

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **POT KILN PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Butt Road, Sudbury

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124536

Headteacher: Mrs J Parsons

Lead inspector: Mrs Margaret Hulme

Dates of inspection: 14<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> March 2005

Inspection number: 267508

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school: First  
School category: Community  
Age range of pupils: 3 - 9  
Gender of pupils: Mixed  
Number on roll: 184  
School address: Butt Road  
Great Cornard  
Sudbury  
Suffolk  
Postcode: CO10 0DS  
Telephone number: (01787) 372 107  
Fax number: (01787) 376 474  
Appropriate authority: The governing body  
Name of chair of Mr K O'Connell  
governors:  
Date of previous 21<sup>st</sup> September 1998  
inspection:

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

Pot Kiln is a smaller than average sized school for children aged three to nine years and has 184 children registered, including 33 children in the nursery who attend part-time and 18 children in the reception class who are full-time. The school roll is lower now than at the last inspection and numbers in year groups have led to the present reorganisation of mixed age classes. The school is in an area of mature local authority housing recognised as one of social deprivation. Most children are of white British heritage. There are still few families from minority ethnic groups and currently the school does not have any children for whom English is believed not to be the first language. The proportion of children registered for free school meals (25 per cent) is much higher than the national average. There are 33 per cent of children with special educational needs, including three who have statements of specific need. Special educational needs are wide ranging and include emotional and behavioural difficulties, moderate learning, speech and communication, dyslexia, autistic and physical difficulties. The school works with the challenge of poor attainment on entry; communication and language skills and personal development being the weakest elements. This is a barrier to achievement. The number of pupils moving in and out of the area is fairly low, with four joining and ten leaving other than at the start and end of the last school year. A number of initiatives have been introduced to support different groups of children including: a nurture group that operates three mornings per week to support those learning to behave in socially acceptable ways, a gym trail for ten children, a breakfast club which is targeted at children needing to come to school early for additional literacy work and a homework club to support those with special educational needs whose parents have difficulty helping with targets. In the last four years the school has had a new headteacher. There have been several changes of staff owing to retirement or promotion and the school works with the challenge of being in an area where recruitment is difficult. In the last four

years much refurbishment and development has taken place, which governors and parents support.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3609	Mrs M Hulme	Lead inspector	Foundation Stage Information and communication technology Art and design Music
9942	Mrs S Stevens	Lay inspector	
29995	Mrs M Walker	Team inspector	English Science Design and technology History Special educational needs
21858	Rev D J Pryor	Team inspector	Mathematics Religious education Geography Physical education

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **very effective school** that does very well for its children and is particularly successful with the large numbers who have special educational needs. There is strong, yet caring, leadership. The key to its success is the commitment of staff and governors to provide for all aspects of children's development. This is an exciting place to be and the committed teaching, wide-ranging curriculum and purposeful leadership are the main reasons that children achieve as well as they do. The school provides very good value for money.

#### The main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve very well because teaching, learning and assessment are very good.
- Staff and governors support the headteacher's very good leadership very effectively.
- The curriculum makes children's learning relevant and meets their needs very successfully.
- The exemplary provision for children with special educational needs results in very good progress.
- Standards have improved and are better than expected for the children's age in English, mathematics, science, ICT<sup>1</sup>, religious education and art and design.
- In the Foundation Stage, nursery provision is not yet as good as that for reception children.
- There is a wonderfully caring and supportive ethos that provides a firm foundation for children's personal development.
- The very effective partnership with parents, other schools and the community makes a positive contribution to children's learning.
- There is still too much unauthorised absence.

#### How the effectiveness of the school has changed since the previous inspection

The school has made good progress since the last inspection in 1998. The issues in the last report have been tackled successfully. Standards have improved in English, mathematics, science, ICT, religious education and art and design. Provision for those with special educational needs has improved and is now exemplary. Teaching has improved resulting in very good achievement. New initiatives and better planning of the curriculum result in successful learning. Provision in the nursery is improving. The school is continuing to try and reduce unauthorised absence.

#### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

<sup>1</sup> Information and communication technology.

Children's achievement is **very good** overall. The very good teaching and leadership are the main reasons children achieve as well as they do. In national tests, those children capable of reaching the expected standards for their age do so and many more do better in reading, writing and mathematics despite the very low attainment on entry to school. As can be seen from the table above, results in writing and mathematics are well above the standards expected by Year 2 and in reading they are above when compared with similar schools. Although children start school with fewer skills in language, literacy and numeracy than are expected for their age, they make steady progress in the nursery and then this speeds up in the reception class and many children, but not all, will reach the goals they are expected to reach in the areas of learning by the end of the reception year. Children build well on the knowledge, skills and understanding they have at Year 2 and continue to achieve very well in Years 3 and 4. Children with special educational needs make very good progress because they are very well provided for. The school is making good efforts to improve standards in other subjects and is achieving some success. There is no distinction between standards or achievement of boys and girls or between that of children from ethnic minorities with others.

**Pupils' personal qualities are very good and are supported by their very good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.** Children have very good attitudes to their work and their behaviour is very good. The orderly and harmonious community means that bullying is rare. An atmosphere has been created where values and beliefs are respected. Attendance has improved and is close to the national average but there is too much unauthorised absence. There have been no exclusions.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education is very good.** Teaching is **very good** and the very effective relationships and high expectations that children will work hard and do their best encourage effective learning. The curriculum is very good overall and provides very well for most groups of children but the nursery is not yet as well provided for as other areas. A very good range of additional learning opportunities enriches the curriculum. Care, welfare and support are very good and contribute to the very good achievement. Children benefit from the very good links with parents, other schools and the community because the activities contribute successfully to their achievement.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership and management of the school are **very good**, stemming from a strong, caring and dynamic headteacher who leads the staff team very successfully. She benefits from the very effective leadership of key staff and good challenge and support from governors. Management is good because the school is committed to a rigorous self-evaluation and continually refines its practice in the light of new initiatives and responses from children, staff, governors, parents and outside agencies. The school is governed well and governors keep in close touch with the school's work. Governors comply with statutory requirements. Staff and resources are used very effectively and decisions are made with improved standards in mind and in consultation with parents and children.

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

Parents have very positive views of the school and are well satisfied with the quality of education it provides and the standards their children achieve. Pupils enjoy coming to school, self-esteem is high because they are listened to and they contribute effectively to the school community.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

This very effective school knows where further improvement is needed to raise standards and has planned for it. Although provision for the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall, the nursery is not at the same high level as the reception class.

**The most important things the school should do now are:**

- improve the organisation, teaching and curriculum in the nursery and the teaching assistant support for the teacher; and
- continue working with parents and outside agencies to reduce unauthorised absence.

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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

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

Children's achievement is **very good** overall and there is no significant difference between boys and girls. Standards in English, mathematics and science are better than expected for the children's age by Year 2 and in Year 4.

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

- The very good teaching and leadership are the main reasons children achieve so well.
- In national tests, those children capable of reaching the expected standards for their age do so and many more do better in reading, writing and mathematics despite the very low attainment on entry to school.
- Children with special educational needs make very good progress because they are very well provided for.
- The school is making good efforts to improve standards in other subjects. The standards in ICT, religious education and art and design have all improved since the last inspection.

#### **Commentary**

##### *Foundation Stage*

1. When children start school in the nursery, their knowledge, understanding and skills are often limited. The evidence shows that attainment on entry is well below that expected for the children's age and they have particular difficulties in the areas of communication, language and literacy, and their personal development. The proportion of children with learning difficulties influences the standards reached in the areas of learning by the end of the reception year. Last year, the Foundation Stage profiles clearly indicated that only two children were reaching standards that were better than expected for their age and a third of the class had special educational needs. Teachers' assessments show that those who have had three terms in reception do best and are likely to reach the goals expected in all areas of learning. This year children are making steady progress in the nursery and achieving satisfactorily but the reception children are achieving very well because they are well settled into routines and respond very well to the methods used to improve standards. Teachers make considerable efforts to extend social skills, with an emphasis on speaking and listening because it is evident that listening is a weakness. The majority, but not all, are working at expected levels in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and physical development. Children are likely to reach most of the expected goals in these areas of learning by the end of the reception year. About a third of the current class are likely to do better because they are close to working at the early National Curriculum levels.
2. Those with special educational needs or from minority ethnic groups progress at the same rate as others because they are in small classes and have the individual support they need. This is particularly beneficial during the mornings when well-trained,

experienced teaching assistants are available. Teachers plan well for them so that the activities provided meet their specific needs.

### *National tests*

3. There is some variation in results in national tests from year to year, depending on the number of pupils with special educational needs<sup>2</sup>. This year there are 33 per cent on the SEN register. The average points scores for 2004 as seen in the table below, clearly show that results for this year group were not as good in reading and mathematics as in the previous year, which is mainly attributable to higher numbers of SEN children and a period of instability caused by staff illness. However, standards are better now than they were at the last inspection in 1998 and there is no distinction between the achievement or standards of boys and girls.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	15.9 (17.0)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	15.6 (15.6)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	16.6 (17.9)	16.2 (16.3)

*There were 38 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

4. Good teaching and effective support have enabled those who have the capability to reach the expected, and sometimes higher, standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Given the starting point, these children achieved very well. When these results are compared with schools that have similar numbers of children registered for free school meals, they show that writing and mathematics are well above standards expected for age and reading is above. The teachers' assessments for science show some improvement since the last inspection and over the last few years. Comparison with similar schools shows the result as better than expected for the children's age. The trend of improvement for reading, writing and mathematics was above the national trend.

### *Inspection findings*

5. Inspection findings show that in lessons and in samples of written work, standards in English, mathematics and science are better than expected for the children's age overall by the end of Year 2 and in Year 4. The secure foundations at the end of the reception year are built on as children move through the school so that, by the end of Year 2, all children achieve very well and make good progress. The school recognises that development to raise standards is essential and intends to carry on using the many innovations introduced, such as the nurture group to improve behaviour, building children's self-esteem by giving them a "can do" view of life through the PSHE<sup>3</sup> programme and the superb support for those with SEN that have proved so successful in raising standards over the last four years. Homework club provides support for those whose parents are unable to provide it and breakfast club exists to provide additional literacy support before lessons begin. The changes made to raise standards have been highly effective. This is largely due to the total consistency of approach by staff and the leadership that has relentlessly kept its eye on learning.

<sup>2</sup> Special educational needs.

<sup>3</sup> Personal, social and health education.

6. Given the few literacy skills that most children have when they start, the school has worked hard at this subject, giving it priority because it opens the door to so many other subjects. Consequently, children do particularly well in literacy, and the effective use of supportive adults means that even the slower learners make effective progress. Factors contributing to this success are the very good subject leadership, teachers' use of innovative ideas to keep children interested and an extensive range of good quality resources.
7. Standards in ICT have improved and, by the end of Year 2, children's capability is good. This is a good improvement since the last inspection. As no lessons were seen with Years 3 and 4, no overall judgement can be made about standards in the junior classes, but the samples of work and discussions with children indicate that standards match those of the infant classes.
8. Standards in religious education at the end of both Year 2 and Year 4 are better than expected for the children's age and work meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. The children's learning about religions is good because of good quality teaching. Because children start from a very low level of knowledge and understanding of the world, their achievement is very good.
9. Standards in art and design by Year 2 and in Year 4 are better than might be expected for the children's age. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The samples of work and displays around the school show children particularly benefit from contact with artists and craftspeople.
10. Those children with special educational needs achieve very well because of the regular, high quality adult support they receive in lessons and through the very well considered individual or small group activities or opportunities for support beyond the school day that are put into place to meet their individual needs so meticulously. As a result of this and the earliest identification of each one's specific needs and very close tracking of their learning, many make very good progress towards their own targets.

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

Provision for children's personal development is **very good, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**. Children's attitudes and behaviour are **very good**. Attendance is satisfactory and close to the national average.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The very good provision for PSHE underpins the very good ethos of the school.
- The majority of the children behave very well, are interested in lessons and work hard.
- The relationships between children and with staff are very good because expectations are consistent, and rewards and sanctions are fair. The school is a harmonious community.
- The incidence of unauthorised absences is still higher than in other schools nationally.

### **Commentary**

11. The style and content of PSHE with citizenship focus on the needs of individual children. It strongly influences the extensive planning and efficient teaching of all the activities and considerable time is given to developing the skills needed for learning and relating to people both in school and later in adult life. This contributes very positively to the children's high levels of achievement as well as their very good relationships and behaviour.

12. In the Foundation Stage, most children start school with a very low level of social and personal development but an effective programme of work has resulted in them being on line to meet the goals they are expected to reach in personal, social and emotional development by the end of the reception year. The majority have now settled into routines, share and take turns, show trust and respect for the teacher and are eager to try new skills although a few are still finding this difficult in the nursery.
13. Most children now behave very well both in class and around the school. They are interested in lessons and enjoy the work planned for them. Incidents of difficult behaviour are decreasing because of the care provided through such initiatives as the nurture group and the very good provision for those with educational or behavioural difficulties. Such incidents as do occur are very effectively and swiftly managed. The school promotes self-respect and willingness to accept responsibilities very well through activities such as the school council, which has a real and active involvement in improvements made in the school and in the community. The very good relationships which exist between children and adults are the result of the consistent and high expectations of the staff and the fairness of rewards and sanctions. Class rules are discussed and agreed at the beginning of each school year by the children who then feel committed to observing them. The school actively promotes harmony in the school through systems such as "Circle Time" for open and free discussion, and the buddy system at playtime. The extension of the roles of teaching assistants in playtime supervision has improved this aspect of the children's experience of school and because they are actively involved, not only are the rare examples of bullying or harassment dealt with very effectively, but also they are becoming rarer.
14. Several subjects provide well for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and in particular the teaching of religious education contributes very well. The attention paid to enriching the children's breadth of experiences through a wide range of visits and interesting visitors contributes well to spiritual development. Good examples are seen in such events as a visitor from the Sikh temple extended learning about a Sikh wedding and dancing with Masai warriors who explained the important part played by singing, dancing and drumming in celebrating the world of the living in religion. Exciting creative activities and the challenge of a residential visit supplemented by religious experience in collective worship contribute effectively to good spiritual development. Children are self-assured and made aware of their rights and responsibilities as members of the community. The provision made for the children's moral development is very good. They become aware of what constitutes right and wrong behaviour and through discussions learn to make moral judgements. Children make very good progress in developing social skills and the knowledge of how to live as members of a community. Provision for their cultural development is very good. Children take part in exciting and interesting experiences drawn from a range of cultures, such as dance and stories from East Africa and art from India as well as stories, music and dance with a European or British origin.

**Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (94.2%)**

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.6	School data	1.2
National data	5.1	National data	0.4

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

15. Children come to school willingly. The majority attend well and some have excellent patterns of attendance. The school's very good procedures, together with support from the Education Welfare Officer, have resulted in an improved attendance rate, but the rate for unauthorised absence is still higher than other schools nationally because of the poor attendance of a few children from a very few families. There have been no exclusions recorded in the last year.

**QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The quality of education is **very good**, reflecting the strong teaching and learning and innovative curriculum that is very relevant to the needs of the children. Overall teaching is **very good**, with a significant proportion of good teaching. The curriculum is **very good** and offers an interesting range of extra-curricular activities that are well attended. The links with parents, other schools and the community are **very good**, resulting in an effective partnership from which children benefit.

## Teaching and learning

Overall, teaching is **very good** and impacting very positively on children's learning and standards. The quality of assessment of children's work is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership provides very good direction for the teaching and learning.
- There is very good teamwork and a consistent approach to lessons.
- The very good relationships established between teachers and children give a firm foundation for learning and motivate most children to make their best efforts.
- In the Foundation Stage, the provision in the nursery is not as good as in reception.
- The innovative methods are an important factor in how well children achieve.
- The thorough system of assessment ensures an appropriate response to the needs of individuals and influences the teachers' planning of lessons.

### Commentary

#### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 30 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
2 (7%)	11 (37%)	12 (40%)	5 (17%)	0 (0%)	0 (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.*

16. The teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now a school strength. The quality of teaching is very good overall with a significant amount of good teaching and two lessons which were outstanding. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. In those lessons judged as satisfactory rather than good, children were sometimes expected to sit longer than their concentration would allow, were unsure about what they had to do in activities and had no adult to help them, or the organisation of activities limited progress. Occasionally, a few children with behavioural difficulties were not always responsive to directions and the teacher had to take time to show why they needed to improve their work so pace slowed.
17. There are many strengths in teaching but the one that has made a particular impact on children's learning is the very effective teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants, strongly promoted by the headteacher. All adults expect children to work hard, but because the skills of both teachers and the teaching assistants are used extremely well, it results in a consistent approach to activities; thus children feel secure and make good efforts. Teamwork extends outside the classroom because the staff co-operate well together in planning work and build effectively on previous learning.

18. The very good relationships, which have been established between teachers and children, are a motivating force for improving learning. Teachers listen carefully to children, who know their contributions are valued, and this makes them eager to do their best work. Activities are matched carefully to their needs and, in lessons, enjoyment is evident; children are totally absorbed. This was demonstrated well in a literacy lesson for Year 3 and 4 children because the teacher stimulated thinking and enthused them in their persuasive letter writing with her lively questioning, use of humour and hot seating. They responded well to her constant challenge of why they should not be eaten by the wolf and some unexpected responses from the teacher acting as the wolf made them think hard about how to survive.
19. The very effective teaching at the Foundation Stage in the reception class gives children a good start towards achieving the goals expected for children at this age. Considerable care and patience is taken to help them settle into class routines because they lack many social skills when they start school. They learn quickly from watching and listening to the teacher who is such a good role model and uses her knowledge and skills very effectively to support children's learning. However, in the nursery, provision is not so good because there have been several changes of teacher, due to recruitment difficulties. In addition, the problems with the accommodation, which has work areas where children cannot be seen, makes it more difficult to teach this age group, particularly when the lessons lack full-time help from a teaching assistant. Some equipment is out of date, such as the water and sand containers used indoors and the painting area which gives insufficient space to work. The teacher is right to provide activities where children can experiment and explore but a better balance between teacher directed tasks and child-selected ones is needed if nursery children are to achieve as well as those in reception.
20. The innovative methods used are very appropriate for the children and are succeeding in driving up standards to the point that despite the very low attainment on entry and the high proportion of children with special educational needs, the majority reach satisfactory standards for their age by Year 2 and many do better. Under the guidance of the headteacher, the teachers try to ensure that all learning is relevant and useful to children's everyday lives and will have a positive impact on preparing them for life in a changing world. The headteacher's purposeful leadership has encouraged such initiatives as providing breakfast for children who need additional literacy support so they are nourished before using the time before school starts for this additional work. The work of the nurture group has improved the behaviour of children from Years 1 and 2 to the point where they can now cope in the whole-class group with work that others do too. The dedication of the SEN co-ordinator has ensured that learning activities are carefully matched to the capabilities of all children. Teachers are expected to encourage the very best from their learning and include them completely in all activities, so children with special educational needs do very well. The strong teamwork of teachers and the many very skilled teaching assistants are extremely influential in helping the children achieve so successfully.
21. Teachers' assessment of children's work is very good. There is an effective policy to provide guidance and the headteacher ensures consistent implementation. Systems for recording progress and daily assessment are well established and used to plan the next stage of learning. Assessments of children's ability on entry and Foundation Stage Profiles which are completed by the end of the Reception Year influence planning and identify children's specific needs. The daily ongoing assessments are now fed into profiles. In other classes the regular assessments and tests are used to inform planning and track progress. Work in all subjects is marked, has teacher comments and targets for improvement. The school improvement plan has identified further development to improve effectiveness. This includes revision of policies, the simplifying of data and involvement of children in self-evaluation, all of which is now

happening. Following an Ofsted evaluation of literacy, the school has taken action on the recommendation to improve the organisation of the considerable data collected so it is more easily accessed by staff to use in tracking progress. Children know how well they are doing and teachers tell them how to improve. All assessment data are shared with governors to extend their knowledge of strengths and weaknesses.

## The curriculum

The breadth of curricular opportunities is **very good** overall. **Very good** enrichment opportunities support the curriculum. The accommodation and resources are **very good** overall.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is particularly relevant to the needs of all children who achieve very well.
- Children with special educational needs do very well because provision is very thoroughly planned.
- Pupils' very strong personal development is an important factor in their very good achievement.
- The curriculum very successfully enriches learning and widens children's experiences.
- Most rooms and outdoor areas are attractive and imaginatively used, creating a lively environment for learning, but the nursery needs some updating.

## COMMENTARY

22. This is a school that is dedicated to providing a high-quality, vibrant curriculum that is fundamentally meeting the needs of all its children very well. It promotes children's self-esteem, confidence, thinking skills and creativity that enable them all to achieve so well. In meeting all the statutory requirements, the curriculum is full of interest and first-hand learning that very thoughtfully extends the children's experiences, bringing enjoyment and relevance to lessons and developing skills that will serve children very well beyond their time in the school. An improved curriculum since the last inspection, it is constantly reviewed and the impact of the provision evaluated to prepare children very well for the next steps in their education. Innovations and new ideas are very carefully explored and, when introduced, are managed very effectively. Improving the quality of the curriculum for all children is key to the many changes introduced. Changes to the start of the school day now establish a calm and respectful atmosphere in which learning can begin.
23. The provision for the large number of children with special educational needs is very good and enables them to achieve very well, often from a low starting point. The very early identification of concerns about learning triggers an extremely thorough process that ensures the most appropriate help is given, progress is regularly tracked and reviewed and action taken as each child's needs change. Support is wide-ranging and includes the new and very successful nurture group, and intensive literacy and spelling groups, all building children's confidence and developing essential basic skills. Individual targets are very clear and precise. High-quality support from very skilled and knowledgeable teaching assistants working in close partnership with teachers is an important factor in the very good progress children make. When any child has specific gifts or talents, these are recognised and extending their opportunities is an exciting school priority.
24. There have been improvements to the Foundation Stage, particularly outdoors and in the reception area. Now there is greater consistency in planning and activities are

firmly based on the areas of learning and the goals children need to reach by the end of the reception year. However, instability in the staffing of the nursery compared with the reception class has resulted in less good provision for the nursery than for other areas of the school. This is an area for attention, given the very low attainment when children start school.

25. Permeating the curriculum is the very strong emphasis on the development of PSHE - a driving force for all learning and an essential and relevant part of the curriculum. A well-structured programme of lessons and times for sharing ideas and discussing issues results in confident, thinking children with positive attitudes to learning. The "*Learning Together*" programme involves parents very well as partners in their children's learning. The quiet supportive atmosphere for the nurture group very successfully focuses on developing key social skills, particularly for those with behavioural difficulties. In lessons and in the work of the school council, children learn at first hand what it means to be a responsible citizen.
26. Providing many stimulating and creative activities to enrich children's learning is a vital part of the curriculum. Visits to places of interest, visitors such as artists, poets and authors and members of other faiths share their expertise and extend children's learning. Theme days for literacy and history are among each year's programme of events that help make learning fun. A short residential visit offers new and exciting challenges as well as the chance to study a different geographical area. After-school clubs, including choir and games, are well attended. Summer swimming groups help younger ones swim early and older children celebrate with a gala.
27. The very best use is made of the school's spacious accommodation, which is very clean, well cared for and well organised. Rooms used for specific teaching, such as ICT, music or art, make a very significant contribution to the good standards achieved. The outside area is well used, the courtyard garden providing a quiet, secluded area. The Foundation Stage outside area, which is shared by the nursery and reception class is now very well equipped and provides a safe and stimulating space for imaginative play and physical challenge.

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

Children's care, welfare, health and safety are **very good** overall. Provision of support, advice and guidance based on monitoring is **very good**. Involvement of children through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school shows consistent, genuine concern for the children and staff have close trusting relationships with them.
- Children receive very good support, guidance and advice because the information that staff gather about their personal development is used very effectively.
- Very consistent, meticulous procedures ensure that any risk of harm is minimised.
- The children have a real voice in the work of the school through the school council.

## Commentary

28. Throughout the school, staff form very good relationships with the children and show genuine concern for their wellbeing and happiness. There are very effective arrangements that take all reasonable measures to ensure that all risks of harm to children's welfare are minimised. The school is very vigilant about child protection and any concerns are dealt with promptly if they arise. The sense of being valued in school helps children concentrate on their lessons, knowing they are listened to and respected for their views. The school has a good relationship with the local social services and helps in supporting any family difficulties. The school works to agreed local policies and procedures in full partnership with other local agencies when acting on concerns about the welfare of any child. The school provides very well for the health and safety of the children. Procedures are well documented and practices are consistent and thorough.
29. The school works hard to form close, trusting relationships with the children. There are good induction procedures for children in the Foundation Stage. This enables staff to get to know them well and helps the very young to settle in before they begin school. Teachers have high levels of understanding of the children's needs and are very caring and sensitive in their relationships. Children in school who experience social and emotional difficulties are very well supported in the nurture group, which boosts their self-esteem and confidence. The staff are consistent in their use of rewards and sanctions so children know exactly where they stand and what is expected of them. All staff work together as a strong pastoral team playing an important role with the headteacher in understanding and supporting children as individuals. Children with specific learning needs are very thoughtfully supported in their learning. The quality of care is greatly enhanced by the ways in which the school is constantly aware of each child's needs and how they may change over time and takes action to provide so effectively for them. When a statement of special educational need is awarded, the statutory requirements are met and the provision is fully and thoughtfully implemented. The guidance and advice of other professionals is regularly sought and their expertise highly respected.
30. The school council meets regularly to talk about anything that affects what goes on in the school and is a respected forum for children to express their views. The school is consistent in seeking children's ideas and carries out surveys to find out what they would like to see changed, improved or introduced, such as the quiet area project and enhancing the buddy scheme. The council has been active in promoting an anti-bullying policy, producing a pamphlet to focus on younger children in the school and providing a 'listening ear' as buddies. Suggestion boxes are provided in all rooms, which encourage children of all ages to be involved in the daily life of the school and to take pride in being part of what is happening in their school.

## Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has a **very good** and effective partnership with parents and other schools. There are **good** links with the local community.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school works hard to develop a close working relationship with parents, who are generally very satisfied with the work of the school and value the contribution it makes to their children's development.
- The school regularly seeks parents' views which contribute to the decision-making.
- The effective links with other schools and the community extend children's learning.
- The range of information is very good and keeps parents up to date on their children's progress.

## **Commentary**

31. The school has a strong commitment to partnerships with parents and they, in turn, have a high opinion of the school. Parents and carers find the school welcoming and no parent who responded to the inspection questionnaire felt uncomfortable about approaching the school when necessary. Staff endeavour to discuss any problems or concerns with them as they arise and the presence of the headteacher at the entrance before school each day leads to much informal dialogue with parents on a daily basis. She can discuss personal matters that affect their children so staff are well informed and consequently provide very well for the children's individual needs. Parents welcome the open relationships and express confidence in the work of the school.
32. The school surveys parental opinion very regularly in many aspects of its work, such as the anti-bullying policy, homework and the new format for the progress reports. Responses are readily forthcoming and staff listen carefully to what parents tell them and use this information effectively when making decisions.
33. The school is at the centre of the local community. The Friends' Association organises events and welcomes members of the local community to such social events as discos and the annual fair. Parents also contribute to the children's charity fund-raising efforts, such as a recent sponsored walk. The school has tried hard to establish links with local businesses and the school council has taken part in discussions concerning the development of the local community centre. Links between the school and its associated schools are very strong; resources and experience are shared to tackle common difficulties or discuss new trends. Pupils enjoy the use of specialised equipment, such as microscopes for science studies or musical instruments. Arrangements for the transfer of pupils to the middle school are good and made smoother by the strength of these established links.
34. Information provided for parents is of very good quality, well focused and user-friendly. The school's brochure and governors' annual report are informative and attractive; they meet all legal requirements. Annual reports on children's progress provide very good, comprehensive information describing clearly what their child can do and where there is a need for improvement. Meetings are held at which parents can discuss their children's work with teachers or they can ask to see teachers at any other time convenient for both the school and parent. Parents of children with special educational needs are kept fully informed and are included in discussions as soon as any needs are identified. Parents are involved in agreeing new behaviour targets as necessary. The school's provision of a breakfast club, as part of supporting those needing additional literacy work, and the after-school homework club has been well received by children and parents. Although many parents are able to help their children with learning at home, those without such parental support can now complete this homework after school. Because parents receive very good information about school life and their children's progress, they place great trust in what goes on there.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Overall, the leadership and management of the school are **very good**. The very good leadership reflects the contributions by the headteacher and key staff. The very good management reflects the commitment to self-evaluation. The school is governed effectively and provides **very good** value for money.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher has created the climate where learning is at the heart of the school.
- The purposeful leadership of the headteacher, well supported by staff, provides firm direction for the work of the school.
- The leadership and management of special educational needs are exemplary.
- Financial management is very good because managers use their budgets to promote standards, achievement and the quality of education.
- The school is clearly committed to effective self-review and has established a range of activities that contribute to the process.

### **Commentary**

35. The leadership of the school is very good. The headteacher has created the climate where learning is at the heart of the school. Her drive and determination have led to effective learning for those regarded as some of the more challenging children in this area. The patterns of change to raise standards have been successful and the leadership has kept a rigorous eye on learning. The staff, parents, children and governors have confidence and trust in the headteacher. In her confident determination to help all the children achieve as well as they can, she has ensured that staff generally have the support they need to do a good job and recognises that more help is needed in the nursery. All staff set a very good example to the children, especially in creating very secure, caring relationships throughout the school. The school ethos particularly reflects the very genuine concern to make children and their families feel this is a desirable place for children to learn, where they will achieve as well as they can. It is well placed to improve further. The subject leaders play an important part in developing and managing their responsibilities well. They understand the strengths and areas for development. The very good use made of the analysis of data from their assessments and from national tests has helped them to know what works well and why. For example, the improvements to provision for ICT have resulted in standards that are better than is usually expected for the age of the children. The headteacher's skills in managing people have succeeded in empowering others, whatever their role; they value one another and they feel valued too. A climate has been created in which the staff and governors work together productively; for example, the self-evaluation process and careful monitoring of the budget are tasks that involve governors and key staff.
36. The leadership and management of special educational needs are exemplary. The special educational needs co-ordinator provides exceptional leadership of the school's provision. Supported extremely well by a teaching assistant responsible for administration, she is very experienced and knowledgeable about her role and totally dedicated to her work and to providing the very best support for every child. Immaculate record-keeping, constant monitoring of the school's provision and the very carefully considered organisation of all those working with the children contribute greatly to the effectiveness of the school's work.

37. The budget and finances are now well understood, with regular reporting to governors to keep them properly informed. Governors are vigilant about monitoring the budget and want the funds spent to show an improvement in standards. In this they have been successful, as children enter school with well below average attainment but leave with standards at a satisfactory level for their age, and many do much better. The school's approaches to financial and resource management help it achieve its educational priorities. The funds available are used sensibly. Sometimes, governors have had to make difficult decisions, such as keeping classes small, which increases teaching costs but it is evident that the particular needs of many of these children necessitate more individual support and in some cases, for example where children have behavioural and emotional problems, they find it difficult to thrive in the larger group. Parents understand that when their children are learning in the nurture group they miss some of the work of the National Curriculum but they consider that this is time spent advantageously, learning to work in socially acceptable ways rather than experiences in the past of their child crawling about on the floor in a literacy lesson and disturbing others. Governors consider that the specific needs of these children with their emotional and behavioural problems necessitate spending on teaching assistants, keeping classes small and maintaining the additional teaching areas for as long as they can. The balance carried forward in the table below is higher than the school would wish but reflects the building costs of installing facilities for the disabled and the improvements planned for the nursery.

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

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	431,755.00
Total expenditure	418,381.88
Expenditure per pupil	2,060.99

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	51,455.00
Balance carried forward to the next year	64,828.00

38. Governors have a good understanding of the principles of best value and the need to use the budget they all manage to promote standards, achievement and the quality of education. Rigorous self-evaluation has led to identifying priorities very carefully and this is evident in the school development and improvement plan. Management is very good because the school continually refines its practice in the light of new initiatives and responses from pupils, staff, governors, parents and outside agencies. This is a very effective school with mainly average costs. Funds are used very effectively to produce high achievement resulting from good or very good teaching and particularly effective leadership and management. Given the children's starting point and the standards and achievement by Year 2, which clearly show very good progress, and the very good quality of education, the school provides very good value for money.
39. Overall, the governance of the school is good. The chair of governors works very hard on behalf of the school and plays an important part in helping to shape the direction of the school. He is dedicated, well informed and active in the school. The governors' well-established performance management process evaluates the headteacher's work and is well established for other staff. The governing body is well organised and has a good committee structure which ensures that the school promotes inclusion for all and has a robust system for the formulation of policies. The school is effective in fulfilling its responsibilities. The governors consider they are able to meet statutory requirements and are currently reviewing the sex and relationships policy using working parties of staff, governors and parents. The policy on race equality is in place and was reviewed last year but monitoring the policy has been difficult with governor changes in last three years. However, any racist incident is dealt with immediately, recorded by the headteacher and reported to the governing body and local education

authority. Governors are a supportive body. They understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school and experienced governors assist newer ones in challenging and questioning decision-making to effect improvement. In particular the systems to monitor and evaluate the school's development priorities are working well.

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

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

Provision for the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall, with some good features, but is better in the reception class than in the nursery. There are 33 children attending part-time in the nursery and all reception pupils attend full time. Reception children are prepared well for transfer to Year 1. Because the school has experienced difficulties in recruiting teachers, the nursery has had three inexperienced staff in a short space of time. At the time of inspection, the nursery teacher had only been at the school for one term and is still learning about the curriculum, classroom organisation and developmental needs of the youngest children but is making satisfactory progress. In the reception class, the situation is stable and children benefit from the expertise of an experienced teacher of young children. Both classes are benefiting from the considerable improvements to the outside area which is helping children achieve very well in physical development and in the personal, social and emotional area of learning. The improvements planned for the indoor area have been undertaken in the reception class but not yet tackled in the nursery. Those teaching assistants who work in the Foundation Stage during the morning make good contributions to children's learning, particularly supporting slower learners so that they too achieve well, but at present they lack time to support the afternoon sessions.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory in the nursery and very good in the reception class. This is an improvement since the last inspection because now there is no unsatisfactory teaching and better teaching in reception. The teachers' lesson planning for the areas of learning has improved and is now more precise. The good relationships between the nursery and reception class make it easier for children to learn and pick up skills faster because a more consistent approach by adults is developing, particularly in planning activities. The very good teaching in the reception class provides examples of good practice from which the less experienced teacher in the nursery can benefit. All adults keep tabs on children's learning throughout this stage, they know what children need to learn next and provide purposeful play and practical activities that keep children interested and meet individual needs so all achieve success. The co-ordinator for this stage is knowledgeable about the needs of these young children and provides good leadership for staff. However, she has several management responsibilities and works with another age group so, at present, cannot monitor the teaching and learning to the extent she would like.

When children enter school, the teachers' assessments clearly indicate that attainment on entry is much lower than expected for their age. There is a very wide span of ability but the main weaknesses are in communication skills, particularly language as speech is often indistinct and most lack the dexterity to form letters. Children also have fewer numeracy skills and lack general knowledge. This is much the same as at the last inspection. Steady progress in the nursery enables the majority of children to achieve satisfactorily, although some do better. When they move into the reception class progress is faster and all children achieve very well. In the current year

group about a third will reach the goals children are expected to reach in all areas of learning by the end of the reception year.

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

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The very good relationships make children feel secure and happy.
- Staff set high expectations to which children respond very well.
- The resources to raise children's awareness of ethnic diversity are limited.

## **Commentary**

40. The effective teaching enables children to achieve very well and they are likely to reach the goals children are expected to reach in this area of learning by the end of the reception year. Although there are a few who find it hard to meet the expectations of staff, most are familiar with routines and understand what is acceptable behaviour. The children settle quickly to tasks, most behave sensibly and have very good attitudes to their work because they enjoy the range of practical activities provided, particularly outdoors where they quickly learn to take turns, work together and behave sensibly with tools and equipment. Because the adults encourage co-operation and perseverance, most, but not all, children have a calm approach to their work. All adults give lots of encouragement because they want children to feel confident to try new things; in this they are successful. Most children trust their teachers and are eager to please them. Although children are being taught the importance of tolerating differences, the teachers do not have enough resources to raise their awareness of ethnic diversity, for example a range of dolls and cooking utensils. In the nursery and reception class, children are taught to take responsibility, tidy up after themselves and change their clothes for physical activities. They do this well.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- A programme of work is used effectively to extend children's language.
- Sometimes teacher expectation is too high for children to understand the task.
- Good teaching of basic skills prepares children well for work in Year 1.
- Particular emphasis is given to the teaching of letter sounds to help children with reading and spelling.

## **Commentary**

41. Children are achieving very well from a low starting point. Many, but not all, will reach the goals they are expected to reach by the end of the reception year and about a third are almost ready to tackle the early stages of National Curriculum work. The poor communication skills on entry to school is a barrier to achievement and, to overcome this, a programme of work is planned, with emphasis on extending the children's use of language. In the nursery there is emphasis on improving children's listening skills and introducing them to everyday words with which they are unfamiliar such as the names of fruit. In both classes there are displays that include the printed word but, in trying to emphasise communication, adults sometimes use captions at activities that children are unable to read, particularly in the nursery. The teaching assistant is particularly good at talking to children and encouraging them to respond to questions, which extends their understanding.
42. In reception, the good teaching of basic skills means that children take part in whole class reading from a large book and practise their reading skills. They pick out words from the text beginning with the same sound and record what they have learned on white boards. Because they learn letter sounds every day, the children gain confidence in matching the right sound to the letter. The teacher plans guided writing activities that capture children's interest and they start to draw pictures and form a few letters with the teacher's support in writing the text. The very good relationships build

up confidence for children to have their first stab at independent writing. The formation of letters is improving but not yet easily legible. However, about a third of the class form letters well, leave spaces between words and use a dictionary to help them spell correctly. These children read their own writing and write a few sentences on lines without adult support. Skilled adults are helping children develop ideas, persevere and extend talk and thinking.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children experience a range of practical activities to support their learning.
- Teachers are good at planning work that builds on what children have learned.

### **Commentary**

43. In the last inspection, standards were lower than expected for the children's age but the situation has improved. This year, the majority are achieving very well and are likely to reach the goals expected in the mathematical area of learning by the end of the reception year. Although the proportion of slower learners means that not all will succeed, they are achieving very well for their capability. The very good teaching in the reception class and co-operation and consistency between the teacher and teaching assistant are the main reasons for this improvement. The number rhymes and games introduce children to counting and sorting activities. In reception, lessons are lively and well organised because the teacher plans activities that children find enjoyable and explains carefully what they have to do. A smooth and seamless move from activity to activity, with adults frequently reminding children about targets and tasks, resulted in much success. Very good relationships and a secure atmosphere motivated children to take part in discussion that builds on previous learning such as when trying to recognise coins – "this coin isn't round so it must be 20p". Problem-solving work involves imagination and enjoyment such as constructing a moneybox but the challenge of how to get money in and out makes children think hard and provides an assessment opportunity for the teacher.

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

44. No lessons were seen in this area of learning so there is no overall judgement about provision, standards or teaching and learning. Teachers' planning and work samples show that a range of interesting activities are planned to extend learning. The range of activities extends children's understanding and stimulates their curiosity, such as in the nursery when they explore and experiment with sand or ask questions about unfamiliar fruit such as pineapples or mangoes. Pupils have opportunities to find out about and identify the uses of everyday technology using computers and programmable toys to support their learning in operating simple equipment. By experimenting with the tape recorder, the reception children remember where the 'play' button is situated and how to use headphones to listen to a story. Children have opportunities to direct the remote control car, use tills, telephones and calculators and talk to a friend using the walkie-talkie. Nursery provision, with its one computer, is not as good as that for reception children who have access to three computers in class and have additional sessions in the ICT suite.

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is good and activities are well planned for children to extend their physical skills.

### **Commentary**

45. Children are achieving very well because teaching is effective and good lessons are planned to make the best use of resources to extend the range of skills needed for physical development. Nursery children use wheeled toys safely as they steer them over a set route. In reception, they learn about balancing on different body parts and controlling how well they can hold that shape, which is much more difficult. Manipulative skills are improving and children extend their control of pencils, scissors and paintbrushes and learn to manipulate materials and objects. Good use is made of the hall in raising an awareness of space and developing control and co-ordination in movement. The children enjoyed challenging sessions.

## **CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

46. No lessons were seen in creative development so no judgement is made about provision, standards or teaching and learning. Opportunities for role-play in imaginative areas, such as the veterinary surgery as seen in a literacy session, are attractive and children choose to play there. Because adults are involved in these activities more talking and listening takes place and language skills are extended. Teachers plan activities for children to explore colour, shape and texture and their efforts are displayed well. Teachers want children to have a place to learn where they can be creative but provision in the nursery is less effective than in reception because too little space is provided and children are not shown how to use tools and media correctly. Children experiment with musical instruments when they explore sounds and love singing, memorising songs and actions.

## **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2 ENGLISH**

Provision in English is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children achieve very well because of high quality teaching and dedicated support.
- Many new initiatives improve literacy skills and enrich learning.
- Very thorough tracking of children's progress identifies the very best provision for every child.
- Extremely knowledgeable leadership of the subject is very effective in raising standards.
- Children's very good attitudes and consequent hard work results in very effective learning.

### **Commentary**

47. Standards have improved since the last inspection. The current inspection findings show that standards in English are good and the improvement seen at the last inspection has continued. By the end of Year 2 and in Year 4, standards in all aspects of English are better than those expected. Test results and samples of written work indicate that from an often low starting point many children achieve very well and make at least good progress in their learning by Year 2 and when they leave the school at age nine. When last year's national test results were compared with similar schools, children reached standards in writing that were well above those expected for their age and more reached the higher level than those found nationally. In reading, the results were better than expected for their age when compared to schools in similar situations but had dipped on the previous year. The high proportion of children with special educational needs and the timing of their arrival into the year group are contributory factors.
48. Teaching is very good overall and, as a result, most children make very good progress in their lessons and all groups achieve very well because learning is very carefully and sensitively matched to each group's ability. Teachers are highly skilled and understand the children very well; they expect the most from each one and the children respond by working hard. Higher attainers are suitably challenged in their learning, as in a reading session when the teacher's searching questioning focused on the meaning behind the author's choice of words. The high quality and wide-ranging support for those with special educational needs helps them gain the basic and essential literacy skills they need so they achieve success. Lessons are full of interest; activities engage and hold children's attention so well that they are eager to learn. Very good relationships greatly promote learning. In an outstanding lesson, children were totally engrossed as they reasoned with the teacher, in the role of the wolf, as to why they should not, as pigs, be eaten – an excellent highly motivating and enjoyable introduction to the difficult concept of persuasive writing.
49. Teachers plan extremely well together, and have a consistent approach to the subject. Lessons very successfully combine reading and writing and provide many opportunities to promote speaking and listening skills. By the time they leave the school, many can communicate their ideas clearly and articulately, listening very carefully to others and taking part confidently in discussions. Good standards are expected in handwriting, resulting in many who have a fluent, joined writing style. Procedures to track progress, particularly in reading and spelling, are very thorough and regularly updated so teachers know exactly how well children are doing and use the information effectively when planning future work, identifying additional teaching or organising their classes. Children, too, are very aware of their own progress and how they can do better because they know what has to be learned in each lesson, they know their literacy targets, and read the marking comments. During lessons, their progress is closely checked and help is given to encourage further understanding. Regular homework for reading and spelling contributes well to learning. Very significant regular extra support is offered to those who attend the homework or breakfast clubs in an informal, friendly atmosphere. The daily 'Attack' spelling groups, based on children's spelling capability, very effectively concentrate on improvement and the programme is much appreciated by parents.
50. Events ranging from theatre visits, theme days and Story Telling Days to visiting authors, poets and librarians bring a wealth of experiences to all children not only enriching their understanding and language but also inspiring reading and writing. Classrooms and shared areas provide a world of words to stimulate and help both reading and writing. New ICT resources bring added appeal to learning; the school is,

however, taking action to improve keyboard skills. In Years 3 and 4, the Sky Hunter story stimulates not only independent writing but also work on punctuation, grammar and language as well as linking naturally with science.

51. The leadership of English is very good. The co-ordinator is a very experienced and knowledgeable subject leader who, through her very regular monitoring of teaching and learning and thorough analysis of how well children are doing, has a very detailed understanding of the strengths in her subject and takes action to improve standards. Because of the high numbers of pupils with learning difficulties, she works closely with the special educational needs co-ordinator. She manages and organises her many responsibilities very efficiently, monitors the effectiveness of changes to the subject and maintains a very good level of resources, in order to improve the quality of provision and achievement in English.

## **LANGUAGE AND LITERACY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM**

52. Within the curriculum, the development of language and literacy skills is central to learning in all subjects and a vital contributing factor to the good standards of work seen. There are no boundaries to the inclusion of literacy skills in lessons, especially when children are listening to teachers' explanations and each other, speaking clearly and precisely to offer answers, to share ideas and opinions or when learning and using new subject vocabulary. Reading and writing go hand in hand with learning in many subjects such as in history when the Ancient Greeks inspire writing or younger children report on their visit to a toy museum. Discussions feature highly in practical scientific activities and, in PSHE, children talk sensibly with partners about the consequences of eating or drinking the wrong things at home.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is very good overall and impacts positively on standards.
- All children are appropriately challenged and respond by achieving very well.
- The teachers' cooperative planning for mathematics is very good.
- The emphasis on personal development ensures that the learning and teaching styles are appropriate for all groups of children.
- Very good standards of behaviour in lessons result in sustained work and very good motivation.

### **Commentary**

53. The standards in mathematics have improved significantly since the previous inspection, and in national tests they are now better than those of most schools nationally and very good when compared with similar schools. This represents very good achievement because the pupils start school with very low levels of mathematical understanding. This progress continues throughout the school. Inspection findings show that, by the end of Year 2 and in Year 4, nearly all children are already achieving standards expected for their age and a significant proportion are exceeding them. Because children are taught to use correct mathematical terms from a very early age, many do better than expected in using and applying mathematics. In using numbers and shapes, and in measuring, children's work is also better than expected for their age. There is no significant difference between boys and girls. Children with special educational needs achieve very well because they are supported effectively. The very good achievement is attributable to teachers' high expectations in which children are encouraged to believe that they can rise to the challenges presented them. The very effective work of the breakfast and homework clubs is an important aspect of this provision because although they concentrate on the development of language, as children become more confident there is also a parallel development in mathematics.
54. Overall, the teaching of mathematics is very good and one lesson was excellent. Lessons are jointly planned so the individual strengths of these particularly competent teachers are shared among the group and all children benefit. The teachers have high expectations of the children which motivates them to respond well and their work is consistently good. The children are encouraged to experiment with different ways of tackling mathematical problems and enjoy meeting the challenges and targets set. The marking of work is effective because it is appropriate to their needs and helps them move forward. Teachers make a point of finding out which types of marking give the most help. They make the work as practical as possible. There is good quality support from teaching assistants for those children with special educational needs and general guidance to other groups. They respond generously to one another's successes. Mathematics is effectively led and staff are willing and able to profit from new methods and resources for the subject introduced through in-service training opportunities. As a result, standards and achievement in the subject have improved significantly since the previous inspection.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

55. Mathematics is used well in other areas of the curriculum. In particular, good use is made of information and communication technology in the teaching of mathematics, especially in the developing use of interactive whiteboards, and there is a positive impact on standards of attainment and achievement. Mathematics is also used for recording in science. The teachers encourage children to use correct mathematics terminology and to speak accurately about their mathematical work.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Strong teaching helps children achieve very well.
- As a result of their very practical science experiences, pupils have very good attitudes to their work and enjoy learning.
- Very good leadership by the co-ordinator endorses good standards.
- Investigative skills are very well promoted when finding answers to scientific questions.

### Commentary

56. At the end of Year 2, teachers' assessments in 2004 show a steady improvement in standards over the previous years and since the last inspection, with the vast majority of children reaching the expected standard for their age whilst a third do better. These results show that more children reach the higher levels than in other schools and comparisons are well above average for schools in similar contexts. Inspection findings are that, by Year 2 and in Year 4, samples of written work and lessons show standards are better than expected for the children's age and the teaching is impacting positively on children's achievement.
57. Overall, teaching is very good, resulting in very good achievement. Children with special educational needs do very well because they are all very well supported in science activities. Teaching is particularly strong in Years 3 and 4. As a result of the teachers' very high expectations of the children's abilities to rise to the challenge of their task, they do very much better than expected for their age. When children are very well informed and prepared to become "science detectives", they use their skills to great effect and are fascinated as they sort, identify and classify the contents of an owl pellet – successfully recognising the results of one night's hunting by a barn owl. When lessons are busy, fast moving, with well-organised and managed activities, all children achieve very well. When organisation of activities is less precise, learning is not as secure. Because teachers plan together and share expertise, ideas and resources, science is taught consistently. Towards the end of Year 4, children begin to study an aspect of science with their new middle school teacher, so there are no breaks in learning. Science is definitely fun. The hands-on approach to science successfully builds children's confidence and observational skills. Factual information and scientific terminology are thoroughly taught; for example, in Year 2 children enjoy using technical words correctly such as *retina*, *pupil* and *iris* to describe their eyes. Enquiry skills are systematically developed over time, resulting in a secure understanding of how to respond scientifically when investigating questions. Regular tracking of children's achievements helps teachers to plan new learning, including specific investigative skills.
58. Science is not taught in isolation. Close links with the PSHE programme emphasise aspects such as the use of medicines at home, and numeracy and literacy skills are applied very well through measurements and in presenting factual information, labelling, or report writing. The use of ICT in science adds an extra dimension to teaching as videos, the interactive white boards or the Internet are included. Use of the school grounds, visits to scientific places of interest together with visitors, such the

falconer or dental nurse, enrich learning and make science even more relevant and enjoyable. Science is very well managed and led by the very experienced subject coordinator. Together with her recent monitoring of the quality teaching and learning, review of children's written work and discussions about their work with them, she has a very secure knowledge of the strengths, standards and areas for further development.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- STANDARDS HAVE IMPROVED SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION AND CHILDREN ACHIEVE VERY WELL BECAUSE OF THE IMPORTANCE AND VALUE PLACED ON THE SUBJECT.
- The improved facilities are having a positive impact on children's progress.
- Good account is taken of developing relevant work that is linked to other subjects.
- The good leadership of the subject co-ordinator and the confidence and expertise of the staff enable children to use ICT effectively.

### **Commentary**

59. The school aims for children to become learners who are confident users of ICT and in this it is successful. Children's capability has improved since the last inspection and the lessons and samples of work show better standards than expected for their age by Year 2. There is no significant difference between boys and girls. By the end of Year 2, children achieve very well, including those with special educational needs, which is an improvement since the last inspection. No lessons were seen in Years 3 and 4 so no judgements are made about standards in the junior classes but samples of work and talking with children indicate that standards are at least satisfactory with many children doing better. Although classes have more than one age group, the good planning enables younger children in the class to learn skills earlier and older ones to strongly reinforce previous learning extending their confidence and self-esteem. Important factors in raising standards are: the improved facilities of an ICT suite, more computers and interactive whiteboards in most classes, and more knowledgeable teachers.
60. In the lessons seen in Years 1 and 2, the teaching was good, which is an improvement since the last inspection when it was satisfactory. Because teachers inspire and challenge children, they make good progress in carrying out tasks that make full use of their computer skills. In one class, children talked with enthusiasm, for example, about how to select an icon and then drag it to make and create a simple sentence. Those with greatest capability could demonstrate on the interactive whiteboard. Plenary sessions were used effectively; for example, a Year 1 child explained how he had learned that computers provided information using text, pictures and sounds. Teachers plan different activities in technology, apart from using computers, such as using the digital camera to take photographs of models they have made to show their family how well they are progressing. The subject leader has been the driving force behind the considerable improvements to the subject. Her specialist skills have resulted in teachers being more secure about what to teach, and more consistent in planning. Other important factors in the subject's development have been the progression of skills that are built on systematically for children and technical support for staff to extend their familiarity with using new software and consequently improving their confidence.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM**

61. Since the last inspection teachers are making good use of ICT skills in other subjects overall. It is now more widely used in literacy, mathematics, science, geography,

history, art and design and music. Displays illustrated effective use in Year 2 of symmetry in mathematics and in composing music at Years 3 and 4. Its use for communication is good whether in simple word processing or demonstrations of factual information to extend knowledge and understanding, as in history.

## HUMANITIES

No lessons were seen in history and too few in geography to make overall judgements about provision, standards or teaching and learning. These subjects were only sampled but there is a full commentary about religious education.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Provision in religious education is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good teaching has a positive impact on standards.
- Joint planning provides a good range and balance of topics.
- The particular attention paid to pupils' personal development enhances the quality of teaching and of learning.
- There is a good and imaginative use of resources.

### Commentary

62. As a result of the good quality of teaching, the standards attained by pupils at the end of both Year 2 and Year 4 are better than expected for their age whatever their prior attainment, or whether they are boys or girls. The children's learning about religions is good, for example, they are familiar with the names of artefacts connected with Jewish worship. They also learn to use religious ideas in a wider context, such as relating Jesus' parables to how people should behave. This became a practical activity when the children collected Christmas shoeboxes of presents for needy East European children. In their answers to questions from the area organiser who came to an assembly to thank them, they drew clear links with the parable of the *Good Samaritan*, which they knew well. There are good links in the planning of religious education and personal, social and health education, which benefits both subjects.
63. The quality of teaching is good overall, with much of it very good. Imaginative planning and good use of quality resources reflect the latter. The high degree of cooperation in the presentation of the subject means that teachers and classroom assistants use their initiative and skills well, as when a teaching assistant baked the bread for the re-enactment of a Shabbat meal from a Jewish recipe for both classes. The children find the lessons interesting and challenging and this maintains higher than expected standards. Children with special educational needs are supported well. When children discuss matters which arise in class, they display a good ability to think. For example, when the older children discussed what they knew of the attributes of angels, they drew upon previous lessons about "God" and "Heaven" to enrich what they had to say. Children are made aware of what they are expected to learn from each lesson, and they check on this at the end. This also strengthens their understanding. Children study Christianity, Judaism, and also aspects of Sikhism and Islam. They have a good knowledge of the correct terms to use, which leads to a good level of sensitivity when referring to faiths other than Christianity. The teaching of religious education contributes very well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The leadership and management of the subject are good and plans for future development are in place.
64. In **geography**, the samples of work and discussions with children indicate that standards are better than is generally expected for age. Higher-attaining children reach standards well in advance of their age, especially in understanding geographical ideas. Given that their knowledge and understanding of the world is very limited when they start school, there are strong indications that children achieve very well. In the few lessons seen, teaching was good with thorough planning, which caught the imagination and interest of the children. Younger ones love the work relating to literacy such as "Katie Morag and the Isle of Struay". They used maps and photographs to identify features on the Isle of Struay; they readily recalled

previous lessons and related new knowledge very effectively to what they already knew. A significant feature of one lesson was the confidence with which the children used correct geographical terms for the features they discussed, and the ease with which they described what they were doing. The older children demonstrated a good level of understanding about the River Tay. They discussed the advantages of hydro-electricity, used correct geographical terms accurately and made good use of knowledge they had gained from a video shown in an earlier lesson. The subject is well managed and enthusiastically led.

65. Making **history** fun and bringing learning to life through many and varied planned experiences that inspire interest in, and understanding of, the past is central to the subject's teaching throughout the school. Through their visit via the Internet to a London based toy museum, children in Years 1 and 2 were well prepared for a visit to a more local toy museum to find out, at first hand, about toys of the past. Following a theatre performance of Greek myths and legends and by becoming Ancient Greeks for the day, children in Years 3 and 4 not only enjoyed taking part in role play that involved food, crafts, pottery, music, dance and drama but very successfully extended their understanding of life in those times. Subject planning is very thorough and encompasses a wealth of first-hand experiences, providing opportunities for children not only to make gains in knowledge but also to develop a good sense of when historical events happened and societies existed. When making comparisons with their own lives and times, they research information and look at different forms of evidence of the past. Work relating to other subjects such as literacy, ICT and geography is naturally involved when history is the focus of learning.

### **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

No lessons were seen in design and technology or music, and physical education was sampled so no judgements are made about provision, standards or teaching and learning in these subjects. There is a full commentary for art and design.

### **ART AND DESIGN**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The very good teaching, facilities and quality resources impact effectively on children's achievement.
- The subject contributes well to children's cultural development and there are good links to other subjects.
- The very good leadership inspires staff and children to produce work of quality.

### **Commentary**

66. Standards have improved since the last inspection. A wide range of work was sampled that provided clear evidence that the standards by Year 2 and in Year 4 are better than expected for the children's age. Progression in drawing is particularly good and work illustrates that as children move through the school, they extend skills and techniques, observe well and make effective use of a range of media to produce good work. Samples of work show that children build on skills systematically and, when talking to them about their work, pride in their achievements was evident.
67. No lessons were seen in Years 1 and 2, but in Years 3 and 4 teaching was very good. Lessons make good use of the art room and high quality resources which contribute

positively to the very good achievement. Specialist knowledge was used effectively to encourage the use of artist's rag rather than water when changing use of colour and the teacher's comments encouraged children to extend their understanding of how one colour affects another, thus learning to control colour. Very good relationships motivate most children to try hard and consequently, they respond well. Because the teacher is sensitive to the needs of individuals, she talks calmly to children and manages the class very well enabling all to achieve success, including those with behavioural difficulties. All are engrossed in their work because the teaching is stimulating and constantly challenging, stemming from an expert knowledge of the subject, and how children learn. The subject contributes very well to cultural development, using such opportunities as Ancient Greek Day, themes based on other countries such as India, and visits to places of interest such as art galleries and sculpture exhibitions. Links to other subjects are good. Following a visit to an exhibition of contemporary children's illustrators at which Quentin Blake was present, the children talked with him about how he works on illustrations for his own stories and those of other authors.

68. The subject leader has been the inspiration behind the improved standards to the subject. Her specialist skills have resulted in more knowledgeable teaching and children who take a pride in their work. Her leadership of the art club enhances the subject where children extend their skills by studying the techniques of artists and crafts persons, often with stunning results.
69. **Design and technology** is an essential part of the school's creative curriculum through which children enjoy interesting activities, learn new skills, widen their vocabulary and successfully apply their learning from other subjects in their work. Responding to challenges when using their acquired expertise, they construct a range of well-finished products. In Years 1 and 2, children plan how to support their wooden photograph frames and, after investigating how a crane mechanism operates, use a simple winding mechanism, which challenges their understanding and design skills. Opportunities for all children to try out their own ideas have been significantly improved since the last inspection. Now using the new kitchen facilities in the nurture room, food technology is an important part of learning about healthy eating and essential food hygiene. Work has included such fun activities as designing and making fruit ice kebabs or baking Anglo-Saxon oatcakes. Planning is thorough, taking into account pupils' needs as well as the national units of work. When it is helpful, the work of specialists is called upon as when pupils in Year 4 viewed the work of a designer of automata.
70. In **music**, pupils enjoy a wide range of experiences, led by a very enthusiastic co-ordinator. A music room with good quality resources is used well and children say they enjoy using such facilities. In the one session seen, to enable them to feel confident when singing in assembly, children were encouraged to make good efforts and sing tunefully. Every child has a music logbook, which follows the child to middle and then upper school and entries indicate an interest in the subject. There is a keen interest in learning to play tuned instruments and the very good liaison with the middle school has produced instruments on loan and a record-keeping system common to all associated schools. There have been many opportunities for junior children to join in performances and benefit from the expertise of the specialist teacher from the middle school. The recorder is taught and Year 4 children have a good understanding of notation. Sometimes music opportunities are incredibly good as when children danced with the Masai warriors from Kenya and learned that singing is their way of passing everything on from generation to generation. They learned that African dance is part

of everyday life and rhythmic singing, dancing and drumming play an important part in celebrating the world of the living in religion. The school benefits from the musical expertise of governors. The chair of governors is a drummer and another governor plays the viola. Both give considerable time to supporting this subject.

71. In **physical education**, gymnastics, dance and games are provided throughout the year and orienteering is provided during the residential visit made by Year 4 children. The planning for physical education is clear and comprehensive and undertaken cooperatively, so that teachers benefit from the strengths of one another as well as that of the subject leader. The facilities available for physical education are very good, including an open-air swimming pool, which is well used during the summer term by all the children and some other schools. Both boys and girls benefit from a good range of clubs that include dance, games, football, hockey and occasional rugby coaching. The clubs provide links with local sporting organisations, which children often attend when they leave school. In the one lesson observed, teaching was satisfactory. The well-planned gymnastics lesson resulted in standards as expected for age. The subject is soundly managed and good attention is given to health and safety.

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

Provision in personal social and health education (PSHE) is **very good**.

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

- The need for a healthy lifestyle is a strength of this subject.
- The inclusion of citizenship prepares children well for the next stage of education.
- The very good leadership is resulting in both children and their parents having a greater awareness of the importance of personal development.

#### **Commentary**

72. Children's personal, social and health education is a strength of the school's extended curriculum and shows the high value that is placed on this aspect of their development. The school plans for it very effectively and it is securely established by the formation of secure and trusting relationships and teachers' high expectations of good behaviour and mutual respect. A particularly significant and successful aspect of the programme is related to the need for a healthy lifestyle. The importance of diet and exercise, the dangers of drug misuse and what pupils can do to keep safe are important aspects but the changes the headteacher has made to school meals, supported by the cook and kitchen staff, have been dramatic. Children talk about healthy eating but, more importantly, they demonstrate what they have learned in the choices they make, such as selecting from five different salads or choosing fresh fruit from a range of desserts at lunchtime.
73. There is good teaching in this subject. In Years 1 and 2, children build on previous work with their parents about drugs education by learning about safe and unsafe practices at home such as drinking unsuitable substances. A discussion about consequences contributed well to children's speaking and listening skills and their quality of thinking was enhanced by this work. Children enjoy the inclusion of some aspects of citizenship in the programme and, in Years 3 and 4, are learning to understand how decisions are made locally. They learn that change involves getting ideas heard by decision-makers who then have to work as a team to make the best selection of ideas, and may have to reach a compromise. Children have some understanding that decisions taken at local level may have consequences on their own lives and know that as adults it is important for them to have their say rather than

sit at home and do nothing but moan. In the work of the school council, children learn at first hand what it means to be a responsible citizen.

74. There is a very good subject leader who is enthusiastic about involving parents so they can reinforce important aspects at home and make their children more aware of living with others in socially acceptable ways.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

### *Inspection judgement*

### *Grade*

<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	2

<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>2</b>
Children's achievement	2

<b>Children's' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)</b>	<b>2</b>
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The quality of teaching	2
How well children learn	2
The quality of assessment	2
How well the curriculum meets children's needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	2
Children's care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for children	2
How well the school seeks and acts on children's views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2

<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

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