

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **RICKMANSWORTH PARK JMI SCHOOL**

Rickmansworth

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117304

Headteacher: Mrs Peta Dyke

Lead inspector: Mr Martin Newell

Dates of inspection: 6<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> December 2004

Inspection number: 267562

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	205
School address:	Park Road Rickmansworth Hertfordshire
Postcode:	WD3 1HU
Telephone number:	01923 770265
Fax number:	01923 776558
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Peter Smithson
Date of previous inspection:	May 1999

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is situated just outside the town centre of Rickmansworth in Hertfordshire. The school gained a School Achievement Award in 2001. There are 205 pupils on roll with a slightly higher percentage of boys than girls. The school is about the same size as other primary schools. Pupil mobility is at an average level. Most pupils are of white ethnic origin, and of the small percentage of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds, none are at an early stage of acquiring English. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average, with the percentage of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs below the national average. The nature of special educational needs includes specific learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural difficulties and hearing impairment. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is under 2 per cent, and this is well below the national average. Attainment when children start at the school covers the full ability range and there are sometimes fluctuations in different years, but in general it is above average.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
10638	Martin Newell	Lead inspector	Special educational needs. Mathematics. Religious education. Music. Personal, social and health education and citizenship.
15181	Meg Hackney	Lay inspector	
16493	Neville Sherman	Team inspector	English as an additional language. English. Information and communication technology. Art and design. Design and technology. Physical education.
12997	Chris Cheong	Team inspector	Foundation Stage curriculum. Science. History. Geography.

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **OVERALL EVALUATION**

This is a **satisfactory** school with a number of good aspects and is improving rapidly under the very good leadership and management skills of the headteacher. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall, but very good in the Foundation Stage. Attainment is strongest in English and mathematics, where standards are well above the national average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. It is a school that is now well aware of the areas that it needs to tackle to help pupils achieve even better. Taking all factors into account, this is a school that is providing satisfactory value for money.

#### **The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:**

- The headteacher has set a very clear and accurate agenda for school improvement.
- The children in the Foundation Stage get off to a very good start to their educational lives because of the very good quality of teaching.
- Pupils attain high standards in English and mathematics by the end of Year 2 and 6 and achieve well.
- Pupils' investigative and enquiry skills in science are not good enough.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to school and this, together with the very good standards of behaviour, makes significant contributions to the quality of learning.
- Pupils' abilities to carry out investigative and problem-solving tasks in mathematics are in need of improvement.
- There are some strengths in teaching in Years 1 to 6, and teaching assistants make an important contribution to how pupils learn.
- Good opportunities are on offer for enriching pupils' learning outside of the formal curriculum.
- The school provides good levels of care and guidance for pupils.
- Not enough use is made of computers to support pupils' learning across different subjects.
- Good links have been forged with parents and other schools.

Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Standards have been maintained and the provision made for information and communication technology has improved. A number of the previously identified strengths in other aspects of school life have been maintained. However, the key issues relating to assessment and the role of subject leaders have only been rigorously addressed since the appointment of the present headteacher. The school is now well placed to continue to develop and improve further.

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED**

#### **Year 6 results**

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	All schools			Similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
English	A	A	A	A*
Mathematics	A*	A	A	A
Science	A	B	B	A

*Key: A\* - very high; A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average. Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.*

Pupils' achievement is **satisfactory** overall. Achievement is very good in the Foundation Stage. The above table shows that, on the basis of the 2004 National Curriculum tests results for Year 6, pupils' results are well above the national average in English and mathematics and above the national average in science. When compared with similar schools on the basis of prior attainment, results are very high in English and well above average in mathematics and science. Inspection findings show attainment to be well above average in English and mathematics and pupils in Years 3 to 6 achieve well overall in these subjects. Standards in science are above average and achievement is satisfactory. Standards in geography, music and elements of physical education are above average by the end of Year 6, and pupils often achieve well. Standards in religious education and information and communication technology are at an average level and achievement is satisfactory. Standards in all other inspected subjects are at an average level and achievement is satisfactory.

Inspection findings indicate that standards at the end of Year 2 are well above average in English and mathematics, and overall pupils achieve well. Standards in science are above average and achievement is satisfactory. Standards are above average in geography and aspects of physical education and music, and achievement is never less than satisfactory. Standards in religious education and information and communication technology are at an average level with achievement being satisfactory. Standards in all other inspected subjects are at an average level and achievement is generally satisfactory.

Attainment when children start at the school covers the full ability range and is generally above average, although the present cohort of children started school with average levels of attainment. The very good, and at times excellent, teaching in the reception class means that children make very good progress, achieve very well and by the end of the reception year standards are above the expected level apart from in personal, social and emotional development and physical development where they are well above average.

Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to classmates, and the good quality of support provided by teaching assistants enhances the quality of pupils' learning.

The provision made for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good**, although spiritual development is satisfactory. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are very good and add much to the ethos of the school. Pupils enjoy coming to school, and this is reflected in the attendance rates which are very good. Punctuality is satisfactory.



## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is **satisfactory** with some notable strengths. Teaching and learning are **satisfactory** overall with some good, very good and excellent features. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is very good and provides children with a very good range of vibrant, challenging and fun learning activities. Teaching in Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory overall, with English and mathematics generally taught well. Good, and on occasions very good, teaching was observed in some lessons in Years 1 to 6, although there are times when teaching does not provide enough opportunity for pupils to be challenged through demanding investigative and problem-solving activities. Good assessment procedures have been introduced by the headteacher, but these are not yet fully embedded in school practice to have the best possible impact on pupils' achievement. The curriculum on offer in the Foundation Stage is very good. In Years 1 to 6, it is satisfactory overall with good enrichment opportunities through visits, visitors and extracurricular activities. The school values the views and opinions of pupils and much good emphasis is given to pupils' care and welfare. The school has built up good links with parents and other schools which add to the quality of pupils' learning experiences. Links with the community are satisfactory.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall leadership and management of the school are **satisfactory**. The headteacher leads and manages the school very well, and since her appointment she has tackled weaknesses in teaching in a rigorous and effective manner. She has set a very accurate agenda for school improvement that is geared to raising standards further and to how well pupils achieve. Since the appointment of the headteacher, subject leaders have played a more proactive role in monitoring teaching, learning and standards, but over time their role has not been at this satisfactory level. Governance of the school is good.

## PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Most parents are happy with the quality of education that the school provides, find the school to be approachable and welcoming and endorse the partnership between school and home. A small minority of parents feel that the individual needs of their children are not being met, would like more information about their children's progress and feel that bullying is an issue. The school is looking at ways in which to improve communication, consultation and information channels to parents. Inspection findings show that pupils' individual needs are met appropriately and extensive discussions with pupils, together with inspectors' own observations, indicate that bullying is not an issue. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and feel that their views are listened to and respected. Pupils state that should bullying occur they are very confident that it would be dealt with quickly and sensitively. Pupils also state that they always feel there is an adult they can talk to if they have any worries or concerns whatsoever.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Improve standards in science by providing more consistent opportunities for pupils to learn through practical and investigative tasks and for older pupils to instigate their own investigations.
- Provide more systematic and well-planned opportunities for pupils to put their number and numeracy skills to the test in investigative and problem-solving activities.
- Ensure that meaningful and relevant opportunities for computers to be used to support and enhance pupils' learning in different subjects of the curriculum are planned for and capitalised upon.

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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

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

Children in the Foundation Stage achieve **very well**. Pupils achieve **well** across the school in English and mathematics and attain **very good** standards by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Standards are not as high as this in other subjects, and achievement overall in Years 1 to 6 is **satisfactory**.

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

- Children in the Foundation Stage get off to a flying start to their educational lives.
- Pupils across the school make good progress in English and mathematics and attain very good standards.
- Investigative skills in mathematics are not as strong as they could be.
- Pupils' investigative skills in science are not at the same level as their scientific knowledge.
- There are strengths in some foundation subjects.
- Not enough use is consistently made of computers to enhance pupils' learning.

#### **Commentary**

##### **FOUNDATION STAGE**

1. Attainment levels when children start at the school cover the full ability range and are above average overall. However, the attainment on entry to the school for the present reception children was average. Children in the Foundation Stage benefit from very good, and at times excellent, teaching. By the time children are ready to start Year 1 standards are above the nationally expected early learning goals in all areas of learning, apart from in children's personal, social and emotional development and physical development, where standards are well above average. The children are achieving very well given their level of attainment when they started school.

##### **KEY STAGE 1**

2. On the basis of the 2004 National Curriculum tests and teacher assessments for Year 2 pupils, attainment was well above the national average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. When the school's results are compared with similar schools on the basis of free school meals, attainment was well above average in reading and writing and average in mathematics. The school's trend of improvement is broadly in line with the national trend. Inspection findings indicate that standards are well above average overall in reading, writing and mathematics, and pupils of all abilities in Years 1 and 2 generally achieve well. There is, however, some scope for improvement in the development of pupils'

problem-solving skills in mathematics. Standards in science are above average, but achievement is satisfactory rather than good because not enough pupils attain at a higher level than that expected by the end of Year 2.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	18.0 (15.9)	15.8 (15.7)
Writing	16.7 (16.5)	14.6 (14.6)
Mathematics	17.5 (14.5)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 30 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- Standards in religious education and information and communication technology are at an average level and achievement is satisfactory, with scope for better use to be made of computers to support pupils' learning across different subjects of the curriculum. Standards in geography and aspects of music and physical education are above average, and achievement in these subjects is never less than satisfactory, and often good. Standards in all other inspected subjects are at an average level and pupils achieve in a satisfactory manner. There is no significant evidence of differences in achievement between boys and girls in any subjects.

### KEY STAGE 2

- On the basis of the 2004 National Curriculum tests for Year 6 pupils, attainment was well above the national average in English, mathematics and science. When compared with similar schools on the basis of prior attainment, the school's results were very high, in the top 5 per cent, in English, and well above average in mathematics and science. The school's rate of improvement is slightly below the national trend. Inspection findings indicate that standards are well above average overall in English and mathematics, although standards in pupils' investigative skills are not as high as their numeracy skills. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 achieve well in English and mathematics. Standards in science are above average and achievement is satisfactory because there is scope for more pupils to attain Level 5, which is the level above that normally expected for eleven year old pupils.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	29.6 (28.5)	26.9 (26.8)
Mathematics	29.2 (28.7)	27.0 (26.8)
Science	30.0 (29.9)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 30 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- Standards in religious education and information and communication technology are at an average level, and achievement is satisfactory. Opportunities are not consistently planned for or capitalised upon where computers could be used to enhance the quality of pupils' learning in different subjects. Standards in geography and elements of music and physical education are above average, and pupils often achieve well in these subjects.

Standards in all other inspected subjects are at an average level and achievement is satisfactory.

6. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is similar to that of their classmates. The pupils benefit from good levels of support and good specialist teaching. Teaching assistants make a major contribution to how well pupils learn. Pupils make good progress towards the literacy and numeracy targets that are contained in their individual education plans.

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

Pupils' attitudes to school are **very good** and this is matched by **very good** behaviour. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good** overall. Attendance is **very good** and punctuality is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and all it has to offer.
- Relationships are a significant strength and bullying is not an issue.
- The high standard of behaviour of the pupils adds much to the ethos of the school.
- The school does much to enhance the personal development of pupils.
- Although attendance rates are very good, not enough is done to follow up on unauthorised absence.

### **Commentary**

7. Relationships between pupils and with staff are very good and help to create a strong family and community atmosphere within the school. Older pupils provide good role models for the younger pupils in school, and pupils both young and old get on very well together. Discussions with pupils indicate that pupils across the school do not perceive bullying to be an issue. Importantly, pupils state that, should it occur, they feel very confident that it would be tackled quickly, sensitively and fairly. Pupils were also eager to point out that there is always someone to talk to if they have any worries or concerns. Many of the strengths identified at the last inspection, in terms of how pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities are developed and nurtured, have been maintained or indeed built upon.
8. The attitudes of the pupils are a significant strength of the school and add much to the quality of learning. Pupils are enthusiastic in all that they do and show high levels of interest and motivation. They are very attentive and show high levels of respect for the views, feelings and contributions of others. This enthusiasm for learning starts in the reception class where the high quality teaching nurtures a love for learning, promotes independence and immediately raises children's awareness of the fact that they too can play a significant role in how well they learn and achieve. Discussions with pupils show that they want to learn, have a thirst for new knowledge and want to achieve well.

9. The behaviour of pupils in class and around the school is of a high standard, and this helps to create an effective learning environment. Pupils show very good levels of self-discipline and are equally as well behaved at break and lunch times as they are in the classroom. Pupils are mature and very polite and courteous to adults, to visitors and to each other. Pupils behave very responsibly when they are not under the direct supervision of adults and respond very well to the high expectations that the school sets for good behaviour. Only occasionally is behaviour not at this high level, and this is usually as a result of teaching not capturing their imagination or enthusiasm. There have been no exclusions during the last twelve months.
10. Pupils' personal development is good, and this is enhanced by the good overall quality of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Assemblies are used well to nurture pupils' spiritual development. Although there are some good opportunities in lessons for pupils to explore their feelings and emotions, such opportunities are not always specifically planned for or capitalised upon, and it is this that results in pupils' spiritual development being satisfactory rather than good. Pupils have developed a strong sense of right and wrong and understand why they should do the right thing. They look after one another well. Pupils enjoy the opportunities they have to work together in pairs or small groups, and co-operate well with others. Older pupils are given significant responsibilities around the school and respond very well. For example, they look after the playground equipment sensibly, act as buddies for younger pupils and take pride in helping the school to run smoothly through their involvement in some of the decision-making processes of the school. Pupils' cultural development is addressed successfully through religious education and through aspects of the curriculum and through the experiences gained from visits and visitors from different faiths. Pupils learn a lot about artists and music from across the world as well as celebrating their own culture well.

#### Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	3.4	School data:	0.4
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.

11. Attendance is very good and well above the national average. The school has satisfactory procedures for promoting and monitoring attendance, and parents are reminded regularly of the importance of good attendance and punctuality on pupils' learning. However, the procedures for the prompt follow-up of all unauthorised absence are not sufficiently well implemented on a daily basis.

#### QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a **satisfactory** quality of education. Teaching and learning are **satisfactory** overall. Assessment is **satisfactory**. The curriculum is **satisfactory**

with **good** enrichment opportunities for pupils' learning outside of the formal curriculum. The accommodation and resources are **satisfactory**. The care and welfare provided for pupils are **good**. The involvement of pupils through listening to and acting on their views is **good**. Links with parents and other schools are **good** and links with the community are **satisfactory**.

## Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is **satisfactory**. Assessment is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching in the Foundation Stage brings learning to life, and assessment information is used very well to guide planning.
- Teaching has improved significantly over the last year.
- Reading, writing and numeracy skills are taught well.
- Teaching of investigative skills in mathematics and enquiry skills in science could be better.
- Visits, visitors and artefacts are used well to enrich learning.
- Not enough use is made of computers to support pupils' learning.
- Good assessment and tracking procedures have been introduced in the core subjects in Years 1 to 6, but are not yet impacting fully on learning.

## Commentary

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 36 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (5%)	6 (17%)	18 (50%)	10 (28%)	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.*

12. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but this does not tell the full story. There are significant strengths in teaching in the Foundation Stage and, although teaching in Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory with scope for improvement, it now has some notable strengths. Soon after the present headteacher was appointed, a teaching audit of the school undertaken by the local education authority found a very high percentage of teaching to be poor. The headteacher, with good support from the local authority, has addressed the weaknesses in teaching in a very effective and rigorous manner, and these efforts have brought about significant improvements in teaching with this pattern of improvement set to continue still further.
13. The teaching of children in the Foundation Stage is very good, and at times, excellent. Staff provide a very good range of learning activities that children find fun and interesting. During each day, there is a very good balance between tasks that children choose for themselves and those chosen by the teacher. The children revel in these experiences and develop very well as independent learners. Alongside these activities, adults directly teach key skills and concepts which rapidly deepen children's knowledge and understanding across all areas of learning.



14. Reading and writing skills are generally taught well in Years 1 to 6, although over time they have not been taught well in Year 1. Younger pupils are taught a range of different reading skills to enable them to tackle new words, and older pupils are taught higher-order reading skills well, such as skimming and scanning and the importance of reading beyond the literal level. Across the school, pupils are provided with a good range of writing opportunities for different audiences and purposes, and there are many good examples of pupils' writing skills being developed in other areas of the curriculum. Occasionally, expectations are not high enough as to how much pupils are to record. Good emphasis is given to the development of speaking and listening skills, and many lessons have good quality discussions where teachers set high expectations as to how well pupils should listen and to using an expressive and expansive vocabulary.
15. Pupils' literacy skills are promoted well across the curriculum and, although satisfactory overall, there are some good examples of pupils' mathematical skills being used well in subjects such as science and design and technology. However, the use made of computers to enhance pupils' learning in different subjects is unsatisfactory because too many opportunities are missed within lessons and opportunities are not always flagged up in the planning process.
16. The teaching of pupils' numeracy skills and the systematic development of pupils' scientific knowledge are good in most year groups. Lessons are often lively and capture the imagination of the pupils. Good attention is paid to what has been previously learned, and teachers are keen to extend rather than simply consolidate pupils' learning. The weaker aspect is that not enough opportunities are being consistently provided for pupils to put their numeracy skills or scientific knowledge to the test in challenging investigative or problem-solving activities. For example, older pupils find some difficulty in instigating their own scientific investigations. Where pupils are provided with opportunities to learn through investigations, for example, in Years 4 and 6, their response is highly motivated and their achievement is good.
17. When teaching is good or very good in other lessons, it is because of lively, animated teaching that keeps pupils interested and enthusiastic. Teachers often use their subject knowledge well in subjects such as music and history to help bring learning to life. A good strength of teaching is the way in which teachers seek to use visits, visitors or artefacts to bring an added dimension to how well pupils learn. In religious education, music and history, pupils' learning is enriched in this way. Across the school, pupils are committed to learning, have very positive attitudes and clearly want to do well. When teaching is satisfactory it is because it lacks pace or a sense of urgency and teaching points are a little laboured. Commendably, pupils stay attentive, but teaching in these instances does not match the learning aspirations of the pupils.
18. The teaching for pupils with special educational needs is often good. Whether pupils receive specialist teaching or are supported in lessons, their needs are generally met well. Teaching assistants play an important and pivotal role in supporting pupils, as the support is often focused but sensitive to the needs of

the individual pupils. Relationships are strong and pupils value the support they are given. Pupils make good progress towards the literacy and numeracy targets that are contained in their individual education plans, and the good overall support and teaching enables pupils to achieve as well as their classmates.

19. Assessment in the Foundation Stage is very good. Very good procedures are in place to assess children when they start at the school, and the information is used very well to identify children who may have special educational needs or be higher-attaining children. The teacher then ensures that the curricular provision for these children is matched to their needs. Day-to-day assessment is equally good. Children are continually assessed and the information used very well to guide and inform planning and to set challenging targets for children of all abilities. The headteacher has introduced good quality procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' progress in the core subjects. These procedures are being increasingly used as a tool for influencing teaching, as teachers are now expected to explore and evaluate the reasons if pupils do not hit their targets or indeed what factors have come into play if pupils exceed their targets. This is good practice. However, it is important that these procedures continue to be followed in a rigorous manner, because they have not yet been in operation for a long enough time to have their biggest possible impact on how well pupils achieve. Assessment in the foundation subjects is satisfactory.

### **The curriculum**

The school provides a **satisfactory** curriculum overall. The way the school enriches and enhances the curriculum is **good**. The accommodation and resources are **satisfactory**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The Foundation Stage curriculum meets children's needs very well. Additional learning opportunities have a positive impact on the curriculum and the life of the school.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs has a positive impact on how well they learn.
- Writing skills are promoted well across the curriculum, but there is not enough development of pupils' investigative skills in mathematics and science and computer skills across the curriculum.

## **Commentary**

20. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is very good. The nationally recommended curricular guidance for this age group is used very well to build a balanced and very stimulating curriculum for the youngest children in the school. High quality planning ensures that children undertake activities that are carefully geared to their needs through first-hand experiences, imaginative structured play and the direct teaching of key skills. Children are encouraged to be independent learners, and the vibrant learning activities on offer every day generate in all children an inquisitiveness for the world in which they live.
21. The curriculum on offer in Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory. It is securely based on the National Curriculum and fully meets statutory requirements. Topics studied are often covered in sufficient depth, and all subjects are allocated an adequate amount of time. Teachers plan for and capitalise on the opportunities that arise to enhance pupils' writing in different subjects of the curriculum. The area for improvement lies in the fact that this good practice is not replicated in the way that pupils' investigative and problem-solving skills are not systematically planned for and developed in mathematics and science, and ways in which computers could be used in different subjects are not always identified in the curriculum planning stage. Improvement overall in curricular provision has been satisfactory since the last inspection.
22. The provision that is made for pupils with special educational needs is good. The school is committed to inclusion, and the good quality of support that is provided for these pupils means that they take a full and active role in all aspects of the curriculum and in all that the school has to offer. Support is well targeted to where the need is greatest, and individual education plans are of good quality. Teaching assistants add much to the quality of provision, and good links have been established with outside agencies to support pupils who may have greater educational, physical or emotional needs. Good provision and support mechanisms are on offer whenever pupils who are at an early stage of acquiring English attend the school.
23. There is a well planned programme to enhance pupils' personal and social education. Teachers use the science, religious education and physical education curricula to discuss drug education, healthy lifestyle, sex education and relationships. In addition, there are timetabled slots for pupils to take part in lessons and discussions about issues that may be of importance or concern to the pupils themselves.

24. The school provides a good range of extracurricular activities that enrich the curriculum. A good programme of regular visits helps pupils' learning in subjects such as history, geography and religious education, while a good range of visitors bring their expertise and interests into school. Gifted and talented pupils have special visitors to work with them. There is a large number of after-school clubs, including art clubs, choirs, an orchestra, and many sports clubs. The school also provides French lessons and musical instrument lessons. There are good opportunities for pupils to take part in team sports and to compete against other schools in a range of sports and to enter many musical events and celebrations.
25. The school's accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall, although some classrooms can only be reached by going through other classrooms. However, this does not have an adverse impact on learning because of the maturity and very good behaviour of pupils. The accommodation and resources for children in the Foundation Stage are good and add to the quality of children's learning experiences. The school does not have its own playing field but has ready access to an adjacent local playing field. There is an appropriate number of teaching staff to meet the demands of the National Curriculum and a good number of support staff who are deployed well.

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

The procedures to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are **good**. Pupils receive **satisfactory** support, advice and guidance. **Good** opportunities are provided for pupils to be involved in decision-making and to act on their views.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- All pupils learn in a safe and secure environment where they are cared for well.
- Health and safety issues are monitored well through good procedures.
- Procedures for supporting and guiding pupils have improved well but are still developing.
- Very good induction arrangements are in place for children starting at the school.
- Pupils have a voice in the school and their ideas and opinions are valued.

### **Commentary**

26. Since the last inspection, the school has continued to provide all pupils with good pastoral care and support. Pupils have very good and trusting relationships with their teachers and other adults in the school, and this makes a good contribution to their confidence and achievements. Children in the Foundation Stage settle into school routines very quickly due to the high level of care they receive. This helps them to make good progress and to enjoy learning in a very safe and happy environment. The vast majority of parents are satisfied with the good level of care their children receive. Health and safety issues are monitored well through regular risk assessments. Child protection procedures are good and meet the statutory requirements. All staff have

received training to ensure that all have a clear understanding of the school's responsibilities.

27. The induction, care, welfare, and health and safety of children in the Foundation Stage are very good. Very good early links with parents are quickly established. The recently changed very good induction arrangements ensure that children get to know their classmates quickly and settle well into the routines and expectations of school life.
28. The school has recently introduced good procedures to assess pupils' academic achievements and to set targets. However, they have not yet had sufficient time to have the biggest possible impact on guiding and supporting pupils. Pupils' personal development is monitored in a satisfactory manner. The staff have a consistent approach towards behaviour management, and pupils are encouraged to work hard. Pupils understand the school's high expectations and good system of rewards, and this has a positive effect on their self-esteem. Although some parents are concerned about bullying, pupils do not feel that it is an issue, and feel confident that the school deals promptly and effectively with any problems. The school's anti-bullying policy is clear and the procedures are followed consistently. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well in classrooms and are fully included in all activities.
29. The school has good arrangements to enable pupils to help in decision-making and to share their ideas for school improvements. Pupils value the fact that they have a voice in the school and that their views are listened to. The School Focus Group, with chosen representatives from each class, meets regularly to discuss pupils' suggestions and ideas. A sub-committee of older pupils is currently working on an anti-bullying project and developing an action plan. The buddy system is well established, and pupils in Years 5 and 6 enthusiastically link with those in the reception class and Year 2 as reading partners and friends in the playground.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The school has a **good** partnership with parents. Links with the community are **satisfactory**, and with other schools they are **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school welcomes parents and there is a good partnership to support pupils' learning.
- Regular communication keeps parents well informed.
- Reports do not always provide clear information about progress.
- The good links with other schools enrich the curriculum.

### **Commentary**

30. Since the last inspection, the school has improved its partnership with parents. Parents are very supportive of the work of the school and provide valuable help with their children's learning at home. A good number of parents help regularly

in classrooms and assist with visits and other activities. Parents are almost unanimous in their satisfaction with the quality of education and feel that their children are making good progress. Although the great majority of parents agree that the school consults them, there is a small minority of parents who have a more negative view and feel that the school does not always value their opinions. The school is currently examining ways in which channels of communication and consultation with parents could be further developed. However, most parents feel comfortable to approach the school to discuss any problems or issues that are of concern to them or their children.

31. The school communicates regularly with parents through good quality newsletters, and provides helpful curricular information about what is to be taught in each class. Consultation evenings and parent information sessions, which cover a wide range of topics, are held regularly and are generally well attended. The headteacher and class teachers are readily available to parents at the start and end of the school day. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are involved well with individual education plans, assessments and reviews. Most parents feel well informed, but there is a significant minority who would like more information about their children's progress. The school's links with parents in the reception class are very good. With children being collected and delivered to the classroom door, very good communication is established and maintained. Parents help with reading and other small tasks at home, and a substantial number help in the classroom on a regular basis. The reports to parents are satisfactory overall, but there is sometimes a lack of clarity of information provided about children's progress, and some reports do not clearly outline targets for improvements.
32. The school's links with the community are satisfactory, and this is recognised by the school as an area for development. Representatives from local churches visit the school regularly to lead assemblies. Pupils have benefited from taking part in a musical production at the local theatre, and senior citizens from the local community visiting to talk to pupils about their wartime experiences also enrich the curriculum. The school's business links have resulted in sponsorship for the prospectus. The school has a good partnership with other schools, and this effectively extends opportunities for learning. Nearby secondary schools help to support the teaching of mathematics and information and communication technology, and pupils benefit from the opportunity to use the swimming pool and other sports facilities at a nearby independent school.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

There is **satisfactory** leadership and **satisfactory** management of the school overall. The leadership and management of the headteacher are **very good**. Leadership and management of key staff are **satisfactory** and the governance of the school is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher has made a significant contribution to improving the school and leads the school very well.
- The understanding of subject leaders and members of the senior management team on how to fulfil their roles effectively has greatly improved.
- There is further work to be undertaken to ensure that better use is made of assessment information to plan further improvements.
- Governance of the school has a number of strengths.
- The management of arrangements for pupils with special educational needs is good and management of the Foundation Stage is very good.
- Planned educational initiatives are not always sufficiently costed.

## **Commentary**

33. The overall quality of leadership and management of the school is satisfactory. The headteacher provides very astute and clear leadership and manages the school very well. She has been very influential and played the most significant role in improving the school since her appointment. Shortly after her appointment, just over 14 months ago, a review of the school's work by the local education authority pointed to a number of significant and serious weaknesses in teaching in some year groups. The headteacher worked swiftly, tirelessly and very effectively to tackle the identified weaknesses and did not shirk from making difficult but much-needed decisions. Such was the success of the headteacher's interventions that teaching is now satisfactory with some notable strengths. A regular programme of monitoring teaching and learning is now in place, and further improvements have been made to improve provision in assessment, the curriculum and in how the school plans for improvement. As a result, all staff are now more actively involved in evaluating the effectiveness of the school's work. The school now provides pupils with a satisfactory quality of education, which is rapidly improving, and is very well placed to build on its current strengths.
34. The leadership and management of key staff are now satisfactory. Senior managers are now much more involved than before in evaluating the work of the school and in assisting the headteacher in establishing an agenda for continued school improvement. The headteacher has initiated an effective programme to enable subject leaders to have non-teaching time to monitor teaching and learning. This is providing them with a clearer perception of what needs to be achieved to raise pupils' performance and achievement in various subjects. Subject leaders now take a full and active part in the school improvement planning process, the quality of which provides a clear rationale of where the school is heading and what action is needed to achieve its goals. The headteacher analyses test and assessment data well and uses the information to inform educational priorities. Subject leaders are to take a more active role in this process. While target-setting and tracking procedures have been recently strengthened, the headteacher has accurately identified the need to ensure that teachers and subject leaders make the best possible use of the information to have the biggest possible impact on pupils' achievement.
35. Governance of the school is good. The governors have a clear structure of committees who meet regularly to review provision and enable them to fulfil their legal responsibilities. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and

weaknesses and a regular programme of visits gives them a good overview of what the school provides for its pupils. Governors regularly attend training courses and regularly discuss standards and pupils' achievement. Governors are kept very well informed by the headteacher. The governing body has become more effective at holding the school to account and is effective at challenging the work of the school and in asking the right questions. At the same time, however, it needs to keep a good and realistic perspective of where the headteacher's, as opposed to its own, responsibilities lie in monitoring directly the quality of teaching and learning.

36. The school is fully committed to ensuring that all pupils are fully included in what the school has to offer. The management of provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and helps to ensure that teaching assistants are deployed well, support is targeted to where the need is greatest and in ensuring that parents are fully informed and included about and in their children's progress. The management of provision for gifted and talented pupils is good because it ensures that their needs are met. The school is effective in ensuring that good support mechanisms are in place if any pupil arrives at the school at an early stage of acquiring English. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are very good. The leader works very diligently and effectively to ensure that the whole adult team, both teaching assistants and parent helpers, are used to their fullest potential in helping children to achieve very well and in ensuring that the learning activities on offer match very well to how young children learn best.
37. The day-to-day management of the budget is satisfactory. Recent staffing changes and temporary members of staff have enabled the school to accrue a larger than average contingency figure. This is currently being reduced due to planned expenditure that includes implementing interactive whiteboards in all classrooms to support pupils' learning in information and communication technology and to provide non-teaching time in light of planned workforce reforms. The management of the budget is generally well aligned to the school improvement plan. However, the plan does not always give a clear idea of the precise degree of funding that will be required in order to implement initiatives. Taking all factors into account, the school is providing satisfactory value for money.



## Financial Information

<b>Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004</b>			
<b><i>Income and expenditure (£)</i></b>		<b><i>Balances (£)</i></b>	
Total income	556 252	Balance from previous year	53 288
Total expenditure	523 412	Balance carried forward to the next	86 128
Expenditure per pupil	2 553		

## **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**

- Teaching provides a vibrant, fun and exciting range of learning activities across all areas of learning.
- Leadership and management of provision impacts have a very positive impact on how well children achieve.
- Very good links with parents and very good induction procedures impact most positively on children's learning.
- Assessment is used very well to plan the next steps in children's learning.
- The accommodation and resources are put to very good use to heighten children's learning experiences.

#### **Commentary**

38. There is one reception class in the school. All children start school early in the autumn term and stay in this class for the year. Attainment when children start at the school covers the full ability range and is generally above average. However, the attainment on entry for the present reception-aged children was at an average level. The children get off to a very good start to their educational lives in the Foundation Stage, and the provision and teaching in the Foundation Stage are significant strengths of the school. All children achieve very well and by the end of the reception year standards are above the nationally recommended early learning goals in all areas of learning, apart from in children's personal, social and emotional development and physical development, where standards are well above average.
39. Teaching and learning in all areas of learning are never less than very good, and at times are excellent. Teaching strikes a strong balance between child-initiated and adult-led activities, alongside the very good teaching of key skills. Staff place a very good emphasis on children developing as independent learners, and the exciting learning activities that are on offer motivate the children. Children quickly settle into school life because of the strength of relationships between adults and themselves, which make them brim full with self-confidence. The learning environment enhances their very positive attitudes and encourages them to behave very well. Assessment is very good. Very good use is made of assessment data to help identify children who may have special educational needs or who are more able. Day-to-day assessment is used very well to guide and inform curriculum planning so that work is always very closely matched to the individual needs of all children.
40. The school has established strong partnerships with parents, who are very keen to help support their children's learning in whatever way they can. Very

good induction arrangements help to ensure that children adapt quickly and effortlessly to school routines and provide parents with a very good insight into what and how children learn best. The Foundation Stage is very well led and managed. There is a very good team spirit and the teacher ensures that the skills of support staff and parent helpers are capitalised on very effectively to enhance the quality of children's learning. The teacher ensures that the learning activities are very well suited to how young children learn best, and so successful is she in her quest that at times children do not recognise how much knowledge and skills they are acquiring.

41. The classroom is spacious, well equipped and used most successfully. It is very colourful and lively, yet extremely well organised with very many displays that children can touch and learn further from, as well as toys and equipment that children can get out and put away for themselves. The outdoor play area is the main infant playground, which is large and very well used.
42. Children's achievement is excellent in the area of **personal, social and emotional development**. Standards are well above average by the end of the reception year, and teaching and learning are excellent. The teacher sees this area as a priority, especially in the autumn term and, as a consequence, she gives it a very high profile and her provision for it is excellent. All adults build up children's confidence and self-belief in an excellent manner. High expectations are set for good behaviour, and children respond to these expectations very well. By the end of their first term in school, the children demonstrate excellent levels of concentration, independence in selecting and using resources and understanding that people have different cultures and beliefs. Children are encouraged to form very good relationships with one another and are supported very well by the whole adult team. Personal independence is consistently focused on and promoted very effectively by all staff and adults. Children are taught the importance of taking turns and share fairly, unprompted by an adult.
43. The children achieve very well as a result of the very good teaching and learning of **communication, language and literacy**. By the end of the reception year, standards exceed the early learning goals. The teacher provides many very good activities to help children to develop their reading skills. Her direct teaching is very good, so children are already sure about some strategies to help decode print, such as looking at the pictures or reading on to the end of the sentence to try and gauge the sense as well as the use of individual letter sounds. Writing standards are above average. Already, many children understand and explain what their writing targets are, such as using their knowledge of letter sounds to write the first letters in words. Most are confident in trying to write for themselves. Handwriting is developing well with the above-average children able to form letters correctly and of a uniform size. Standards in speaking and listening are above expectations. By the time children end their reception year, most of them are able to communicate successfully, helped by the teacher's very good vocabulary teaching. However, just occasionally, opportunities are missed to develop better speaking and listening skills, such as by enabling all the class briefly to speak and listen in

twos, as a result, when the teacher asks a question, too few children put their hands up to volunteer an answer.

44. Children achieve very well in their **mathematical development**, and teaching and learning are very good. By the end of the reception year, attainment levels exceed the early learning goals. The teaching ensures that children are provided with a wide range of stimulating practical learning activities, which fill the children with excitement. Every opportunity is capitalised on to develop children's number skills through songs and rhymes. Children also learn through the inventive games devised by the teacher. For example, the whole class enjoy playing a special version of "pass the parcel", where the children count as the parcel is handed round and when stopped, the child with the parcel is asked to say the next counting number as well as their own. These same parcels are then used well to help children gain an appreciation of 'heavy' and 'light', as well as how a balance works, and then go on to use the balance in making buns. The teacher and teaching assistants ensure that work is very well matched to individual children's needs by regular assessment and record-keeping using the "stepping stones", the nationally recommended assessment stages.
45. Attainment exceeds the early learning goals in children's **knowledge and understanding of the world** by the end of the reception year. All children achieve very well because of the very good, and at times excellent, teaching and learning. Teaching is very good because the teacher provides a very lively, interesting curriculum as well as the daily provision of a range of activities from which children are able to choose for themselves. For example, in an excellent lesson, they observed "jewels" encrusted in cubes of ice by a "wicked fairy", firing their imagination as well as helping them to learn scientific vocabulary. The very well planned activities on offer throughout the week stimulate the children's desire to learn, help them to an understanding of the world around them very well and very successfully extend their skills. Information and communication technology is also very well taught. Remote control cars, floor robots made into Santa's sleigh to deliver gifts, and daily free access to computers all help them to learn effectively and think for themselves. Many have good mouse control for their age. They are also developing good control of the different technologies with very good levels of added challenge provided by staff. The school meets statutory requirements in ensuring that religious education is taught to children who are five. Children learn about traditions from differing world faiths, such as Judaism, and learn about the major world faith festivals.
46. In terms of their **physical development**, teaching, learning and achievement are all excellent, and standards are well above those in the early learning goals by the end of the reception year. The teacher provides very many challenging tasks to extend their manipulative skills through activities such as threading small beads, weaving ribbons and making pictures with hammers, tiny nails and wooden shapes with holes in the middle. Children have very good control over their bodies when running, riding bikes and dressing up. The development of large physical movement is well provided for by daily opportunities for outdoor play. Excellent teaching provides direct teaching of key physical skills and

encourages children to be imaginative, adventurous and creative in their movements.

47. By the end of the reception year, standards exceed the early learning goals in the area of **creative development**. Children achieve very well, and teaching and learning are very good. Very good teaching ensures that children are provided with very good opportunities to work with a variety of media, such as pencils, paints, chalks and collage to create images and pieces of work that are often of a good standard. Children sing confidently and well and thoroughly enjoy the musical sessions that the teacher and other staff offer. They are often joyous occasions. Children love experimenting with sound as they play a range of untuned instruments. Very good role-play and creative play activities are on offer, and the readiness of all adults to take a very proactive and often humorous part adds a great deal to children's creative spirit, to their self confidence and to enhancing their communication skills.

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

### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is **good**.

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

- Pupils achieve well, and standards are well above average by the end of Years 2 and 6.
- Reading is taught well and teachers make good use of other subjects to extend pupils' writing skills.
- Rich and varied opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills.
- Pupils work hard in lessons and greatly enjoy what they are asked to learn.
- Teaching assistants contribute much to pupils' learning.
- Teachers miss opportunities to incorporate the use of computers into daily lessons.
- Leadership, management and assessment are improving at a good pace.

#### **Commentary**

48. On the basis of the National Curriculum tests for Year 2 pupils in 2004, standards in reading and writing were well above the national average and well above average when compared to similar schools on the basis of eligibility for free school meals. The 2004 National Curriculum test results for Year 6 pupils indicated that pupils reached standards that were well above the national average. When compared with similar schools on the basis of prior attainment, standards were very high and in the top five per cent of these schools in the country. The findings of the inspection indicate that pupils reach standards that are well above average at the end of both key stages. Pupils of all abilities achieve well and there are no significant differences between the achievement of boys and girls. There is also little doubt that the very positive attitudes of the pupils, their desire to do well and the effort that they put into their work makes an important contribution to how well they attain and achieve. The pace of improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory, although there has been significant improvement since the appointment of the current headteacher. The school has focused a great deal of effort in raising standards of writing, and this has had a positive impact on raising pupils' achievement in this aspect of their literacy development.
49. By the end of Year 2, most pupils are very confident speakers and listeners. They keenly listen to stories or explanations by teachers and speak clearly and articulately. Speaking and listening skills are developed well as pupils move through the school. By participating in debates in geography, for example, about the effect of building new businesses in local communities, Year 6 pupils learn to listen and appreciate very well the views of others, even if they do not always reflect their own. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, pupils are confident readers and many read avidly and widely. Pupils derive great pleasure from

what they read and at the same time have sufficiently developed skills to read other texts, such as information books and magazines, in order to delve into and explore different topics and themes. Many pupils leave school as very accomplished readers who can skim and scan texts with ease and who are developing the ability to read beyond the literal level. By the end of Year 2, pupils write well and often, and produce informed pieces of writing that hold the interest and attention of the reader. Pupils have a good grasp of the basic elements of punctuation and employ these well in the course of their day-to-day writing. By the end of Year 6, pupils have a very good understanding of how writing needs to be varied according to its purpose and with different audiences in mind. They understand well that in order to produce well-crafted pieces of work, editing, drafting and redrafting work play an important part in the writing process. Pupils write at length and in a style that maintains the interest and attention of the reader.

50. Teaching and learning are good overall. In many lessons, pupils are given ample opportunities to take part in both whole-class and group discussions and to feedback their ideas and opinions to the rest of the class. This boosts their confidence in taking part in whole-class debates and speaking aloud to a wider audience. Teachers have good subject knowledge and make good use of a range of literature to stimulate pupils' learning. Lessons are often fast paced, and capture the imagination of the pupils. Occasionally, lessons lack sparkle and are functional rather than imaginative, and this prevents learning from being even better. Many classrooms have displays of works by a range of authors, and this ensures pupils have a good understanding of both contemporary and more classical writers. Across the school, reading is taught well and those with particular needs are given additional effective support to enable them to achieve well in reading. The teaching of writing skills is effective and the school's philosophy that promotes learning the skills of joined-up handwriting at an early age has a positive effect on standards. Scrutiny of pupils' books indicates that, over time, writing skills have not been taught as well for pupils in Year 1. Pupils are given good scope to develop their understanding of the importance of drafting and editing their work, and such teaching strategies help to ensure that pupils develop the confidence of refining their work in order to improve its overall quality. Across the school, teaching assistants play an important and valued role in supporting pupils' learning and in ensuring that pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as their classmates. The weaker aspect of teaching is that computers are not always used in an effective manner for editing and drafting, and lesson plans do not highlight how computers could be used to move pupils on in their learning.
51. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory and have been much improved since the appointment of the headteacher. The headteacher has provided the subject leader with non-teaching time in order to monitor teaching and learning, and this has led to an improved understanding of how English is taught as well as the work still needed to raise pupils' achievement still further. The school recognises that there is scope for further improvement in ensuring that good practice is disseminated and any weaknesses tackled. The headteacher has introduced good quality procedures for target-setting and for tracking pupils' progress.

## **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

52. Pupils' language and literacy skills are promoted well across the curriculum. Teachers plan carefully to ensure that pupils are provided with good opportunities to flex their speaking and listening skills through debates, discussions and presentations. The teachers plan for, and capitalise on, opportunities for pupils to develop and extend their writing skills in many different subjects of the curriculum, such as history, religious education, geography and design and technology, and this has a positive impact on how well pupils achieve in writing.



## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The generally good quality of teaching enables pupils to achieve well and attain very good standards overall.
- Not enough is consistently done to develop pupils' investigative and problem-solving skills.
- Pupils' enthusiasm for learning and desire to do well contributes much to the high standards.
- Teaching assistants contribute significantly to pupils' learning.
- Opportunities are missed for computers to be used to enhance learning.
- Leadership and management of the subject and assessment are improving well.

### **Commentary**

53. On the basis of the National Curriculum tests for Year 2 pupils in 2004, attainment was well above the national average and at an average level when compared to similar schools on the basis of free school meals. The 2004 National Curriculum tests for Year 6 pupils in 2004 showed attainment to be well above the national average and well above average when compared to similar schools on the basis of eligibility for free school meals. Inspection evidence indicates that standards are on track to be well above average overall by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, although pupils' problem-solving and investigative skills in the subject are not as well developed as the other aspects of their mathematical work. Pupils across the school generally achieve well, and there are no significant differences between the achievement of boys and girls. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, although it has gained much greater momentum since the appointment of the present headteacher.
54. Pupils in Year 2 have good mental agility skills and handle numbers very confidently. They have a very secure knowledge of place value and carry out addition, subtraction and simple multiplication and division calculations with ease and confidence. Pupils' knowledge of shapes and their properties is good, and pupils are good at handling and interpreting data. Pupils use a good mathematical vocabulary when talking about their work. The weaker aspect of their learning is that not enough opportunities are being provided for pupils to put their numeracy skills to the test in challenging and practical problem-solving activities. This results in pupils being less confident and secure in this aspect of their learning and for them not always recognising the relevance of mathematics in everyday situations.
55. Pupils continue to make good progress as they move through Years 3 to 6, and by the time pupils leave school, many are very confident and able mathematicians. Pupils have very well developed number skills, have a very good understanding of percentages and decimal notation, measure accurately,

have a strong knowledge of the properties of irregular shapes, a good knowledge of probability and handle data well. The weakness identified in Years 1 and 2 remains as an issue. Not enough mathematical investigations are on offer for pupils to put their high level of mathematical knowledge to the test in demanding, investigative tasks, which would really extend their learning. When such opportunities are provided, the pupils invariably meet the challenge.

56. Teaching and learning are generally good across the school, although scrutiny of pupils' books in Year 1 indicated that these pupils do not always achieve as well as they could. This is the exception rather than the norm. Teaching places a good emphasis on the development of pupils' mental agility skills, and these sessions in lessons are often snappy, challenging and good fun. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and put to good use to explain new mathematical concepts. Teaching is at its best in Years 4 and 6, as it is here that good quality investigative activities are provided which extend and challenge pupils' mathematical thinking and at times lead to very good levels of achievement. Across the school, teachers encourage pupils to examine the different strategies they use to arrive at their answers, and the sharing of these outcomes often leads to advancements in learning for all the class. Pupils thoroughly enjoy mathematics and are very keen and committed learners, and there is little doubt that this desire to do well contributes much to the standards that are reached. Teaching assistants, when they are present in lessons, support pupils' learning well, and their targeted and focused, yet sensitive, support helps to ensure that pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as their classmates.
57. Leadership and management of the subject are now satisfactory and have improved significantly since the appointment of the headteacher who expects, and has enabled, the subject leader to play a more proactive and effective role in monitoring teaching, learning and standards. This has led to the subject leader gaining a stronger grasp of the strengths and areas for development in the subject, but the school recognises that there is still room for further development to ensure that good practice in the school is disseminated and weaknesses tackled. The headteacher has also instigated good procedures for target-setting and tracking pupils' progress, but they are not yet fully embedded in school practice to have the biggest possible impact.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

58. The use of mathematics across the curriculum is satisfactory. Although there are some good examples of pupils' skills being developed and enhanced in subjects such as science and design and technology, there are occasions when opportunities are not seized upon in the planning stage or capitalised upon in lessons. This is also the case for computers, where, for example, some pupils spend too much time drawing and colouring, and not particularly accurately or neatly, graphs, tables or charts of data, which could be done to much better effect on a computer.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- Teaching in Years 4 and 6 is good.
- Pupils' investigative and enquiry skills are not systematically and rigorously developed.
- The attitudes of pupils and their desire to do well contribute much to the quality of learning.
- Leadership and management of the subject and assessment are improving well.
- Computers are not always used well to support and enhance learning.
- Work is not always recorded for the younger pupils in school.

## COMMENTARY

59. On the basis of the 2004 teacher assessments in science for Year 2 pupils, attainment was well above the national average. National Curriculum tests for Year 6 pupils in 2004 showed attainment to be well above the national average and well above average when compared to similar schools on the basis of prior attainment. Inspection findings indicate that attainment is above average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6, and achievement overall is satisfactory. There are no significant differences in the achievement of boys and girls. Pupils' scientific knowledge is better than their enquiry and investigative skills, which are at an average level, and this prevents more pupils attaining higher than the levels normally expected at the end of Year 2. Any differences in inspection findings and test results can be explained by the fact that the 2004 cohorts of pupils were better in terms of their scientific ability. Across the school, pupils show a real thirst for new knowledge and skills and show very positive attitudes to the subject. These qualities add much to the quality of learning in the subject. Improvement overall has been satisfactory overall since the last inspection, but has gathered greater momentum with the appointment of the present headteacher.
60. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a good knowledge of living things and identify different creatures and their habitats well. Pupils sort materials for different purposes well, have a good understanding of forces and electricity, and explain clearly the difference between reversible and irreversible change. Pupils have a good understanding of what is needed for a healthy lifestyle. By the time pupils leave school they have acquired a more extensive body of scientific knowledge. Nearly all pupils are confident in explaining about food chains and how animals might adapt to different climate conditions. Pupils have a good knowledge of materials, forces and healthy living, and understand well processes such as evaporation and filtration. Many pupils use a good level of scientific vocabulary when talking about their work. However, enquiry skills are not sufficiently developed. Too many Year 2 pupils are hesitant at predicting what will happen and are unsure of how to record their findings in a variety of ways. As they move up the school, this lack of independence continues to be a factor, and older pupils lack confidence in setting up an experiment for themselves and do not use their scientific knowledge in an effective manner to predict what might happen in investigations or to explain why things happen as they do. The school has already identified this aspect of the subject as needing improvement, is seeking to ensure that enquiry skills are developed in a more systematic manner and has purchased more good quality resources to help develop this aspect of pupils' learning.
61. Although teaching observed during the inspection was good, teaching over time has been satisfactory. The best teaching was observed in Year 4 and Year 6. Here, good opportunities are provided for pupils to learn through practical and challenging practical investigations. The teachers in these classes have high expectations and expect pupils to put their scientific knowledge to the test and to accurately measure and then record their findings in a range of different formats. Across the school, teachers put a good emphasis on pupils using a

good level of scientific vocabulary. Lessons are usually planned well and what is to be learned is made clear to pupils and then evaluated at the end of the lesson. The subject provides good opportunities for pupils to work together collaboratively. The younger pupils in the school are taught the subject on a regular basis, but at times, although there is a great deal of discussion, work is not always recorded in any real depth, and this means that pupils do not always have a point of reference to remind them of what they have learned. Across the school, too many opportunities are missed where computers could really enhance the quality of pupils' learning by, for example, producing findings in different tables, charts or graphs or as tools for research and independent study.

62. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory and have improved well since the appointment of the present headteacher. Good systems are now in place to enable the subject leader to get a better grasp of the quality of provision, teaching and learning in the subject and to instigate strategies to tackle weaknesses, such as the development of pupils' enquiry skills. Good target-setting and tracking procedures have been introduced recently, but more time is needed for them to impact fully on pupils' attainment and achievement.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Recent improvements in provision are helping to raise pupils' achievement.
- Older pupils are adept in combining text, sounds and graphics in order to make presentations.
- Teaching in the computer suite is good.
- There is much greater scope for pupils to use computers to support their learning in other subjects.
- Pupils have too limited an understanding of how to use control, modelling and sensor equipment.
- Leadership and management of the subject are improving well.

### **Commentary**

63. Standards are at an average level by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, and this represents good improvement from the time of the last inspection when standards were judged to be below average. Much work has been undertaken since the last inspection and includes the provision of a new computer suite which each class uses on a twice-a-week basis. Achievement by all pupils is now satisfactory and improving well.
64. By the end of Year 2, most pupils load programs, save files for later retrieval, and are confident in using a range of different software to support their learning. They use an art package, for example, to design a prayer mat and use the software's features to embellish their work. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the use of computers

in the wider world and use a satisfactory level of technical language when talking about their work. By the end of Year 6, pupils use spreadsheets well to present mathematical data and understand well how the features in such software can be used to manipulate data by entering particular variables. Pupils demonstrate good skills in using multimedia software and enjoy, for example, researching, exploring and extrapolating information from various websites to help them with their studies. Pupils recognise the uses and potential of e-mail, but only have a limited knowledge of how to use control, modelling and sensor equipment.

65. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with good teaching often taking place in the school's computer suite. It is here that key computer skills are taught in a direct manner and then pupils provided with relevant tasks where newly acquired skills can be tested out. Teachers' confidence and expertise are constantly developing, and this means that any minor technical problems can be dealt with without there being any great loss of time in the lesson. Improvements to raising teachers' understanding of how to use and demonstrate certain software have ensured they have a secure understanding of what skills pupils should be taught. Pupils respond with high levels of enthusiasm and are sufficiently independent when undertaking their work. However, this enthusiasm is not always capitalised upon in their day-to-day lessons where teachers miss opportunities to make fuller use of classroom equipment and computers to support and extend pupils' learning.
66. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall, but improving at a good rate following the appointment of the headteacher. A temporary member of staff, who has a high level of enthusiasm for the subject and is leading educational development well, leads the subject. There is a clear action plan for the subject, which is currently being implemented. This contains proposals to extend provision still further by situating interactive whiteboards in each classroom. She is aware of the need to extend the use of computers and other equipment into daily lessons so that the subject can make more of a contribution to pupils' learning across other subjects.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

67. The use of ICT in other subjects is unsatisfactory. Pupils get too few opportunities in lessons to use the computers and other related equipment to develop their skills through other subjects. Teachers do not identify consistently enough at the planning stage relevant and meaningful opportunities where computers could be used to develop further and support pupils' learning across the different subjects of the curriculum.

## **HUMANITIES**

Due to timetable constraints, not all subjects were inspected in depth and, therefore, a judgement on provision cannot be made. No lessons were observed in geography and only one lesson in history. Several lessons were observed in religious education. The following represent the inspection findings.

68. In **geography**, evidence from pupils' work, teachers' planning and discussions with teachers and pupils indicate that standards are above average by the end

of Year 2 and Year 6 and that pupils achieve well. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that a good balance is struck between the teaching of geographical knowledge and geographical skills. By the end of Year 2, pupils have developed good mapping skills and draw simple maps well. Pupils are confident at identifying attractive and less attractive features of where they live and use the *Katie Morag* books well to study a contrasting location and compare it in detail with their own. By the time pupils leave school, many attain good standards. Pupils understand and use co-ordinates well to locate different places, landmarks and rivers. They talk enthusiastically about their work in geography and use a high level of technical vocabulary when discussing rivers and the water cycle. Pupils eloquently describe features of where they live and describe similarities and differences between Rickmansworth and other parts of the world. Pupils have studied issues such as pollution, tourism and vandalism and put forward persuasive viewpoints on these issues. Their knowledge of cities, mountain ranges and oceans around the world is good. Pupils state that they do not use computers a great deal to support their learning in the subject. Leadership and management and assessment in the subject are satisfactory and improving well as the subject leader is now taking a more effective role in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in the subject.

69. In **history**, evidence from pupils' work, teachers' planning and discussions with teachers and pupils indicate that standards are at an average level by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, and achievement is satisfactory. Teachers' planning indicates that, over the course of the year, all elements of the subject are covered in depth and pupils' books support this assertion. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a satisfactory understanding of chronology and a satisfactory level of knowledge about famous people and times in history that they have studied. Pupils recognise that how we live has changed considerably over time and that objects from the past can provide us with an insight into how people used to live. By the time pupils leave school, they can recall a satisfactory body of knowledge about the Tudors, the Egyptians, the Victorians and World War Two. Pupils know the terms 'primary' and 'secondary' in relation to sources of evidence and recognise the importance of artefacts for informing us about the past. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of how different events in history may be interpreted differently by different people. Discussions with pupils indicate that they thoroughly enjoy finding out about the past and are keen to develop their skills as historical investigators. Pupils also state that there have been some instances where they have used computers to carry out research tasks and that they would like to do this more often as it is a fun way to find things out about the past. Scrutiny of pupils' books shows that the subject is often used well as a vehicle for developing and enhancing pupils' writing skills. Teachers' planning shows that good use is made of visits, visitors to school and artefacts in the classroom to help motivate the pupils and to bring the subject to life. Assessment and record-keeping systems are satisfactory. Leadership and management are satisfactory because of recent improvements to monitoring and planning.

## **Religious education**

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good opportunities are provided for pupils to learn about different faiths and cultures.
- Pupils' knowledge of topics learned in the past is sometimes patchy.
- Not enough use is made of computers to enhance pupils' learning.
- Leadership and management of the subject are improving well.

## Commentary

70. Standards are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Achievement across the school is satisfactory. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.
71. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a satisfactory understanding and awareness of what it means to be a Christian and of the books and buildings that are of importance to Christians. Pupils recognise that certain symbols are important to people of different faiths and that some, such as light, are of significance to people of many different faiths. Pupils have a good early knowledge of world faiths, such as Islam, Hinduism and Judaism, but have some difficulty recalling work from a while ago, partly because, although different topics have been discussed, work is not always recorded. By the end of Year 6, pupils have deepened their knowledge and understanding of different world faiths, such as Christianity, Buddhism and Sikhism. Pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of important celebrations and festivals, such as Easter, Hanukkah and Divali, but even though they have been taught about the significance of events, such as Palm Sunday and Good Friday, their recall is limited. Pupils know places of worship such as 'mosque', 'temple' and 'synagogue', but are unsure who worships and celebrates in them. Despite their patchy recall, pupils nevertheless have a high level of respect for the beliefs and traditions of people from different faiths and cultures, and recognise that there are similarities as well as differences between faiths.
72. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with some good features. Teaching is at its best when learning is brought to life through visits to places of religious significance, through visitors to school and through the use of artefacts and other resources that all bring an added depth and understanding to pupils' learning. An example of this was observed in Year 2, when pupils were learning about symbols of the Muslim faith. The strong relationships in the school mean that pupils are confident at sharing their ideas, values and beliefs, although opportunities to enhance pupils' spiritual development are not always specifically planned for or capitalised upon. Although pupils show a strong desire to learn and find out more, there are occasions, for example in Year 3, when the content and the pace of the lesson are a little laboured and do not match pupils' learning aspirations. Although there are some good examples where computers are used to support and enhance pupils' learning, this good practice is not consistent enough across the school.
73. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory and have improved well since the appointment of the present headteacher. This is because the subject leader is now expected to play a more pivotal and influential role in monitoring standards and provision in the subject and does so through the



monitoring of planning and pupils' work. Opportunities for the subject leader to monitor teaching and learning through observation of lessons will be provided when the subject is an identified area for development on the school improvement plan. Assessment in the subject is satisfactory.

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

Due to timetable constraints, not all subjects were inspected in depth. No art and design or design and technology lessons were observed, but lessons in music and physical education were observed. The following represent the inspection findings.

74. In **art and design**, on the basis of scrutiny of available pupils' work, teachers' planning and discussions with pupils and teachers, evidence indicates that standards are at an average level by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Younger pupils in school mix colours to produce the desired effect and are becoming more confident at working in three-dimensional, as well as two-dimensional, formats. Pupils are encouraged to be creative and imaginative in their work. By the time pupils leave school, they have been provided with opportunities to work with a range of different media, including paint, pastels, charcoal, pencils and clay. Pupils use sketchbooks in an effective manner to experiment with different techniques and to record ideas. Teachers' planning indicates that pupils are taught key artistic skills as they move through the school and are taught the importance of techniques, such as shading and adding texture to their work. Discussions with pupils indicate that they thoroughly enjoy the subject and looked forward to their lessons. Year 6 pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of famous artists, such as Monet, Picasso and Van Gogh, but are not conversant with specific styles or techniques that famous artists use. Pupils study art from different countries and continents around the world, and this adds to their cultural development as well as to their artistic knowledge. There are some examples of computers being used to produce work in the style of different artists, but less evidence of computers being used, for example, to carry out independent research projects about the work of different artists. Assessment is satisfactory. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory and have improved since the appointment of the present headteacher.
75. In **design and technology**, scrutiny of teachers' planning and pupils' work and discussions with pupils and teachers indicate that standards are at an average level by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Planning indicates that the subject is taught in sufficient depth over the course of the year and that pupils are provided with the opportunity to work with a range of different materials and are taught to use a variety of fixing and joining techniques. By the time pupils leave the school, they have worked with wood, plastic, paper, card and different fabrics. Pupils make bridges, toys, musical instruments and photograph frames and have taken part in numerous food technology activities. Pupils are conversant with how to create and use pulleys, levers and cams. There are some good examples of links with science, such as where pupils made a Christmas tree and also had to make circuits to light up the tree. Finished products are sometimes of a good standard. Discussions with pupils indicate

that they thoroughly enjoy the practical experiences that the subject offers and also that teaching places a good emphasis on the designing and evaluating aspects of the subject as well as the making. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory and have improved well since the appointment of the present headteacher. Assessment in the subject is satisfactory.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils attain and achieve well in certain aspects of the subject.
- Provision in the subject adds to pupils' cultural development.
- Good opportunities are provided for pupils to sing and perform both in school and in the community.
- Computers are not used enough to enhance pupils' learning.
- Leadership and management of the subject are improving well.

### **Commentary**

76. Standards are at an average level overall by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, but there are strengths in singing, and the fact that music tuition is provided for a good number of pupils in Years 3 to 6 means that a significant percentage of pupils leave the school as good musicians. Achievement is never less than satisfactory and is good within individual lessons when teaching is good. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.
77. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a good early understanding of musical notation and of musical terminology, such as rhythm and pitch. They show a satisfactory awareness of how music can be used to create different moods and evoke different feelings. Pupils play untuned instruments in a satisfactory and creative manner to represent different sounds or actions. Pupils' use of musical vocabulary is satisfactory. Singing standards are good and pupils recall a good range of songs from memory. As pupils move through Years 3 to 6, they continue to experience a good range of musical activities. Pupils are provided with opportunities to compose music and write lyrics, and this is satisfactory overall and at times good. Singing continues to be a strength of the school, and pupils sing tunefully and with good diction. The school provides opportunities for pupils to receive peripatetic music tuition on a wide variety of instruments, and this results in a good number of pupils leaving school as accomplished musicians. Although these pupils use a good range of musical vocabulary, other pupils' understanding of musical vocabulary is satisfactory. Pupils' knowledge of famous composers and their work is satisfactory.
78. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with some good aspects. Good teaching was observed in Years 2 and 4 where teachers were enthusiastic and ambitious as they got pupils to put together quite complex compositions using a range of different instruments and using different notations to record the compositions. Pupils learned a lot, had great fun, showed pleasure and pride in

their work, but disappointment as the lessons ended. Some teachers lack confidence in their ability to teach music. Teaching provides pupils with lots of opportunities to sing and perform in school and in the wider community, and this does much for their confidence and personal development, as well as enhancing their musical skills. The pupils are introduced to music and musical instruments from around the world and this, together with a good range of musicians who visit the school, adds significantly to pupils' cultural development. Sometimes, opportunities are missed where computers could be used for aiding musical compositions or for research projects.

79. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory and have improved well since the appointment of the present headteacher because of the manner in which there is a greater expectation for the subject leader to play a more proactive and effective role in supporting colleagues and monitoring planning and provision. Assessment in the subject is satisfactory.

## **Physical Education**

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The teaching of dance is good and pupils achieve well in this area of their learning.
- Some lessons lack sufficient pace, which slows down the degree of learning.
- Many pupils reach high standards in their ability to swim.
- Despite the lack of a school-based field, good opportunities are provided for pupils to participate in extracurricular activities of a sporting nature.

### **Commentary**

80. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, standards are in line with national expectations, and all pupils achieve satisfactorily. However, pupils achieve well in dance due to the quality of teaching in this aspect of the physical education curriculum, which is often good. Many pupils reach high standards in swimming and can swim beyond the national expectation of 25 metres. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.
81. By the end of Year 2, pupils reach good standards in their dance work. They listen attentively to the guidance teachers give and perform simple, but effective, movements in response to a piece of music. By the end of Year 6, pupils work increasingly co-operatively in their dance work and put together more complex movements. Pupils reach satisfactory standards in their games work. They play team games, such as tag rugby, sensibly and understand and can put into practice, the skills needed for co-operating effectively with others. Weekly access to swimming sessions at the neighbouring independent girls' school enables the pupils to develop a good range of swimming skills, and many achieve beyond the expected standards by the time they leave the school.

82. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The teaching of dance is good, and teachers have a good understanding of the effective ways in which pupils' learning can be best promoted in this area of their work. Teachers demonstrate points of technique in relation to dance and this boosts the pupils' confidence when they themselves undertake their work. Occasionally, teaching lacks pace and this mars pupils' learning. In addition, while pupils are given the scope in lessons to look at the work of their classmates, they are provided with too few opportunities to critically evaluate the work seen in order to improve their own performance.
83. There is satisfactory leadership and management of the subject. The co-ordinator is increasingly gaining an overview of provision due to the improved opportunities for her to work with her colleagues. Since the previous inspection, the school has improved the scope for pupils to participate in learning how to play various games as a result of the negotiated access they have to a local field, as the school does not have its own field. This enables the pupils to participate in a range of extracurricular activities of a sporting nature.

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

84. The programme for personal, social and health education and citizenship is good and adds positively to pupils' personal development. The school promotes healthy eating and healthy lifestyles through both the science and physical education curricula. Satisfactory provision is made for pupils to learn about sex education and drug awareness. Pupils are provided with many good quality opportunities to learn about life in a multicultural society. In many lessons and in 'circle time', pupils are encouraged to offer their views and opinions on a wide range of different and diverse issues. The school has instigated a 'bubble box' initiative, where pupils can express anonymously any concerns they may have, and pupils state that these concerns are always acted upon. The pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for tasks around the school and do so well. Discussions with pupils show that they feel confident in expressing their views and know that their voices will be listened to, respected and taken on board. The School Focus Group, with chosen representatives from each class, meets regularly to discuss pupils' suggestions and ideas. A sub-committee of older pupils is currently working on an anti-bullying project and developing an action plan to address bullying should it occur.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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