

INSPECTION REPORT

MEXBOROUGH PITT STREET INFANT SCHOOL

Mexborough

LEA area: Doncaster

Unique reference number: 106683

Headteacher: Pauline Brandham

Lead inspector: Joyce Taylor

Dates of inspection: 17th - 19th January 2005

Inspection number: 267314

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 3 - 7 years
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 112

School address: Pitt Street
Mexborough
South Yorkshire

Postcode: S64 0LT

Telephone number: 01709 583271

Fax number: 01709 578092

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Councillor Edwin Simpson

Date of previous inspection: April 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is situated to the west of Doncaster and north east of Sheffield, with nearly all the pupils who attend coming from the surrounding area. Normally, few pupils come and go other than at the usual times of starting and leaving. They are taught in five single age classes in this small infant and nursery school. All the pupils are of white, British background and there are no pupils from homes where English is not the language mainly spoken. The area has a well below average proportion of adults with higher education, high unemployment conditions and a more than average proportion of children are entitled to free school meals. When pupils start at the school, most attain well below what is expected for their age in many areas of learning. Around six per cent of pupils are identified as having special educational need, which is less than average. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs, which is low given the number of pupils altogether. Most of the pupils receiving additional help have speech and communication or language difficulties. The school has close links with other local schools through the local cluster. The present headteacher has been in post for less than a year.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
4275	Joyce Taylor	Lead inspector	The Foundation Stage English as an additional language Mathematics Art and design Physical education
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4295	David Dodds	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Design and technology Religious education
27337	Sylvia Oultram	Team inspector	Special educational needs English Geography History Music

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	1
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	3
Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	5
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	9
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS	11
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 1	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	21

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very good school. It is successful at helping pupils reach high standards in their personal development. Children make fast progress in most subjects and reach standards that are average and often above. The very good teaching results in enthusiastic learning. The headteacher, in post for less than a year, is leading and managing the school very well. She is strongly supported by staff and governors. The school gives very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils become exceptionally good writers;
- Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are high;
- The headteacher has a very clear view of what needs to be done, makes sure developments are managed successfully and is ably supported by the whole school community;
- Very good teaching ensures learning is extremely effective and rigorous assessment monitors children's progress effectively;
- Children do not have enough experience of different British cultures;
- Not enough use is made of mathematics in other subjects.

Improvement since the last inspection in 1999 has been good. Other than a need to extend children's understanding of cultural diversity, all issues highlighted at that time have been dealt with. Other significant improvements include better standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening, mathematics, science and ICT. Provision for the nursery and reception children is more effective and children with special educational needs are very strongly supported. The leadership and management are very good. Relationships have improved and are excellent.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Pupils achieve very well. Standards reached in tests are usually average or better and reflect fairly the very good achievement. In the Foundation Stage, the children make very good progress and they achieve the goals that are expected by the end of reception. In writing, numeracy and personal development they exceed these goals. Children push forward particularly well in ICT to reach very high standards by the end of Year 2. In writing, their progress is very rapid. There has been slower achievement in reading and mathematics but newly introduced approaches and resources have remedied this. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, work to the limits of their capabilities; more able pupils and those with particular gifts or talents are urged on at a fast pace and

achieve very well. By the time they leave, most pupils reach or exceed the national standards in English, mathematics, science and ICT.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are very good. They form extremely effective relationships with each other and help and care for one another in their work and play activities. Children enthusiastically take up and enjoy the opportunities for learning that the school offers and they behave very well. Their attendance has improved significantly and is now satisfactory; their punctuality is good. Their understanding of cultural diversity is underdeveloped. Children have little contact with those of cultures different from their own, although they eagerly learn about different faiths and are keen to help others who are in need, particularly in different countries.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a very good quality of education for its pupils. Teaching is very good. Across the school there are extremely strong relationships between adults and pupils, which encourages pupils to work hard and do their best. Teachers use assessments extremely effectively to make sure they challenge children with work that stretches them. Tasks are interesting and discussed fully with the children, to make sure they know why these aspects of learning are important. The more able pupils extend skills and apply them to something different. Important reasons why pupils with special educational needs achieve well are the high quality of the support they are given by teaching assistants and the determination of all staff to ensure they make good progress.

The curriculum for nursery and reception children is rich, broad and relevant for the pupils. Staff have achieved a good balance of teacher led and child initiated activities in all areas of learning, apart from learning outside for the nursery children, where the accommodation restricts free access outside. For Years 1 and 2, the curriculum is varied and interesting and, as for the younger children, it is planned very well to ensure good coverage. Not enough use is made of mathematics across other subjects, but writing and ICT provide very good links between different branches of learning. Visits and visitors are used well to make learning real. There are satisfactory opportunities for pupils to take part in activities outside school time. Staff care for pupils very well and have their interests very much at heart. The school has good links with its parents and the local community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are very good. The headteacher has achieved much in less than a year and has improved provision that was already good. She has won the confidence of staff, parents and children. Team spirit is strong and staff are highly motivated to carry out new ideas. Management is very good. Senior teachers support others in implementing new policies and demonstrate, in their own work, the next important developments. The pupils' performance is closely checked and the systems for evaluating teaching and ensuring teacher development are high priorities. Governance is good. Many governors are new and, whilst they are still learning the ropes, they show a very strong commitment to the school and provide very good support. The governing body complies with all statutory requirements.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The parents think very highly of the school and a strong bond has been formed with the new headteacher. They are exceptionally pleased with what the school does for their children. The pupils themselves feel very much at home, show confidence and thoroughly enjoy themselves.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Ensure the children extend their understanding of cultural diversity;
- Provide more opportunities for mathematics to be used across the other subjects.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Pupils' achievement is very good. They start briskly in the nursery and reception classes (Foundation Stage) where, for many, their starting point on entering the nursery was low. In Years 1 and 2, children continue to make very good progress. In Year 1, they generally reach above average standards. In Year 2, where there are fewer potentially higher attaining children, although they achieve very well, their standards are average overall. In ICT, standards are well above average across the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well and reach average or above average standards;
- Standards are particularly high in ICT and are above average in writing and speaking and listening in Years 1 and 2;
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well and more able pupils reach very high standards.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.0 (14.7)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	16.1 (15.3)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	16.9 (15.3)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 34 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Commentary

1. Pupils achieve very well in the Foundation Stage. When they join the nursery class, most have social, language and mathematical skills at a much lower level than you would normally expect at the age of three. Before they enter reception, most have moved quickly across the 'stepping stones' and have made very good progress. Although they speak confidently, their sentence structure is still immature and their knowledge and understanding of the world is patchy. They are extraordinarily tolerant of each other but are insecure when negotiating about sharing and taking turns. By the end of reception, they more than reach the goals expected (the Early Learning Goals) in writing and number, with many showing skills beyond this level. In the physical area of learning, the children make better progress in some aspects than in others. In the nursery, activities such as climbing and scrambling in a suitably equipped area are not possible because the necessary facilities are not available. However, this is remedied in reception. Their overall knowledge and understanding of the world, physical and creative development is average.
2. Test results from year-to-year show standards to be generally average and often above. On occasions, however, these results have fallen below average for reading and mathematics. The school has worked hard to improve reading standards by providing many new and stimulating books; many are designed to particularly tempt the boys into increased effort. More practical and problem solving activities have been introduced in mathematics. In 2003, the test results showed an improvement overall and this high level of achievement has been sustained since. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is low. This is because the school does not register those children who have delays in their learning that can be overcome by hard work from teachers, pupils and their families. Pupils on the

special educational needs register are usually those who learn at a slower pace and the extremely effective strategies to support these children ensure they learn most productively. In Years 1 and 2, children's achievement is very good. Writing and ICT stand out and speaking and listening, mathematics and science have proved strong. The inspection has shown this to be a fair reflection; pupils' writing skills are exceptional. Their achievement is better in writing than reading, because they use the vocabulary they find familiar and select new vocabulary from this starting point. When reading, they are confronted with many unfamiliar words that, at this age, sometimes over-face them. The most able pupils reach the same heights in their reading as in their writing.

3. By the time they left in 2004, Year 2 pupils reached or exceeded the standards expected in most schools. Over time, the children's test results have compared very well with pupils in similar schools. The current Year 2 pupils are reaching average standards overall because there are few potentially higher attaining children in the year group. When these children started in the nursery, only a quarter of them demonstrated average standards. Their standards are above average in writing, speaking and listening, design and technology and geography, and well above average in ICT. Standards are average in other subjects. In science, pupils' very good achievement is strongly supported through practical and investigative work. In mathematics, good improvement in solving numeracy problems has ensured they are moving forward very quickly, but their standards in using mathematics in other subjects are not high enough. Overall, the school has improved on its average standards since the previous inspection.
4. There are very good levels of support for pupils with special educational needs and the children benefit from all aspects of the curriculum. There are precise targets for pupils and learning support assistants provide skilled and very effective support. Pupils' progress towards their targets is checked frequently and targets updated when necessary, which ensures children move forward rapidly.
5. Boys and girls achieve equally well, although the lower starting point of some boys continues as they move through the school. New resources and specific attention to raising boys' standards are already proving effective. The most able pupils achieve very well. They are given different tasks to ensure they move on quickly and have good opportunities to apply the skills they have learned.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES, VALUES AND OTHER PERSONAL QUALITIES

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, but children have insufficient experience of the range of different cultures in Britain. Pupils' attendance is satisfactory and punctuality is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have very good attitudes, behave very well and form excellent relationships;
- Pupils are not prepared well enough for life in a culturally diverse society;
- The school works very hard to achieve satisfactory attendance.

Commentary

6. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and their attitudes to work are very good. In all classes, they look after themselves, learn quickly and apply themselves well to their work. Pupils' behaviour throughout the school is very good and they show very clearly they know what is expected of them. They display excellent manners. For example, reception children remembered to say 'please' when choosing their activities, no matter how excited they were. Parents report that there have been very few instances of inappropriate behaviour or bullying but, when they occur, they are dealt with quickly and sensitively. The school takes

bullying very seriously and has held an effective 'anti-bullying week' and tackled, in assemblies, issues such as name-calling.

7. Assemblies are used well to boost children's self-esteem and allow time for reflection. The school also uses special experiences, such as chicks hatching and caterpillars turning into butterflies, to help children explore sensitive and emotional events. Children's understanding of right and wrong is very good and staff are accomplished at helping them to handle conflict and to consider the needs of others. The good organisation of charitable initiatives is helping the children think through ethical and moral issues. There is a very good range of opportunities to support pupils' social development. They receive appropriate jobs and responsibilities, such as selling poppies for Remembrance Day. The wide range of visits and visitors helps them understand their wider society. The personal and health development lessons are effectively promoting aspects of their social development.
8. Good opportunities are provided for children to understand their own culture. These include local sports initiatives, helped by the community link to Doncaster Rovers. Many theatre groups visit the school and many visits and visitors provide 'hands on' experiences for the children. They learn something of other cultures through charitable initiatives and studying different religions, but they rarely meet people from different cultures and do not have a clear enough understanding of the cultural diversity in Britain today.
9. Attendance has improved dramatically and is now close to the national average. It no longer reflects the table below. To achieve this upturn the school has appointed a support assistant to monitor each child's attendance very carefully. She is working very closely with the welfare officer and other agencies to help families and to ensure contact is made on the first day of their child's absence. The school works very hard to ensure parents are aware of the need for good attendance and punctuality; however, for a few parents, ensuring their child's regular attendance remains difficult.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.5	School data	0.7
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.

Exclusions

10. There have been no exclusions in the past school year.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. Teaching and learning are very effective. The curriculum provides many interesting learning opportunities. Staff care for the children very well and there are strong links with parents and the community.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are very good and assessment of pupils' work is particularly effective.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Writing and ICT are taught particularly well;

- Children's learning is assessed extremely well in the nursery and reception classes and in key subjects in Years 1 and 2;
- Learning support assistants provide excellent support.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 21 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	11	6	1	0	0	0

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

Commentary

11. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection, when it was judged to be good. Teaching across the school is rigorous and effective. Writing is taught particularly well, because staff know the skills children need to become competent. Nursery class children learn letter sounds and forms and the most able reception children are already writing one or two sentences by themselves. In Years 1 and 2, pupils extend their writing very well in other subjects, as well as writing lengthy reports and personal accounts during literacy sessions. A similar level of expertise supports the learning of ICT skills and the children apply these across most subjects of the curriculum. Teaching in mathematics and reading has improved through the introduction of new approaches such as problem solving in mathematics and group reading. A complete revision of reading resources has ensured children are highly motivated and effective learners.
12. The children and teachers have excellent relationships. This means children work extremely hard, resulting in huge satisfaction when new and difficult learning is mastered. Teachers provide challenging tasks and encourage the children to have a go and experiment with different ideas. In mathematics, for example, Year 1 pupils struggled successfully to explain how different subtraction strategies, using a number line or counting back in their heads, represented the same overall method. They are prepared to take risks in their answers because they have confidence that teachers will understand what they are trying to do and listen to their explanations.
13. Assessment strategies are very good overall. They are exceptionally detailed and thorough. The Foundation Stage children are closely monitored through all areas of learning and their development is precisely recorded. The information is used to plan the next stage of learning. Photographs and ongoing notes are used to illustrate how each child copes with new learning and to identify their strengths and weaknesses. This system is excellent. The assessment in Years 1 and 2 of literacy, numeracy, science and ICT is of equal quality. Strategies vary from one subject to another to match the needs within each subject. For example, in mathematics new developments in problem solving are underway and detailed tracking of the children's achievements in this particular aspect, and numeracy in general, are closely linked. All children know what they can do and what they need to learn to reach the next stage. Teachers link these stages to small steps in the national curriculum and monitor progress each half term. They and the children know how fast learning is achieved. These systems work extremely well and have a powerful influence on the pace of progress. In other subjects assessment is good but not yet developed so thoroughly.
14. The learning for pupils with special educational needs is managed very well. Teachers and learning support assistants work closely together, planning and reviewing work to ensure children are learning exactly what is needed next and that their tasks are challenging but manageable. Support assistants observe and record the children's contributions during class lessons and follow this up during group work time. They have an extremely effective impact on the children's learning. The children work well and with confidence. They learn as quickly as they can and are removed from the special educational needs register as soon as possible. Those children with low standards, but who are judged to be learners of average potential, are given specific attention. They are not placed on the special educational needs register but receive strong encouragement and support. These children generally reach average standards by the time they leave Year 2.

The curriculum

Whilst the curriculum is good overall, it is of very good quality in literacy, mathematics, science and ICT and provides exciting and clearly linked learning experiences for the pupils. The other subjects do not yet always provide the same level of excitement. The school provides many valuable opportunities, extending learning through visits and visitors to the school. The accommodation is satisfactory and resources are adequate in most subjects and good for ICT. Provision has improved since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 is very effective;
- Provision for special educational needs is very good;
- There are insufficient occasions for children to apply their mathematical skills in other subjects.

Commentary

15. The nursery and reception children have a very rich, broad and relevant curriculum. These young pupils need many opportunities for practical exploration and this is provided through a wealth of first hand activities they select for themselves. Direct teaching, with challenging tasks, ensures children move forward quickly and successfully. Concerns raised at the last inspection, about reception pupils having insufficient opportunities to learn through play, have been fully resolved and this aspect now contributes very successfully to the overall effective learning. The nursery children have no immediate access to the outdoors but all spend time each day, having been escorted outside, involved in well planned learning tasks.
16. The Year 1 and 2 curriculum for literacy, numeracy, science and ICT is organised and planned very carefully to help the children move forward rapidly. The skills linked to each subject are learned progressively through a range of directly taught and practical activities. Alongside this, there is a very thoughtful new approach to linking subjects together that strengthens overall provision. For example, when children learn about life on an island in geography, they also learn to design and make simple vehicles suitable for the island and may reinforce their knowledge of island life in the role play area. Very good opportunities are provided for the children to use their literacy skills, for example as they learn to compose an island story, inserting digital photographs of themselves as characters. This creates lively, interesting learning opportunities, which contribute to high standards. New reading resources contribute very effectively to improving standards in reading. Resources for other subjects are satisfactory.
17. Provision in ICT has been a focus for school development. Many good opportunities are provided for the children to develop and consolidate their skills. These include the work of a visiting teacher, who has been improving the children's keyboard skills so that they can word process their stories more effectively. New ICT resources are effective and productive.
18. The accommodation has been improved by removing large quantities of outdated resources and the redecoration of many areas. A new library is almost complete and plans to widen corridors and provide shared work spaces are at the planning stage. Governors strongly support these improvements as they enhance the children's time in school.
19. The provision for special educational needs is a significant strength and has improved since the previous inspection. Excellent systems are now in place to identify pupils' needs. Fully trained, experienced support staff provide extremely effective teaching in lessons and through individual and small group work. Individual education plans are very well written and ensure everyone knows what needs to be learned next. The school has a register of gifted

and talented pupils and the curriculum is adapted well to ensure these pupils reach appropriately high standards. The school ensures that all children have every opportunity to be included in all curricular activities.

20. Opportunities for enrichment are good. For example, a recent visit by a local optician resulted in a programme of aid to provide people in Africa with spectacles. Doncaster Rovers Youth Coaching team spent time in school, giving the children a 'taster' session. There are also regular theatre group visits to support different areas of the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

The provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships throughout the school are excellent;
- The school's concern and care for the children is very good;
- There is no formal system of monitoring pupils' personal development but assessment of children's learning is very thorough.

Commentary

21. The school provides very effective care for the children. Staff know pupils very well and meet their needs most effectively. Pupils confidently approach any of the school staff with worries or concerns and relate extremely well to the adults and each other. Child protection is good, with the co-ordinator well trained and experienced to deal with matters that may arise. Health and safety arrangements are very good. The governors and headteacher have recently focused on improving the buildings as a means of improving children's safety and raising their self-esteem.
22. The school has strong systems for assessing and monitoring pupils' academic achievement and these are used very well to plan lessons and set targets. Support staff are deployed very well to help groups and individuals so that all pupils make very good progress. Although personal development is promoted most effectively, it is not monitored consistently across the school, so staff have no ongoing evidence about how well children respond to learning and the life of the school.
23. Parents are very happy with the way children are introduced into the nursery and good procedures are in place for the exchange of information between parents and the school. Children's views are sought, as in decisions made on spending the Harvest Festival money, where each class could choose how they spent their budget from the Oxfam catalogue. A school council is due to begin meeting soon to give the children further say in decision making for the school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents receive clear information and show a very high level of satisfaction with the school;
- Strong links with other schools and colleges enhance learning opportunities;

- Some annual reports to parents give less helpful targets for improvement than others.

Commentary

24. Parents hold the school in very high regard. They say they find the school very approachable and their children enjoy coming. They like the newsletters and are confident the school listens to them. They receive a good range of information through notice boards, induction booklets, home reading diaries and the newsletters, plus other occasional letters so they feel well informed on general day-to-day matters. Whilst the end of year reports meet statutory requirements, they vary considerably in the indication of progress made and in the helpfulness of targets for the future.
25. Parents feel consulted. They have been asked their views on the length of lunchtime and on the usefulness of the family workshops. Their opinions have been taken into account. They are invited to support their children's learning in a variety of ways, including attending family literacy sessions which have proved both popular and useful.
26. The school has many productive community links, which broaden and support the children's learning. Good use is made of lots of visits and visitors to support learning, in religious education for example. The school actively supports many charities to help the local community and further afield. Links with local colleges and other schools effectively provide the staff with new initiatives. The headteacher's and senior staff's links with the 'Primary Leadership Programme' provide resources, funds and sharing of staff expertise. The school is looking to improve the curriculum links with the junior school to help children's transition process.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is led and managed very well. The new headteacher has quickly won the support of staff, children, parents and governors and is guiding the school forward. Other key staff play an effective role and governance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good leadership ensures particularly effective team building;
- The school is improving through self-assessment and strategic planning of a very high order;
- Subject leaders make strong and effective contributions;
- Although new, the governing body is very committed, active and knowledgeable.

Commentary

27. Since her appointment to what was already a good school, the headteacher has worked with staff and governors to accurately evaluate how well the school is doing. Meticulous and strategically planned developments have been identified in many aspects of school life. Specific attention has been given to upgrading the children's learning through improving the curriculum, staff development and accommodation. The headteacher's very strong lead is driven by a clear and steadfast vision, which is supported by all. She has introduced a strong, team approach that seeks and values everyone's contribution to the way the school works. As a result, governors and staff are eager to play a full part in the school's development and parents, who are kept well informed, are happy with the outcomes. The school has very good procedures to ensure that change and development are managed smoothly and effectively. Currently, the school is creating a shared approach to teaching and learning before further developments occur in individual subject policies.

28. The headteacher's view, that 'all staff are leaders and are valuable', is proving highly effective. Co-ordinators recognise they are responsible for improving provision in the school. They work well together and are mutually supportive, referring to each other when discussing their roles. For example, one said 'I worked with the assessment co-ordinator when this tracking approach was introduced because she knows a lot about it.' The co-ordinators strongly influence development across the school and their newly introduced ideas are evident in all classes. Central to this has been the creation of a senior management team. The loyalty, support and sharing of workload that has resulted is a real asset to the school. 'Three heads are better than one' was quoted. Members of the team also take responsibility for the performance and professional development of the teachers and classroom assistants.
29. Although the pupils achieve very well in almost all areas of the curriculum, the school is not complacent and seeks to improve. For example, there is a project to ensure learning develops smoothly between reception and Year 1. An effective opportunity is provided for some Year 1 children to select from a range of integrated activities, as part of a pilot scheme to extend their confidence and help them see how subjects relate to each other.
30. Although many governors are new, they already have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Many visit the school regularly and have meetings with subject leaders, members of the senior management team and the headteacher. Parent governors use their roles effectively to listen to parents' views and concerns, and the teacher governors have very good professional expertise to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of the governing body. These views are shared and discussed at meetings and help prepare for the future. Governors are enthusiastic and supportive but challenge effectively when required. They have recognised the need to shorten the school's lunch break and are carefully taking the school through the correct procedures for change.

Financial information

31. The school budget is controlled and monitored carefully and the school uses the principles of 'best value' to very good effect as part of strategic planning and development. Following the sale of part of the school field, a 'nest egg' has been saved. This is intended to improve accommodation by providing joint working areas for the children and enhancing the provision for the nursery children.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	447,746	Balance from previous year	95,556
Total expenditure	440,940	Balance carried forward to next year	102,362
Expenditure per pupil	3,834		

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation Stage is very good. Children enter nursery with standards that are well below the expected level for their age. In some year groups, standards on entry have been even lower. When they leave reception, children are reaching the expected standards in all the areas of learning and have achieved very well. The teaching in both classes is very good and some teaching is excellent. The children's progress is assessed regularly and the strategies to monitor their development and plan subsequent learning are excellent.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children show a high level of confidence as learners;
- They recognise that the needs of others are important.

Commentary

32. Children are taught very effectively to become independent and confident learners. They make sensible choices about their play and work activities from the stimulating resources and organise themselves as they play. In the nursery, they usually wait their turn for resources but if someone tries to help themselves, acute indignation from other children shows them they have erred and they are quick to make amends. There is good provision for children to talk about their own emotions and listen to the views of others. Standards are generally average by the end of reception and are above average in helping each other, for example in hearing each other's 'key words', offering pats on the back and noting which words still need learning.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in writing are above average in reception;
- Children use language confidently.

Commentary

33. By the time they leave reception children are above the expected standards in writing and use of spoken vocabulary. They are average in reading and below average in the way they organise their speech. This was seen in reception when children were asked what they thought a non-fiction book was about. One replied 'costume', meaning people in uniforms. In the nursery, many children learn to form letters correctly and watch adults write before practising their own work. They read for fun and this supports sessions when books are used more formally to teach reading skills. Very good talking and reading activities and excellent writing opportunities in reception build effectively on play and direct teaching sessions in the nursery. In both classes talk is a high priority and used effectively.

Reception children enthusiastically roared like little tigers to show they were ready to work and screamed for the attention of a fire engine that innocently parked nearby.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children make very good progress in numeracy.

Commentary

34. Children reach the expected goals in numeracy by the time they leave reception. Very good opportunities to sort, arrange and count through play and direct teaching sessions are provided in the nursery. These younger children can count to ten and recognise the numbers. In reception, children extend these skills to a level where they organise numbers and describe their position in sequences. For example, one described 13 as needing two spaces after ten. The teaching is very effective and these skills are taught thoroughly. The children enjoy lessons. Much of their understanding is reinforced through everyday counting sessions when the order of the day, the weather and date are discussed. They speak confidently about numbers and can make simple comparisons to illustrate their talk; for example, 'My dad's a lot bigger than you!'

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good activities extend the children's experiences.

Commentary

35. The nursery children arrive with limited understanding of the world and rapidly expand their insight through play activities and very good direct teaching. The children have ample opportunity to explore and investigate the interesting resources and tasks. Although they have limited access to the outside, they have daily sessions outdoors and are developing a small garden. They are becoming familiar with computers and enjoy using them. The skills and vocabulary they use are still simple, although most of the children construct at the level one would expect when using resources such as train sets. The reception children have very good opportunities to share views and are learning new ideas. They use computers confidently to support and enhance their work. They have visited the fire station, for example, and readily accept that digital photographs of the visit, printed on their writing paper, are a typical way of illustrating their text. Their play is guided towards reinforcing information they have been given and exploring familiar situations. Outdoor learning is planned very carefully and children use the space for tasks such as scientific exploration of forces, through moving large and heavy objects across the yard. Standards are at the expected level by the end of reception.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Best use is made of restricted accommodation to ensure the nursery children have opportunities for active learning.

Commentary

36. Although the nursery is built at a high level above the steeply sloping yard, the children negotiate steps and ramps every day to make use of the yard or field. They have good opportunities to play with large-scale resources and to move energetically. They use the spaces sensibly and are aware of safety aspects, such as avoiding the sharp corners of the buildings. Very good management of the tasks ensures children develop independence during these activities. One small, newly arrived child, for example, failed to grab a hoop from those arranged on the floor. The teacher watched carefully as he stared anxiously at his playing peers. Then he spotted a spare hoop, scuttled to it and joined in the play, having resolved the difficulty for himself. His ability in handling the problem was noted by the teacher as a feature of his personal development. In reception, children are taught precise control of resources such as pencils, paintbrushes and the computer keyboard. They show skill in their fine control.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Artwork is of a high standard.

Commentary

37. In both classes, the children produce drawings and painting that are individual and skilled. In the nursery, pictures of winter showing robins, penguins and bare landscapes are given detailed attention. Using a variety of resources the children have created robins and penguins with perky beaks and knowing eyes. They are birds with attitude. Their landscapes are detailed and thoughtful. Made from torn paper, pastels and paint blown through straws, they are wintry and unusual. In reception, similar subjects are treated with increased sophistication. Very careful drawings of trees have been coated with glue and glitter to indicate frost. The same technique, applied to illustrations of science work on light, shows how their learning is consolidated. The standards in both classes are above average. When using their imagination in play situations the children's standards are below average. They find it difficult to adopt pretend roles outside their familiar home and family experiences. Very good teaching ensures that resources and settings are provided and modelled to help children become more creative when they pretend to be someone else.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 1

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good** and the children achieve very well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- English is taught very well throughout the school;
- Assessment systems are excellent;
- There are very good opportunities for children to use their literacy skills across the curriculum.

Commentary

38. Most pupils reach above average standards at the age of 7. The school's performance in national tests shows that writing results are the strongest aspect. Standards in the current Year 2 are above average in spelling, speaking, listening and writing and are average in reading. In Year 1, they are above average in all aspects of literacy. All the children achieve very well during their time in school and Year 2 have come from a very low starting point according to assessments made when they started in the nursery. Standards in reading have improved during the past year, as up-to-date resources have been purchased and the children are now taught in small groups, each one following or reading the text as the staff support them. In the past, standards in reading lagged well behind writing; this is now being remedied. Although the standards are not yet parallel, they are considerably closer.
39. All staff encourage children to ask and answer questions confidently and many very good opportunities are provided to practise these skills. Through tasks that integrate several subjects, the skills of discussion and explanation are taught. For example, each week a visiting teacher sets a task to be completed by small groups of Year 2 children. The time scale is short and children must be ready to explain their work at morning assembly. They learn to improve their skills of meeting deadlines and making a presentation. The whole school takes part in asking questions about each task. Opportunities like this ensure the achievement of high standards.
40. Children are enthusiastic about writing and don't find it a 'chore'. They have developed very good attitudes to their work. Their written work demonstrates this well and there is an enormous amount spanning all subjects. They have a very good understanding of letter sounds. When asked to write, the children begin quickly. They confidently 'have a go' at unfamiliar words and their attempts are always plausible. They read through their work to check it makes sense. For example, when constructing a story plan pictures were drawn quickly, the text was written underneath and checked for meaning by reading it aloud to a partner. The task was completed rapidly and without fuss.
41. Teaching is consistently very good and during the inspection one lesson was excellent. Tasks are well matched to the children's needs and assessment systems are excellent. Precise targets are set and progress towards them is noted frequently. Marking is helpful to the children; it tells them how they are doing and what to do next to improve. In lessons, there is a real buzz of excitement from adults and children. Staff have received training to update their skill in teaching reading and this has helped raise standards. The school places great importance on developing very independent learners and children are fully involved in charting their own progress. Pupils with special educational needs receive excellent support from the classroom assistants; consequently, they make good progress.
42. The co-ordinator is very effective. Her meticulous and effective monitoring ensures that achievement is consistently high. The school has identified the need to change the handwriting policy to introduce joined up writing earlier and to ensure that older and more able pupils achieve even higher standards.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

43. There are very good opportunities for children to develop their literacy skills across the curriculum. Speaking and listening experiences are planned across all subjects; reading from websites as part of their geography lessons allows children to apply their skills; a wide range of writing opportunities is on offer for children to record their work in, for example, science and design and technology.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Number and calculating skills are taught very effectively;
- Targets for pupils' improvement are extremely clear and effective;
- Mathematics is not used enough in other subjects.

Commentary

44. The national test results, over the past few years, show that Year 2 pupils reach standards that are average or better when compared to pupils nationally. When compared to pupils in similar schools, their standards are above average. This is a picture of pupils' very good achievement when compared to their well below average standards on entry to the nursery. This year's group is not on course to reach the same heights as last year because there are fewer higher attaining pupils than usual; when they started in nursery, only a quarter of the pupils reached average standards.
45. There are many very good features in the teaching of mathematics. The introduction of numeracy problems has significantly improved pupils' rapid and accurate recall of number facts and quickened their calculating skills. Pupils are encouraged to try different ways of reaching answers and to explain to the class how they have done it. In Year 1, for example, they described how to subtract from numbers up to 20 by using a number line. They were brought, through skilful teaching, to recognise the similarity between this strategy and counting back in their heads using their fingers to help them. Explaining what they had done enabled the 'penny to drop'. Their confidence and enjoyment ensures enthusiastic participation.
46. In Year 2, new learning of telling the time using traditional and digital clocks was taught effectively, through very good opportunities for repetition and practice, until all children understood. During the lesson, pupils were seen to make connections between counting in fives and identifying the position of the minute hand. They were given every opportunity to explain and share their findings within small groups and the whole class. When misunderstandings occur, these are openly discussed and children's reasoning is checked and rechecked by teachers to ensure their learning is secure.
47. Through very good teaching the school is developing the pupils' ability to recognise their own areas for improvement. Each child has clear numeracy targets that are often linked to problem solving tasks. Photographs of the children are grouped around the targets and they attach a sticker when they achieve the target. They then move quickly forward to a new target. Teachers monitor the rate of progress against national curriculum levels and ensure progress is fast enough. This is an excellent and extremely productive system that uses assessment to track and speed progress, then plan new tasks. The children have an increasing understanding of what they need to learn next and recognise how well they are doing.
48. The new co-ordinator leads well. She has good subject knowledge and a clear view of what needs to be done. She works closely with the assessment co-ordinator to monitor the new tracking strategies. The improvements in problem solving are already improving standards.

Mathematics across the curriculum

49. Opportunities for pupils to use their mathematics skills in other subjects are insufficient. Graphs and charts rarely illustrate their results from investigations in science or geography and mathematical problem solving is not developed in design and technology. Links with ICT are not strong enough; for example, pupils do not use computers sufficiently when they work with numerical data.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**. Standards are at the expected level for pupils' knowledge and understanding of the subject and above average for their skills of investigation.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good use is made of practical investigations to consolidate concepts and understanding;
- Teachers' very good intervention and questioning skills help pupils make rapid progress;
- The use of assessment is exceptionally good for planning and evaluating learning;
- The subject is led very well.

Commentary

50. Pupils achieve very well and this is reflected in the 2004 teacher assessments for pupils in their national tests. All the children reached the average Level 2 and the higher attaining children achieved particularly well.
51. Teaching is very good. A consistently good knowledge of the subject, an emphasis on practical activities and the development of investigative skills and independent working is common to all teachers. The pupils are also supported extremely well by the classroom assistants, who assist learning by noting pupils' contributions to oral sessions and who take responsibility for managing groups. They intervene most effectively to support individual pupils. In particular, pupils with special educational needs make very good progress because of the high quality of this approach.
52. A particular feature of the teaching is the very skilful intervention by teachers to develop the children's knowledge and understanding. The children make rapid progress during lessons because of this. For example, during a Year 2 lesson on the changes that occur to some materials when heated, the pupils showed they could explain clearly what was happening, using appropriate scientific language. They were less sure about making a prediction of what might happen. The teacher spotted this and drew the class together to develop their thinking by skilful questions. She asked 'What is happening to the clay since we started using it? Is it still squashy? Is it changing colour? You have made a bowl. Are bowls that we use like yours?' By the end of the lesson the pupils could complete a table to illustrate a material, making a prediction about the effects of heat and comparing this with an outcome. Whilst the pupils in a Year 1 class showed clearly that they could do and understand the content of the lesson, they were less secure when recording their findings. The teacher immediately spotted this and noted an alternative recording strategy that would be used next time. ICT is used very well for pupils to record their findings, to develop skills such as placing materials into different sets and for teachers to instruct, using a computer-linked class board.

53. The subject is led and managed very well and the co-ordinator is currently trying an innovative approach for integrating subjects. Her class, when investigating electric circuits, designed and made lighting for a model puppet theatre they had constructed in design and technology. The arrangements for assessment are extremely thorough and purposeful and contribute well to pupils' progress. However, the current practice of storing the pupils' work in loose packets, along with work from other subjects, does not help the pupils have a clear view of what they have learned or the progress they have made. In the past, the pupils usually used worksheets to record their findings. This prevented them from learning to present their findings in their own way. This practice is already changing, but some of the work is still over-controlled by the continued use of worksheets.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is vibrant and challenging, leading to high standards;
- The pupils' work is assessed very well and they have a clear view of their own learning;
- The smooth transition between the Foundation Stage and Year 1 is very good.

Commentary

54. Standards are well above average and pupils make very good progress, including those with special educational needs. The school has recently made great strides in improving the provision of hardware and software resources, resulting in children having very good access to computers both in the classrooms and the suite. These are used 'up to the hilt' and groups can be found using ICT to record their work in science, literacy, history and geography in most lessons.
55. The teachers have a very good grasp of the subject and provide children with opportunities to use ICT creatively as a tool. They also use it to learn and practise specific skills, such as some Year 1 children creating mathematical sentences, for example 5 add 3 makes 8, or by using an interactive whiteboard to instruct and inform. The school has created a PowerPoint presentation to show children features of a synagogue for their religious education studies.
56. The subject is led very well. New hardware and software have been introduced very effectively and the school has clear guidance on the use of powerful applications. Assessment procedures are outstanding, linking pupils' progress in skills, knowledge and understanding, attainment, achievement, lesson evaluation, pupil self-assessment and exemplification of standards. This enables children to identify what they need to learn next and to make rapid progress.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

57. The pupils are provided with very good opportunities to use ICT in exciting and relevant activities across subjects and they respond very well to these challenges. For example, Year 1 and 2 pupils have been learning to program robots to move between places on a large map of an island they are studying in geography. Year 1 pupils have drawn intricate Mendhi hand patterns using an art program as part of their studies on Sikhism and Divali. In Year 1 science, 4 pupils have used a text and graphics program to place objects made out of different materials into different sets.

HUMANITIES

58. Inspectors saw two lessons in humanities, both in geography. No lessons were seen in **history** or **religious education** so no judgement on overall provision can be made in these subjects. However, pupils' work was scrutinised and discussions were held with staff and children.
59. In history, the children have learned about significant historical figures, such as Dr Barnardo and Guy Fawkes. They know what caused the Fire of London and retell the main events. A recent visit by local fire fighters allowed them to consider how fire fighting has changed over time. Recorded work shows that children know the significance of symbols, such as wearing a poppy on Remembrance Day. There are good opportunities for the children to use their literacy skills in history. Written work is interesting, presented well and indicates they enjoy their lessons. The children's completed work shows that standards are in line with those expected nationally.
60. Standards in religious education are in line with the locally agreed syllabus and, in some aspects, are above those expected for 7-year-olds. The pupils make good progress. Knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith and other faiths are introduced well.
61. Religious education is linked most productively to other subjects. For example, some wonderful posters created in ICT supported the collection of glasses for charity. When studying Sikhism, the pupils used drama and role play to help their knowledge and understanding of the story of Rama and Sita. In art and design and ICT, they designed Mendhi hand patterns and Rangoli floor designs. Although religious artefacts are used well, an aspect of their studies that is underdeveloped is the lack of opportunity to experience first hand people and places of worship from other faiths.
62. Pupils are beginning to recognise that religion has a language of its own through the writing of prayers, poems and recounts. The children benefit from a visit to the local church, which extends their learning about places of worship, religious artefacts and how faith and belief influence people's lives. By the end of Year 2, the children are beginning to appreciate that events of importance to a belief underpin celebrations.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good** and children reach above average standards.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Skills are taught very effectively;
- Geography is linked particularly well to several other subjects but does not support mathematics.

Commentary

63. The school has improved teaching and learning in geography since the last inspection. Good links are made with other subjects, such as design and technology and ICT. Very good opportunities are provided for children to practise their literacy skills but mathematics is not used well enough to extend the children's learning. In Year 1, the children are developing a good understanding of other localities. They know that Antarctica is a cold place and it is a long way to where polar bears live. In Year 2, the children make comparisons between homes in Mexborough and Africa. They know that people take a plane to get to Australia but can go by train to places like Paris.
64. Learning is made interesting. In both lessons seen, the teaching was very good. Children are excited by their work and are highly motivated. ICT was used well in both lessons and

this accelerated the children's progress. The teachers link earlier learning well. This helps the children to remember and use their skills more effectively. The methods used extend the learning of higher attaining children and provide good support for those with special educational needs.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

65. Inspectors saw no full lessons in **art and design, design and technology, music** or **physical education** and no judgement on overall provision can be made in these subjects.
66. In art and design, the quality of displays and the variety of techniques used in pupils' work show they reach above average standards in Year 1 and average standards in Year 2. The range of work is relevant to the subject. In Year 1, the interesting materials used in their collages, of snowmen for example, show a thoughtful use of layered tissue paper to create individual pieces of work. Their drawings of winter trees are detailed and show an early appreciation of perspective in the way overlapping branches are drawn. In Year 2, paintings are more ordinary and some of the work covered presented restrictions of size and expression when children designed small tiles. The school has already begun to review the curriculum and reorganise the content to improve provision.
67. The standards in design and technology are above the level expected for Years 1 and 2. The school is effectively linking the learning with several other subjects. In Year 1, for example, work in puppet making linked with science when the children made a theatre with a lighting circuit. They used ICT art work to make scenery and dramatised their production in literacy lessons. The standard they reach is above average. The high quality materials used for the puppets inspired the children to make a delightful range of little characters. For example, an angel has been given a most appealing face through the use of moving eyes enhanced by wondrous eyelashes.
68. Design and technology is used by the school for some exciting and innovative work to develop problem solving skills, oracy and teamwork. A small group of Year 2 children used very large-scale construction materials to build a vehicle for travelling over difficult terrain. The spiky-wheeled tractor they designed and produced was shown to all the children in assembly, and the team of constructors answered questions from their very interested audience. The group told how useful it had been to work as a team, to share ideas and to help each other correct mistakes.
69. The school has recently held a very well attended evening for parents to try out and explore the learning that takes place in design and technology. Parental comments show how much this evening was valued and appreciated.
70. Planning shows that all aspects of the music curriculum are taught and recorded music is used to create a strong sense of atmosphere in assemblies. The children have the opportunity to hear live performances when the local education authority ensembles perform. The new co-ordinator provides satisfactory support and is preparing to review the subject, she recognises that as teachers are not specialists in the subject they will need considerable support and guidance. The children sing enthusiastically and generally tunefully. Their standards are in line with those expected nationally.
71. In physical education, teachers' planning shows the curriculum breadth is appropriate and children have access to physical education for a satisfactory time each week. The curriculum is supported well by after school activities that are available to the Year 1 and 2 children. Energetic and well managed sessions extend and improve the children's sports skills and encourage team building.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

72. The school has made the provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship (PSHCE) a strong focus and integral part of the children's day. This ensures pupils make very good progress towards becoming confident, well rounded individuals from the time they enter the nursery. A very strong feature is the emphasis placed on raising children's awareness of the needs of others through, for example, charitable initiatives. Their self-esteem is raised as they see that they can make a difference, whether through buying chickens and goats from the Oxfam catalogue or collecting old spectacles to be sent to Africa by 'Global Eye'. The school is making good use of visits and visitors to improve the quality and relevance of the learning and the visit of an optician to talk both about their health and the 'Global Eye' project particularly extended their learning. The 'Safe Team' have visited the children from the Health and Education Unit to make the learning more interesting and accessible.
73. The new PSHCE co-ordinator is effective. She has ensured that all aspects are being taught and is introducing structures to ensure children build on existing skills and knowledge appropriately. However, there is no whole school assessment of pupil's progress in PSHCE. The school is working towards national 'Healthy Schools' status with healthy snacks available at break time and the cook providing very high quality lunches. The school is also encouraging more active playtimes, so that the children develop good habits of physical activity for life.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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