

INSPECTION REPORT

NORTON FIRST SCHOOL

Norton, Bury St Edmunds

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124710

Headteacher: Mrs E Cobbold

Lead inspector: Mr M Carter

Dates of inspection: 16 - 18 May 2005

Inspection number: 267415

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Primary
School category: Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils: 4 - 9
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 103

School address: Norton First School
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Norton
Bury St Edmunds
Suffolk
Postcode: IP31 3LZ

Telephone number: 01359 230520
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Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of governors: Rev Ian Hooper

Date of previous inspection: 22 February 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school serves the village of Norton and surrounding hamlets. It also has a small number of pupils coming from further afield. There are currently 103 pupils making the school smaller than many although the number on roll has increased since 2000. Children enter the Reception class in the September before they are five. Many have attended some form of pre-school education. Pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4. Socio-economic indicators for the area are above average and the proportion of pupils claiming a free school meal is below average at 2.5 per cent. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below average at 12 per cent although there is a relatively high number with statements. Such pupils' difficulties cover a wide range from autism to profound learning difficulties. The vast majority of pupils are from white British backgrounds. None is learning English as an additional language. The children's attainment on entry is generally average and this is similar to judgements made at the last inspection. A number of clubs and activities provide a degree of care after school. The school has links with the local pre-school group, local middle schools and the village church.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20714	Mr M Carter	Lead inspector	English Science Information and communication technology Art and Design Music Physical Education Special educational needs
9504	Mrs S Gurney	Lay inspector	
11419	Mrs Underwood J	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Mathematics Design and technology Geography History Religious Education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school. Attainment on entry is broadly average while standards on leaving are generally above average. Educational value added is good. Standards in reading are frequently well above average. Teaching is frequently good or better and this helps the vast majority of pupils to learn and achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. The headteacher's strong leadership provides a clear direction and the school is well managed with good potential for further improvements. Governors are well aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and governance is good overall. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- standards in English and mathematics are good and most pupils achieve well;
- although teaching and learning are good overall, there are inconsistencies in teachers' expectations of the more able pupils and a small number of these pupils could do better in writing;
- provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good;
- the good leadership and management of the headteacher is consistently providing improvements;
- assessment systems are good although sometimes they are not used enough;
- the school's ethos supports the pupils well, encouraging good attitudes and learning;
- there are inconsistencies in the development of basic literacy skills across the curriculum.

Since the previous inspection, improvements in standards have generally kept pace with the national trend and they remain above average in English and mathematics. The key issues identified in the last report have been addressed with mixed impact. The main points concerning standards in information and communication technology and in improving consistency in progress have been largely effective. Minor points concerning checks on teaching, marking, guidance for personal education and a policy for provision for the Reception children have had a good impact. Those concerning development planning, multi-cultural provision, basic skills across the curriculum and the reporting of absence have been less effective. Overall, the school's improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory and there is good potential for further improvements.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals. A* indicates that standards are in the top 5 per cent of schools.*

The achievement of pupils is good throughout the school. In English and mathematics standards are currently above average. Attainment on entry to the school is average overall and by the end of Year 4 the large majority of pupils attain or exceed the nationally expected levels for their age. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because of good provision. A small minority of more capable pupils could do better in writing in Years 3

and 4. Good teaching helps children in the Foundation Stage to learn well and most achieve the national goals for early learning by the end of the Reception year. A few of the Reception children exceed these, particularly in mathematics. Standards in the Reception year are above average overall in each of the areas of learning where judgements could be made. Standards in information and communication technology have improved significantly since the last inspection and they are now at least satisfactory. Standards in music and religious education are satisfactory. **The pupils' personal development is generally good** and this helps their attitudes to school and learning to be good as well. Their **spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall**, although the provision for gaining awareness of multi-cultural society is weak. Behaviour is satisfactory overall. Most pupils behave well. The few instances of bad behaviour are dealt with quickly. Attendance for the last full year was well above average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good overall. Teaching and learning are good with very good features and a few minor aspects for improvement. Most lessons are interesting and help the pupils to learn well in a variety of ways. This supports the school's good potential for further improvement. In a few lessons, the learning needs of the more able pupils are not consistently met. The curriculum is satisfactory, with good features in the Reception year. Throughout the school, the development of literacy skills in subjects other than English is underdeveloped. The school's accommodation is good. Resources have improved and they are satisfactory. There are plans for further improvements. The pupils are well cared for and their views are taken into account, for example, through the school council. The partnership with parents is good overall. Although there are still a few minor omissions from the information provided, parents are generally well informed and they provide good support for the school and their child's learning. Nine out of ten parents feel happy to approach the school with concerns and questions. Links with the community are satisfactory and there are effective links with other local schools, particularly to aid the transfer of pupils to their next school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides strong leadership and she has been effective in improving standards despite a period of staffing changes. There is a clear focus on maximising the pupils' learning. There are good improvements in the systems used to check on standards and provision. Development planning has improved, although action plans are sometimes not specific enough. Teachers are mostly effective in subject leadership, most having several roles. The governing body has regular involvement with the school. It relies heavily on the headteacher, but supports and challenges staff, having independent ways to corroborate reports. The school's finances are directed towards improving provision and governors' checks of best value decisions are satisfactory. Overall, governance is good.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Nearly all the pupils like the school and enjoy their lessons. Members of staff listen to their views and the school council provides further involvement. A minority feels that other pupils do not always behave well and they are not trusted to do things on their own. However, behaviour is generally good and pupils have many opportunities to take responsibilities around the school. Parents also feel their children enjoy school. Overall, the school is popular and parents think their children are making good progress.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- to consistently have high expectations of more capable pupils and to devise work that is accurately matched to their learning needs;
- to increase the opportunities for developing basic literacy skills in other subjects;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- ensure that all information statutorily required is included in communications with parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

The achievement of pupils is good throughout the school. In English and mathematics standards are above average. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because of good provision. A small minority of more capable pupils could do better. Standards in information and communication technology have improved significantly and they are now at least satisfactory. Standards in music and religious education are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Both achievement and standards are good overall.
- Weak standards in information and communication technology have been overcome.
- Progress in writing in Years 3 and 4 is inconsistent.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and nearly all pupils achieve the standards appropriate for their age.
- Some more capable pupils do not achieve high standards.

Commentary

1. Attainment on entry to the school is broadly average and by the end of Year 4 the substantial majority of pupils reach or exceed the expected levels for their age. Good teaching helps children in the Foundation Stage to learn well and most achieve the nationally recognised early learning goals by the end of the Reception year. Some exceed these, particularly in mathematics. By the time children enter Year 1, standards are above average in each of the areas of learning where there was sufficient evidence to make judgements. By the end of Year 2, the results of the National Curriculum tests in 2004 were well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. In each case, there was well above the average proportion of pupils having high standards. In comparison to similar schools these results were still well above average in writing, above average in mathematics and average in reading.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	17.0 (15.5)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	16.8 (15.9)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	17.6 (16.9)	16.2 (16.3)

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

2. With relatively small groups of pupils, the results have varied over the last five years but nearly all have been above the national average and the trend of improvement has kept pace with the national trend. The early indications are that the trend will continue in 2005. The inspection found that standards of the current Year 2 pupils were above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in science are assessed by teachers and in 2004 results were below average. However, the current Year 2 pupils have standards that are similar to the national average.

3. At the end of Year 4, when the pupils leave the school, there are no national curriculum tests, but optional tests are carried out and these showed good results in 2004, in reading and mathematics. Over a third of the pupils achieved the standards expected of Year 6 pupils, which is very high. However, in writing there was less high attainment and four out of ten pupils did not achieve the standards expected of Year 4 pupils nationally. These results show that progress in writing in Years 3 and 4 is too variable. The writing standards of the current Year 4 pupils are improved. Standards are now above average in writing, reading, and mathematics. In science, standards are satisfactory. Overall, these standards represent good achievement especially in reading and mathematics, despite inconsistent progress in writing in Years 3 and 4.
4. Those pupils with special educational needs generally make good progress so that some overcome their difficulties while most make good progress and achieve the standards expected at Year 2 or Year 4. This is because teachers plan carefully for their needs, providing easier work and adult support or guidance in their tasks. Their achievements are regularly celebrated and most parents feel good progress is being made. Although there are good proportions of high attainment in reading and mathematics by Year 4, there is weak progress through Years 3 and 4 from some pupils in writing. In about a third of lessons, there were few opportunities for higher attaining pupils to achieve higher standards. This inconsistency has mixed impact through the school.
5. While judgements about several subjects were not possible because they were not a focus of the inspection, in information and communication technology, nearly all the pupils achieve the objectives set for their age. There was some evidence of higher standards as well. Standards are at least satisfactory. The school is improving its use of computers to support pupils' learning in other subjects. In music and religious education standards are satisfactory at Year 2 and Year 4.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils like the school. Their attitudes, values and personal qualities are good. Behaviour is satisfactory. Their spiritual, moral and social development is good. Punctuality is good and attendance for 2003/4 was very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's attitudes to school are good.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. Cultural development is satisfactory.
- Relationships are generally good throughout the school and children show concern for each other.
- Although most pupils behave well, there are pockets of unsatisfactory behaviour.

Commentary

6. Pupils are happy and parents agree that they almost all like school. Children's attitudes are good and often very good in lessons. Especially when the teaching is challenging, they work hard, concentrate and co-operate well. They are attentive, eager to answer questions and show enthusiasm for their learning. They readily offer to help each other and show concern for those less fortunate than themselves. Relationships are good. Behaviour, which was very good at the time of the last inspection, is satisfactory. Although most pupils behave well, there are some

instances of unsatisfactory behaviour and disrespect with occasional instances of bullying. However, the pupils agree that these are swiftly dealt with. There have been no exclusions during the reporting period.

7. The school provides good, sometimes very good opportunities for spiritual development. Assemblies, where pupils listen carefully and generally behave well, are a particularly strong feature. Pupils are given time to reflect on their thoughts and feelings. Good opportunities are made in lessons to enhance pupils' spiritual awareness. Provision for moral and social development is good. Pupils know right from wrong and a strong moral code is constantly reinforced. The school council gives pupils the opportunity to take on responsibilities and the members, elected from every class, are proud to do this. Older pupils volunteer for tasks such as helping younger children in the dining room, acting as buddies in the playground and helping in the library. Children were seen spontaneously helping others in need. Pupils' personal achievements are celebrated in assemblies and in newsletters to parents.
8. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Aspects of European culture are covered in art, literature and music and through visitors and educational visits. There is now a policy for cultural education and this aspect of provision has much improved since the last inspection. However, some multi-cultural links have lapsed. A promising link with Ghana is at an early stage and has not yet had an impact on the pupils.
9. The pupils' attendance for the year 2003/04 was very good. Punctuality was good. Figures for the current year are lower so far but punctuality is still good. Attendance is monitored well by the school and for all authorised absences an explanatory note is required. Holidays in term-time are strongly discouraged. There are, however, inconsistencies about completing the class registers, which do not always make clear whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	3.5	School data	0.1
National data	5.1	National data	0.4

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good overall. Teaching and learning are good. The curriculum is satisfactory and the pupils are well cared for. Overall, the partnership with parents is good and the leadership and management are good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good with very good features and a few aspects for improvement. Assessment systems are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons are generally well planned and interesting.
- Teaching is consistently good or very good for children in the Reception class.
- Teachers have generally good knowledge of the subjects they teach.

- There is variation in the challenge provided for the more capable pupils.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 20 lessons

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

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

- Teachers have generally good knowledge of the subjects they teach and provide stimulating lessons that engage the pupils well and help them to learn. Despite staff changes, the quality of teaching is at least as good as at the time of the last inspection and in several ways it is better. Teaching and learning are good in each part of the school and there are instances of very good teaching. This signifies a good potential for further improvement. Teaching and learning are best for children in the Reception class, where lessons are consistently good or better and the role of teaching assistants and others makes a significant contribution to learning. The pupils' work throughout the school often shows good progress and teachers usually plan lessons well with clear objectives and challenging activities.
- Many lessons are taught with a good pace and this helps the pupils to maintain their interest. Most lessons provide a good degree of challenge in each class. In a few lessons, the learning needs of the more able pupils are not carefully matched to the work provided and it is sometimes too easy. Marking is generally helpful, regular and provides teachers with information about what the pupils need to learn next. However, a minority of the pupils' past work shows that this is inconsistent and sometimes does not provide enough help for pupils to make improvements. These inconsistencies are noticeable in the progress made between the two Year 3 and 4 classes.
- Teachers use good methods to teach and assess pupils' progress in gaining basic skills and the school is rightly keen to promote their use across different subjects. In many cases, this is being successful, for example, in spelling where the children's progress is evident in much of their work. However, while most pupils' handwriting is of good quality for their age, this is only in specific handwriting lessons and frequently these skills are not used in other written work. Members of staff do not insist on the use of such skills sufficiently in other subjects. Teachers set homework with reasonable regularity. Homework supports the pupils' learning in lessons and it is satisfactory overall.
- The school's systems for assessment are good and very good in English and information and communication technology. Training has been provided for teachers about daily assessments and these are being used more frequently. They are used well to help provide lower attaining pupils with more guidance for their tasks, through easier work, adult support or pages with more prompts for written work. In these ways pupils with special educational needs are well taught and they often achieve the standards expected for their age group. In a minority of lessons, the work is not as closely matched to the needs of the most capable pupils. Nevertheless, the majority of parents and their children feel they are making good progress generally and they are well taught.

The curriculum

Curriculum provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Provision in Years 1 to 4 is satisfactory. The curriculum is enriched well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Curriculum provision in the Foundation Stage is good and the outdoor area is used well.
- Many visits and visitors provide good enrichment and support for the pupils' learning.
- Improvement in the time allocated to information and communication technology is now helping to raise standards.
- In the main, good innovative links are made between the subjects.
- The school's provision for personal, social and health education, and for equal opportunities, is good.

Commentary

14. The school provides its pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum that meets requirements fully. The curriculum incorporates all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education, based on the locally agreed syllabus. The curriculum contains appropriate elements of personal, social and health education including a policy covering sex and relationships and drugs education. The curriculum for Reception children is good providing them with a wide variety of activities in all areas of learning. A good feature of this provision is the planned use of the outdoor area, which enhances children's learning experiences. An issue from the previous report was insufficient time for the teaching of information and communication technology, which had a negative effect on standards. The school has made great strides in improving provision and teachers' knowledge and standards have improved.
15. All subjects have schemes of work devised from national guidance. With the exception of literacy and numeracy, planning is based on a two-year cycle to take into account the mixed age classes. Teachers plan closely together to ensure entitlement for all pupils regardless of which class they are in. Many useful links are made between subjects. However, pupils' use of their basic literacy skills, including handwriting, is not as strong in other subjects.
16. A range of visits and visitors complement the work the school does in many areas of the curriculum, enabling pupils to gain many first-hand experiences. For example, Years 3 and 4 are studying World War II and visit and talks from local people about their childhood experiences during the war provided the pupils with insights to wartime Britain. Extra-curricular activities such as football, cricket and recorders add satisfactorily to pupils' experiences. Visits to the local area are well used by all age groups to enhance the understanding of the world around them. There are many visitors from the police, fire service, the local vicar, an artist who runs a workshop and from the local newspaper. These are examples of ways in which the curriculum is enriched to support pupils' learning. The school is presently forming a link with a school in Ghana.
17. A dedicated and enthusiastic team of teachers and support staff work well together. All adults are well deployed to meet the demands of the curriculum and they effectively support pupils' learning. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory and members of staff make good efforts to ensure that all the pupils can learn. There is currently no system to evaluate the overall impact of measures to

support pupils with special educational needs. However, these pupils generally make good progress sometimes overcoming their special needs. Accommodation for the Foundation Stage is good providing the children with a spacious well organised and stimulating environment, including a secure outdoor play area. The accommodation for the school is generally good, with attractive well maintained grounds. The hall has limitations because of its small size. Resources for the Foundation stage are good but for other areas of the curriculum are no more that sufficient overall. For example, there is a lack of resources to support the learning of other faiths.

Care, guidance and support

Arrangements to ensure children's welfare, health and safety are good and have been at least maintained since the last inspection. The school has a caring ethos and members of staff have good relationships with the pupils. They are given good support and guidance.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is good support and monitoring of pupils' academic and personal development.
- There are good induction arrangements for children entering the Reception class.
- Teachers have good relationships with the pupils.
- A few children were unsure whether they would feel able to consult a member of staff with a personal problem.

Commentary

18. Members of staff support the pupils well and the ethos of the school is welcoming, friendly and caring. Induction procedures in the Reception class and are good. Children settle in quickly and easily and this has a positive effect on their achievement. Good arrangements are made to prepare Year 4 pupils for their middle schools. There is good academic liaison and effective efforts are made to ensure children get to know some of their new classmates.
19. The school makes good arrangements to implement the locally agreed child protection procedures. All members of staff are given basic training on the need for vigilance and they know what to do if they have reasons for concern. Arrangements to ensure health and safety are good and regular risk assessments take place. Fire drills take place at least twice per term. First aid provision is good and children feel safe and secure.
20. Pupils are given good support, advice and guidance. Their academic performance and personal development are checked and recorded well. The targets set for literacy, help the pupils to know what to do next in order to improve their work. Teachers have good relationships with their pupils, and this contributes to a good learning ethos. Most children trust their teachers to help them and are confident they can share their worries with them. However, a small number, though happy with academic guidance, reported reluctance to share a personal problem with a member of staff.
21. The school listens to pupils' views through class discussions, the school council and through questionnaires. The school council has met for two years. Pupils' requests are taken into account with improvements and new resources being provided in the playground. New suggestions boxes will enhance the impact of children's ideas.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's partnership with the parents is good overall. Most parents are very supportive of the school and its aims. There are good links with other local schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The parents' association is strong and effective in supporting the school.
- Most parents are happy with the school and the education provided.
- Many parents make an effective contribution to their children's learning at home.
- A small minority of parents is uncomfortable approaching the school with suggestions or concerns.
- There are good links with other local schools.

Commentary

22. Parents are given good information about the school and pupils' progress. The detailed annual reports meet statutory requirements. Those at the end of Year 2 are very helpful and tell parents where children stand in relation to national standards. Those for other years are detailed and show clear knowledge of the pupils but for Years 1 and 3 they give less information about levels attained. The prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents are both detailed and helpful but, as at the time of the last inspection, neither meets statutory requirements fully. All parents are sent termly newsletters giving details of the curriculum to be studied. This enables them to help their children at home. Parents give good support for meetings and events which directly affect their children, such as class assemblies and afternoons when pupils share their work with them. They are far less supportive of general meetings. Only two opted to attend the governors' annual general meeting for parents, which was therefore cancelled. The school seeks parents' views through questionnaires and all teachers are available after school or by appointment. However, a small minority is uncomfortable approaching the school. The parents' association organises fund raising and social events, which are well supported and they help to provide valuable extra resources. A small number of parents give regular voluntary help in class and many willingly help with events and educational visits.
23. The arrangements for links with the community are satisfactory. Links with the local church are very good. Members of the local community, especially senior citizens are encouraged to attend school events. Educational visits make a positive contribution to pupils' knowledge of the locality. Parents and children are generous in their support for children's charities. The new link with a school in Ghana will increase the pupils' knowledge of the third world but has yet to make an impact.
24. Links with the pre-school encourage the children to settle in happily. This partnership should develop further when the pre-school moves next to the first school in September. There are very good links with local special schools where a few pupils attend Norton for part of the week and their special school for the other part. Links with other local first schools, the receiving middle schools and the community college are strong.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. Governance is good. The leadership and management of the headteacher are good overall as they are for other staff. The school has satisfactorily improved since the last inspection and offers good value for money because the pupils achieve well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good leadership of the headteacher has promoted improvements and sustained good achievement.
- The school development plan lacks specificity but it has improved since the last inspection.
- Subject leaders manage well.
- The governors hold the school to account and know its strengths and weaknesses well.
- Best value principles are partially adhered to.

Commentary

25. The headteacher offers strong leadership and has high expectations of pupils and staff. Ninety-seven per cent of the parents' questionnaires reported the view that the school is well led. There is a keen emphasis on raising standards and this is effective in establishing a productive climate for learning. It is helping the large majority of pupils to achieve at least average for their age and many exceed this. Consequently, achievement and the school's effectiveness are good. Professional development has been promoted and managed well and new teachers have quickly adopted the school's systems and become effective. Professional development extends to teaching assistants and the school has gained "Investors in People" status. There are sound plans to provide time for teachers to plan, prepare and record assessments.
26. Teaching and learning are checked with regular systems and the outcomes are fed back and contribute to the school's good self-evaluations. From these, the actions needed for school improvements are formed into a development plan. Work has taken place on the key issues raised at the last inspection. For the most important ones, there has been significant progress, for example, in the provision for and standards in information and communication technology. However, for several minor issues progress has been more limited, for example, in the provision made for pupils' multi-cultural awareness and the quality of development planning. The current development plan lacks specificity about actions and clarity about how their impact will be evaluated. However, it does now allocate appropriate funding over a three-year period.
27. Teachers work hard to manage and provide for all the school's needs. They have little time for their roles as subject coordinators but are very aware of the major strengths and weaknesses and are able to make evaluations and prioritise within the whole school programme of improvements. A senior teacher has extra responsibilities often acting as a deputy headteacher.
28. The governing body carries out its duties well, overall. Governors contribute well to the school's overall aims and direction. They understand its main strengths and weaknesses well, partly through the headteacher's reports and partly through independent means such as visits to lessons. They are involved well with the school and satisfactorily question proposals. Most statutory duties are complied with but attendance figures are not adequately communicated to parents in the prospectus and this issue was raised at the last inspection. Governors oversee the school's finances and most understand the main features of the budget. However, the school's financial reports are not always sufficiently clear. Nevertheless, funding issues are planned on a three-year basis and specific grants are used for their purpose fully. Such financial

planning is leading to stable staffing and an effective education. Governors strive to obtain the best value for school expenditure but they seldom compare costs with similar schools.

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	284,376
Total expenditure	296,909
Expenditure per pupil	2,940

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	37,395
Balance carried forward to the next	24,862

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

29. Provision in the Foundation Stage is effective and gives the children a good start to their education. Admission to the Reception class is in the September of the year the child has their fifth birthday. Initially only those with birthdays before Christmas attend full time. The younger children become full time after Christmas or Easter depending on their birthday. Currently, there is a small group of Year 1 children in the same class. The majority of pupils have had some pre-school experience. Attainment on entry is broadly average but this varies from year to year. By the end of the Reception year, most children are on course to attain the early learning goals (the nationally recognised goals set for the achievement of children by the end of the Reception year). All children, including those with special educational needs achieve well and make at least good progress.
30. The quality of teaching is good with some very good teaching. The class teacher has a very good understanding of the needs of this age group, leading to the provision of a wide and appropriate range of worthwhile activities. This provision is closely linked to the early learning goals. Tasks are carefully matched to the relevant learning needs the children. This has a positive impact on their learning and helps them to concentrate. A strong emphasis is placed on developing all aspects of language and number skills. This is often through rhymes and songs. Questioning is used effectively to extend and reinforce learning. Very good relationships give the children the confidence to respond to adults and to share their thoughts. There is a good balance between directed and self-chosen activities that encourage the children to be independent. Assessment is used effectively to ensure all children are appropriately challenged. Teaching assistants provide valuable support for children with special educational needs but also to others.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in this area is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The welcoming environment helps children to settle quickly into the routines of school life.
- The adults' expectations of good behaviour have a beneficial effect on children's learning.
- A wide range of opportunities encourages the children to develop appropriate skills and achieve well.

Commentary

31. Achievement is good because of good teaching. Most children are on course to attain the expected levels by the end of the Reception year and standards are above average overall. The welcoming, interesting environment and the caring adult staff contribute positively to ensuring children settle quickly and adjust to the routines of school life. The majority of children live up to the expectation of good behaviour. Children have a positive attitude towards their tasks and activities. They are interested

and mostly remain focused on their tasks. A buzz of excitement pervades the classroom as children happily interact with each other. Children are happy, confident and willingly respond to adults' questions. They know they must take turns and listen to each other although occasionally some are a little too enthusiastic and call out. Many opportunities are provided for children to acceptable personal and social skills. The good team work of the adults provides the children with good role models of co-operation. Children play together sensibly and share equipment.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Provision in this area of learning is good, with very good features but aspects for improvement in writing.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Adults use every opportunity to develop children's communication skills.
- The quality of teaching is very good so children achieve well in speaking, listening and in reading.
- Standards in reading are above average but those in writing are below average.

Commentary

32. Very good teaching helps most children to attain or exceed the expected level in reading by the end of the Reception year. However, in writing, few children are on course to attain the expected level because they need more time to develop the necessary skills. This is despite an emphasis on the development of communication skills. All the children achieve well in speaking, listening and in reading, including those with special educational needs and make good progress. Many opportunities are provided for children to develop speaking and listening skills, to explore letter sounds, word recognition and writing. Members of staff use questioning very effectively to stimulate responses and many children are articulate, confident speakers who answer in whole sentences or phrases. A small group, however, find this is difficult. Children enjoy reading and sharing books. The teacher's expressive reading of a story captures the children's imagination and they are fascinated by the tale. This helps to foster a love of books; sharing books is an integral part of a literacy lesson. Children talk enthusiastically about books and all but the lower attaining children are confident, accurate readers for their age. These children are developing appropriate ways of working out unfamiliar words using letter sounds and picture clues. The lower attaining children are not so secure with letter sounds but can recognise some words chosen at random from their word list. Children are asked to write for different purposes, such as to retell a story, give instructions or write a diary. However, few are on course to achieve the expected levels because all but the higher attaining children are struggling to write independently.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in this area of learning is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Every opportunity is taken to extend children's confidence in understanding number through counting and number rhymes.
- Good teaching is leading to enthusiasm and interest.

Commentary

33. Effective teaching is leading to good achievement and above average standards. Most children are on course to attain the expected level and some will exceed these goals by the end of the Reception year. Children count confidently to 20 and many above 20 to 100, counting in twos and fives. They know how to write numbers such as 50, 60 and 100. They know "one more and one less" than a given number. Addition and

subtraction is understood by many children. Appropriate mathematical vocabulary is taught when necessary. Because of their enjoyment, the children learn well and make good progress. As well as the systematic and planned activities for numeracy, every opportunity is taken to reinforce children's learning at other times, for example, counting, number rhymes and action songs, or measuring the length of the outside area. All these activities provide children with a wide variety of experiences that enhance their number skills.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Provision in this area of learning is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- An interesting variety of practical experiences, visits and visitors enhance children's understanding of the world around them.

Commentary

34. Children are on course to attain the expected levels by the end of the Reception year and standards are above average overall. Because of the good teaching, all children, including those with special educational needs, achieve well and make good progress. Exciting opportunities are provided for children to explore the local environment, looking at natural objects and visiting Bury cathedral and museum. Visitors include grandmas who came to talk about their childhood toys and games, as part of a "Toys" topic. Children examine seeds under the microscope and are aware a magnifying glass will make things bigger. They are fascinated by the seeds in different fruits especially those of the melon. Because children have so many first-hand experiences their knowledge of the world around is greatly enhanced. Computer skills are developing well and many demonstrate good mouse control when moving objects round the scene or trying to draw fruit.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

35. There was no opportunity to observe any sessions in this area of learning so no judgements can be made about standards. However, planning shows appropriate provision for children to develop physical skills. There is photographic evidence of activities to develop children's pencil control, colouring in the lines and cutting skills.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

36. Only one music lesson was observed in this area of learning so it was not possible to make any judgements about standards overall. However, having seen the session, it was possible to judge standards in this subject. Many children are on course to attain the expected level by the end of the Reception year and a few will exceed. Children sing familiar songs from memory, with enthusiasm and keeping in tune well. Many can keep the beat as they provide an accompaniment to a song about the sea. There was no direct teaching in other areas of creative development observed. Displays show the range of media children have explored and their effective use.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- While stronger in reading, standards are above average overall.
- Very few pupils have attainment lower than that expected for their age.
- Progress in writing is variable in Years 2 and 3 but is satisfactory overall
- Pupils do not use their skills in handwriting throughout their written work in other subjects.

Commentary

37. Standards and achievement are good overall. The results of the Year 2 national tests for reading and writing were well above average. In comparison to similar schools, they were well above average for writing and average for reading. These were improvements since the previous year although the general picture is stronger for reading than writing. Over the last five years the Year 2 National test results have been above average, and more so for reading. The standards of the current Year 2 pupils are good and have improved since the last inspection in writing and been at least maintained in reading.
38. While there are no national comparisons for Year 4 pupils, the results of the 2004 optional tests showed good standards in reading and that the pupils had made satisfactory progress since Year 2. In writing, the optional test results were satisfactory but these pupils' progress since Year 2 had been weak. The inspection found there are some inconsistencies in progress in writing through Years 3 and 4, due to variable teaching. Nevertheless, the school's predictions for the current Year 4 pupils of English standards overall are very positive with a good number likely to achieve above average levels and a few at low levels.
39. In reading, very few pupils have standards below those expected nationally for their age and many read well. The pupils are taught consistently and challenged with some quite difficult reading material in terms of both words and meanings. They manage this well and even pupils with special educational needs are confident readers, with good strategies for reading difficult words and understanding which leads to good expression when reading aloud. Generally, the pupils are supported with their reading at home and at school because there are strong systems to encourage this. Pupils of Year 2 onwards know about book conventions and are able to use books to find facts, making good use of the library.
40. In writing, the pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2 so that they have a good knowledge of how to write and often do so with complex sentences. Teachers' marking encourages them and often shows ways to improve as do the targets set for pupils individually. Sometimes, the teachers do not insist that pupils use all their skills in other subjects. For example, the quality of pupils' handwriting is good in their handwriting books, but they seldom maintain this in other writing tasks. However, teaching is good and provides a good range of support.
41. The progress of pupils in Years 2 and 3 is varied in writing. The quality of teaching varies but is at least satisfactory. The pupils have a good range of different writing tasks, sometimes supporting their learning in other subjects. Marking and individual targets are effective as is the school's programme for spelling. Tasks are often challenging and interesting but the pupils' work is occasionally muddled. This is sometimes because the teachers are not always clear enough about what the pupils should learn next. The pupils' past work suggests there is sometimes insufficient time for them to concentrate and finish their written work.
42. The subject is led very well and the coordinator has introduced a number of successful strategies to improve progress in skills such as spelling. There is a very full programme of assessments made of pupils' attainment although day to day assessments do not always result in accurately matched work for all ability groups. For example, tasks for older pupils in mixed age classes are not consistently at a higher level. However, teachers have had a good degree of training and generally

have good subject knowledge. There is a good programme of checks of teachers' planning and pupils' work as well as lesson observations. These have been effective in maintaining the subject's strength and the pupils' standards. Nevertheless, there are no clear strategies to overcome the inconsistencies in progress in writing in Years 3 and 4.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

43. The school has worked to make more opportunities for pupils to use their literacy skills in other subjects. This is satisfactory overall but should be developed further. The pupils' handwriting skills are not sufficiently practised in other written work but many lessons use speaking and listening, reading and writing to support other subjects.

MATHEMATICS

The provision for mathematics is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in mathematics in Year 2 and Year 4 are above average.
- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good, so pupils achieve well.
- Although assessment procedures are very good insufficient use is made of the data to ensure all pupils are appropriately challenged.

Commentary

44. Standards in mathematics were well above average in the 2004 national tests for Year 2 and nearly half the pupils exceeded expectations. The results were well above the national average when compared to all schools nationally and above average when compared to similar schools. Current standards by the end of Year 2 are just above average, which is below last year's and reflects variations in attainment on entry rather than ineffectiveness in teaching. As the year groups are small, fluctuations in the number of pupils with special educational needs affects comparisons with other schools. This explains why standards have not remained consistently well above average over the years. By the end of Year 4, standards are currently above average with a small number of pupils working well above the expected level. Standards have improved since the previous inspection.
45. Given the broadly average attainment on entry, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are achieving well and making good progress. A very small group of pupils are achieving very well and making very good progress. These are the pupils consistently exceeding the expected level. Throughout the school there is an emphasis on learning and handling numbers, so pupils are confident to use their knowledge to solve problems. The work of the lower attaining pupils is of good quality because of the good support given and work that is carefully matched to their needs.
46. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic, so most pupils are well motivated and keen to succeed. The brisk quick-fire mental activities at the beginning of a lesson capture the pupils' interest. Very good relationships encourage pupils to respond to teachers' questions even if they are unsure of the answer. They are expected to explain how they solved a problem. This often produces a range of methods so pupils begin to appreciate that there is more than one way to solve a number problem. Learning intentions are shared with pupils but ways to be successful are not consistently highlighted. Consequently, pupils do not always understand what or why they are doing something. Practical tasks are enjoyed by all pupils. Although assessment procedures are very good, insufficient use is made of the data to ensure all pupils are appropriately challenged. This is often the case with higher attaining pupils and a possible reason for fewer pupils in Year 2

exceeding the expected level. Marking overall is good but not consistent in giving guidance to pupils on how they might improve.

47. The leadership role is presently being undertaken by the headteacher because of a teacher's absence. The subject is well managed. The monitoring role is clearly defined and carried out. Links are encouraged between other areas of the curriculum.

Mathematics across the curriculum

48. Mathematics is used effectively across the curriculum. Pupils collect data and turn this into graphs and this helps their learning in science and some aspects of geography. Their understanding of grids and grid references supports learning in geography. In practical work, such as in design and technology, pupils use their measuring skills.

SCIENCE

Provision for science is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is an effective emphasis on practical lessons, which help develop pupils' understanding of scientific methods.
- The work for more capable pupils sometimes lacks challenge.

Commentary

49. The assessments that teachers made of the Year 2 pupils' attainment in 2004, suggested that standards were below average. In comparison with similar schools, this was well below average. However, standards at the last inspection were found to be satisfactory. This inspection also found that throughout the school, the current pupils have satisfactory standards. The pupils learn about the different aspects of the subject largely through experiments, tests and observations. This is being effective in emphasising how scientific knowledge is gained. Consequently, pupils have a sound idea of making an experiment fair and of the need for careful observation and recording. The past work of Year 4 pupils reflects the practical nature of lessons. The standards these pupils achieve are in line with those expected for the age. The work of Year 2 pupils also shows satisfactory standards and that nearly all the pupils are achieving the expected level. The school's targets suggest improvements since last year.
50. Teachers often provide well written work-sheets, which help the pupils to be clear about what needs to be recorded. This support, and that of adults, enables pupils with special educational needs to learn well and make good progress. The work sheets and tasks provided for more capable pupils are more demanding but seldom prompt work at a higher level. For example, few pupils make generalisations from the conclusions of experiments. Consequently, there is some under-achievement and this is largely by more capable pupils.
51. Teachers' expertise and knowledge in the subject is generally satisfactory. Although there is little time available, planning and the pupils' work are reviewed. However, assessments systems are not used to enable a whole school view of standards, strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, the school improvement plan lacks the specificity to raise standards and to target weaknesses.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is good and a significant improvement since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The programme of work is well planned and it provides for all aspects of the subject.
- Standards are at least satisfactory overall because nearly all pupils achieve the expected standards for their age.
- Pupils and teachers are confident in the use of computers.

Commentary

52. Although few lessons were seen, judgements were possible with evidence from the pupils' past work, discussions with staff and observations and discussions with pupils in other lessons. Most pupils throughout the school have a capability that is at least commensurate with their age. Very few pupils do not achieve the standards expected. This is because provision is good with a well planned programme of competencies and understanding to be taught each term. This is complemented by a system of recording pupils' learning as well as progress sheets that outline detailed achievements of the learning objectives. The work of Year 2 pupils shows that a broad range of work has been experienced and that most pupils have achieved the expected level. A small amount of the work shows a level above that expected, for example, in retrieving and using data that was saved, in the form of a graph. The work in Year 4 shows that nearly all the pupils have achieved competence in a wide range of aspects. Very occasionally there is work that suggests a high level of capability, for example, in the presentation of ideas using images drawn from the internet. Overall, the pupils achieve well and the evidence seen shows standards that are at least satisfactory.
53. The school and its teachers are now confident and capable in the teaching of the subject. Lessons are well prepared and involve demonstration and explanation of the basic control of various programs and their use. Computers are available in each classroom and, although these were not used fully during the inspection, the pupils have a good amount of work and examples of this are printed and sometimes displayed. Where used, teachers, and pupils, operated interactive whiteboards effectively and this supported others' learning. Since the last inspection, the subject receives more time. Leadership is good and it is helping to raise the profile and use of the subject throughout the school.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

54. While classroom computers were not used fully during the inspection, there is work showing that pupils do use computers to support other lessons. Graphs in mathematics and geography and work in art is evident. Furthermore, the school now has a good supply of appropriate program software that can enable use in other subjects. The school's priority in this aspect is evident and improvements are being made. Currently, this aspect has improved and it is satisfactory.

HUMANITIES

55. Although **history** was not a focus of the inspection, the pupils' work shows an appropriate coverage and range of experiences. The pupils are developing the skills of enquiry and they are given opportunities for research. Pupils use the internet and books to find information. Very good teaching was seen in one lesson where pupils were exploring what rationing meant to families during World War II. Examples of the rations had been brought in by the teacher, which fascinated the pupils. They then made biscuits that did not need fresh eggs. The lesson was well planned and all pupils were well focused and interested in their tasks. A recent visit to Duxford provided valuable support for the pupils' learning.
56. There was no opportunity to see **geography** as the subject is taught in half termly blocks with history. The focus for this half term is history. Looking at pupils work showed an appropriate coverage and developing skills. The local area is used to enhance the pupils' understanding of geography.

Religious education

Provision for religious education is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have a good knowledge of Christianity, but are not so secure when asked about other faiths.
- Resources are adequate for Christianity but limited for other faiths.
- Good use is made of the local church and vicar to enhance pupils' understanding of Christianity.

Commentary

57. Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 4 are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils talk confidently about Christianity explaining the importance of Jesus and the bible. They are familiar with the Christmas and Easter stories and Jesus' teachings. The Year 4 pupils understand the relevance of the Communion service and its connection with the Last Supper. However, when asked about other faiths they had studied, most find it difficult to recall much information. They remember looking some aspects, such as Diwali but not the story of Rama and Sita on which the festival is based. Planning shows evidence of input about other faiths.
58. The pupils' work shows limited opportunities to develop literacy skills. There are examples of pupils' own writing and thoughts but this aspect of recording is an area for improvement. Only one lesson was seen. The lesson seen was good. The pupils were interested and respectful of other faiths. Questioning was used effectively to explore what pupils' know but opportunities were missed to extend their understanding of books special to other religions. At the end of each unit pupils are asked questions to check their knowledge. The subject leader is enthusiastic and interested. Planning and pupils' work are checked but opportunities to observe teaching limited. Resources are adequate to support learning about Christianity but are not so for other faiths. Although pupils visit the local church, they have not been to other places of worship. This is an area for further development.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

59. There was no opportunity to observe any lessons in **design and technology**, so no judgements could be made about standards. However, the pupils' books show that their understanding of design technology is being developed appropriately. Recording illustrated how pupils' begin with planning the task and then designing the model. Once the model is complete they evaluate the results, suggesting improvements.
60. Only one lesson of **physical education** was seen and despite additional discussions with pupils and teachers there was insufficient evidence for judgements to be made. The lesson seen for a Year 3 and 4 class was well taught and gave good enjoyment. Its focus was on problem solving and entailed running and stretching. The pupils engaged in strenuous activity well. In discussion, pupils discussed such problem solving activities as a major part of their physical education. Although the long term plan is designed to promote all aspects of the programme of study, there was insufficient evidence of this. The subject is well liked by pupils.
61. No lessons of **art and design** were seen and judgements cannot be made. The subject is planned for appropriately and some wall displays suggest that there are good links with other subjects. Displays indicate that pupils have learnt a number of interesting techniques with some good work about famous artists' styles. Some teachers would like to see more materials and resources.

Music

The provision for music is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is good overall.
- Using the skills of a music specialist is effectively promoting pupils' enjoyment in the subject.

Commentary

62. Standards in music at the end of both Year 2 and Year 4 are inline with expectations for the pupils' ages. Although all elements of music are taught only certain elements were seen in lessons. Standards of singing are as expected for the age groups although one Year 3/4 class was able to sustain a very simple three part vocal phrase, which is better than the expected standard. Pupils in Year 2 sing in tune and enjoy adding percussion to accompany a song. They keep the beat and play the instruments correctly. Some pupils in Year 4 sing with enthusiasm and interest pitching the notes well. However, others do not participate or concentrate and this detracts from the overall effect. Similarly, some Year 4 pupils are skilled at keeping the beat whereas others find this difficult because of lack of concentration.
63. The quality of teaching overall is good. The use of teacher expertise helps to promote learning and pupils' enjoyment. This provision has recently been introduced and its effectiveness on raising standards has yet to be evaluated. A variety of activities is provided for the pupils to develop their interest in the subject. Lessons are brisk and keep most pupils' well focused. Occasionally a small group of pupils is less well focused and this detracts from learning. There are opportunities for pupils to learn the recorder, take part in the Bury Festival, be involved in the church Flower festival and perform in school productions. All these help to enhance the pupils' music experiences and extend their understanding.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

64. No lessons were seen in this subject and judgements cannot be made. However, there is a programme of lessons, which are held weekly. The school council supports pupils' sense of responsibility and helps the school gain their views. Pupils in the Reception class make rapid progress in personal, social and educational development. Assemblies and class lessons continue to provide for pupils to develop their skills and attitudes to others. The school has built a "ball wall" on the playground to provide additional interest at playtimes and midday meals supervisors have access to training. There are advanced plans to make links with a school in Ghana. However, provision to develop pupils' multi-cultural awareness is not yet strong enough.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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