

INSPECTION REPORT

NORTH TOWN COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Taunton

LEA area: Somerset

Unique reference number: 123708

Headteacher: Mrs J Venning

Lead inspector: Mr G Wallace

Dates of inspection: 11th – 14th October 2004

Inspection number: 267405

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 -11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	402
School address:	Staplegrove Road Taunton Somerset
Postcode:	TA1 1DF
Telephone number:	01823 284676
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs P Crowe
Date of previous inspection:	7 th June 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

North Town primary school, built in 1907, is located immediately to the north of the commercial part of the town centre of Taunton. Private housing and some small workshops/offices enclose the site. The catchment area is very wide, covering much of Taunton. The school houses a before- and after-school care facility known as 'Splodge'. The school has a Healthy Eating award and Investors in People status.

There are two classes in each year group and a total of 402 pupils. The school is bigger than the average for primary schools nationally. There are 192 girls and 210 boys. The socio-economic backgrounds of pupils at the school vary considerably, but overall are just below average and the attainment of pupils on entry to school is at the lower end of the band of average attainment for children of their age. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is nearly 15 per cent, which is below average.

Nearly all pupils are from a white British heritage background. There are no pupils for whom English is an additional language. There are 40 pupils with identified special educational needs which, at 10 per cent, is below the national average. Two pupils have Statements of special educational need, which is below the national average.

The school is popular and oversubscribed. The school demographic profile is at odds with the general profile of Taunton in that the level of over-subscription to the school is increasing whilst there are falling rolls in Taunton. As a consequence, when children leave at any time during their primary school years, for example as a result of moving home, the remaining place in the school is taken quickly. Overall the mobility of pupils is close to the national average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
10010	George Wallace	Lead inspector	Geography, physical education, personal, social and health education, citizenship
12289	Susan Burgess	Lay inspector	
24052	Trevor Taylor	Team inspector	Mathematics, art, history, design and technology
22398	Lynne Wright	Team inspector	Foundation Stage, science, ICT, music
19994	Lys Bradley	Team inspector	English, religious education, special educational needs

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

North Town Primary is a satisfactory school with many strengths. It is an increasingly effective school with a caring and hugely supportive approach to enriching pupils' experiences at school. Pupils achieve well in the Foundation Stage and satisfactorily throughout the rest of the school. Standards are average by the time pupils leave school. Teaching is satisfactory. Leadership overall is good and management satisfactory. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Very good leadership and management of the headteacher¹ who has made effective progress since the beginning of the autumn term.
- Good leadership and support from the governing body.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- Standards in information and communications technology (ICT) and religious education by the end of Key Stage 2 are too low. Pupils' numeracy and ICT skills are not developed sufficiently in other subjects.
- The school has a strong positive ethos and pupils' personal and social development is very strong. Pupils enjoy coming to school.
- Subject leadership is not good enough because there is no consistent monitoring of standards in subjects to evaluate whether they are high enough.
- Provision for pupils in the Foundation Stage is good.
- The school's support from and links with parents, the community and other schools are very good.
- The welfare, care and safety of pupils are very strong features of the school and provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship is very good.
- Assessment information is not used well enough to ensure that standards are as high as they could be.

Overall, the school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Comparison with findings from the last inspection show that improvements have occurred in the standards of pupils' writing and in ICT at Key Stage 1. Significant improvement in the effectiveness of the governing body has been made, as well as all subjects now having detailed and useful schemes of work. There are areas in which little or no improvement has occurred.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Standards of achievement are **satisfactory**. In the two reception classes, which make up the Foundation Stage, children get a good start to their schooling. They establish good habits and patterns of learning and by the end of the year reach standards expected for their age. Achievement in the Foundation Stage is good.

Year 6 results

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools	
	2002	2003	2004	2004	2003
English	A	D	B	B	D
mathematics	C	C	D	D	C
science	A	B	C	B	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 to the Year 6 pupils (2004) when they took their tests at the end of Year 2.

¹ The headteacher is new and started at the beginning of the autumn term 2004.

The national test results show that standards in English dropped in 2003 and were below the national average and below average compared with the pupils' prior attainment. Both the unvalidated 2004 test results and inspection findings show improvement. Inspection findings show that standards are average for pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 with strengths in reading and, although there are broadly satisfactory standards in writing across the school, this represents underachievement in Years 3 to 6.

In mathematics standards as shown by the 2004 national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 are below average, although they are average in Key Stage 1. When test results are compared with similar schools, standards are above average at Key Stage 1, but below average at the end of Key Stage 2. Inspection findings show standards to be above average in Year 2 and average in Year 6. Achievement by pupils is good in Key Stage 1 but, although it is satisfactory in Key Stage 2, it is lower than expected.

The national test results show that standards in science improved significantly in the years after the last inspection and, although declining in recent years, the results for 2004 show average standards by the end of Year 6. Compared with similar schools, however, the standards are average at the end of Year 2 and above average by the end of Year 6. Inspection findings reveal standards to be average at both key stages. Achievement of pupils at the end of Year 6 overall is satisfactory.

Standards in other subjects are generally average across the school. They are below average in ICT and religious education by the end of Year 6 and pupils are underachieving in these subjects.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **very good**. Pupils' personal development is very good. Their behaviour is very good, as are their relationships with others throughout the school. Pupils are polite, enthusiastic, keen to please, enjoy learning and therefore are willing to work hard and take part in lessons. Pupils' self-esteem is high, they feel valued and staff work hard to ensure that they all feel included. Overall attendance is good and punctuality is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **satisfactory**. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good. Throughout Years 1 and 2 teaching seen was largely good with significant strengths in Year 2. In Years 3 to 6, teaching is sound overall, although the quality varies between satisfactory and very good, with the best teaching in Year 6. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection.

Assessment procedures are good in the Foundation Stage and satisfactory elsewhere in the school, but there is no consistency in the way teachers use their assessment findings to raise standards. The curriculum is satisfactory and enriched by a good range of additional activities.

The welfare and care of pupils are very good. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported and all pupils are effectively included in the many activities throughout the school. The school has been effective in settling children who have had difficult experiences elsewhere.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good** overall. Governance is **good**. The leadership of the headteacher is **very good**, while other key staff provide satisfactory leadership overall. Management is satisfactory.

The new headteacher provides very good leadership. She is astute and very clear about the school's priorities and has already made much progress since the beginning of the autumn term. Her focus is ensuring that the right things are done to raise pupils' achievements and overall standards. The senior leadership team has been strengthened by the inclusion of the special educational needs leader who provides very good leadership.

Overall, subject leadership and management are satisfactory although there are some areas of strength and an area of weakness, which is the use of evaluative skills so subject leaders acquire knowledge of how high standards are in their subjects and whether these are high enough. For the most part subject leaders are conscientious and show themselves to be both keen and confident in assuming greater responsibility in the pursuit of raising standards. Governors have a strong commitment to the school. They know the school well and recognise their own strengths and weaknesses through a well-constructed improvement plan.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The outcomes of parents' comments from the pre-inspection meeting and the questionnaire revealed an almost unanimous level of support for the school. There are very good links between the school, parents and the local community. Pupils greatly benefit from this involvement. Links with other schools are good. Parents and children like their school and are supportive of the work that is done. Although many families live at some distance from the school, the majority of parents are fully involved with their children's education and provide strong support, for example with homework and enthusiasm for school activities.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- raise standards in ICT and religious education in Key Stage 2 and standards in numeracy and ICT across the curriculum;
- improve the quality of the assessment systems and the way the information is used;
- improve the quality of the evaluative skills of subject leaders.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, and subjects

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall, although good in the Foundation Stage. Standards by the end of Year 6 are average in English, mathematics and science.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement in the Foundation Stage is good.
- Standards in reading, especially in Key Stage 1, are above average.
- Standards in ICT and religious education are below expectations by the end of Year 6.
- The trend of improvement is upwards and mirrors the national picture, but overall standards should be higher.
- Pupils' numeracy and ICT skills are not developed well enough across the curriculum.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well.

Commentary

Foundation Stage

1. Children's attainment on entry to school spans the full range but is at the lower end of the average band. The children make a good start at school and make good progress so that by the end of their reception year nearly all pupils have attained the early learning goals in all the areas of learning. All children are very well supported and as a consequence, teachers identify children with special educational needs at an early stage. They are then given very good support from teachers and teaching assistants which helps them to achieve very well.

Key Stage 1

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2003 and 2004

Standards in:	School results 2003	National results 2003	School results 2004	National results 2004
reading	15.8 (16.5)	15.7 (15.8)	16.9	15.8
writing	13.9 (15.0)	14.6 (14.4)	14.6	14.6
mathematics	16.9 (17.3)	16.3 (16.5)	16.2	16.2

There were 55 pupils in the year group. Figures above in brackets are for the previous year.

2. In **English**, the 2003 National Curriculum tests show that standards in Year 2 dipped. The results were below the national average in writing but average in reading. Compared with similar schools², the results were well below average. The unvalidated³ results for 2004 indicate that standards have improved. Year 2 pupils reached above average standards in reading, but below average standards in writing. The number of Year 2 pupils attaining the higher levels⁴ in reading in the 2004 tests is well above average. Inspection findings show that standards are in line with national expectations by the end of Year 2 and that standards are higher in reading than writing across the school, the same as they were previously. A significant number of pupils read fluently and with understanding. The school has made

² The comparison with similar schools is based on all schools that have a proportion of pupils receiving free school meals similar to that for North Town Primary School.

³ Whilst nearly all schools know their own results, this is not the case for some schools that have appealed against some results. Therefore there is not a completely accurate national picture as yet. Hence it has not yet been possible to validate the school results against other schools and similar schools nationally.

⁴ The National Curriculum has been written on the basis that pupils are, by the end of Key Stage 1 when pupils are age 7, expected to reach Level 2. If a pupil is attaining Level 3 then he or she is reaching standards above that expected for a child of his or her age.

satisfactory progress since the last inspection and this improvement is mainly due to the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy. Pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2.

3. In the 2003 national tests for **mathematics** standards in Year 2 were above the national average, but below average when compared with similar schools. Inspection findings and the 2004 unvalidated national test results compared with similar schools show above average standards in Key Stage 1. Achievement is largely good.
4. In **science**, the end of Year 2 teacher assessments in 2003 showed that standards were below the national average overall, but well above average at the higher Level 3. The assessments for 2004, yet to be validated, show an improvement in standards. Inspection findings show that standards overall have improved because of the topic-based approach which ensures that each aspect of science is given similar weight. Standards are average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory.
5. Standards in all other subjects inspected are average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall.

Key Stage 2

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results 2003	National results 2003	School results 2004	National results 2004
English	26.0 (28.7)	26.8 (27.0)	27.8	26.9
mathematics	27.0 (27.3)	26.8 (26.7)	26.3	27.0
science	30.0 (30.7)	28.6 (28.3)	29.3	28.6

There were 66 pupils in the year group. Figures above in brackets are for the previous year.

6. In **English**, the 2003 National Curriculum tests show that standards in Year 6 dipped. Results were below the national average and below average compared with similar schools. The results for 2004 indicate that standards in Year 6 have improved, with pupils reaching standards that are above average compared with all schools and similar schools and also above average for those reaching the higher levels⁵. Inspection findings are that standards are in line with national expectations at the end of Year 6 and that standards remain higher in reading than writing across the school. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 are currently achieving satisfactorily in all areas of English; however, this represents underachievement in writing, especially for the more able pupils. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection.
7. In the 2003 national tests for **mathematics** standards in Year 6 were in line with the national average and also average when compared with similar schools⁶. The 2004 results are below average. Inspection findings show that standards are average in Key Stage 2. However, whilst achievement is broadly satisfactory in recent years, there has been a steady and consistent decline in standards.
8. The **science** test results for 2003 showed standards to be above the national average at Year 6. Results were well above average when compared with similar schools. The unvalidated tests for 2004 show a slight drop so that results match the national average, but remain above average at the higher Level 5. Inspection findings show standards to be as expected for their age and pupils' achievement to be satisfactory.

⁵ The National Curriculum has been written on the basis that pupils are, by the end of Key Stage 2 when pupils are age 11, expected to reach Level 4. If a pupil is attaining Level 5 then he or she is reaching standards above that expected for a child of his or her age.

⁶ The comparison with similar schools is based on all schools whose pupils attained similar results to those of these Year 6 pupils when they took tests at the end of Year 2.

9. Pupils with special educational needs in all year groups are very well supported by teachers and teaching assistants and as such their achievement is very good. Boys and girls currently make similar progress.
10. Standards in ICT are below average by Year 6. Although pupils' achievement is now satisfactory, there are gaps in their learning. Standards are improving. In religious education standards are unsatisfactory by Year 6 and pupils do not achieve well enough. Standards in other subjects inspected are average and achievement is satisfactory.
11. Standards are improving at a rate similar to the national trend.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are **very good**. Attendance is **good** and punctuality is **satisfactory**. Provision for pupils' personal development, including all aspects of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have very positive attitudes to their work and to school in general.
- Very good behaviour enriches all aspects of school life.
- The school's use of music supports very good provision for spiritual development.
- The school has good procedures for monitoring attendance and punctuality.
- A small minority of pupils are regularly late for school.

Commentary

12. Pupils' attitudes to learning, and to school in general, are very good. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Ninety nine per cent of the parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire said that their children like coming to school and this was confirmed when inspectors talked to pupils before and during the inspection. In general, pupils are interested in their work and try hard to complete what they have been asked to do. Their response is very positive and, on occasion, excellent in lessons where teachers inspire pupils' interest and enthusiasm.
13. Pupils are proud of their school, polite and confident with adults and are happy to talk about their work and their involvement in school life. Pupils willingly undertake responsibilities offered to them, such as being prefects, monitors and playground buddies. The school council, made up of representatives from Years 3 to 6, provides an effective means for pupils' views to be taken into account.
14. Behaviour in class, in assemblies, at lunchtime and around the school is very good. Pupils generally get on well together and are confident that the school deals well with occasional incidents of bullying or unacceptable behaviour. Staff work effectively as a team to provide good role models and bring out the best in pupils. All adults consistently expect pupils to respect a clear code of conduct and show consideration for others. As a result, pupils have a clear idea of right and wrong and of how they are expected to behave. There were no exclusions last year, which represents an improvement since the year preceding the last inspection (1998).
15. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The school uses music to very good effect to encourage opportunities for reflection, a sense of well-being and an appreciation of different musical styles and origins. Music welcomes pupils into school in the mornings, provides a pleasing background to the many activities in the library area throughout the day, is used effectively when pupils attend assemblies and creates a motivating atmosphere in some lessons. Because of the provision made in aspects of personal and social education, 'circle time' and assemblies, pupils reflect on ideas and principles that may be new

to them and appreciate the positive aspects of their own lives. Pupils are encouraged to celebrate the efforts, achievements and qualities of others and to put forward their own ideas with confidence. Assemblies are very good and contribute strongly to pupils' spiritual development.

16. Pupils have a good understanding of honesty and fairness and they are invited to consider the consequences of their actions. A whole-school policy of positive behaviour management ensures that rules are workable and that rewards and sanctions are appropriate. Pupils actively support a range of charities and consider others less fortunate than themselves. Pupils' awareness of their own and other cultures is enhanced effectively by theatre groups and other visitors as well as by staff feedback to pupils on their professional visits to Ghana and Finland. The school makes good use of its location in an interesting area and arranges educational trips to a very good range of destinations such as Bristol, the Monmouth rebellion battlefield, local churches and museums.

Attendance

17. Attendance is good and slightly above the national average. The school has very efficient procedures in place to monitor and promote good attendance, including a rigorous approach to the authorisation of holidays taken in term time. Most pupils arrive in good time for school but a few pupils are regularly late, disrupting the first lesson of the day.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	5.6	School data:	0.1
National data:	5.4	National data:	0.4

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year (2003)

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is **satisfactory**. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The curriculum is satisfactory, with good opportunities for enrichment. Accommodation and resources are good. Pupils are very well cared for and given good support and guidance. Links with parents and the community are very good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **satisfactory**. Assessment is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is consistently good in the Foundation Stage and in Years 2 and 6.
- Inclusion and equality of opportunity for pupils are very strong hallmarks of the school.
- Assessment information and associated systems are not consistent throughout the school and have too little impact on planning and raising standards.
- Recent analysis of national curriculum test data is being used effectively to set targets for pupils in English and mathematics.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and concentration in lessons, but planning to take account of pupils' differing abilities and the quality of marking are too inconsistent.
- Ongoing assessment is used well in the Foundation Stage to improve standards.
- In some classes learning is particularly effective where pupils are asked to evaluate their own and others' work.

Commentary

18. Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage are good. In Key Stage 1 teaching and learning are largely good, with particular strengths in Year 2. They are satisfactory in Key Stage 2 with particular strengths in some year groups, especially Year 6. Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection. Assessment procedures are good in the Foundation Stage.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 51 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0 (0%)	10 (20%)	22 (43%)	19 (37%)	0	0	0

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

19. Teachers know their pupils very well and pupils respond positively. Relationships between teachers and pupils throughout the school are very good so that lessons start promptly and with a brisk pace. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive and good teaching both capitalises on and develops this very well. Thus, some lessons maintain the crispness of their start and move forward with a strong pace and fervour so that the interaction between pupils, and between pupils and their teacher, reveals a genuine love for learning. However, other lessons, whilst satisfactory, fall short of such concentrated levels of learning. For example, in one lesson, the teacher used a good resource which sparked the imagination of pupils to work quickly and use drafting books to record a wide range of relevant ideas, but they had no time for their ideas to be used to encourage them to expand or explain their thoughts.
20. In all lessons teachers make it very clear to pupils what the purpose of the lesson is and therefore what they are expected to know and understand by the close of the lesson. Teachers use time targets effectively to focus pupils' learning to maintain interest, motivation and an urgency to complete the tasks successfully. Teachers mostly have high expectations but there is a variation in the quality of planning which reveals differences in what pupils are expected, and are able, to achieve. For example, in a very good Key Stage 1 English lesson where the initial resource caught the imagination of pupils, activities matched pupils' needs extremely well. The teacher provided good challenging tasks for pupils of different abilities. In satisfactory lessons the pace sometimes drops and learning is not as good as it could be. Talking partners are used well in some lessons to develop speaking and listening skills, but this practice is not consistent in all classes.
21. Where teaching is very good, teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to build on pupils' ideas and to manage uncertainty amongst pupils. It also allows for deeper exploration of topics by drawing out points made by pupils and then effectively extending their thinking through good questioning. Some teachers are very good at matching work closely to the learning needs of different pupils. In some lessons varied approaches to questioning pupils in particular really pushed the most able to use language very specifically in their explanation. In other very good lessons there was recognition by the teacher that higher ability pupils need not do the foundation task, therefore successfully moving such pupils straight into their core task.
22. Strong planning is evident in some classes, which includes very clear preparation of tasks for pupils with special educational needs, with teachers taking good account of the pupils' individual education plans. Teaching assistants work very well in partnership with teachers. The quality of their work strongly enhances pupils' learning, particularly those with special educational needs.
23. In the Foundation Stage, assessment is carried out systematically and the information is used well to plan work which meets the needs of individual children. In Years 1 to 6, inconsistency between the different assessment methods and marking used by individual teachers, together

with significant differences in the recording of progress and the way the information is used to plan lessons, is not sufficiently effective in raising standards.

24. The assessment⁷ co-ordinators' recent good analysis of the end of Year 2 and Year 6 national test results and non-statutory tests in English and mathematics has resulted in individual targets being set for all pupils. The teachers have not yet begun to regularly assess pupils' progress or use the data gained to guide their planning and practice to ensure the pupils will achieve their end of year targets. The standard of marking does not always help pupils to improve their work, although the recently introduced good marking policy has already had a positive impact on the quality of marking. In some very good lessons it was observed that marking was effective in promoting pupils' next steps in their learning.

The curriculum

The school provides a **satisfactory** curriculum which is enhanced by a **good** range of additional activities. Accommodation is **good** and resources are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs.
- Pupils' personal, social and health education is supported very well.
- All pupils are given very good access to the curriculum.
- There are not enough planned opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy and ICT skills in other curriculum subjects.
- There is a good range of out of school clubs.
- The good central library area displays books and artefacts well to stimulate pupils' learning.
- The time allocation for religious education in Years 3 to 6 is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

25. The school fulfils the statutory requirements by teaching all National Curriculum subjects and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. The school's time allocation for religious education is only sufficient when combined with time allocated for personal, social and health education, but does not allow sufficient time for pupils to reflect on their learning and produce extended pieces of writing. Pupils' literacy skills are developed satisfactorily in other subjects but teachers' planning for pupils to consolidate and develop their mathematical and ICT skills in other subjects is unsatisfactory. The school is addressing the weaknesses in ICT particularly through very recent improvements in ICT resources. The school's very good programme for pupils' personal, social and health education helps them to make strong relationships and learn how to maintain a healthy lifestyle. The personal, social and health education programme also helps them to develop their awareness of their responsibilities in the wider world. There are effective arrangements for sex and relationships education and for raising pupils' awareness of drugs misuse.
26. The school's commitment to providing pupils with equal opportunities for their all-round development is very good. A wide range of strategies ensures that pupils with special educational needs have access to learning in all subjects through finely tuned support in literacy, numeracy and behaviour management. The school has taken first steps in identifying gifted and talented pupils and has drawn up an action plan to support these pupils, the full impact of which has yet to occur. The school works hard to help pupils who have arrived from other schools to fit in and make the most of their learning.
27. The high quality provision for pupils with special educational needs results from very good identification of individual need right from the start. Teachers and teaching assistants monitor the progress of these pupils thoroughly so that they can plan well-targeted activities, both in lessons and in additional programmes where individuals and small groups work outside the

⁷ The school has a Foundation Stage/Key Stage 1 assessment co-ordinator and a Key Stage 2 assessment co-ordinator.

classroom. This ensures that pupils with special educational needs achieve very well across the curriculum.

28. The interesting and varied curriculum in the Foundation Stage supports the children's learning well and their achievement is good. The emphasis given to developing the children's personal, social and communication skills within a well-balanced programme of activities gives them a good start to their school life and begins to establish learning patterns that will help them as they move through the school successfully.
29. Pupils at each stage of their education are well prepared for the next stage in their schooling. Arrangements for the transfer to secondary school of pupils with special educational needs are very good and a comprehensive programme of visits enables them to become familiar with new people and routines.
30. There is a wide range of good quality out of school clubs covering several curriculum areas. These are well attended and the pupils enjoy them. The many school visits and visitors to the school extend pupils' experiences and knowledge well and widen their interests. The school is active in contributing to local arts events.
31. The accommodation is good overall and well maintained. This has a positive effect on standards. There is plenty of space for pupils both inside the buildings and in the grounds. The playground has been softened with the introduction of potted plants, a gazebo, the Foundation Stage play area and the quiet garden for the older pupils. For athletics, and for team games, such as football, the school uses a large area of park which is a couple of minutes walk from the school. This is a formal agreement with the local council for such use and ensures care and maintenance of the areas used. The classrooms in the main building are of a good size, extremely pleasant in character and most year groups have the added advantage of sharing an activity area, which allows the area to be used for a variety of purposes. Staff facilities are unsatisfactory in that there are too few lavatories and the staff room is too small to accommodate the staff at breaks or at after school meetings. Additional facilities include a special educational needs unit and an indoor swimming pool.
32. Learning resources are satisfactory overall and are good in ICT. There is an ICT suite of newly acquired computers and also additional computers are spread throughout the school.

Care, guidance and support

The school makes **very good** provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety. It offers **good** pastoral support, advice and guidance. Pupils are involved **well** in the life of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The learning environment is attractive and secure and pupils feel safe and confident.
- There are well-established high quality systems of pastoral support to meet the needs of individual pupils.
- The schools has very good induction procedures.
- Pupils are effectively involved in the life of the school.

Commentary

33. Health, safety and security are given a high priority by the school. The vigilance of staff and the good level of supervision throughout the day ensure that pupils are well looked after. There is a friendly, purposeful atmosphere in the school that reflects its caring ethos. The attractive grounds are well maintained and provide interesting play spaces.
34. Staff work well as a team and know their pupils well. Good work, attitudes and behaviour are celebrated once a week in assembly with a mention in the Gold Book. Behaviour modification programmes are put in place when necessary but the vast majority of pupils respond very

positively to the staff's consistently high expectations. Pupils are involved well in the life of the school by means of the school council, the popular 'buddy' system and the increasing responsibilities and privileges that apply as pupils move up the school. Such aspects of school life positively promote pupils' personal and social development.

35. Appropriate child protection arrangements are in place, with the policy at present under review. Pupils are confident they would know who to go to with a problem or concern and staff organise valuable extra support for pupils who need it. Where bullying occurs pupils feel that it is dealt with and resolved quickly. A designated teaching assistant offers specific support for vulnerable pupils. The aim of such support is to raise self-esteem and confidence so that barriers to learning are reduced as much as possible. There are plans to increase this help even further where necessary so that pupils can begin to enjoy more conversational and social success and be better prepared for the next stage of their education. The whole teaching assistant team is actively involved, under the guidance of specialists, in a range of supporting activities such as anger management, occupational therapy or preparation for secondary school.
36. Induction procedures are very well managed. Children arrive in reception class from over twenty feeder pre-school settings and it is therefore a tribute to the school's induction process that they settle in and form friendships quickly. Pupils who arrive in school at a later stage are carefully monitored and parents are invited in after one week to discuss the way the transfer is going. The school arranges a staged induction if attendance is known to be a problem and some Year 6 pupils are offered a very gradual introduction to the routines and expectations of secondary school. This is a successful programme.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There are **very good** links between the school, parents and the local community. Pupils **greatly benefit** from this involvement. Links with other schools are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The strong partnership between home and school makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning.
- Parents support the school very well individually and through the parents' association.
- Very good links with the local community broaden pupils' experiences.
- Links with other schools are very good.
- The quality of information and communications to parents is very good.

Commentary

37. The positive views of parents on almost all aspects of school life reflect a high level of satisfaction with its work.
38. The school has very good arrangements for keeping parents informed. Curriculum evenings on topics such as literacy, mathematics and drugs education have been well attended. Parents enjoy coming to class assemblies and staying to have coffee with the headteacher. Detailed annual reports clearly indicate pupils' attainment and progress, contain targets for improvement and comments on personal development. There is an opportunity to discuss progress at three consultation evenings during the year and parents receive a curriculum overview at the start of each term so that they know what is to be taught. There are frequent newsletters home which include diary dates as well as general information. The headteacher makes a point of being available to talk to parents informally outside in the playground at the beginning and end of the day. Parents' views are regularly sought by questionnaires on a variety of topics.
39. Although many families live at some distance from the school, the majority of parents are fully involved with their children's education and provide strong support, for example with

homework and enthusiasm for school activities. The very active school association organises a good range of social and fund-raising events that are generally well supported by parents. The North Town School Association compiles a skills register among parents so that the school can benefit from the available expertise. Parents also support the school in practical ways such as helping to improve the school grounds, with specific projects or on educational trips and developing the school's web site.

40. Links with other schools are very good, particularly those within the Taunton Learning Partnership. Although Year 6 go on to at least five different secondary schools, all pupils are visited by their Year 7 teachers and also have induction days at their next schools so that they can become familiar with new routines and expectations.
41. The school has developed very good links with the local community, all of which enrich the pupils' experiences and have a positive effect on their learning. These include attractive display boards about the school to leave with playgroups or nurseries and the enhancement of pedestrian entrances into the grounds to make the site more visible within the town. There are good links with local supermarkets and other businesses or organisations, including contacts established through members of the governing body. The school makes very good use of local museums and churches to enrich the curriculum and invites the emergency services to visit during health promotion weeks. The drama club and choir perform regularly at local events, such as the annual Living Nativity procession. Through the Business in the Community 'Right to Read' project, volunteers from the Taunton Inland Revenue office come into school twice a week to hear children read. All these links contribute well to raising the school's profile in the community and to broadening pupils' experience of life.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good** overall. Governance is **good**. The leadership of the headteacher is **very good**, while other key staff provide **satisfactory** leadership overall. Management is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The newly appointed headteacher has rapidly established a clear sense of direction and a strong commitment to raising standards.
- The governing body provides a very good balance of challenge and support.
- The leadership and management of special educational needs are very good.
- Subject leaders do not have a clear picture of standards or the quality of education in their subject because monitoring is at a very early stage.
- Action planning for literacy is poor.
- The induction of newly qualified teachers and teaching assistants is very good.

Commentary

42. In the very short time since taking up her appointment, the headteacher has already made a very astute evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. She has established an honest and open working partnership with the experienced deputy headteacher who kept the school on track and addressed some difficult staffing issues during her two terms of acting headship. The headteacher is very clear about the school's priorities and has accurately identified what needs to be done in order to raise achievement and standards, and the correct order in which to tackle them. She is also focused on doing things right as well as doing the right thing, and is not afraid to make difficult decisions if it will improve the quality of education for the pupils. The senior leadership team has been strengthened by the inclusion of the special educational needs leader in order to improve communication and to establish a coherent approach to teaching and learning. The roles and responsibilities of subject leaders have been redefined and sharpened to ensure that they each play an active part in monitoring and evaluating the work of teachers and pupils. For the most part, they show themselves to be both keen and confident in assuming greater responsibility. This change is critical in improving

the school's approach to self-evaluation and in belatedly addressing an issue that was identified at the time of the last inspection.

43. The effectiveness of the governing body has improved significantly since the last inspection, when the governors did not have sufficiently rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. Governors have a strong commitment to the school. The school is oversubscribed, even though the rolls of other local schools are falling because of changes in the age profile of the area. Governors have been active in reviewing their own strengths and weaknesses and have independently drawn up a comprehensive development plan for the current year. The quality of their own self-evaluation indicates a real understanding of their roles and responsibilities and their commitment to be genuine partners in the strategic leadership of the school. Since the last inspection, the governing body has instituted a programme of classroom visits and links have been established with several key staff to enable governors to gain a deeper understanding of the curriculum and to keep an eye on priorities for improvement. Good relationships have been developed with staff both formally and informally. Whilst providing very good support to the senior leadership team, governors also ask probing questions and expect all new proposals to be backed up with substantial evidence.
44. The leadership of key staff, whilst satisfactory overall, ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. The school's two assessment co-ordinators have done a good job in establishing tracking systems for English and mathematics and class teachers are beginning to use this information to gauge the progress of individual pupils. Tests results have only recently started to be analysed to identify gaps in pupils' learning and therefore subject leaders for English and mathematics have not been able to use this analysis to improve medium-term planning by identifying weaknesses in the curriculum. There are signs of good improvement starting to take place within mathematics, but in English leadership is unsatisfactory. The poor quality of the action plan for literacy indicates an insufficiently clear picture of how to raise standards in writing or how to measure improvement. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good. Consistent practices, effective monitoring and a good knowledge of how young children learn best ensure that the children have a good start. The leadership and management of special educational needs are very good. The special educational needs co-ordinator is a leading practitioner who has been highly influential in developing good practice in the school. She has established excellent procedures for identifying at an early stage those pupils who may have a barrier to learning and provides very high quality training and support for those teaching assistants who support individual pupils. Although standards in information and communication technology are still not high enough at the end of Year 6, the subject leader provides very good leadership. She has a very clear vision for the development of the subject and has correctly directed her energies to improving the quality of provision substantially.
45. The headteacher has raised the quality of school improvement planning significantly to ensure that there is a much sharper focus on raising standards. She has produced a draft improvement plan for discussion with staff and governors based on a small number of key priorities. Although it is a draft plan with some refinements to be made it provides a tighter focus than the previous plan. The headteacher has also moved quickly to strengthen the leadership and management of literacy and numeracy and to encourage greater consistency of classroom practice through the introduction of a draft policy for teaching and learning. Because few key staff have been actively involved in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in the past, the school has been slow to identify and share good practice. This has led to teachers using different approaches to assessment across the school, some much more effectively than others. Performance management is well established and links with the school improvement plan and professional development are being tightened effectively. Induction procedures for newly qualified teachers and for all teaching assistants are very good. This enables them to stand on their own feet quickly and for individual training needs to be accurately identified.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,039,059	Balance from previous year	20,488
Total expenditure	972,487	Balance carried forward to the next	87,060
Expenditure per pupil	2,443		

46. Day-to-day financial management is satisfactory. Although the school is currently without a finance officer, the school has negotiated a high level of support from the local education authority until a new administration team is established. Strategic financial planning is good. The finance committee is fully involved in monitoring expenditure and the governing body takes good account of the principles of best value and ensures that expenditure is closely linked to the school's priorities.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for pupils in the Foundation Stage is **good**.

47. Nearly all children have pre-school experience and links with the pre-schools are very good. The very experienced Foundation Stage leader has a good understanding of the needs of young children and how they learn best. Her good leadership and management have built a strong team and teachers and teaching assistants work closely together to give all the children a positive start to their learning. When they start school the children's ability spans the full range, but overall it is at the lower end of the average band. The children achieve well in all areas of learning in reception so that, by the time they start in Year 1, most have attained the Early Learning Goals and are at the upper end of the average band of attainment. The good quality curriculum enables teachers to plan activities that closely match the children's interests and experiences so that they are involved in their own learning. Teaching is good. Well-planned lessons and activities and effective daily assessments ensure that staff know the children well and meet their individual needs in later activities. The excellent systems for the early identification of children with particular educational needs and the very good support they get from teachers and teaching assistants help them to achieve very well across the curriculum. There has been good improvement since the last inspection because the leader has embraced change brought about by national initiatives to maintain good standards.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Adults provide good role models of caring and considerate behaviour.
- Children are given choices in many activities to help them to become independent.

Commentary

48. This curriculum area is given high priority so that all children achieve well and most meet the Early Learning Goals by the end of the reception year. Children come from a large number of pre-school settings and many of them do not know other children when they start school. Activities such as calling the register and eating snacks are social occasions and the children quickly develop a sense of belonging to a group. Rules and routines are established clearly from the start so that children know what is expected of them. They understand the differences between right and wrong and try very hard to do what is right. Staff establish a calm and happy working atmosphere and the children become increasingly confident at work and play. They are given responsibility for classroom routines, understand that they will all have a turn and are very proud when asked to do a job. Good teaching reinforces good learning attitudes in all areas. Children know they are at school to learn and do so successfully. They concentrate hard for long periods and have a good degree of independence in making choices. The very good relationships give the children the confidence to have a go at new things and to reflect upon their own thoughts and ideas. Children with particular learning needs are fully included in activities and staff and children make sure they are comfortable.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Early reading and writing skills are developed well through play.
- Singing is used effectively to build up rhythms and sounds of language.

- Teaching plans do not include the development of speaking and listening in every curriculum area.

Commentary

49. Most children begin the reception year with satisfactory language skills overall, although the current year group includes a significant proportion of children with speech and hearing problems. Teachers and teaching assistants are vigilant in making sure that they are coping and making progress. Good teaching ensures that all children attain well and most are on course to attain the Early Learning Goals by the end of their reception year. Adults are good role models in speaking and they encourage the children to contribute their ideas to class lessons. However, they do not always specifically plan for children to develop their speaking and listening skills in all activities and opportunities are sometimes missed to reinforce learning and promote higher standards. Most children are becoming confident talkers and spontaneously offer information in phrases and sentences, especially in play. They listen carefully to adults and each other and they are effectively developing a good grasp of the conventions of conversation. Their classrooms are good places in which to develop their literacy, both as a consequence of children working in small groups with adults and through the enjoyment of well planned play activities. Very good emphasis is put on the step-by-step teaching of letters and their sounds, often using songs and rhymes. The teachers' enjoyment of these sessions, the effective, well-targeted use of teaching assistants and a good variety of interesting activities encourage the children to recognise an increasing range of sounds accurately.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Practical activities support effective learning.
- Play and videos are used successfully to teach children to count and use mathematical language.

Commentary

50. Teaching and learning are good and children achieve well so that most attain the Early Learning Goals by the time they start in Year 1. A good range of activities involves the children counting and using number in real and imaginary situations, such as when taking the register and in making appointments at the 'clinic'. The occasional use of videos to teach number recognition widens the contexts for counting in a humorous way which engrosses the children in their learning. Number games and number rhymes further promote good learning so that children are confident with numbers and are building up a good understanding of numeral notation and addition and subtraction.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching plans take good account of the children's own experiences.

Commentary

51. Good teaching helps the children to learn well and their achievement is good. Most attain the Early Learning Goals by the time they transfer to Year 1. Children are helped to learn about the world around them through a range of good quality experiences that helps them to put their learning into context. For example, a visit from a mother with her young baby helps them to

understand how much they have grown and learned. A good range of visits and visitors gives children a chance to look beyond their own immediate experiences, for example members of the school community visit to tell children about their jobs. Children develop their observational skills through such activities as watching ice cubes melt. They use computers regularly and most are confident with keyboard, mouse and cursor to carry out simple processes accurately. Religious education is structured well to fit into teaching themes. In 'Ourselves' children are encouraged to think about special things and people and how God is special to Christians. The theme of kindness has had a positive effect on their behaviour to each other.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The range of activities is good and encourages independence in learning.
- Children do not have independent access to an outdoor play area.

Commentary

52. Teaching and learning are good and the children achieve well. Most will reach the Early Learning Goals by the end of the reception year. Staff use praise and encouragement well to give children confidence in their physical activity. The children have a good understanding of the need to warm up before a physical education lesson. They are happy to find and sit in a space in the large school hall, showing good awareness of their own body. Most have developed a good awareness of the space around them in a short time. Although the school lacks a designated early years outdoor play area, planned group sessions help the children to develop a range of basic skills indoors and out, using large wheeled toys and climbing apparatus. The children's physical development is effectively threaded through other areas of learning, such as drawing with enormous chalk sticks to promote good physical control and a wide range of other activities, such as bead threading and the use of construction kits to improve finer control. Their increasing independence is demonstrated by the fact that almost all undress for physical education lessons independently.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' planning takes good account of the development of children's creativity.
- There is not always enough focus on the development of speaking skills through creative activity.

Commentary

53. Teaching and learning are good and most children achieve the Early Learning Goals by the time they leave reception. The children develop their creative thinking through well-planned play activities in a variety of well-resourced settings, such as the 'clinic'. Children enjoy these and develop their own stories about what they are doing whilst playing. However, teaching staff do not play alongside children to move their stories on and to help them develop more complex ideas. Music is used effectively in many ways and small group music sessions further develop the children's confidence by teaching them to name and play a good range of musical instruments. Most successfully copy and maintain a simple rhythm and beat, while others are still at the random playing stage. The children are encouraged to be creative and their mixed media paintings of pumpkins show confidence and verve with good attempts at colour mixing and blending.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils do not do well enough in writing, especially the more able pupils.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs is extremely effective.
- The subject leader of English has a limited understanding of strengths and weaknesses and does not have an effective plan for future development.
- The use of response partners in lessons actively involves pupils and promotes thinking.
- Assessment is not used well enough to inform planning or to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities, particularly in Years 3 to 6.
- Teachers use other subjects successfully as a context for literacy lessons, but do not always have the same expectations of pupils' written work in other subjects.
- Target setting is used successfully in some classes to improve writing standards.
- Monitoring has not identified inconsistencies and weaknesses in teaching effectively.

Commentary

54. In the 2003 National Curriculum tests, standards in both Year 2 and Year 6 dipped. In Year 2, the results were below the national average in writing but average in reading. Compared with similar schools, the results were well below average. In Year 6, the 2003 results were below the national average in English and below average compared with similar schools. The unvalidated results for 2004 indicate that standards have improved with an average number of pupils reaching the expected levels in Year 2 and an above average number in Year 6, with a well above average number of pupils reaching the higher levels in reading, but below average in writing. Inspection findings are that standards are in line with national expectations at the end of Year 2 and Year 6, and that standards are higher in reading than writing across the school, as was previously the case. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection.
55. Pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2 and standards are in line with expectations in speaking, listening, reading and writing with a significant number of pupils reading fluently and with understanding. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 are currently achieving satisfactorily. Their achievement has been unsatisfactory in the recent past because of long-term staffing difficulties, inconsistency of practice and weaknesses in the way assessment information has been used to ensure that lesson planning meets the needs of pupils of different abilities. Although standards in speaking, listening, reading and writing are broadly in line with expectations at Year 6, very few pupils achieve the higher Level 5 in writing.
56. The school has identified the need to improve standards in writing throughout the school. To this end, teachers are making effective use of response partners to enable pupils to discuss their thoughts and ideas with a partner, both in whole class sessions and at times during group activities before committing themselves to paper. However, because the subject leader has not been involved in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, there is inconsistency of practice, particularly in Years 3 to 6, and good practice that has been developed by individual teachers has not been shared systematically. In some classes, there is insufficient focus on word and sentence level work as building blocks and insufficient modelling of writing to make the use of grammar, vocabulary and stylistic points explicit to pupils. There is also inconsistent practice in the use of wordbooks and dictionaries and in teaching handwriting. The school has introduced individual target setting for writing and in several classes this is being used successfully by teachers to pinpoint the next steps for pupils and to focus their attention when undertaking a piece of written work.

57. Teaching has improved since the last inspection when there was an unacceptable proportion of unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching and learning are good in Years 1 and 2, where there is consistency of practice and high expectations of pupils' efforts. Teachers' clear expectations and very good relationships with pupils ensure that pupils are keen to learn and make the most of each lesson. The use of target setting is closely linked to marking and the teachers make learning fun!
58. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall at Key Stage 2, although some very good teaching was seen in Year 6 during the inspection. In those very good lessons, planning and preparation are very thorough. Teachers use probing questions to check on pupils' understanding and to encourage discussion. Higher attaining pupils are given a good level of challenge and independence is promoted well. Where teaching is satisfactory, the lessons do not take good account of the needs of pupils of different abilities. Across the school, the support for pupils with special educational needs is very effective, whether through one-to-one support or with small groups. Teaching assistants are very skilled and complement the work of the class teacher very well. Individual progress is monitored very closely and the school's programme of intervention designed for individuals is effective.
59. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The subject leader does not have a clear enough picture for the development of the subject. She has not monitored standards or the quality of teaching and learning. The action plan does not identify sharply enough how standards in writing are to be improved or how success will be measured. There has been too little use of assessment information to pinpoint weaknesses in the curriculum. An analysis of pupils' books and lesson observations indicate inconsistencies in practice that have not been picked up even though consistency of practice was a priority in last year's school improvement plan.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

60. The use of language and literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory overall. The curriculum for personal, social and health education makes a good contribution to the development of speaking and listening as does the recently introduced strategy of talking partners in many lessons. Teachers have also given considerable thought to the way that learning in other subjects can provide a context for literacy lessons. Good links were seen with science and citizenship. However, there are weaknesses in the quality of pupils' written work in other subjects where teachers' expectations are not consistent and pupils do not have enough opportunities to write independently or at length, particularly in the oldest classes.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The recent use of assessment information to show strengths and weaknesses of planning within mathematics is beginning to have a positive effect on standards.
- Pupils' attitudes and interest in the subject are very good.
- There is insufficient emphasis on problem solving, teaching of time and data handling.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning is not sufficiently developed.
- Marking is not used consistently to show pupils what they have to do to improve.
- Pupils' mathematical skills are not developed well enough in other subjects, especially in the use of ICT.
- Teaching assistants are used well to support groups of pupils.

Commentary

61. In the 2004 national tests standards in Year 2 were in line with the national average, but above the average when compared with similar schools. The Year 6 national test results show that

pupils' standards are below the national average when compared with all schools and when compared with similar schools⁸. Inspection findings are that standards are above average by the end of Year 2 and average by the end of Year 6. Pupils' achievements in Years 1 and 2 are largely good, however. Overall, pupils in all groups make satisfactory progress and achievement, although satisfactory, is lower than expected. National test results for the end of Year 6 reveal a steady decline in standards over recent years such that standards have now fallen below the national average. Pupils with special educational needs, well supported by teachers and teaching assistants, achieve as well as their classmates. Boys and girls are currently making similar progress. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

62. In the 2004 national tests, standards in Year 2 were in line with the national average, but above the average compared with similar schools. The Year 6 national test results in 2004 show that pupils' standards are below the national average compared with all schools and with similar schools. The evidence from inspection is that standards are above average by the end of Year 2 and average by the end of Year 6. Pupils' achievements in Years 1 and 2 are largely good. Overall, pupils in all groups make satisfactory progress and achievement, although this is under-achievement compared with the school's expectations, and national test results for the end of Year 6 have declined over recent years. Pupils with special educational needs, well supported by teachers and teaching assistants, achieve as well as their classmates. Boys and girls are currently making similar progress. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, although, whilst fluctuating, test outcomes have improved. The school has worked hard to raise standards in mathematics. Pupils have achieved well throughout the school in relation to the outcomes at the time of the last inspection.
63. Teaching and learning are satisfactory with some strengths in both key stages. Where teaching is good, lessons are carefully planned and have clear learning objectives. Teachers prepare interesting lessons which capture pupils' enthusiasm. There is good emphasis placed on pupils using mathematical vocabulary correctly. Lessons are planned well to take good account of pupils' previous learning. Pupils are encouraged to feel secure so that they contribute without fear of failure. Teaching assistants are well briefed and often lead groups on specific tasks effectively. In most lessons questions are used well to check pupils' understanding and advance their thinking. Where teaching is satisfactory, there is not always the same pace and challenge to ensure the pupils are fully involved throughout the lesson.
64. The recently appointed temporary subject leader has started to play a key part in subject improvement by introducing personal targets for the pupils and by ensuring that all aspects of the subject are being covered. The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory, but it is evident that the capacity for improvement is high. For example, following an intensive study of the results of previous standard tests, the subject leader is in a strong position to realise that areas such as problem solving, time and data handling are not given adequate teaching time. Whilst the marking of pupils' work is inconsistent and does not often indicate to pupils how they can improve, the recently introduced marking scheme is having a positive influence, together with the subject leader's introduction of pupils' self-evaluation of their own progress in reaching set objectives. There is no regular pattern of monitoring of the subject to identify and share good practice. Information and communication technology is not systematically used to support pupils' learning of mathematics.

Mathematics across the curriculum

65. The use of mathematics across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Where it does occur, it tends to be incidental and the development of pupils' mathematical skills is not an integral part of the planning of most other subjects. There is some limited use of pupils' measuring skills in design

⁸ The comparison with similar schools is based on all schools whose pupils attained similar results to those of these Year 6 pupils when they took tests at the end of Year 2.

and technology and graphs in science and geography, but little evidence of its use elsewhere in the curriculum.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' scientific enquiry skills are developed consistently.
- Pupils co-operate very well in practical work.
- Teachers' marking does not give pupils a clear idea of the strengths and weaknesses in their learning.
- There is no consistent system of assessment so that teachers can target learning for groups of pupils of different abilities.
- Sometimes teaching concentrates too much in older year groups on recording facts rather than developing understanding.
- Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported by teaching assistants.
- Homework extends pupils' learning in science effectively.

Commentary

66. The end of Year 2 teacher assessments in 2003 showed that standards were below the national average, but well above average at the higher level. The assessments for 2004, yet to be validated, show improvement. Standards in Year 2 matched the national average, with attainment at the higher level remaining above average. The results of national tests for 2003 showed standards to be above the national average at Year 6 at both the expected and higher level and well above average when compared with similar schools. The results for 2004 show a slight drop and standards now match the national average, but remain above average at the higher level. The performance of girls in the tests compared with the national picture is significantly higher than that of boys and the 2004 group of eleven year olds that took the tests contained a higher proportion of boys. However, the inspection found no significant differences in attainment between boys and girls.
67. Inspection findings confirm that standards overall are average by Year 2 and Year 6. Standards have improved in Years 1 and 2 because of the topic-based approach which ensures that each aspect of science is given similar weight. Standards now match expectations in every aspect of the science curriculum, whereas attainment in 2003 was unsatisfactory in two aspects. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory throughout the school. Pupils progress well in lessons where teachers have high expectations of pupils and set time targets to encourage good levels of achievement. Higher attaining pupils in Years 3 to 6 apply their literacy skills to good effect, using scientific terms and language accurately to draw together the threads of their learning to explain more abstract concepts. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.
68. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers plan the structure of their lessons soundly and most identify the key questions that underpin the major focus of the learning. They share the learning objectives clearly with their pupils so that pupils know in general terms what they are expected to learn. However, lesson plans are often pitched towards the average attaining pupils and do not consistently identify the learning objectives for groups of pupils of different abilities. This means that teaching is less well focused for all groups than it could be. Although marking of pupils' work is beginning to reflect the new marking policy, it is too often confined to supportive comments and does not give pupils a clear idea of progress they are making against the learning objectives or show them how they can improve. Very good support for pupils with special educational needs means they work alongside their peers and achieve very well.

69. There is some good teaching in science and, where this occurs, teachers have a good grasp of the nature of different types of science investigations and plan for a balance over the year. They give structured support to pupils' recording which encourages them to explore their own predictions and check their results against their hypotheses. The best teaching also picks up on pupils' misconceptions and provides chances for them to adjust their ideas in the light of their results. As pupils get older the balance of recording their science knowledge shifts to copying facts from the board. Whilst this serves a particular purpose, too much means that teachers cannot judge pupils' understanding accurately. Homework often requires pupils to do their own research and apply their science knowledge to explaining events. Pupils behave very well in lessons, even when the activities are messy and exciting. They organise themselves sensibly and show high levels of co-operation.
70. Leadership is satisfactory. The subject leader provides practical advice and support and to some extent this has helped to develop a more coherent approach to the recording of scientific investigation. Management is unsatisfactory. Different assessment systems are in use and there is little consistency in the information they give so that their usefulness is very limited. Pupils' progress and attainment are not analysed rigorously throughout the year in order to set group or individual targets to ensure that pupils achieve as well as they can and improve attainment.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good knowledge and leadership of the subject leader are instrumental in bringing about good improvement.
- The use of new resources is becoming increasingly effective in raising standards, though more technician support would be helpful.
- Teachers' planning does not provide enough opportunity for pupils to apply their ICT skills in other subjects.
- Teachers do not assess pupils' attainment regularly or accurately.
- Pupils' keyboard skills are developing well.

Commentary

71. Standards have improved in Years 1 and 2 since the last inspection and are in line with national expectations at the end of Year 2. They are below expectations at the end of Year 6, which is a similar picture to the previous inspection. Pupils' achievement is now satisfactory in all year groups and in every class. This is also an improvement since the previous inspection, when lack of progress was ascribed to inconsistent levels of teachers' skills and lack of equipment. Standards in Years 3 and 4 are improving, but pupils in Years 5 and 6 have gaps in their knowledge and understanding as they have not had sufficient experience over the years in a range of ICT applications. New and improved resources are now enabling the older pupils to work at the expected levels.
72. Teaching and learning have improved and are now satisfactory at both key stages. The subject leader provides very good support for teachers and their subject knowledge and growing confidence are evident. Pupils' growing competence is evident in the way they tackle logging on, navigating through a menu and using a dialogue box. Teachers have sound subject knowledge and are confident in their use of terms in describing processes and instructions so that all pupils progress well in their acquisition of keyboard skills and satisfactorily in their understanding of the application of different aspects of the ICT curriculum. In some lessons, teachers do not always notice when pupils need particular help and sometimes miss opportunities to draw the class together to make a teaching point so that all pupils' learning can be advanced. In the good lessons, teaching is more confident and teachers expect their pupils to develop an independent, experimental approach in their use of

programs which leads to good achievement. Pupils with special educational needs receive very good support from learning support assistants at the right level that helps them to achieve very well.

73. Very good leadership and management of the ICT curriculum have given a clear direction to raising standards and in increasing teachers' expectations of their pupils' achievement. The subject leader has a very clear picture of the current level of provision and standards and is working enthusiastically to realise her vision of excellent provision and high standards within five years. The employment of a technician would enable her to direct her energies towards the professional aspects of her job. She is aware that assessment of pupils' standards and progress is unsatisfactory and is now focusing on this aspect with all staff. Resources for learning are now good and will be further improved with the planned increase in the number of whiteboards in classrooms.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

74. The use of ICT across the curriculum is **unsatisfactory**. Whilst it is satisfactory in supporting learning in literacy, its use is very limited in other subjects. To address this the subject leader has catalogued the software available and has passed on the management of its integration to other subject leaders. It is far too soon to judge the effectiveness of this strategy and the impact of the new equipment in this respect.

HUMANITIES

75. **History** was not a focus of this inspection and no lessons were observed. From work samples and discussions with pupils, it is evident that the full programme of study for the subject is covered and pupils develop a suitable range of historical skills and a satisfactory knowledge of the locality, of European and Southern American history. The subject is suitably planned and regularly taught.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are not high enough at the end of Year 6.
- Pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2.
- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development.
- The school has no consistent assessment procedures.
- Teachers' planning does not take sufficient account of the needs of pupils of different abilities, particularly in Years 3 to 6.
- Teaching does not bring learning alive for pupils.
- Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are not given enough time for reflection and writing in detail.
- Resources need improvement.

Commentary

76. Insufficient improvement has been made since the last inspection and standards and achievements have declined by Year 6. In Years 1 and 2, pupils achieve well and attain the standards expected by the locally agreed syllabus. They have a good knowledge of Bible stories, understand what caused key figures to act as they did and are beginning to make thoughtful connections with their own lives. In Years 3 to 6, pupils' progress slows. By the time pupils reach Years 5 and 6, their progress is unsatisfactory, and achievement at the end of Year 6 is unsatisfactory. At the end of Year 6, standards are below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Older pupils have very limited recall of what they have been taught and sometimes confuse key elements of the different religions they have studied. Pupils indicate this is the subject that they least enjoy.

77. Teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2 are good overall. Teachers use a good range of strategies to involve and motivate pupils. In a Year 2 lesson, particularly good use was made of drama, backed up with probing questions, to give pupils an insight into how Jonah felt when he was tossed into the sea and how he faced up to a moral dilemma. The lesson moved at a good pace, resources were well chosen and activities clearly linked so that pupils were able to reflect on the implications for their own lives by the end of the lesson. Pupils' learning is effectively supported by teachers' very high expectations of behaviour and encouragement of independence. No time is wasted and pupils play an active part in thinking things through for themselves.
78. Although those lessons observed in Years 3 to 6 during the inspection were satisfactory, the scrutiny of pupils' current work and work completed last year provides evidence that teaching and learning at Key Stage 2 are unsatisfactory overall. Teachers are not generally confident in their subject knowledge and do not have sufficiently clear expectations of what standards pupils should be achieving, particularly in Years 5 and 6 where the quality and quantity of recorded work are not good enough and do not build on previous learning. Pupils of all abilities are usually expected to complete the same work in the same time with the result that higher-attaining pupils are working at too low a level and lower-attaining pupils are not always given the support to enable them to make sense of their learning. The school manages to comply with the recommended time requirements of the locally agreed syllabus through linking work in religious education with lessons in personal, social and health education. However, not enough thought has been given to linking plans in both subjects more closely and the present organisation of time does not always give older pupils sufficient time for reflection and the opportunity to write at length. Satisfactory use is made of visits and visitors to bring the subject to life and to enable pupils to understand the relevance of religion to the lives some people lead.
79. Leadership is satisfactory, but management is unsatisfactory overall. Until very recently, the subject leader's responsibilities were limited to managing resources and very little monitoring of standards, teaching and learning has taken place. This subject has not recently been a priority for development and, consequently, weaknesses identified in the last report, and the one before that, remain. Most important is the failure to implement standard assessment practices across the school so that standards and rates of progress can be measured. The subject leader has worked hard to put a programme of teaching and learning in place that takes better account of the locally agreed syllabus. Resources have improved since the last inspection. They are now of a good quality and accessible to staff.

Geography

The provision for geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The breadth of the curriculum is good with a variety of good topics taught.
- The more able pupils are insufficiently challenged.
- There are good examples of topics where pupils have to use and increasingly reveal an understanding of basic map skills.
- Examples of planning for fieldwork excursions are very good.
- The use of evaluative skills in the management of the subject is unsatisfactory.
- Marking of pupils' work is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

80. Standards in geography are in line with national expectations at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6. As pupils get older, they make satisfactory progress and are increasingly made aware of places that are further and further away from Taunton. In lessons seen in Years 1 and 2 pupils' achievements were good. Teachers ensured that pupils' listening and speaking skills

improved together with an understanding of the geography, in this case, that people make decisions about the way in which places are used.

81. No Key Stage 2 teaching was observed, but an analysis of pupils' books shows good coverage of National Curriculum geography with good topics chosen to widen pupils' experiences of both the physical and human aspects of the subject. All pupils complete similar work. As a consequence, higher ability pupils find that their work offers little challenge because the only way to extend their understanding is to complete extra work of a similar challenge and therefore their achievement is unsatisfactory.
82. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Pupils throughout the school enjoy their geography. In Key Stage 1, pupils are very attentive and naturally get involved in the thinking, answering questions and completing tasks. Teaching seen varied between very good and satisfactory. Planning is thorough and the choice of resources very good. For example, in a Year 2 lesson, for which arrangements for health and safety before and during the visit were excellent, pupils walked into the centre of Taunton and undertook specific surveys about shop types, traffic, buildings and people so that they could make the contrast with a settlement in the Outer Hebrides that they were studying. The first hand information collected was recorded well for later use in the classroom.
83. In Key Stage 2 teachers' planning varies between satisfactory and very good. As pupils reach the upper years of Key Stage 2 they automatically produce more writing, but it is generally descriptive and rarely analytical and pupils are not given opportunities to compare different aspects of the same topic to reach a conclusion. Marking of pupils' work has been unsatisfactory in that there is no guidance on how to improve and many basic facts are left uncorrected.
84. The subject is satisfactorily led, but a weakness in management, similar to other subjects, is the lack of time to evaluate the quality of pupils' work across the school. A major improvement over the last inspection has been the production of a programme of work for all year groups and the assembly of good quality resources that are accessible .

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

85. **Design and technology** and **music** were not priorities for this inspection. No lessons were observed in design and technology and one lesson in Year 2 was seen in music. Consequently, no judgements can be made about the overall quality of provision in these subjects.
86. In **design and technology**, there were displays of interesting and carefully made design projects and evidence of the full coverage of the curriculum. Work seen indicates that pupils cover the planning, making and evaluating components of the curriculum. Planning indicates that requirements are met and pupils have a satisfactory range of experiences.
87. In **music**, in the lesson seen, the standards observed matched national expectations and good teaching helped the pupils to achieve well in using beat and rhythm to accompany chanted questions and answers. Since the last inspection a published scheme of work has been introduced across the school and teachers say that its good guidance has helped them to feel more confident. In the lesson seen the teacher's good modelling of more complex rhythm patterns resulted in the pupils' improved performance and they were pleased with what they had achieved. Choir and band clubs are taught by a specialist music teacher. Her enthusiasm and expertise give the pupils a very worthwhile musical experience which they enjoy very much. Music played in the library at the beginning and end of the school day adds to the school's welcoming atmosphere and introduces pupils to music from different cultures. Singing is a regular and enjoyable part of class routines for the younger children, for example when tidying up after a lesson.

Art and design

Main strengths and weaknesses

The provision for art and design is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Artwork that is effectively based on stimuli within pupils' own experiences allows them to be creative from a firm foundation of knowledge and ideas.
- The high standard of display demonstrates respect for pupils' work and celebrates their achievements.
- The good curriculum planning ensures the pupils are offered a chance to work with variety of media.
- Overall there is insufficient use of tactile experiences such as working with clay.
- The co-ordinator has insufficient time to monitor and evaluate the subject fully.

Commentary

88. Standards in art and design meet national expectations at the end of Years 2 and 6 and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The wide range of artwork displayed throughout the school gives clear evidence of these standards and pupils make good progress in learning artistic skills balanced with developing an understanding of artists, their influences and their work. Pupils use a range of media and techniques to create interesting work. They successfully imitate the styles of famous artists and there are attractive displays based on well-known works. All pupils develop a range of skills in drawing and painting, printing, textile and three-dimensional work in paper, collage and clay. They develop their speaking and listening skills through discussion related to their artwork during lessons.
89. Teaching in art and design is satisfactory. Good support is given to individuals to improve their technique and to develop their ideas. Girls and boys alike have very positive attitudes towards their work and they display real pleasure in showing their work to adults and each other. Where the teachers are secure in the subject knowledge there is a beneficial effect on the pupils' completed work, but where teachers are not as secure there is less use made of modelling techniques or pupils assessing each other's work. Artwork is used very effectively to support other subjects. Pupils are able to explore ways of making, alternating, rotating, repeating and creating patterns in their design work when involved in printing from a polystyrene tile.
90. The subject is well led and management overall is satisfactory. The subject leader ensures that the art curriculum stimulates the pupils by using their own experiences and a variety of artefacts to assist them in their artwork. This often relates to multicultural themes, which included African masks starting with sketches and the making of masks in Year 2, a study of Rangoli patterns using printing in Year 4, also supported by computer designed patterns, and a study of Aboriginal art using water colours in Year 6. The art and design planning overview produced by the subject leader ensures that pupils, as they move between years, are offered a range of media to work and to experiment with, concentrating on drawing techniques. This does limit the teaching of areas such as clay, which is planned to be taught twice during pupils' time at school. The subject leader at present lacks time to monitor the subject on a regular basis.

Physical education

Provision for physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' planning is good and lessons are well managed and ensure good learning.
- Relationships and collaboration between pupils are always very good.

- The physical education curriculum is enriched through extra-curricular activities.
- Teachers ensure that pupils are working hard to develop their skills.

Commentary

91. Standards at the end of both key stages are in line with national expectations, with some pupils achieving above average standards because they concentrate and work exceptionally hard to improve their skills. This is an improvement over the findings from the last inspection. In many lessons pupils achieve well. It is evident that pupils' skills, whether in games or gymnastics, are improving. Pupils have access to games, gymnastics, dance, swimming and athletics.
92. Teaching is good. Teachers know their pupils well and ensure that they are well focused so that they have every opportunity to succeed. All lessons are well planned and as such teachers know exactly what they want pupils to do and achieve. In some cases, music is used to very good effect, guiding the speed and influencing the body movements of pupils as they practise their highly controlled sequence of paired movements and balances. Whether in games, dance or gymnastics, teachers are always encouraging pupils to think about their performance so that they are conscious of what they are doing and how their performance can be improved. Whilst working hard, routines most often fail because pupils start new topics by trying something that is too complex. At the same time teachers promote enjoyment in physical education and, for the most part, maximum involvement in the various tasks undertaken. There is no significant difference between the overall standards reached by boys and girls.
93. Teachers ensure that lessons start promptly and both staff and pupils change quickly for their lesson. Pupils know the purpose of warming up for the various tasks they are about to work on. Warm-up activities are enjoyed and set a very good tone for the lesson, whilst ensuring that pupils' muscle and overall demeanour are ready for the main activities. Teachers have a good repertoire of activities to improve skills. They use praise and encouragement well to give pupils confidence in their physical activity and skills development. In addition to praise, teachers intervene to either re-focus them or extend their performance. Therefore instructions to pupils are clear, teachers have an additional focus on performance and therefore assess the quality of pupils' work, and pupils are involved all the time.
94. No dance lessons or swimming sessions were observed although both are taught. The school has an indoor learners' swimming pool for the youngest pupils of the school. This is used throughout the summer term each year and ensures that these pupils gain water experience under close supervision. Most learn how to stay afloat and many can swim the 5 metre length of the pool.
95. The subject is satisfactorily led and well managed, but the subject leader has insufficient time to ascertain whether standards are sufficiently high across the school. The profile of physical education in the school has been raised successfully by staff development in areas where teachers lacked confidence. Resources have been audited and enhanced. Physical education generally is also enriched by extra-curricular activities for boys and girls and, in Year 6, a residential experience.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- As a result of very effective teaching and learning, relationships and attitudes to people and to learning throughout the school are very good.
- Pupils co-operate and collaborate extremely well.

- The very good well-designed programme is complemented by an interesting and valuable citizenship course.
- Leadership is very good.

Commentary

96. The school has a very strong positive ethos. It is an extremely pleasant place to be in because the pupils' personal and social development is very good. Pupils are very polite, easy to talk with and they work with each other and adults in an extremely positive way. Pupils are listeners, they are responsive and they are keen to please. From a very early age pupils know and understand how the school works and what their role is in the school. They talk honestly and openly about their enjoyment of their school. These aspects show strong personal and social development.
97. There are many features that strongly aid pupils' personal and social development. For example, the school council is a recognisable vehicle for pupils' views in school. The 'buddy' system is valued by pupils because there are times when younger pupils feel they want to talk with older pupils who are 'buddies' and on occasions seek their help and support. This aspect of the school, along with the prefect system, ensures that older pupils take on highly responsible activities which enhance their personal development.
98. Pupils' work in the classroom and in their folders shows that their citizenship programme covers a wide range of core topics such as health education, including sport, fitness, hygiene, sex education, social skills and basic political awareness, for example, of the European Union, the key points arising from the Children's Act, poverty and wealth in the world. Pupils' work shows that they are beginning to gain a good basic understanding of a wide range of relevant issues. Pupils achieve well and show that they are responsive and successfully represent information in a wide range of ways.
99. Teaching of personal, social and health education and citizenship topics is good and very well planned. Pupils know what is expected of them. Teachers provide pupils with challenging tasks which require them to think hard and share their ideas in peer groups as well as to the teacher and whole class. Sensitive handling of such approaches to learning are undertaken with children from a very early age and so they grow with an ever increasing sense of confidence and self-esteem. For example, very young pupils were given the task of looking at a photograph of a local urban site – they recognised the disused facility and successfully, through small prompts from the teacher, offered their feelings about what they saw and how the site could be changed. Pupils were highly focused, listened attentively when others spoke and were keen to explain their own views. The task supported good thinking skills, independence and, at other times in the lesson, good collaboration. Older pupils were successfully increasing their understanding of the role of a chairperson, spokesperson and committee member of a group. Achievement was good since their debating skills were visibly enhanced during the lesson, as were their speaking, listening and thinking skills. From the youngest pupils to the oldest, whatever the task they undertake, pupils do so willingly, responsibly and, where necessary, with genuine sensitivity. Leadership and management of this area of school life are very good. There have been very good improvements since the last inspection in both provision and the actual personal and social development of pupils.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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