively. Many of the topics form useful links with other subjects. In Year 6, for instance, the work on electric vehicles links with the study of forces and motion in science. The provision is monitored well by the subject leader, who has drawn up an accurate evaluation in the subject's action plan. This highlights appropriate areas for development, such as an increasing focus on the process of designing and making.
78. The atmosphere in the **physical education** lessons seen was purposeful and good humoured, enabling pupils to enjoy and find satisfaction in learning. A very successful Year 6 lesson was taught by visiting dance specialists. The expert demonstrations, discerning advice and quickly established relationships with pupils promoted very good progress. The curriculum provides a wide range of individual and team activities, and is supported by an extensive range of extra-curricular activities. The school takes part in a good number of inter-school competitions. Residential trips, including orienteering, abseiling, canoeing and yachting, provide very good outdoor activities for the older pupils. The school playground sets some limits on practice, for example with ball control skills. However, teachers are resourceful in their management of these limitations. The subject leaders are imaginative in identifying ways of extending practice facilities so that pupils can develop the full range of skills, for example through a partnership with the nearby secondary school.

Art and design

Provision in art and design is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching has a good focus on basic skills
- Teachers use resources thoughtfully to motivate and guide pupils
- Pupils have very positive attitudes towards the subject

- Effective leadership of the subject means that standards are beginning to improve

Commentary

79. By the end of Years 2 and 6, standards are in line with those expected for the pupils' ages. This is similar to the findings of the previous inspection. Teaching is satisfactory overall, and often good. Teachers organise their classes well, give clear and interesting introductions to lessons and distribute materials efficiently. They have good subject knowledge and prepare relevant resources well. However, teachers do not always insist enough on achieving high quality, so pupils' work can sometimes lack care and creativity. There are indications, though, that provision is improving further. For instance, sketchbooks are well used throughout the school, although some contain less work than expected. The focus on basic skills is beginning to raise standards. This is evident in the quality of the observational and figure drawing by Year 6 pupils. Year 5 work, too, is above average in composition and shading.
80. Teachers use resources well. In a Year 1 lesson, for instance, pupils were motivated by an Aztec blanket as a guide to their own work. They enjoyed collecting their own information and objects from the park to produce good quality panels of natural materials. They found many hidden meanings like jungles and waterfalls in them. Teachers introduce some of the technical language of art processes and evaluation, but pupils tend to use only simple language in their descriptions. Teachers link art topics well with numeracy and sometimes with ICT, but the links with literacy are not as close.
81. Teachers often provide pupils with good opportunities to follow their own ideas, by selecting themes, resources and techniques for themselves. Pupils value this independence and use it well. Consequently they have a very positive attitude to their work and concentrate well. The atmosphere in lessons is happy and relaxed, and pupils develop their social skills very well as they discuss, for example, which options to take in their designs and colouring. They are also able to evaluate the finished work of other pupils satisfactorily.
82. The leadership and management are good. The subject leader has introduced a useful system for assessing pupils' attainment and this is ready to track the standards through the school. Her sensible action plan includes the monitoring of teaching, so that all teachers can be equally successful. Under good leadership, the teachers have established a detailed planning scheme that enables pupils to learn basic skills in a more secure sequence of small steps. However, the leadership has not yet succeeded in ensuring that all teaching is consistently effective.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching of pupils' basic skills has improved over recent years
- Pupils are enthusiastic and so enjoy composing and performing music
- Extra-curricular activities offer pupils a wide variety of musical opportunities

Commentary

83. Standards have improved since the last inspection and pupils reach the standards expected by Years 2 and 6. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, which in turn ensures that the achievement of pupils is satisfactory. Singing is mostly tuneful and rhythmical, and pupils often use actions to enhance the meaning of the words. This was clearly seen in a Year 1 class where pupils performed a wide range of movements to accompany the song 'Noah's Ark'. Pupils in Year 2 know how to sustain a beat with their fingers and use percussion instruments well. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 develop their understanding of such elements of music as pitch and tempo. They are given the opportunity to develop and process their own musical ideas and think carefully about the moods and images that music creates. For example, pupils in Year 6 worked in small groups to create their own Victorian street cries.
84. Lessons are presented in a warm, relaxed style and teachers work effectively together. They encourage pupils to be creative in composing their own music and to use a broad range of musical terms. Opportunities for pupils to develop their musical skills, knowledge and appreciation occur both in music lessons and in the daily life of the school. Pupils enjoy their music lessons and are particularly enthusiastic when they have the opportunity to play a percussion instrument to create sounds to illustrate a story or song.
85. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The subject leader monitors teachers' planning and teaching appropriately, and ensures that pupils' progress is suitably assessed. Provision outside the classroom is good. Visiting teachers provide pupils with good opportunities to learn to play instruments, such as violins, guitar and woodwind, and pupils are eager to take part in the choir and orchestra. Occasional visitors to school, including a group playing African drums and a local dance group, strengthen the school's provision.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education (PSHE)

Provision is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All adults encourage pupils to be responsible and compassionate members of the school community
- The school has a very positive approach to promote the health of its pupils
- Formal lessons give pupils a good opportunity to discuss personal, as well as wider social and moral, issues

Commentary

86. There is a great sense of togetherness in the school. Teachers and pupils look out for one another at all times. Teachers lay down clear guidelines to pupils about their expected behaviour and, more importantly, teach them to be considerate. In this way, older pupils are on the watch in the playground to ensure that younger pupils are not alone or unhappy. In classroom discussion, pupils not only listen respectfully but acknowledge that all opinions are valid. There are very good opportunities for working in tandem with a partner or a small group, for example in science experiments and

dance routines. Pupils simply enjoy working with any other pupils, regardless of who they are.

87. The school has done well to achieve the third level of the Healthy Schools status. Many staff are trained in first aid and any concerns about pupils' health are swiftly dealt with. The science curriculum underlines the importance of nutrition to growth and well-being. Outside agencies do a good job in explaining to pupils key issues in sex education and drugs awareness. The school encourages pupils to eat healthily. The prospectus emphasises that sweets are not allowed and encourages parents to give their children healthy snacks for break times. Under the National Fruit Scheme, all pupils in Years 1 and 2 receive free fruit each day.
88. The weekly lessons for PSHE are effectively taught. Teachers ensure that lessons have clear themes linked to an overall topic. Pupils in a Year 4 lesson, for instance, learnt how best to cross a road as part of their programme on personal safety. The very opportunities for whole class or group discussion not only promote good speaking and listening skills, but also develop pupils' ability to interact with other people thoughtfully. It is to the school's great credit that pupils from all backgrounds get on so well together.

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

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