

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **LOWTHER ENDOWED SCHOOL**

Hackthorpe, Penrith

LEA area: Cumbria

Unique reference number: 112342

Headteacher: Mr M Pincombe

Lead inspector: Mr J Heap

Dates of inspection: 8 – 10 February 2005

Inspection number: 267253

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Primary  
School category: Voluntary aided  
Age range of pupils: 4-11  
Gender of pupils: Mixed  
Number on roll: 106

School address: Hackthorpe  
Penrith  
Cumbria  
Postcode: CA10 2HT

Telephone number: 01931 712 344  
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Appropriate authority: Governing body  
Name of chair of Mr R Gill  
governors:  
Date of previous 17 May 1999

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Lowther Endowed primary school caters for pupils between the ages of four and eleven. It is situated in the village of Hackthorpe, which is about five miles from Penrith. This is a well below average-sized primary school, with 106 pupils on roll: 60 boys and 46 girls. The roll has significantly increased since the last inspection. Children arrive at school reflecting the full range of attainment levels but, overall, the attainment on entry is broadly average. Pupils are organised into four classes and all of them have more than one age group. Most pupils come from the local village and surrounding rural area and there are few signs of deprivation. Housing ranges from housing association properties to private dwellings. It is a school with relatively low pupil and very high staff mobility. All pupils are white. Five per cent of the pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is below average. Twenty-eight per cent of pupils are on the list of special educational needs. This is above the national average. The range of needs include specific and moderate learning difficulties and

behaviour and communication impairment. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs. The school has received the following awards:

- Sports Activemark. (2002)
- FA Charter Mark. (2004)

This year, two factors have adversely affected pupils' standards and achievement:

- a large increase in the number of pupils with special educational needs compared with the time of the last inspection;
- the very high turnover of staff has led to inconsistency in the quality of teaching and the slowing of progress in school improvement.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
18824	J Heap	Lead inspector	English Geography History Religious education English as an additional language
9002	D Ashton	Lay inspector	
22113	A King	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Design and technology Physical education Special educational needs
30724	D Hiscock	Team inspector	Science Art and design Music Areas of learning in the Foundation Stage

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**Overall, this is a good school** where pupils benefit equally, regardless of background or ability. Long-term difficulties with staffing have adversely affected otherwise good teaching, learning and achievement. The effects of these disruptions have been minimised by the good leadership of the governing body and headteacher. Pupils have good attitudes to school and learning and this is promoted well by the school's effective provision for personal development. The school gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- By Year 6, standards are above average in speaking, listening, reading, mathematics and information and communication technology.
- Provision and achievement in the Foundation Stage (Reception Year) are good.
- Standards in writing are not high enough.
- The quality of teaching in the Year 5/6 class is just satisfactory, but needs improving, most particularly the management of the behaviour of a minority of pupils.
- The school has developed very good links with parents and the community.
- There are weaknesses in the quality of strategic management.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.

Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Progress since the last inspection has been slowed by the many changes to the staffing of this small school, particularly in the quality of teaching and learning. Nevertheless, there have been good improvements in the work of the Foundation Stage, teaching and learning in information and communication technology and the way that experimental science is taught. Personal, social and health education is developing well. There has been insufficient improvement in the quality of marking.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Owing to the small number of pupils in year groups, caution is necessary when interpreting data. For instance, the 2004 results for Year 6 pupils were based on just seven pupils. This means that each child is worth around 14 per cent, which makes judgements based on a single year invalid. However, it is useful and possible to draw conclusions from trends in results.

**Overall, pupils' achievement is good**, including that for pupils with special educational needs. Children enter the school with broadly average standards, with particular strengths in communication and numeracy. Standards at the end of this Reception Year are on target to be above average, but this is not typical of every year. In Year 2, pupils achieve well and

standards are above average in speaking, listening, reading and mathematics. Standards in writing are average. Results in national tests over three years were best in reading and mathematics and weakest in writing. Boys are doing better than girls. The trend in results is inconsistent because of fluctuating numbers of pupils with special educational needs and is below the national trend. By Year 6, the results over three years are above average in English, mathematics and science. The trend is inconsistent but, overall, is below the national trend. The trend in mathematics has been rising. Boys do better than girls, particularly in mathematics. These results are similar to inspection findings, where above average standards and good achievement are found in speaking, listening, reading, mathematics and information and communication technology. Knowledge and understanding of the library and information-gathering skills are above average. Standards in writing are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory. The school does not emphasise enough the teaching and learning of basic writing skills and consequently the standards are not high enough. By Years 2 and 6, standards in science and religious education are average and achievement is satisfactory. Targets set by the school are challenging but achievable.

**Overall, pupils' attitudes, values and personal qualities are good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.** Pupils have good attitudes to school and study. Behaviour is satisfactory. Most pupils behave very well, but a minority of boys in Years 5 and 6 behave poorly and this has an adverse effect on teaching and learning. Attendance is satisfactory.

#### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education is good. Teaching and learning are good.** In the Foundation Stage the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good. Staff provide children with a good mix of activities that are interesting and motivates them to become independent learners. In Years 1 and 2, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have strong subject knowledge, particularly in reading, mathematics and history. However, there are too few opportunities to use and develop basic writing skills. In Years 3 to 6, the strongest teaching is seen in the Year 3 / 4 class. Teaching in the Year 5/6 class is just satisfactory. However, there are difficulties in managing a small number of challenging boys and this has an adverse effect on the quality of teaching and learning. Assessment procedures are satisfactory. Systems are strongest in mathematics, but weak in writing because there is not enough attention given to directly linking marking and pupils' targets.

The curriculum is sound. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is strong and promotes their good progress. Opportunities for participation in sports and the arts are very good. However, writing throughout the curriculum is a weakness. The quality of care is good. Links with parents and the community are very good. Links with other schools and colleges are effective.

#### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Overall, leadership and management are good.** The headteacher leads well and because of this the effects of disruption have been minimised. Senior colleagues lead soundly. They provide adequate support for the headteacher and the effective governing body. Governors ensure that legal requirements are met and have actively promoted projects such as the school's independent meal service. The management of the school is sound with the strengths outweighing the shortcomings. However, strategic planning is weak. The school soundly challenges the issues that act as barriers to learning, such as the very high turnover of staff.

#### **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**



In most respects, parents and pupils are satisfied with the work of the school. A minority of parents and pupils have concerns about the behaviour of a few pupils and inspectors agree that it is an area for improvement. A few parents are also concerned that links with home are not as good as they could be, but inspectors do not agree and judge this area of the school's work to be very strong.

### **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The most important things the school should do are:

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in the Year 5/6 class, most particularly the management and behaviour of the minority of disruptive pupils.
- Improve standards in writing.
- Improve strategic management.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses**

Overall, pupils' achievement is good, including those pupils with special educational needs. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve most in communication and mathematics. Standards are average when pupils join the reception year and above average when they begin Year 1 and at the end of the infants and juniors. Results in national tests fluctuate because of the small size of the year groups.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- In the Foundation Stage, standards are good in communication skills and mathematics.
- Basic skills in writing are weak and not as good as they ought to be.
- Standards in speaking, listening, reading, mathematics and information and communication technology are above average.

#### **Commentary**

1 Since the last inspection, standards and rate of progress have fallen, particularly in English, mathematics and science. However, it is clear that it is unsafe to make comparisons between current standards and those at the time of the previous inspection because of two reasons:

- the proportion of higher attaining pupils is now much less than at the time of the last inspection;
- there has been an increase in the proportion of pupils with special educational needs.

The evidence from analysing the school's tracking of individual pupils shows that the present group of Year 6 pupils achieves well in reading and mathematics. The evidence from testing and other assessments over time shows achievement in writing to be satisfactory, but the evidence from the analysis of pupils' books is that pupils have weaknesses in their basic writing skills and that they ought to be doing better. Overall, improvement from the last inspection is satisfactory, with the gains made in information and communication technology a strength of the school. Parents are happy with the progress that their children make.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.4 (18.6)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	13.6 (14.9)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	17.1 (17.7)	16.2 (16.3)

*There were 16 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

2 Standards in the 2004 national tests at the end of Year 2 show mathematics to be the strongest subject followed by reading and then writing. The proportions of pupils gaining the higher than expected Level 3 showed a similar pattern. Over the last three years, results in reading were well above average, whilst writing results were below average and mathematics results were above average. Boys do better than

girls. The school trend is below the national one. Marked changes in the year-to-year profile of results suggest that changes in the number of pupils with special needs have a big effect on overall standards. Boys did significantly better than the girls over time.

- 3 In 2004 there was a very small group of pupils in Year 6, where each of the seven pupils represents around 14 per cent. This means that the attainment of individual pupils had a large effect on the overall picture and can cause significant inconsistencies in year-on-year scores. Consequently, most notice should be taken of the three-year trend. Over the last three years, results were above average in English and mathematics and well above average in science. The trend is inconsistent but, overall, is below the national trend. The trend in mathematics has been rising. Boys do better than girls, particularly in mathematics. Overall, there has been above average standards consistently since 2000. However, the more recent scores have not matched the high levels of 2000. Equally, the number of pupils with special educational needs has significantly fluctuated during this period. Targets for the current groups of pupils are ambitious but distinctly possible.
- 4 In the Reception Year, children achieve well in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematics and knowledge and understanding of the world. In these areas of learning, most children are on target to meet the nationally recognised Early Learning Goals by the time they enter Year 1. In creative and physical development there is too little evidence to make secure judgements about standards and achievement. The most mature children are achieving even higher standards in communication and mathematics and these exceed the Early Learning Goals. Children with special educational needs benefit from highly focussed support and the high quality provision leads to very good progress in relation to their prior learning.
- 5 In English, overall standards are average and achievement is satisfactory. The best standards and achievement in Years 2 and 6 are in speaking, listening and reading. In these aspects, attainment is above average and achievement is good. A particularly strong area in Year 6 is the pupils' knowledge and understanding of library classification and their skills at gathering information from books. Standards in writing are average in Year 2 and achievement is satisfactory. However, standards are below average in Year 6 and achievement is unsatisfactory. This is particularly noticeable in the basic skills of handwriting, spelling and punctuation. Teachers are not sufficiently rigorous in their marking and target-setting and too little time is spent on writing. Across the school, there is not a substantial body of writing in subjects across the curriculum.
- 6 In mathematics, overall standards are above average and achievement is good. By Years 2 and 6, pupils are secure in their problem-solving, number work and knowledge and understanding of shape. In Year 2, pupils do not always understand new ideas because there are not enough opportunities for them to consolidate their knowledge of mathematical language. The most progress is made in the Year 3 / 4 class because the teaching is well-informed and interesting. In this class, information and communication technology is used very well to illustrate mathematical ideas. In Year 6, basic mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding are secure, but progress is occasionally slowed by the lack of demands for work to be finished in a certain time. This affects the challenge for the higher attaining pupils.
- 7 In science, overall standards are average and achievement is satisfactory. Most progress is made up to the end of Year 4, because of good teaching that promotes:
  - an investigatory approach, so that pupils guide their own learning;

- good knowledge, skills and understanding brought about by challenging questioning;
- pupils' analysis of their own predictions and the invitation to modify their own views in the light of the findings.

Progress is slower in Years 5 and 6 because of fewer opportunities to investigate and use helpful tools, such as computer programs. As a result, pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are not broadened and deepened.

- 8 Overall, standards in information and communication technology are above average and achievement is good. In Year 2, standards are average and pupils show confidence when using machinery and simple programs. They make good progress and develop skills that will serve them well as they move through the school. In Year 6, pupils have a good range of skills that enable them to produce quite sophisticated multi-media presentations. Standards are above average and achievement is good. Useful work in support of other subjects further develops skills and good practices. For instance, Year 3/4 pupils search on the Internet for information about the Aztecs. Standards and achievement have been strengthened by improvements in resources and teachers' expertise.
- 9 In religious education, standards meet the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus and achievement is satisfactory. In Year 2, pupils have a sound knowledge and appreciation of religious stories and a range of festivals. In Year 6, pupils have built on prior knowledge and experiences and know facts about Islam. However, throughout the school pupils attain more in relation to their personal understanding of the part religion plays in the life of believers. This aspect is much stronger than their knowledge and understanding of general facts. In this way, religious education plays a key part in the effective provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- 10 It was possible only to sample work in other subjects. Consequently, no judgement on standards and achievement is made about art and design, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education.
- 11 Pupils identified as having special educational needs achieve well because of the good support they receive. They achieve in lessons at the same rate as their peers. Children in the Foundation Stage of learning make very good progress because they have a high level of support and encouragement. The provision for special educational needs is good; pupils' specific needs are identified early on and monitored carefully. They receive support which is specifically targeted to their needs, which means they achieve well.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils' attitudes are good. Relationships with others are good. Behaviour is satisfactory. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Attitudes to learning are particularly strong in the Foundation Stage and in Years 3 and 4.
- Relationships between pupils and between pupils and other adults are good.

- A small group of boys in Years 5 and 6 display challenging behaviour that disrupts learning.

## Commentary

- 12 The very positive judgements from the last inspection have not been fully maintained. Behaviour, which was previously judged to be very good is now satisfactory. A minority of parents and some pupils admitted concerns about this aspect of school life. Cultural development is good overall.
- 13 Pupils display good attitudes and work hard when teaching is challenging and catches their interest, for example in the Foundation Stage and Years 3 and 4. Throughout the school nearly all listen attentively, are keen to answer questions and undertake tasks willingly. This is the result of good teaching, which ensures that pupils of all levels of attainment have the opportunity to achieve well. Special educational needs pupils respond well to the encouragement of support staff.
- 14 The great majority of pupils behave very well. However, a small minority of boys in Years 5 and 6 display inappropriate behaviour in lessons which is not always dealt with well. Learning is affected by this and sometimes leads to unsatisfactory teaching and learning. Pupils discuss and agree the golden rules and are fully aware of the high expectations of teachers and support staff. The caring ethos of the school results in pupils knowing right from wrong and showing consideration for others. No signs of aggressive behaviour were seen and both parents and pupils confirmed that where verbal bullying does occur it is quickly resolved. There have been no exclusions in recent years.
- 15 The good ethos of the school fosters effective spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are many occasions when pupils are required to reflect on substantial issues, such as considering faith and how it effects people in different religions. Staff give a positive lead in fostering pupils' views of right and wrong and in developing good relationships. Rewards, praise and encouragement are given at every opportunity. From the day they start school in the Reception Year, children are encouraged to become independent learners and this makes a good contribution to the way that children achieve by the end of reception progress well by the end of reception. As a result, most children are achieving well in personal, social and emotional development and are on course to meet the Early Learning Goals in this area of learning. Most pupils take seriously their responsibilities of living in a community, and develop good levels of maturity by the time they transfer to secondary school. Evidence from the secondary schools praises the school's efforts and the standards reached by the pupils. Responsibilities given to the pupils range from acting as a school councillor, running the tuck shop and acting as reading partners to the younger children. There are many opportunities for pupils to experience life outside school, for example through visits to places of historical interest, an aquarium and the encouragement of outdoor pursuits through a collaborative project with Outward Bound and Cumbria Youth Alliance. A visit by an Afro-Caribbean dancer, multi-faith studies in religious education, art and music, together with colourful displays for the Chinese New Year and Diwali, highlight the school's multicultural provision.
- 16 Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory. Attendance awards are given and pupils enjoy coming to school.

**Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)**

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.5	School data	0.2
National data	5.1	National data	0.4

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

**QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

Overall, the quality of education is good, including the quality of teaching and learning. The curriculum satisfactorily promotes pupils' learning. The school has good procedures and practices for care, welfare, health and safety. The links with parents and the community are very good and productive. The links with other schools are good.

**Teaching and learning**

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Assessment procedures and practices are satisfactory.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The work of classroom assistants is very good.
- Teaching in the Foundation Stage is consistently effective and assessment is good.
- The unusually large movements in staffing have adversely affected the quality of teaching and learning.

## Commentary

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 28 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	3	15	9	1	0	0

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

17 Since the last inspection, many strengths identified in the report have been maintained. However, the unusual and extensive instability of staffing has brought about shortcomings and inconsistency in some areas such as:

- the quality of marking;
- management and control of the oldest pupils;
- the use of assessment in Years 5 and 6 to match work accurately to the needs of pupils in lessons;

The causes of this instability have been unavoidable. The governors and headteacher have worked hard and, in the main, successfully to minimise the effects of this movement of staff. This has been done by:

- increasing the level of monitoring;
- increasing the amount of time the headteacher has to work on leadership and management.

Nevertheless, the burden on all concerned in a small school has been great and has led to problems the school has not previously faced, particularly in Years 5 and 6.

18 In the Foundation Stage, the quality of teaching and learning is good. The particular strengths are:

- the effective planning of lessons that highlight the development of good basic skills and attitudes;
- the interesting and varied activities that encourage children to learn and ensure that they take full part in the lessons;
- the very good use of time, where teacher-led activities are well balanced with activities chosen by the children. This promotes good learning and a self-reliant approach;
- the very effective work of the classroom assistant in supporting and extending the children's work.

Assessment is good and makes an effective contribution to lesson planning and the setting of individual targets for the children.

19 In Years 1 and 2, the quality of teaching and learning is good, overall. Staff rightly focus on developing pupils' basic skills and interests in most subjects. Subject knowledge is mainly effective and the challenges for pupils are high. The occasional exception to this is in the development of basic writing skills, and the issued opportunities to use and develop writing skills in the full range of subjects. However, the best writing observed came from work pupils were doing in history about the

Great Fire of London. Again, the use of classroom assistants is very good and the range of resources and visits/visitors enhances pupils' learning.

- 20 In Years 3 to 6, the overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. However, this is the area of the school that has been most affected by staffing difficulties. Consequently, the very good standard of teaching reported at the previous inspection in Years 5 and 6 is now satisfactory. The strongest teaching was observed in Year 3/4 and the main strengths were:
- very good subject knowledge, particularly in science and history;
  - very good management and control that promote particularly strong relationships, pace to learning and the development of independent learning skills;
  - the very effective use of information and communication technology in mathematics and history. This fosters a confident and competent approach to using computers.
- 21 In the Years 5 and 6 class, the overall quality of teaching is just satisfactory. Clearly, there are some challenging pupils in this class and their weak behaviour is having an adverse effect on pupils' achievement. This was evident in the unsatisfactory science lesson. The quality of teaching and learning is best when there is added teaching support, for instance from the headteacher. This was observed to good effect when the headteacher taught a good religious education lesson at short notice. In most lessons observed, pupils' learning was, at least, satisfactory and records of pupils' achievements show that they will achieve well in reading and mathematics. However, weaknesses in assessment, marking and subject knowledge mean that standards in writing are not high enough and that achievement is unsatisfactory.
- 22 Overall, pupils' competence in using speaking, listening, reading, mathematics and information and communication technology is good and this is the result of effective teaching. The development of writing through its use in other subjects is a weakness, particularly in Year 6.
- 23 Pupils with special educational needs have individual education plans that are used effectively to offer a good level of support. The targets set are clear and the pupils, therefore, can make good progress towards these. The co-ordinator for special educational needs ensures these targets are manageable and achievable, and has reviewed them to ensure they are very specific to the needs of the pupils' individual needs. Support staff are well-deployed, know the pupils well and work with them effectively to ensure they make good progress. Staff plan well together to ensure support for pupils meets their needs. The support for children in the Foundation Stage is particularly good. The staff keep detailed records in the reception year, which inform what the children are to learn next, and build very successfully on what they already know, can do and understand.
- 24 Assessment of children's progress is robust in the Foundation Stage and clearly describes how the children manage their work. All the pupils have targets in literacy and numeracy but they are not as effective in their outcomes as they could be and particularly so in pupils' writing. The pupils are involved in discussing whether they have achieved the intentions of the lessons. Few of them are involved in deciding what the next step in their learning should be. This is a missed opportunity that does not support pupils as well as it might. The marking and assessment of work is not consistently carried out well, despite copious work on the part of teachers. However, this factor needs to be noted alongside the background of substantial staffing



changes. The best, seen in Years 3 and 4 science, helps the pupils to improve their work by re-visiting it in discussion and through marking. The value of targets is lessened because there is not a clear enough link between the everyday work and pupils' individual needs. In most lessons but not all, the work is suitably matched to the pupils' differing ages but not always to their abilities.

## **The curriculum**

The curriculum is satisfactory. The curriculum in the Reception Year is good. There is a very good range of activities outside the classroom to enrich pupils' learning. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is a very good range of clubs and other activities.
- Special educational needs provision in the school is good.
- Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils.
- Provision for personal, social and health education is effective.
- In the Foundation Stage, the outdoor area is inadequate.
- The curriculum is weak in promoting writing skills in subjects across the curriculum.

### **Commentary**

- 25 Progress in developing the curriculum since the previous inspection is satisfactory. The findings from the previous inspection identified developing the Foundation Stage curriculum as an area for improvement, and this has been tackled successfully. There was good planning for the mixed-age classes in the school and this is still the case. There is good provision for speaking, listening, reading, mathematics and information and communication technology, but weaknesses in promoting pupils' skills in writing.
- 26 The curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and the locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education. The sound two-year cycle meets the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs. The programme for learning is satisfactory and mostly builds on pupils' prior gains in knowledge and understanding. It also ensures that pupils neither repeat or omit essential topics. There is careful consideration given to the curriculum for Year 1 pupils who work with children in the Reception Year, which ensures they have equal access to the National Curriculum and also have a curriculum which meets their developmental needs. The curriculum framework provides a mainly balanced coverage of all National Curriculum subjects, the exception being the weak attention to the basic skills in writing. Links across subjects are developing, as is the development of information and communication technology as an aid to learning. Developing pupils' independence and thinking skills in science is emphasised strongly and there is good breadth in the curriculum in history and physical education, for example through visits, the use of the local area and community links.
- 27 There are well-established class discussions to develop pupils' personal, social, health education and citizenship. During these discussions pupils exercise their skills and develop their confidence in sharing their views amongst classmates. These activities are well planned and involve older juniors in productive discussion about such matters as the degree of risks in life's activities, the options open to individuals and what being a citizen means.
- 28 The curriculum for the Foundation Stage of learning is good, with a well-balanced range of activities, which provide good breadth and detail to enhance children's learning. The programme works towards the nationally expected Early Learning Goals in the six areas of learning and prepares the children well for the next stage in

their education. Children with special educational needs are provided for very well and achieve well because of the detailed support they receive.

- 29 The school continues to provide a very good range of activities to develop the pupils' sporting and artistic skills. The links with the community are also put to very good use to enrich pupils' experiences. There is a very good variety of experiences in the arts and sport through visits, and visitors to the school are very well-represented. The school utilises creative and sporting expertise very well to enrich pupils' learning, both from the local community and further afield. For example, dance workshops have been highly successful in promoting pupils' skill in the performing arts.
- 30 The provision for pupils identified as having special educational needs is good and they achieve well alongside their peers. Individual education plans for pupils are well-written, with clear targets for what the pupils are to achieve. The good level of support in lessons and around the school, combined with the effective use of the individual education plans means the pupils make good progress.
- 31 The support from teaching assistants is good and there is a good match and deployment of staff to meet the needs of all pupils. Although the accommodation for the reception year is adequate overall, the provision for outdoor play is weak. There are very advanced plans in place to improve this in the near future. Significant improvements have already been made to the school's satisfactory accommodation, especially in providing additional space and facilities for information and communication technology, which have benefited pupils' learning.

### **Care, guidance and support**

Provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is good. Support and guidance for pupils is good. The school successfully involves pupils in its decision-making and development.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils feel secure and work in a caring, healthy and safe environment.
- There are good staff/pupil relationships.
- Induction arrangements for reception year are effective.
- Pastoral care is good.
- The school council makes a good contribution to the life of the school.

### **Commentary**

- 32 The school has maintained the strengths identified in the last report. In their meetings with inspectors, parents and pupils expressed great satisfaction with the caring nature of the school. As a result, the school provides a happy and friendly environment that is conducive to learning. Close attention is paid to health and safety issues and risk assessments, particularly when planning visits to places of interest and walking to a nearby play area.
- 33 Pupils' healthy and safe living is well promoted through the effective personal, social and health education programme, which is enhanced by regular visits from the Healthy Schools' team, Child Health representatives and the local community police officer. Healthy eating is complemented by the new in-house catering arrangements.

First aid provision and arrangements for caring for sick children are good. Child protection procedures are good and there is effective liaison with other agencies.

- 34 Teachers and support staff are sensitive to the needs of the pupils and thus able to provide appropriate support and guidance. The good relationships between most pupils and staff encourage pupils to raise any concerns they may have, knowing they will be dealt with sympathetically. Pupils with special educational needs make views known in their diaries and there are plans to develop this further with pupils making contributions to their individual education plans. Teachers track the progress and personal development of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, which leads to pupils achieving well. The 'upsteps' reward system is used to good effect to highlight and encourage pupils' achievements.
- 35 Induction arrangements are well organised and ensure that children settle happily into school life. These include a pre-school group and several opportunities for parents to visit the school. Parents are particularly pleased with this aspect of school life. Pupils are mostly well prepared for transfer to secondary education.
- 36 The school councillors take their responsibilities very seriously and enthusiastically. They have been consulted on a range of issues, for instance the change in the school meals arrangements.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

Links with parents, the local and wider community are very good. Links with other schools and colleges are good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents are well informed about the school and the standards and progress of their children.
- The Friends of Lowther School provide very good support.
- Curriculum evenings successfully provide parents with a great deal of useful information and guidance.
- Meetings with pre-school group are effective and productive.

### **Commentary**

- 37 Since the last inspection, the qualities of this very strong aspect have been maintained. However, the responses to the parent questionnaire highlighted a small minority of parents who are less than satisfied with:
- information about their children's progress;
  - the approachability of the school and the notice it takes of concerns;
  - information about how they may help their children.
- Overall, inspectors do not agree that these are areas of weakness.
- 38 Parents are mostly satisfied with the school. They know that their children are encouraged to be mature and responsible and they appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular activities. Curriculum evenings help them to keep up with their children's learning. A pre-school group meets weekly to prepare children for school. Behavioural problems are a cause for concern for a few parents and inspection findings confirm that a small group of disruptive older boys are involved. The headteacher is active in dealing with the problem directly and use is made of the

sanctions and rewards that are present in the school's policy. However, the small number of boys continue to cause a difficulty.

- 39 Parents are well informed about the school through the prospectus, regular newsletters and other correspondence. Pupils' progress is properly monitored through consultation evenings, family assemblies, reading records and annual reports that are detailed and include suggestions for improvement. At the meeting with inspectors, parents judged the school to be very approachable and happy to discuss concerns at any time. They are encouraged to contribute to their children's learning by providing assistance in the classroom and on trips and visits. They also raise significant funds for the school through the Friends of Lowther School Association.
- 40 Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept well informed about their children's progress. They are appropriately involved in the review of educational plans, any necessary target setting and how they can help their child at home. There are good links with parents and carers to ensure the pupils receive as much support as possible in their learning.
- 41 The very good links with the community include local churches where Christian festivals are celebrated and the village hall where members of the community are invited to attend school events. Pupils take part in musical events, a residential visit, sporting activities, charity fund raising and carol singing.
- 42 Good working relationships exist with the local schools and the collaboration of staff and resources enhances the teaching and learning of all pupils. The school provides training for students from a local college. All these initiatives contribute positively to the progress and achievements of the pupils.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Overall, leadership and management are good. Governance is effective. The headteacher leads the school well. Key staff make a sound contribution to leadership. Management is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The governing body has led progress on privatising school meals and in improving facilities for learning.
- The headteacher has been strong in recognising and improving most areas of underachievement.
- Success criteria for school improvement are weak.

### **Commentary**

- 43 In the period since the last inspection the school has endured a long period of instability, mainly because of a large number of staffing changes. As a result, the best efforts of the governors and headteacher have been frustrated. The governing body has prudently supported the headteacher by giving him more time to concentrate on leadership and management. This has led to many matters, such as policy development, being resolved after a period of slow activity. However, staff changes and absence have further disrupted even this extra support from the

governing body. Consequently, the school has not, understandably, progressed in a number of areas.

44 The governing body is keen, knowledgeable and strong. It is kept well-informed by the headteacher and its decision-making benefits from a business-like committee structure. Members of the governing body are well known in the school, through their practices, such as monitoring of teaching and learning. They research and question significant areas of school, including standards. Further, they have made a significant contribution to strategic planning, particularly in their work on privatising their school meals service and in improving facilities for information and communication technology and the library.

45 The headteacher enjoys the confidence and support of colleagues, governors, community and local education authority. He leads by example, particularly in the quality of his teaching and in his expectations of the pupils' moral and social development. The instability in staffing has presented a significant challenge for the headteacher and his good leadership has ensured that the quality of provision has been maintained in most areas. Put simply, he has held the school together at a difficult time. Since arriving at the school he has identified weaknesses in areas such as literacy and they have been improved, such as:

- the quality and depth of reading skills;
- boys' attainment and achievement.

The contribution of key staff is sound but again, staff turnover has frustrated continuous impact. All staff and governors are very committed to providing pupils with equal opportunities.

46 Management is strongest in the collection and use of performance data. Individual pupils' achievements are clearly tracked and trends are noted. However, there is insufficient attention paid to:

- ensuring that all pupils achieve their highest standards on a day-to-day basis;
- requiring staff to implement school policies, such as the ones relating to marking and behaviour.

Strategic planning has led to improvements in several areas, but the school improvement plan lacks rigorous success criteria and evaluation. As a result, strategic planning is weak and does not always pick up the real needs of the school. For example, the current school improvement plan does not have references to:

- plans;
- improving the quality of writing, even though it has been a priority in previous plans;
  - improving behaviour in the Year 5/6 class.

47 The school has a sound approach to performance management. Governors, headteacher and local authority staff regularly observe lessons. Staff are keen and willing to extend their own professional expertise through a wide range of training and partnerships.

48 Leadership and management of special educational needs are good. The co-ordinator knows the pupils well, both those who have been placed on the special needs register and those about whom staff have raised initial concerns. Support staff are well-informed about their roles in school and are well-deployed and prepared for the level of support they are required to give the pupils. Staffing for special educational needs is given careful thought, especially to make sure there is continuity and progression in the pupils' learning. There are regular reviews of the

pupils' progress towards their targets, the system is efficient and effective and parents and carers are encouraged to participate in these reviews. Outside agencies are used effectively with good links and liaison. Pupils are also involved, make contributions in their diaries, and the school intends to involve them still further in devising their individual education plans.

- 49 Financial management is good. Governors and management prudently administer the budget and there has been helpful support from the bursar. Governors benefit from the opportunity to debate and choose from several options for investment. The most important and far-reaching decision that has been taken is the funding of significant management time for the headteacher. The school has good procedures and practices for making sure they receive good value in their purchases and any dealings with service providers.

***Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004***

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	210,070
Total expenditure	213,282
Expenditure per pupil	2,112

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	14,581
Balance carried forward to the next	11,369

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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

Provision in the Foundation Stage is **good**. This represents a good improvement on the findings of the previous inspection.

When children start their reception year, their attainment is generally what is expected for their age. They achieve well in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematics and knowledge and understanding of the world because they make good progress from the start. Most children are on course to meet the goals set out for them to achieve and in mathematics and language for communication there are many working beyond these levels. Teaching is consistently good. Accommodation is adequate. There are good plans in place to extend outdoors in summer 2005. Staff have made good efforts to provide enough space for children to explore as they learn. The arrangements for outdoor play are sufficient for the small numbers of children and helpful for those with special needs. Resources are satisfactory and staff use them particularly well to promote achievement.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There are strong links with parents, nurseries and playgroups that make children very secure.
- Children's personal skills mature well. Where children explore they are happy and make plans for their play.

#### **Commentary**

50 Children quickly settle very easily into Reception because arrangements with families and pre-school provision prepare them well for school. They share tasks effortlessly with older infant pupils. Strong leadership and management help children to gain from a rich stream of ideas that blend reception learning well with that of children in Year 1. Children are confident and trustful, and behave very well as they play alongside or with others. Effective planning helps children to make choices and plan where they will play next. Support staff make a very effective contribution in each day's round of activities. There is a good balance of time for children to explore for themselves and to be guided by staff. One or two of the very youngest children express their need for a shorter teaching time during the longer sessions.

### **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children listen very well and many of them show a higher standard of attainment in their conversation than most children their age.



- They make good progress from their previous attainment in reading and their knowledge of letter sounds.
- The variety of experiences for writing is good and better than the pace at which children develop their writing skills.

### **Commentary**

51 Achievement is good. There are lots of opportunities for children to listen to stories. Regular shared reading sessions with older pupils and parents help to make reading important to children. Children are very confident to talk amongst friends and they listen very well as others describe their feelings. The phrases of the more able children show that they have an above average grasp of language and use it very well and at length. Overall, the full range of ability is evident and most of the children achieve robustly in their early reading and writing skills. When they transfer to Year 1, most can read and write a simple sentence or two. They know letter sounds and clusters of sounds very well and some children use them as they read. Children know that there are plenty of reasons to write so they make lists, labels and jottings in their play. A good number of children do not make enough headway in developing writing skills because too little is expected of them.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is good focus on mathematical calculation that builds well on children's experience of number.
- Learning is fun.

### **Commentary**

52 Children achieve well. Most can count to 20 without adults helping them. They can write numbers to 20 and many can deal successfully with number sentences such as  $4 + 6 = 10$ . Two thirds of the children can subtract with numbers up to 10 and use the correct mathematical words. The contribution made by the teaching assistant is very good. The high level of support and detailed checks on progress help the very small number of children with special needs to make substantial progress from their start. Mathematical resources are used well to help these and all the other children to explore ideas of measure as they do for example, in their water play. In doing so they consolidate what they know and absorb ideas in fun ways.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The rich variety of experiences provides children with much to think about and do.

### **Commentary**

- 53 Children's awareness of time, place, the past and different cultures is well promoted through the good range of well-connected experiences. The visit to a local museum to experience 'Washday Blues', for example, opened up a wealth of experiences about the past. Many questions came from the children as a result. In addition, learning was enriched by lots of parents accompanying the visit and effectively helping the children in their learning. What accelerates children's progress more is that they had the opportunity to have a go in the washtub themselves, once ideas were planted. Children get a good grounding in the early skills for making things and investigating and using computers. This is a good improvement since the previous inspection when they had little access to technology. In some aspects of their knowledge and understanding they show an understanding and insight beyond that of most children the same age. The questions they ask show that they gain a lot from their exciting experiences and use them well in their play. Most are fully on course to meet the goals for their age and a good number of children exceed them.
- 54 No teaching sessions were seen in the area of creative development or physical development so no judgement could be made about the provision overall in each of these areas. In day-to-day **creative development** sessions, children's ideas for imaginative play are well developed. They plan their play independently and follow their imaginative ideas well. They have a good range of materials to make collages and they represent objects such as goldfish well. They play readily, write little notes that capture the moment and reflect the good quality of their play together. Their singing of rhymes is robust and most join in. In **physical development**, school information indicates that children are on course to reach the standards expected at the end of their time in Reception. In their fine skills of control and manipulation, children show the skill, strength and ability of most children their age when they handle small tools and resources. In their regular 'Fitness' fun sessions, they demonstrate good control and balance. They can repeat and follow a sequence of simple movements well and travel with typical co-ordination. No evidence of other aspects representing the full range of physical development was seen during the inspection.

## **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2**

### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' knowledge of the library and information-gathering skills are very good.
- In Years 5 and 6, pupils' writing skills are not good enough.
- The tracking of individual pupils' achievements is good.

#### **Commentary**

- 55 Improvement is satisfactory since the last inspection. The school has maintained the good quality of speaking, listening and reading and they are very secure in these aspects of work. However, writing skills are not as good as they were particularly in Year 6 where the basic handwriting, spelling and punctuation are below the level they ought to be. Overall, standards are average and achievement is satisfactory.

Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the standards set for them in speaking, listening and reading.

56 By Years 2 and 6, pupils listen carefully and speak well. These qualities are seen in English lessons, and also in other subjects. For example, pupils in Year 2 speak clearly and knowledgeably in history when describing the events of the Great Fire of London. Reading standards are above average. Higher attaining pupils have a very good understanding of the books they read and show high levels of fluency and expression. All pupils visit the local library and most show good attitudes to reading. Year 6 pupils have a very good understanding of library classification, how to find information and the way that non-fiction books are structured. The daily 'reading partners' project is effective and provides pupils with good opportunities to develop skills and gain confidence.

57 In Year 2, standards in writing are average and achievement is satisfactory. The best pupils' work is clearly seen in history on the Great Fire of London. Here, the writing is interesting and accurate. Standards in Year 6 have suffered from the disruptions caused by staff changes and absence. In Year 6, standards are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory. Pupils' command of the basic skills of handwriting, spelling and punctuation is weaker than it should be. The main reasons for this are:

- there is insufficient attention paid in the teachers' marking and target-setting to improving skills;
- too little time is given to writing, particularly in other subjects such as religious education and history.

58 Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The best work was seen in good lessons in Year 2 and in Years 3 and 4. The main strengths were:

- the way that the teachers 'grabbed' the attention of the whole class, which led to good concentration, appropriate contributions and high levels of interest;
- good questioning draws all the pupils into the lesson, including the more reticent ones;
- a brisk pace that is maintained by limiting time for each part of the pupils' individual and group work;
- end-of-lesson discussions provide an opportunity for pupils to contribute confidently to aspects of speaking, listening and reading skills.

In other lessons, the sound practice led to satisfactory achievement, but the pupils were not enthused by the content, or demands of the lesson. Marking is positive, but there are few references to pupils' targets and how well they are being achieved.

59 Leadership and management are satisfactory. Although the work of teachers and pupils is monitored soundly, instability in staffing has led to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning. This has been particularly so in writing. The coordinator tracks individual pupils' progress well and ensures that support is given, either in classes or by way of additional grouping. There is insufficient use of information and communication technology, particularly in the drafting of writing.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

60 Satisfactory. In speaking, listening and reading the pupils use and develop their skills very well in a range of subjects. However, writing skills are not developed sufficiently and not enough time and planning is given to this aspect of work. As a result, there is a lack of a substantial body of writing in subjects across the curriculum.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good** overall.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards in Year 6 and Year 2 are above national expectations and pupils achieve well.
- Good emphasis is given to numerical calculations.
- Positive attitudes to mathematics are promoted.
- Sometimes, there is not enough challenge for higher attaining pupils.

### **Commentary**

- 61 The standards in Years 2 and 6 are above average. Pupils' achieve well, including those identified as having special educational needs. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.
- 62 In Year 2, pupils calculate using a variety of strategies and recognise that addition is the inverse of subtraction. They know regular two- and three-dimensional shapes. Pupils use resources well in a good range of practical and investigatory work. In Year 6, pupils are learning to calculate multiples of numbers, staff have a good understanding of the mathematical ideas. However, there are missed opportunities to enable the pupils to participate in lessons and use resources to record and share their mathematical ideas with others, such as using mini-whiteboards to record calculations and check for pupils' understanding.
- 63 Teaching and learning in mathematics are good overall and promote good achievement. Staff have a clear understanding of the national strategy for teaching numeracy and lessons are well-planned and organised. Occasionally, in Year 5/6:
- there is too much adherence to the written plans, which results in some loss of pace and challenge;
  - pupils are encouraged to keep on task, but there is not enough direction to complete work in a required amount of time.
- 64 In effective lessons there is a good match of tasks to the range of abilities within the class. In satisfactory lessons, at times there is not enough challenge or reinforcement of accurate mathematical language, especially to extend higher attaining pupils. Behaviour in lessons and attitudes to learning are generally good, although a small minority of pupils in Years 5 and 6 sometimes find paying attention is difficult. Work in the pupils' books is marked regularly and includes guidance on the standard of work and presentation, but there are few evaluative comments to inform the pupils about what they are to learn next and how to improve.
- 65 Leadership and management are satisfactory. The present temporary co-ordinator has been in post for a very short time and has yet to monitor pupils' work or the teaching of mathematics. This is an area for future development of which the school is aware. The curriculum is effective and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. It also reflects the national strategy for teaching numeracy, and this work is well supported through the use of a commercial scheme of work.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

- 66 There are good opportunities for the pupils to use their mathematical understanding across the curriculum. For example, they use charts, graphs and measurement in scientific studies. Work in art and design and design and technology indicates that mathematics is used in pattern making and calculating size and shape.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- To the end of Year 4 pupils show good levels of knowledge and understanding; particularly so in the lower juniors, where they achieve very well.
- The curriculum makes good use of investigative work except with the upper juniors, whose abilities are not harnessed enough in their writing and diagrams.

### Commentary

- 67 With the fluctuating number of pupils being assessed or taking the national tests in any one year and varying number of pupils with special needs, the results of national tests are not fully representative of pupils' attainment. However, the pattern of results over several years suggests that standards in Years 2 and 6 are above average. In 2004, the great majority of pupils in Year 6 attained the higher than average Level 5 in tests and this result is a fair reflection of pupils' good achievement. However, inspection findings about the current Year 6 show that these pupils will not do as well because they are not stretched to their full capacity. In Years 2 and 6, standards are typical of most pupils the same age and achievement is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs make good gains in relation to their prior learning.
- 68 In Years 1 and 2, a good range of activities are well linked to other subjects such as history. Good teaching makes helpful connections that in turn deepen pupils' understanding. For instance, where they considered 'old toys', pupils had the opportunity to use their knowledge of materials to consider the properties they observed. Toys were found to be 'rusty' 'clockwork' or 'radio-controlled.' They arrived at their conclusions by discussing the outcomes and they recorded their findings well. This has led to good progress and achievement.
- 69 In Years 3 to 6, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The strongest practice is in the Year 3 / 4 class where pupils have plenty of opportunities to investigate and carry out practical experiments. As a result, they develop their understanding of what makes a fair test and test their own predictions with some deliberation. In one instance, their findings about shadows and the proximity of a source of light completely overturned their original view and led to some deep thought on the part of the pupils. They recorded their findings well and strong teacher questioning and marking encouraged even deeper thought. However, having laid these robust foundations to the end of Year 4, the challenge is not built upon sufficiently for the pupils now in the Year 5 and 6 class. The quality of their work is too reliant on worksheets that continue to expand some knowledge but provide too few chances for them to continue to develop their skills as scientists. For example,
- there are relatively few opportunities for these pupils to design and carry out their own experiments, decide how to go about them or how to present their findings;
  - pupils have worksheets that do not harness their knowledge to deepen or quicken

their understanding.

Where pupils are asked to interpret findings, this important feature of learning is not always followed through. Pupils have too few opportunities to organise or analyse their findings in writing or through the use of information and communication technology.

- 70 Nevertheless, there is good leadership in science. The strengths of investigative work have been maintained up to the end of Year 4. Most pupils display confidence when they tackle scientific ideas and investigations.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in information and communication technology is **good** overall.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards of work have improved in Year 6 and are above the expected level for this age group.
- Pupils are now achieving well overall, because resources have improved and are used to good effect.
- The curriculum for information and communication technology is good.
- The co-ordinator is well-informed and actively seeks improvement.
- The use of technology across the curriculum is being developed. It is used very well in Year 3/4, but there is the capacity for further development in all year groups.

### **Commentary**

- 71 Attainment in Year 6 is above the expected level, with signs that standards are continuing to improve. Standards are average in Year 2. Pupils make good progress, including those pupils identified as having special educational needs. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Standards in Year 6 are higher than at the last inspection because of improved resources, greater expertise of staff and the successful work of the co-ordinator.
- 72 In Year 2, pupils develop their ideas about numeracy and use computer programs to calculate money problems. In Year 6, pupils' work demonstrates their good range of skills, through using fonts skilfully to create colour effects and adjust the size of text and font styles in multi-media presentations. Sound effects, the use of imported photographs and the good use of colour created imaginative, animated and amusing pieces of work.
- 73 The quality of teaching and learning is good. Most staff have good subject knowledge and have developed confidence in using information and communication technology effectively in lessons. Opportunities to use computers are sometimes missed however, for instance in a mathematics lesson in Year 5/6, computers were available but not planned for or used. Good use is made of the whiteboard projector located in the library area in lessons, and there are plans to provide more of this type of resource in classrooms. Staff support pupils well in using computers for a range of tasks.
- 74 Leadership and management of the subject are good. The good progress the school has made is the result of the clear direction and co-ordination within the school and

the expertise of the co-ordinator. There is a good awareness of the standards of work pupils achieve and this information is saved by the pupils in their own files and folders. This means the co-ordinator has direct access to this work and can monitor what pupils have done. Also, there is good awareness of the collaborative and co-operative way in which pupils work together. The curriculum is broad, balanced and covers all the expected aspects, including the use of control programs/equipment, such as roamers, creating programs to operate traffic lights and lighthouse systems. Assessment procedures are good, targets are set termly, and staff assess pupils' progress against the expected outcomes of the national guidelines.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

- 75 The use of information and communication technology across the curriculum is satisfactory. There are some very good examples of information and communication technology being used in other subjects, mainly in Year 3/4. For example, pupils using art programs to create their own colour pictures and patterns. In mathematics, pupils in Years 1 and 2 use charts and pictograms to record their findings on a transport survey. However, there are shortcomings, for instance:
- in literacy there are too few examples of the good use of computers;
  - skills, knowledge and understanding are not used effectively in lessons in all year groups, especially to challenge and enhance learning for higher attaining pupils.
- The school is aware of these shortcomings and plans are in place to develop provision further.

## **HUMANITIES**

Work in geography and history was sampled during the inspection by looking at pupils' books and talking to staff and pupils about teaching and learning. As a result, it is not possible to make secure judgements about provision, standards, achievement, teaching and learning and leaderships and management.

In **geography**, Years 1 and 2 pupils are clearly aware of the local area and its landmarks. They know about important environmental issues such as litter, transport and the accessibility of shopping facilities. By Year 6, pupils have a sound knowledge of how land use is planned. They are clear about the different countries that make up the British Isles and the positions of some in Europe. They can talk about similarities and differences in climate in the different regions of the world.

In **history**, Year 2 pupils have very good knowledge and understanding of the causes and consequences of the Great Fire of London. In lessons, their recall of the events and characters is detailed and vivid. Their writing also makes a good contribution to their use and developments of literacy skills. By Year 6, pupils have a good understanding of life in World War II. They are particularly knowledgeable about what it would have been like to have been an evacuee and, as in other subjects, show a clear insight into the thoughts and feelings of people of the time. Pupils benefit from a curriculum that includes visits and visitors that bring past times to life. Two lessons were seen:

- in Year 1 the quality of teaching and learning about the Great Fire of London was satisfactory;
- in the Year 3/4 class, the lesson on Aztecs was very good. The main strengths were the very good use of the Internet to find information; the way the teacher gained the pupils' full attention by role-playing a character and the challenge to the pupils of making predictions and hypothesising from evidence.

## Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good attitudes of all pupils to the beliefs of others.
- The understanding that religion provides guidance and comfort.
- Pupils' knowledge and understanding of religious facts and stories.

### Commentary

76 Since the last inspection, standards at Years 2 and 6 have been maintained at the level expected by the locally Agreed Syllabus. Achievement for all pupils, including those with special educational needs, continues to be satisfactory. Pupils show great respect, concern and understanding for the beliefs of others.

77 Throughout the school, pupils recall well the stories and facts they have learned in lessons. For example:

- in Years 1 and 2, pupils know about festivals of light such as Diwali and Christingle. They also recall several parables;
- in Year 6, pupils know about Islam, particularly the importance of the Qur'an and the daily prayer to Muslims.

However, the strongest aspect in pupils' work is in the way they reflect on the wider beliefs of the peoples of the world. This has led to a caring and positive understanding of the cultures and religions of others. One Year 6 pupil summed this up as:

“People find solace and direction from their religion.”

78 Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The strongest aspect is the development of opportunities for reflection and discussion that is helping pupils to gain a greater insight of the meaning of religion and empathy with other people. This also means that the subject makes a significant contribution to the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In the best lesson in Year 6, the strengths were:

- effective planning that recapped on previous learning and consolidated pupils' learning about Moses;
- good use of resources that simplified the archaic language of the Ten Commandments and fostered pupils' knowledge and understanding of rules and what they are for;
- strong pace to the lesson enabled all pupils to make a verbal or written contribution.

Higher attaining pupils make good links between ancient rules and those we have today.

79 Leadership and management are sound. The coordinator is relatively new to the job and she has taken a great deal of useful advice from local authority officers. This has led to the greater emphasis on pupils' understanding of religious meaning, rather than just knowing facts. Monitoring is mainly through looking at teachers' planning and pupils' work.

## CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS



Art and design, design and technology, music and physical education were sampled during the inspection and there are no overall judgements on provision, standards, achievement, teaching and learning and leadership and management.

In **art and design**, the work of pupils on the walls around the school indicates a vibrant and flourishing curriculum. Although no lessons were seen, teaching makes strong links between the work of an artist and the techniques open to the children. Pupils' work in Years 1 and 2 shows a rich variety of texture, print, paintwork and three-dimensional figure shapes. Some of this work links well with literature and the other subjects the pupils are studying. The spread of work seen in Years 5 and 6 indicates good teaching of tonal work in pencil and charcoal that brings depth and perspective to their work. The standard of this work is above that typically seen of pupils the same age. Observation, pattern making and ceramics add to this interesting curriculum and strongly suggest that pupils achieve very well.

In **design and technology**, the analysis of pupils' work indicates a good standard of presentation. Pupils use their skills effectively to produce three-dimensional models, with effective pneumatic systems, such as 'monster heads'. In Years 1 and 2 the pupils are able to fold paper to create a 'concertina' effect to produce moving models of cats. The curriculum is thought through carefully to accommodate the mixed-age classes in the school and ensure there is no repetition of topics and pupils make progress in acquiring skills and techniques. The subject is taught in all year groups, follows national guidelines and covers all the expected elements.

In **music**, the one lesson seen in Year 1 and 2 indicates that pupils have good knowledge and understanding of the subject. A strength of planning is the clear link made to pupils' knowledge and understanding of sound from their work in science. In the lesson seen, this reinforced their understanding of 'vibration' when they explored instruments including their own voices. Pupils' singing is harmonious and has good volume. Pupils sing in simple descant and enjoy their performance to the whole school in assembly. No junior work was sampled.

In **physical education**, teachers' records show that the vast majority of pupils swim the nationally expected 25 metres by Year 6. Physical education is strongly and regularly featured on the timetable. Pupils have equal access to the full range of the curriculum in school time and there is a satisfactory range of activities outside school hours. Pupils attend a very wide variety of sports clubs, such as football, netball, rugby, cricket and cross-country, and these activities enhance the curriculum very well.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

The school offers a good programme of activities to support pupils' personal, social and health education and to enable them to become good citizens. There is a comprehensive programme of activities to develop pupils' awareness of issues such as drug abuse, sex education and puberty and relationships. There is good work on health and general well being. The philosophy sessions offer good experiences for the pupils to consider problems in depth and to offer suggestions and contributions. The prospectus provides a good amount of detail about sex education and relationships and how these are tackled in the school, and extra-curricular activities are used very well to develop personal, social, health education and citizenship. For example, through the Healthy Schools Initiative, healthy eating is promoted in the school.



## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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