

INSPECTION REPORT

**QUERNMORE CHURCH OF ENGLAND (VOLUNTARY
CONTROLLED) PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Lancaster

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119378

Headteacher: Mrs Kristine Morgan

Lead inspector: Mr Phil Snelling

Dates of inspection: 18th - 20th April 2005

Inspection number: 267531

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	109
School address:	Postern Gate Road Quernmore Lancaster Lancashire
Postcode:	LA2 9EL
Telephone number:	01524 66628
Fax number:	01524 66628
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Peter Elliott
Date of previous inspection:	April 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is situated close to the village of Quernmore, around 3 miles from Lancaster. About half the pupils come from the countryside surrounding the school, with the other half travelling from the City of Lancaster. The school is small and the number on roll at 109 is about the same as it was when last inspected. The pupils are taught in four classes, one a Foundation Stage class and the others each covering two year groups - Years 1 and 2, 3 and 4, 5 and 6. Nearly all the pupils are of white, British or other background and there are no pupils from homes where English is not the main language spoken. The area has a stable population and as a whole has above average social and economic conditions. A well below average number of pupils are entitled to free school meals. Usually children have skills and knowledge similar to others of their age when they start school, though their language and communication skills are often better. Last year, however, levels dipped unusually low. A very small proportion of children have special needs, the nature of which varies, and one at present has a statement of special educational needs. The school was awarded 'Beacon' status in 2000, renewed in 2003 and it became an Eco School (silver) in 2005.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3624	Phil Snelling	Lead inspector	English as an additional language Music Physical education Religious education
8988	Joan Cross	Lay inspector	
30724	Delia Hiscock	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage Special educational needs English Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology
32750	Peter Jones	Team inspector	Mathematics Science Geography History

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very good school. The staff and governors are committed to developing 'the whole child' and the school achieves this as pupils flourish in its care. They reach well above average standards in most of their work and in their personal development. Very good teaching and the pupils' own attitudes ensure that they enjoy their learning and achieve very well. The school is very well led by the headteacher, who has gathered a strong staff team. Relationships are excellent. The school gives very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher, through her vision, has created an exceptionally innovative curriculum that fully utilises the rich and beautiful environment of the school;
- The strong family ethos results in a community where adults and pupils care for one another and all are included;
- The school's commitment to pupils' personal development is reflected in their excellent behaviour, their hard work and their enjoyment in taking up the opportunities offered;
- Attendance and relationships are excellent;
- Pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to achieve as much as they could in information and communication technology (ICT).

Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The standards pupils reach at the age of 11 are higher, attendance is better and the curriculum more fulfilling for pupils of all ages. A building extension to create better classroom space has helped make the Foundation Stage stronger. The governing body are more effective and actively involved in the school's work. Whilst provision in ICT has improved, its use across other subjects has not moved on as fast as it might have done.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average; A indicates a result in the top 5 per cent. Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2. Please note this is a small school; results must be treated with caution.*

Pupils achieve very well. The test results largely reflect the well above average standards pupils reach in English and mathematics, and the above average standards they reach in science. The much lower than usual test results in English in 2004 is explained by the Year 6 group having fewer than normal more able pupils and two or three pupils misinterpreting a test question. As this is a small school only a handful of pupils take tests in any one year, so the performance of a few has a big effect on the overall results. The inspection confirms that the current Year 6 are reaching well above average standards and are on course to reach their challenging targets in all three subjects.

In using ICT, pupils show appropriate skills when given the chance and there is notable achievement in art and religious education. In the Foundation Stage, the reception children

make a very good start and are on course to comfortably reach or exceed the goals they should when they move to Year 1. Reading standards are exceptionally good in the infant class and writing and mathematics are also strong. Across the school all pupils, from those with special needs to the most able, achieve very well.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are excellent. Attendance is well above that found in most primary schools and provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils behave very well and are hugely enthusiastic about the opportunities for learning the school offers.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a very good quality of education for its pupils. Teaching is very good overall. The excellent relationships between teachers, teaching assistants and pupils result in confident learners who know they are expected to do well. Adults work sensitively with the children, creating an ethos in classrooms which stimulates beautiful, high quality work. Pupils are given the space to take the initiative in lessons so they become independent and self-sufficient learners. They willingly help each other. Their thirst for knowledge is fuelled by teachers skilfully choosing the best way of teaching a particular point, through discussion, writing or an investigation. They encourage pupils to 'use what is in front of you', so reinforcing their curiosity and appreciation of the richness around them. Teachers could squeeze a little more value for pupils out of their marking and out of homework.

The curriculum is highly interesting, offering a lot of variety in learning and influencing enormously the impressive ethos of the school. An excellent feature is the seamless use of indoors and outdoors as one resource, the school and its surroundings as one. The close interweaving of subjects results in children understanding better what their learning is about. Pupils use their literacy skills frequently across the different subjects but their ICT skills are not used often enough because there are too few opportunities created. Staff know the pupils very well, are caring and have the interests of the children very much at heart.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The headteacher's excellent leadership is best seen in the learning that stems from her vision and relentless drive to provide for educating the 'whole child' within the school's surroundings. However, an eye is also kept on ensuring the highest standards in literacy and numeracy. Team spirit is substantial and staff play their full part. Management is good, though it could be more systematic in the way it collects information from lessons and uses the outcomes, and in the way it carries out some routine tasks. Governance is very good. Governors share the vision for what the school is about and work determinedly to make it happen.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents support the school well and are especially pleased with the way it nurtures their children and provides them with an exciting and interesting all round education. One aspect they rightly think the school could do better at is in canvassing their views. The pupils share the parents' enthusiasm for the school and are very pleased when their views are taken into account.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important thing the school should do to improve is:

- Improve pupils' achievement in using ICT across the curriculum.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Standards are well above average at the ages of 7 and 11. Pupils achieve very well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils get off to a very good start in the Foundation Stage (reception class);
- There is some very good achievement in most subjects in Years 1 to 6;
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well throughout the school and more able pupils are challenged;
- Achievement in ICT could be better if it was used more often in the various different subject lessons.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	18.9 (18.3)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	15.6 (17.3)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	16.8 (18.5)	16.2 (16.3)

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

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.4 (29.1)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	30.2 (29.8)	27.0 (26.8)
science	30.2 (30.2)	28.6 (28.6)

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

1. With the number of pupils taking the tests each year being relatively small, the results alone do not give a reliable basis on which to judge pupils' attainment. However, the impressive standards shown in these tests are confirmed by the inspection as a fair reflection of the well above average standards that pupils reach. The weaker looking results last year, in writing and mathematics in Key Stage 1 and English in Key Stage 2, are explained within the particular groups of children. The school's investigation shows that some pupils in Year 6 misinterpreted questions in the test and this brought results down. Also in that particular group, there was a smaller proportion than usual of more able pupils. In the Year 2 group, not so many reached the higher Level 3 as usual and this similarly brought down the scores in a small group. Pupils in both Year 2 and Year 6 this year are reaching well above average standards and if they perform on the day, results can be expected once again to soar.

2. When they start school, children's skills are usually around what you would expect at their age but the language they use and their skills of communication are better. However, last year levels dipped to below average on starting school. In the Foundation Stage (reception) these pupils have made a strong start and are achieving very well in all areas of learning. Most are on course to comfortably reach or exceed the expected levels (Early Learning Goals) in all areas by the end of the year. From the outset they make particularly good progress in their personal, social and emotional development.
3. Pupils achieve very well throughout the school and standards are rising. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well in relation to their abilities because of the skilled support provided for them. Challenging work stretches the more able pupils. Those with particular gifts and talents make good progress, with more rigorous identification of their needs recently introduced.
4. The high standards in English are found across all aspects of the subject. In Key Stage 1, the content and language used in the pupils' writing is outstanding, with both boys and girls equally enthusiastic writers. In Key Stage 2, pupils' poetry writing is exceptional. Reading is very strong throughout, giving the oldest pupils a perceptive understanding of what they read and an undiminished hunger to pick up a book. In mathematics, pupils develop strong calculation skills from an early age. By the time they are in Year 6, their mental mathematics capability is very strong, enabling them to solve difficult problems in a variety of ways.
5. In science, pupils reach similarly high standards. By doing a lot of investigations, younger pupils develop an early understanding of scientific methods. As they become older, they make especially good use of these skills in their work outside. Whilst pupils become competent in the ICT applications that they use, this does not spread widely or often enough into other subjects. A good example of this is the opportunity missed in failing to use sensors to enhance their science work.
6. There is some notable achievement in other subjects. There is some exceptional artwork and pupils reach high standards in swimming.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes towards their learning are excellent and they are very well behaved throughout the school day. Provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Pupils have a real thirst for knowledge and are extremely keen to learn;
- Pupils of all ages and abilities get on exceptionally well together;
- Pupils appreciation of the environment is outstanding;
- Attendance has improved dramatically since the last inspection.

Commentary

7. Many aspects of pupils' attitudes, values and personal development have strengthened over the past six years. Attendance, in particular, has risen sharply, largely as a result of the school's considerable efforts to change the culture of families taking holidays in term time.
8. New staff blend seamlessly with the rest in creating the school's impressive climate for learning. Pupils' attitudes towards school are first rate and they are extremely well motivated. They relish being stimulated by learning that challenges their thinking, confidently asking searching questions to satisfy their intense curiosity. Pupils' very keen interest in their work contributes hugely to their very good achievement.

9. What makes this school extra special is the way that staff empower pupils to enjoy their childhood whilst working hard and attaining very high standards. As much play and learning as possible takes place within the school's intensely spiritual natural arena, and pupils revel in it. Their love of the outdoors is palpable. They talk excitedly about the fun that they have in the school's extensive adventure playground and woods. Den building and bartering with natural materials as currency are just some of the many delights that fire their imaginations. They can be trusted to behave very well at all times.
10. When children first join the school in reception their personal, social and emotional skills tend to be much as expected. By Year 6, pupils mature into gregarious, well adjusted individuals who are totally at ease with themselves because staff treat each one as special. Respect and care for others are strikingly apparent in their encouragement and sensitive support of those with special educational needs.
11. Older pupils fondly involve younger ones in their activities. Girls in Years 5 and 6, who adore choreographing their own dance routines, often extend their lunchtime club to Years 1 and 2, attracting large numbers that are very eager to follow their example. Pupils thrive on taking responsibility and showing initiative. Older ones organise charitable fundraising each term and elect to lead the weekly children's assembly, so popular that they have to join a waiting list. The eco-committee makes a considerable impact upon waste reduction. Its representatives of all ages, including reception, are justifiably very proud of helping to save the Earth's resources.
12. The richness of pupils' cultural experience is greatly enhanced by superb artwork that is often linked to their heritage or to other cultures. Visits and visitors also contribute strongly. Pupils visit the places of worship of several world faiths and historical sites, for example, that broaden their perspective.

Attendance

13. Attendance is excellent and pupils usually get to school on time.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	3.1	School data	0.0
National data	5.1	National data	0.4

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

Exclusions

14. There have been no exclusions previously and there have been none this year.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a very good quality of education. Teaching and learning are very good and at times of the highest quality. The exciting and imaginative curriculum provides many interesting learning opportunities. Staff care for the children well and there are good relationships with parents, other schools and colleges.

Teaching and learning

Lessons are of a very good quality overall. Some are truly inspiring and this shines through in the pupils' learning. The teaching challenges all pupils regardless of ability and age.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teachers' well chosen methods for delivering different lessons result in highly motivated pupils and rich learning activities;
- Teaching assistants make a very strong contribution to children's learning;
- There are excellent relationships between adults and pupils, which underpin learning very well;
- Teachers could sometimes make more of marking and homework.

Commentary

15. Teaching was strong at the time of the last inspection and it has improved further. The foundation for success are the excellent relationships which reflect the ethos of the school and result in the strong and productive partnership between adults and pupils. Teachers manage the wide range of ages and abilities very well, so that learning takes place in calm surroundings yet in an exciting atmosphere. All pupils, of whatever age or gender, work exceptionally well together. They are encouraged to lead the learning themselves and support each other, which gives a boost in confidence to all. For example, pupils in Year 6 act as 'sentence doctors' to help in improving each other's writing.
16. A strong feature of the teaching is the successful blend of teacher and teaching assistant. The teaching assistants offer a seamless extension of teaching in, for example, the way they use the same methods and terminology, teach sensitively and allow the children space to lead in their learning. In the pupils' minds, teachers and assistants are indistinguishable. They work effectively with children across the full ability range, at times asking perceptive and demanding questions of more able pupils, at other times closely supporting pupils with special needs. The teaching assistants' contribution helps in providing best challenge for the wide age and ability ranges in each class.
17. Teaching is highly effective in the Foundation Stage. The teaching in this younger class constantly challenges the pupils with new ideas, so they are encouraged and their curiosity is aroused. Early on it has a particularly strong impact on their social skills, establishing the platform from which they become such good learners when they are older. Strong features of the teaching here are the way children are encouraged to explore and express themselves with other children and the ideas that help them to extend their vocabulary and thoughts.
18. Teachers plan their work with great care to ensure best coverage of the subjects. The close links made between the different subjects make the pupils learning more relevant and interesting. Teachers work closely together to share their knowledge about different subjects and they choose their methods well, depending on what they are trying to achieve, for example, would discussion, writing or an investigation be best? Their approaches successfully stir the pupils' imaginations and arouse their curiosities through challenging them with interesting activities. The environment teachers create in the classrooms, particularly through display, celebrate the children's achievements and encourage them to produce high quality work. They use resources such as interactive whiteboards effectively to support explanations, and the outside well in science investigations. Teachers stress with pupils the value of what is around them - 'Use what is in front of you' - to enhance their appreciation of what is there.

19. Teachers do not always get the best value possible out of marking or homework. Whilst the marking and assessment of pupils' work meets basic needs, more benefits could be gained from this. Pupils' work is corrected and praised but more guidance given to pupils on what to do next would be beneficial. Similarly a more consistent approach to giving homework would add further value to pupils' learning and development. However, these omissions do not undermine the very good teaching pupils receive from day-to-day; rather they are the cherries missing from the fine cake.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 16 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	5	6	3			

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

The curriculum

The curriculum provision is very good. It provides a wealth of interesting learning opportunities that cater well for the pupils' aptitudes and particular needs. The school provides very good opportunities for enrichment, including extra-curricular activities. The accommodation and resources are good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum has a huge impact on the very impressive ethos and spirituality of the school;
- The educational opportunities provided by the school's stunning grounds and local environment are fully realised;
- Not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to use ICT in their work in the various subject lessons;
- Enrichment opportunities are very good and are linked to the children's needs and the whole curriculum;
- The provision for special educational needs children is very good, as it is tailored to individual needs and removes all barriers to learning.

Commentary

20. The highly innovative and inspirational skills based curriculum, introduced by the current headteacher, drives the ethos of the school. It is sustained and improved by the headteacher's most effective leadership of a motivated, able staff who share her philosophy, based on developing the whole child. This sets out to, and more importantly succeeds in, developing children who are articulate, skilled, kind and thoughtful. Pupils take pride in high achievement based on acquiring and developing a wide range of skills through a theme based curriculum. They are stimulated academically by this, yet are encouraged to enjoy their childhood. The school values the work of its pupils very highly and outstanding displays in corridors and classrooms reflect the high quality experiences the curriculum gives the children. The school's high regard for beauty and spirituality is reflected in the outstanding quality of children's poetry and creative writing, their work on nature and their exceptional art and design abilities. Standards remain consistently high in the core subjects and across the curriculum, and this has been achieved through stimulating and exciting lessons. All staff collaborate to plan and deliver the curriculum, which is constantly developing. Intellectual and organisational rigour ensures a proper balance between subjects and avoids repetition. However, across the various subjects there are not enough opportunities for pupils to make best use of ICT in support of their work.

21. The school is situated in the heart of a valley of raw beauty, within its own stunning grounds. The farsighted and resourceful governing body have acquired surrounding fields and woodland to extend the site and secure its long-term integrity. It is this environment and the dynamic development of its potential that is key to Quernmore's successful curriculum. It permeates school life and the immediate surroundings are used by staff and pupils as an 'outdoor classroom'. Within the grounds are an adventure playground, a wildlife garden and playing field. Pupils benefit socially, emotionally and academically from this superb resource. The school eco-committee has a very high profile and caring for the environment is a top priority for the school. From their classrooms, children can study the abundant bird life outside, drawn to the well placed bird tables, or view web cam images of a bird's nest. The school building is cramped but excellent use is made of the available space. There is a flow between the interior and exterior that gives the whole school an organic and very special atmosphere.
22. There are very good enrichment opportunities for pupils within lessons and outside the school day. All classes undertake educational visits strongly linked to the school curriculum. These have included a visit to Manchester Airport as part of a transport project and visits to Morecambe, the Liverpool Museum and the Ribble Discovery Centre to support other studies. Each year the older pupils have the chance to visit the Isle of Man for a residential adventure holiday with pupils from other local schools. Those not attending undertake a well organised and exciting Activity Week in school. A rich variety of visitors come into school, including poets, musicians and artists. Pupils perform in concerts and plays and learn to play a musical instrument. There are opportunities to play football, netball and other sports.
23. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported by highly skilled and sensitive support and teaching assistants. These pupils are fully included in all lessons and activities and make very good progress. The part-time co-ordinator works very expertly with staff to maximise opportunities for pupils and remove barriers to their learning.

Care, guidance and support

Staff take good care of the pupils and support and guide them effectively. Involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' personal support and guidance is excellent;
- Staff strongly promote very high attendance and very good behaviour;
- Pupils are not given a broad enough scope to influence decision making;
- Some of the school's health and safety procedures could be more systematic.

Commentary

24. Parents are highly delighted with the level of care that their children receive in this all embracing school. It encourages pupils' independence and allows them to be themselves. Parents really appreciate the family atmosphere within which their children are happy and flourish academically, personally and creatively. One aptly

commented that pupils are supported, nurtured and loved all the way through school.

25. Staff make very good arrangements to ensure that newcomers settle in smoothly. Reception staff usefully visit the pre-school settings that many of the children attend and successfully organise pre-visits to school. Parents are unequivocal that these arrangements enable their children to get off to a good start. Older pupils who transfer from other schools say that everyone's friendliness is a big factor in their successful integration.
26. Staff skillfully support and guide pupils with special educational needs through individual education plans that are very effectively matched to their difficulties. Promotion of independence is given high priority. Provision for able and talented pupils is more recently developed and not yet fully in practice, following the school's recent audit to identify needs.

27. Very good behaviour is achieved through staff strongly encouraging self-discipline, and comes from within the pupils. There is no need for a 'carrot and stick' approach in this school but staff firmly and fairly discipline the pupils when necessary. Pupils and parents say that rare incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively by focusing upon the feelings of those concerned and discussing the distress caused. Pupils' great love of school stems from the stimulating, richly varied curriculum. Absence through illness is rare and parents think twice about going on family holidays in term time, now that staff have made them aware of the detrimental effects.
28. At the time of the last inspection some aspects of the school's arrangements to assure pupils' health and safety were weak and reported as a key issue for action. Since then, many of the deficiencies have been tackled but there is still not enough structure to some of the safety checks that take place. Fire drills are held every term now, and logged, but checks of the premises are more 'ad hoc'. The school's self-evaluation acknowledges the need for health and safety audits by governors to become part of committee meetings.
29. Staff welcome, and suitably take on board, pupils' suggestions for improvements. Pupils are actively encouraged to bring about change through their eco-committee but lack a regular forum, such as a school council, for influencing broader aspects of school life. This is a shame considering their excellent attitudes and maturity.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school enjoys good partnerships with parents, other schools and the wider community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are passionate about the school's innovative provision for their children's learning and development;
- Communication with parents could be better and many would welcome this;
- Strong links with several local schools bring many benefits for the pupils;
- The school plays an important part in village life and uses the community well.

Commentary

30. The school is very popular with parents and is always over-subscribed. Many wrote and spoke to inspectors at length in glowing terms about its philosophy. Half of the pupils travel to the school from the town quite far away, because parents want this quality and style of education for their children. Many arrive and depart by bus, their parents rarely having the opportunity to make personal contact with the staff. Those who are able to cross the threshold into school when they deliver and pick up their children, or through helping in school, build strong relationships with the headteacher and staff because of the warm welcome they receive. Quite a number of parents and other adults get actively involved in school by hearing readers, for example, or by arranging successful social and fundraising events through the parent and teacher association.
31. More than a quarter of parents justifiably feel that they could be better consulted. Many would like more information on how their children are getting on, and ways that they might help them to learn. Although the school consults parents on some

issues, it does not sufficiently canvass their opinions as stakeholders about its full provision. Parents, for instance, told inspectors that they would like to know more about how mathematics is taught nowadays. The school, once aware of this, responded swiftly by arranging an evening to explain this. More could be made of the school's website to keep parents abreast of the curriculum, policies and developments.

32. Parents are most welcome to contact the school in person, or by telephone, if they have any concerns about their children's progress or other issues. Pupils' annual written progress reports are generally good but do not always pinpoint their attainment in relation to the national average. Some are better than others at identifying the steps that pupils need to take next to improve.
33. Close links with the grammar school (to which more than a third of Year 6 transfer) enable Year 5/6 pupils to visit for science, mathematics and computer lessons, that help to raise standards and prepare them for transition. The school successfully joins with three others in the locality to make viable the annual residential visit to the Isle of Man that so enhances older pupils' personal development.
34. The school plays an active part in the life of the community by providing a meeting place for church groups and by participating in the annual village sports day. Staff tap into local amenities and the wider community effectively. Educational visits make learning exciting and visitors, such as musicians, poets, theatre groups and health professionals, successfully enrich pupils' learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent and she is very well supported by other key staff. Governance is very good. By and large the school is managed well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is inspired leadership by the headteacher, which underpins the innovative curriculum, strong family ethos and high standards;
- There is a strong team of staff and governors, with a keenness to continually improve the school;
- One or two aspects of management could be sharper.

Commentary

35. There is outstanding leadership by the headteacher. The headteacher and governors are committed to delivering their clear vision for the school, which offers interesting and exciting learning experiences within the ethos of developing the 'whole child'. As one parent at the meeting put it 'The school is like a big family'. Care, respect and support for those who need it permeate the work of the school and pupils are exceptionally receptive learners. There are considerable strengths in the way pupils are nurtured, encouraged and grow in confidence. Staff and pupils are well motivated to work hard. The staff work well as a team because they share the same goals, and the teaching assistants and other staff play a full part. When the school chooses new staff, the headteacher and governors take great care to ensure that whoever is appointed shares their beliefs about learning and the curriculum.

36. The school has successfully achieved high standards for a number of years and they continue to rise. As well as those improvements measurable through rising test results, standards seen in pupils' work in the infant and junior classes and in the Foundation Stage were better than at the time of the last inspection.
37. A few aspects of management could be sharper. Whilst the school leadership knows broadly how well the school is doing, it needs to improve the way it collects information and views to inform its future growth more thoroughly. It currently relies much upon informal, rather than systematic, methods and this does not always provide information with enough regularity or depth. Staff leading subjects need more opportunities to see what is going on in year groups other than those in which they regularly teach, to help move their subject forward. A number of parents pointed out that they are not often asked for their views and routine health and safety checks are sometimes delayed.
38. The provision for children with special educational needs is led and managed extremely well. The children are identified quickly; individual education plans are drawn up and are specific to their needs. Provision for pupils in the Foundation Stage (reception class) is led and managed very well. The increased space offered an exciting opportunity to expand and reshape the school's provision for the youngest children and this has been seized.
39. Governors have improved their effectiveness and are doing a better job than at the time of the last inspection. They have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and show determination in driving the school forward; this happens, for example, in their active involvement in protecting the school grounds and extending the building. They are keen to sustain the ethos at the heart of the school and to ensure that pupils enjoy their learning as well as achieving good outcomes. They ensure statutory responsibilities are met.
40. The school's budget is managed efficiently and available funding is used well to support key priorities. The targeting of finances to improve the building and grounds and the allocation of funds to buy new ICT resources are two good examples. The school provides very good value for money. It is successful in making the most of the advantages that come from being a small school and this easily outweighs any losses from the restricted accommodation or small school disadvantages.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	324,429	Balance from previous year	36,000
Total expenditure	349,907	Balance carried forward to the next	10,585
Expenditure per pupil	3,210		

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation Stage is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The children benefit from plenty of animated conversation and exciting experiences for reading and writing;
- Their own ideas, questions and comments help to steer and deepen their understanding and knowledge about the world around them;
- Children play productively because ideas and props are carefully planned to develop inventiveness and skill.

Commentary

41. Usually when they start school, children's skills are close to that of most their age but the language they use and skills of communication are better. In all the areas of learning, the children achieve very well because they make particularly good progress from the start. Most are on course to exceed the goals set out for them to achieve and this includes their social skills. Activities are planned to ensure that each child learns in the best ways possible. This common purpose is at the heart of the pattern of the day and is shared by all the staff. Ideas are beautifully blended with visits, props, events and visitors; knowledge and skills ooze out of each activity. This is so much so that each child learns at a very good pace, independently and with no stress. Children play as children should do, with joy and eagerness. Teaching is very good. Accommodation is much improved and now provides a good amount of light and airy space for the fifteen children. Resources are good. Leadership and management are very good.
42. Children's **personal, social and emotional development** is very good. They play alongside and with each other very well and for a good length of time. They are very well behaved children, who manage their own belongings, are happy to make choices and to figure things out. Prime activities for learning are planned to develop robust personal skills through which the children extend their repertoire and stamina for the range of skills for this age. In doing so, adults preserve the joys of early childhood encounters and ensure that the children learn happily, hand in hand with the familiar, the new and with suitable challenge. In many ways, the children are typical in their emotional development and are not pushed to be independent too early. As such, they are securely on track along the 'stepping stones' towards the overall goal but in their social development they are ahead.
43. Achievement in **communication, language and literacy** is very good. Shared sessions with adults buzz with conversation and interest. Children speak confidently and with a higher command of language than most their age. The phrases they use show that they are on course to significantly exceed the goals for speaking and listening, in their skills for communication and in their capacity for thinking about ideas. They understand that print carries meaning and get a flying start to their reading in the sharing of stories and books. They write interesting labels and lists for the 'garage' and 'office' in their role play area and understand and write with greater

sense of purpose than many children their age. When they start Year 1, most can read and write simple sentences and the higher attaining children write interesting pieces and have a growing awareness of simple punctuation marks.

44. Achievement in **mathematical development** is very good. Children's activities demonstrate their understanding of numbers to 20 and they recognise patterns in numbers to a much higher level than many children of their age. Refreshing teaching guides the children to explore numbers and the properties of objects. Often the children set challenges for themselves and when occasions are ripe adults snatch these valuable moments to teach some more. In one instance, the children spotted a pattern sequence and several of them took over the teacher's role momentarily as they built on each other's observations. They took it upon themselves to count in sets of twos and threes using the coloured patterns that captured their attention. Very good teaching accelerates progress and consolidates children's understanding in a wide range of indoor and outdoor challenges, so the children progress quickly along the 'stepping stones'.
45. Achievement in **knowledge and understanding of the world** is very good. Children's awareness of culture is beyond that usually seen. Their experiences include a wealth of Chinese objects, writing and art. Children's work as they observe, explore, draw and write is carefully linked to experiences about change, the past, places and beliefs. Thoughtful planning means that the children gain a great deal from activities such as news footage from Pathe News, so they can make sense of what might be the same in garages and cars today. The wealth of valuable resources used to develop children's understanding is impressive. They help the children to think deeply and extend the scope of their understanding very well.
46. In their **physical development**, children are on course to exceed the goals in quite a range of their skills. For example, in the daily fun activity of 'Puff & Pant' they can hop, balance and negotiate space much more effectively than many children of their age. They also have a good awareness of their own heartbeat racing and steadying during and after exercise. Outdoors with others in the play areas and in adult supported sessions, they have a rich variety of physical experiences that benefits all of them.
47. In **creative development**, children's inventive play is emphasised through very thoughtful planning, a wide range of ideas and ample time for play, which adults extend. Teaching provides a stream of ideas and valuable resources that enrich conversation and foster imaginative expression. Children's paintings delight in detail and character, fine skill and observation.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are skilled and mature in the art of conversation and they use these strengths in their learning very well;
- Their high level of skills and thirst for reading help to deepen understanding in other subjects;
- The stories, poems and descriptive pieces they write show skilful use of language and very good understanding of how an author writes.

Commentary

48. The small numbers of pupils taking national tests when compared to the numbers in most schools mean that test results alone do not always show an accurate picture of the standards that pupils achieve. In fact, the standards attained in the school's 2004 national tests scores for Year 6 reflect just this. The results matched those of other schools nationally but would indicate a significant dip compared to those of similar schools. The main reason for the lower performance than in previous years was the smaller proportion of pupils in this year group with higher levels of attainment when they started school. The standard of pupils' work seen during the inspection indicates consistently very good achievement. Most pupils are indeed working at a level well above that of other pupils their age in all the areas of the subject. Since the previous inspection, the school has made good improvements in teaching, learning and standards in reading. The standard of work seen in Year 2 was also well above that typical of pupils of this age.
49. Throughout the school, pupils listen very well to their classmates, consider what they say and are remarkably mature in their use of spoken language. The qualities of their vocabulary and the phrases they use are pertinent to the discussion to which they contribute. In many instances, children can match the needs of the situation in which they find themselves to the style of language they need to use. This they do very well. In most year groups, the pupils bring higher qualities of language to school than most their age, so they are very confident when discussing their ideas and often respond to lessons with an urgent quest for knowledge.
50. The school has built on the good standards in reading seen during the previous inspection; so much so, that most pupils read with a passion and depth far beyond their age. In the Years 5/6 class, a new book by a treasured author is moving around quickly and the buzz of excitement is evident. Parents make a huge contribution to the hunt for other exciting books, even to the extent of videoing an interview with a favourite author! Pupils in the infant classes have great understanding of characters and story events, and love to explain the details in the stories they share. The range and quality of longer texts available to pupils, and the involvement of many adults as readers themselves, are valuable role models and children want to read.
51. In writing, the pupils romp along. They explore the nuances of language in a story or poem with huge interest and with increasing precision, as they respond to the cadences of written phrases. In Year 3 and 4, for instance, they delight in the range of 'juicy' words they might use for themselves in their own writing. Achievement in writing is very good because of the continual emphasis on rich language and the very close planning that links the style of well loved and new authors with the craft of writing. As a result, higher attaining pupils respond by exploring the inventive phrases used by writers in their own writing. The range of information writing undertaken by pupils reflects the breadth of curriculum subjects well but there was no evidence of writing in science during the inspection. Interestingly, pupils' handwriting is more ordinary and tends to lack the fluidity and skill typical of pupils in Years 2 and 6 across the country.
52. Teaching is very good. Teachers are skilful and enthusiastic. They meet the needs of individual pupils, including those with special needs, with sensitivity and challenge. In fact, they frequently use the idea a child offers to enrich and deepen

the literary experience. Teaching assistants contribute much valuable support that helps pupils to deal with their work with greater confidence than they might otherwise have. This assures that the momentum of their learning is kept up. Marking is thorough and pupils get the message that their good efforts are valued, but the written comments for older junior pupils do not always help them to improve their written work, nor do they guide pupils sufficiently towards targets that they might achieve. Pleasingly, these same pupils can and do evaluate their work with each other very well. Leadership is strong. The school team maintain a good overview of pupils' progress and the subject leader has expert subject knowledge.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

53. Pupils use their skills in literacy, including those of speaking, very well in all subjects. Their passion for reading is a strength used across the curriculum. Teachers' planning seeks to develop skills profitably in most other subjects, so pupils compose their work to a high level, though good presentation is less important to them.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards and achievement have remained consistently well above average;
- Teaching overall is very good, with some excellent teaching in Key Stage 1;
- Pupils develop strong, independent learning skills from an early age;
- Problem solving and thinking skills are highly developed in all classes;
- Work is very well matched to the needs of individual pupils;
- Leadership and management of the subject are good.

Commentary

54. Standards for pupils at the age of 7 have been typically above or well above average over the last four years. At the age of 11, standards have been consistently well above average. Pupils' achievement is very good in all classes. All pupils succeed from an early age, thanks to the very good teaching they receive.
55. The volume and quality of mathematics work that pupils of all ages produce is exceptional. Within Key Stage 1, pupils soon become adept at tackling mental problems and their work covers a wide range of mathematical operations and applications. They display enthusiasm and ingenuity in their work, and use and understand mathematical terminology with confidence. The older pupils, particularly those in Years 5 and 6, have developed very good abilities and many are working at a very high level. They retain their zest for the subject and enjoy new challenges and learning fresh techniques to stretch their knowledge and abilities. Pupils of all ages work well together and with the adults in the classroom, and they have very good capacity to work independently for long periods when necessary.
56. Teaching is very good overall, with some excellent teaching in Key Stage 1, as seen in the Year 1/2 class when pupils worked with the teacher and support assistants on direction and compass points. The lesson was inspirational, with all pupils working to a very high standard and making excellent progress. The teacher very skilfully used maps, aerial photographs and a grid to reinforce and extend their knowledge of compass points, before moving into the playground to carry out lively and challenging practical applications of their knowledge. In the school hall, the teaching assistant expertly led a lesson with younger pupils on direction, using an electronic Roamer, which tested and extended pupil knowledge of direction and estimation. The support assistant was closely involved in the planning and delivery of the lesson. The special needs pupils made excellent progress, showing a full understanding of the subject and taking a major part in programming the Roamer successfully. The teaching for older pupils is very good and closely matched to the needs of individual pupils. All pupils, and most particularly the high proportion of very able children, work through problems at an exceptionally rapid rate. This tests the resourcefulness of the teacher but he and the teaching assistant ensure that the work remains at the right level and is stimulating and interesting. The strong emphasis throughout the school on problem solving and thinking skills reaches its

zenith with these pupils, who apply a wide range of strategies to solve some very challenging problems.

57. The subject is well led and managed by the co-ordinator, who monitors the work in the area well. Assessment is thorough and well recorded. Staff are kept informed and receive thorough and regular updates in their training.

Mathematics across the curriculum

58. There are plenty of opportunities for children to use their mathematical skills in other subjects as a result of the themed curriculum. They produce and interpret graphs and tables and use measure in many subjects from science to art and design.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average at the age of 7 and rise to well above average at the age of 11;
- Achievement is above average for all pupils;
- Teaching is good overall across the school and has developed effective links with the local grammar school involving older pupils;
- There are strong links with other subjects;
- Use of the school site and the natural environment is outstanding.

Commentary

59. Standards have been consistently above average at the age of 7 over the last four years. By the time pupils reach the age of 11, they have risen further to well above average. Pupil achievement is good for all ages and abilities.
60. Pupils cover a wide range of National Curriculum topics within science. Younger pupils, in their work on forces, begin to explore investigations and experiments and understand fair testing. In their work on minibeasts, they further hone their observational skills and add to their knowledge. Older pupils' work includes such topics as studying light, circuitry and forces and friction. The emphasis on investigative and observational skills is developed further, though pupils do not always record the methods and outcomes of their experiments as thoroughly as they should.
61. Teaching is good overall. Lessons are well planned and prepared and often have an experimental emphasis. The opportunities afforded by the school's stunning site and natural environment are used very well. Pupils in classrooms can view web cam images of a bird's nest in the grounds and bird tables outside classrooms attract a wealth of different species. The younger pupils took part in a lesson studying insects and collected specimens within the school grounds, made interesting observations and recorded them. Their enthusiasm and interest is typical of that displayed by all classes. Older pupils working on plants and habitats are able to conduct controlled experiments inside and outdoors. Pupils of all abilities are well provided for. Special needs pupils are fully involved in lessons and their achievement is very good. The large number of higher ability pupils have work that challenges them appropriately.
62. A strong feature of the curriculum is the link with other subjects, which follows from the skills based cross-curricular approach of the school. There are elements of writing and art and design, humanities and mathematics, as well as science in the topics covered. There is some use of ICT to record and present information but this

could be used more widely to conduct and model experiments. Exciting links with the local grammar school have been developed. Older pupils have the opportunity to visit the school to be taught by science specialists and to use their extensive science facilities. They experience exciting and challenging experimental work in biology, physics and chemistry and standards are very high.

63. The subject is well led and managed by the headteacher, who has developed the innovative curriculum over a number of years. Pupils' work is thoroughly monitored and assessed and staff receive good support. Their skills and knowledge are regularly updated by training.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

64. Insufficient teaching was seen in **information and communication technology (ICT)** to make a reliable judgement about overall provision. Inspectors looked at the work pupils had completed, both on display and in electronic format, and talked to some of them about it.
65. Evidence from these sources indicates that in the Year 1/2 class pupils achieve well in their understanding and use of technology in the world around them. The school has improved the core resources of hardware since the previous inspection, so children have at least satisfactory access to use computers for research, writing and presentation. In Year 1/2, there is a breadth of relevant and sometimes exciting activities that add great interest to learning in other subjects, through web cams and the use of simple robotic devices. However, technical difficulties encountered have hindered the progress intended for the subject. Nevertheless, pupils have very good skills to navigate their way around the range of tools they need to use computers quickly. These skills are supplemented very much by computer use at home.
66. Although older junior pupils are very skilled and quick to learn new programs, the momentum of technological progress in learning through computers is slower in some aspects than that seen nationally. Discussion with pupils in Year 6 indicates they can manipulate the tools to create presentations and simple web pages and they can word process to edit, re-organise and present their work. They can save their own portfolio of work electronically and use the digital camera and video to record events and work. They achieve well in these features of the curriculum. However, there is little evidence that they tackle and understand other important aspects, such as using simulations or monitoring events. The link with a partner school and the use of shared resources from time to time enables pupils to use spreadsheets and enhances the quality of provision for specific lessons.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum.

67. Insufficient use is made of ICT to support work in other subjects. Little use was seen during the inspection and pupils work samples did not reflect widespread use. There are few opportunities for pupils to enhance their knowledge and skills in subjects such as science, by using technological devices to input, change, interrogate and transfer data rapidly. Pupils were at a loss when asked to describe any IT based models, simulations or to examine patterns and relationships in their work, other than some achievements in Years 3 and 4.

HUMANITIES

68. The pupils' work in **geography, history and religious education** was sampled, with just one lesson seen in religious education. This was insufficient to make a firm

judgement about provision in each individual subject. However, pupils' previous work was seen and evidence of their achievement was also available through talking to them about their work and experiences. Photographic records of events and visits, displays and discussions with teachers also added to the picture. Together this evidence points to some very good achievement and high standards.

69. Pupils study geography through the skills based themed curriculum. Younger pupils learn about environmental features and use maps and atlases. Their work effectively combines geography with English, art and science. The older pupils study aspects such as rivers, mountains and weather. As expected, the school site and the local environment are used extensively in lessons. Older pupils track the course of the nearby River Lune as part of their fieldwork.
70. In history, younger pupils' work includes beginning to understand sequencing events, comparing old and modern and the study of place names. Older pupils' studies include the Egyptians, the Greeks and fieldwork on a local historical site. They use the Internet to research topics and visit local and more distant places to support their studies.
71. Pupils enjoy their work in both subjects very much, particularly the practical aspects. They appreciate the richness of their school site and the surrounding area.
72. In religious education, the younger pupils cover a wide range of appropriate work. For example, they write prayers or retell stories from different points of view to the original. They learn about special places or write down their thoughts and feelings, building up their knowledge of Christianity and of other religions. By the time they reach Year 6, pupils have a very good knowledge and understanding of different religions and how they affect people's lives. For example, through their knowledge of Christianity and Judaism they can talk about the differences in beliefs, as reflected in the Bible and the Torah. They are comfortable with talking about religious beliefs and understand that holy books can offer guidance on how to live life today. Through their discussions and written work in the subject they also develop their literacy skills well.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

73. The pupils' work in **art and design, design and technology, music and physical education** was also sampled. This was insufficient to make a firm judgement about provision in each subject. However, in addition to the few lessons seen, discussions were held with teachers, pupils' previous work was looked at and inspectors spoke to pupils about their experiences and work.
74. In art and design, children's work on display, their sketchbooks and the one outstanding lesson seen indicate that most have a very high level of skill when compared with those of pupils in many schools. Activities invite exploration and artistic expression of a superb quality. Teaching of technique is clearly exceptional and the resources used are finely tuned to developing pupils' skills. In the one lesson seen, pupils in the Year 3/4 class matched their designs with the effects of ink to represent water, as do the pictures they study by the artist David Hockney. In doing so, the children discovered the effect of natural light and reflection on their work. They generated plenty of ideas to develop their work from this point, demonstrating outstanding skills as they appraised their own work and that of others. Their sensitivity, generosity and use of artistic terms were impressive. The subject encapsulates the aims of the school and celebrates much of its work.

75. In design and technology, the small amount of pupils' work scrutinised, samples of work around the school and discussions held with pupils in Year 6 indicated that pupils' understanding of the nature of the subject and their skills of design are higher than usually seen in Year 6.
76. In physical education, pupils have regular opportunities to swim. They become confident swimmers well before they transfer to secondary education. Teachers' planning shows due emphasis is placed on games, gymnastics, dance and athletics in lessons at different times of the year. Some after school clubs for boys and girls provide additional opportunities to develop team skills. This latter provision is not easy to organise in a small and isolated school to which all pupils have to travel by car or bus.
77. In music, regular lessons are planned and timetabled, with one seen during the inspection. In this, Year 4 pupils showed appropriate standards and skills for their age in composing 'river music' by writing down their ideas as graphic scores and using untuned percussion instruments to perform. This theme stemmed from their work in geography and a river visit. A large number of children learn instruments, such as the flute or violin, with visiting specialist teachers coming each week. Such opportunities are open to all pupils, with all in Key Stage 1 learning the recorder and about half in Key Stage 2 learning another instrument. Those who take part are enthusiastic and make good progress.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

78. The pupils' work in **personal, social and health education and citizenship (PSHCE)** was sampled. Only one lesson was seen, insufficient to make a firm judgement on overall provision.
79. The school places very high importance upon developing the whole child as an individual and PSHCE underpins all that happens in school. Staff are very good at raising pupils' self-esteem by valuing them for what they are. Pupils really appreciate this and the trusting relationships that enable them to discuss their feelings and emotions.
80. Citizenship is promoted very effectively. Staff actively encourage pupils to think about the needs of others in school and in the wider community. Older pupils maturely share responsibility for helping younger ones in the dining hall and hearing them read. They often undertake charitable fundraising. In a PSHCE lesson in Year 3/4, for example, pupils had planted sunflower seeds and were making eye-catching posters to attract sponsorship of plant height for a children's hospice.
81. Pupils are very aware of environmental issues, helped by the outdoor curriculum and their work on global conservation. They have set up their own eco-committee, who spur peers to reduce waste by holding weekly eco-lunches, by encouraging them to switch off unnecessary lights and to recycle as much as possible.
82. Sex and relationships education and drugs education are taught effectively. The Life Education Bus visits, for instance, to raise pupils' awareness of healthy life options. The school is working towards gaining recognition as a healthy school. Pupils of all ages, including reception, respond very positively to measures to improve their fitness and well being through daily 'Puff and Pant' exercises.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)	1
Attendance	1
Attitudes	1
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

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