

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ROTHWELL VICTORIA INFANT SCHOOL**

Rothwell, Northamptonshire

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 121856

Headteacher: Miss A L Spence

Lead inspector: Mr G Derby

Dates of inspection: 21 – 23 February 2005

Inspection number: 267595

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant School  
School category: Community  
Age range of pupils: 3-7  
Gender of pupils: Mixed  
Number on roll: 311

School address: School Lane  
Rothwell  
Kettering  
Northamptonshire

Postcode: NN14 6HZ

Telephone number: 01536 710 363  
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Appropriate authority: Governing body  
Name of chair of Mr G Main  
governors:

Date of previous 5 July 1999  
inspection:

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Rothwell Victoria Infant school, situated in the small market town of Rothwell near Kettering, is a highly popular school with parents. It is much larger than most infant schools. The pupils come from the town and surrounding areas. One of the two main areas where parents reside is significantly more affluent than the other. Overall though, the social and economic circumstances of the area are typically average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average at just over eight per cent. There are nearly 40 children attending nursery for separate morning and afternoon sessions in purpose built accommodation close to the main building. Most children start school in Rothwell Victoria nursery. Very few enter in later years.

No pupils are at the early stages of learning English and only three pupils come from minority ethnic groups. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is below the national average; there are four pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Need. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is currently in line with children of a similar age, although it does vary from year to year and is sometimes below average.

The school received the School Achievement Award in 2000 and 2002 and School Curriculum Award in 2000.

The school has faced a number of difficulties in relation to its staffing over the last 12 months. Prior to that, staffing was relatively stable. Three teachers have taken maternity leave and one is absent due to long-term illness. At the time of the inspection, two teachers were temporary. The headteacher retires at the end of the spring term and a new headteacher has been appointed to start at the beginning of the summer term.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
25349	George Derby	Lead inspector	Science Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology Special educational needs English as an additional language
14214	Gillian Smith	Lay inspector	
30724	Delia Hiscock	Team inspector	Mathematics Geography History Religious education Areas of learning in the Foundation Stage
15474	John Fairclough	Team inspector	English Music Physical education

The inspection contractor was:

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **good** school where pupils achieve well and standards are above average. The school's good care and support for pupils' personal development mean that they leave for the juniors as mature, well adjusted pupils. The quality of teaching and learning is good and, as a result, pupils are very keen and eager learners. However, there is too little teaching that is very good. The school is well led by the headteacher; overall leadership and management are satisfactory. The school offers good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils achieve well in English, mathematics and ICT and reach standards which are above average in these subjects.
- Pupils work very hard and show a great deal of interest in lessons because they are given every encouragement by staff.
- The school expects pupils to behave very well and makes this very clear to pupils; as a result, they are very sensible and behaviour in the school is very good.
- Relationships between pupils are very strong and pupils trust the adults with whom they work implicitly.
- Although the work of co-ordinators has developed since the last inspection, there is still room for further expansion of their roles, especially in strategic planning and the monitoring of teaching.
- Well planned lessons and mostly good attention to pupils' needs means all groups generally learn well; however, in science and some aspects of other subjects there is not always enough attention given to stretching more able pupils.
- There is generally a positive commitment to pupils' learning; however, strategic planning could demonstrate even higher aspirations.

Improvement since the last inspection in 1999 has been good overall. Standards have improved and the challenge for more able pupils is now much better, especially in English and mathematics. However, there is still room for improvement. Systems for tracking pupils' progress have improved and a good range of evidence is collected to support assessment and evaluation. The school has responded well to national initiatives and the Foundation Stage has been strengthened. However, there is no overall co-ordinator for this important stage of school. Development planning is clearer with costings for actions and the roles of key staff identified. Some criteria for success in the plan are not sufficiently sharp.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average  
Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals*

The school's evidence of attainment shows that the skills that children have on entry vary from year to year. Currently these are similar to most children, but occasionally these are

below the level usually seen. This accounts for the variation in the results above. For instance, in the 2001 and 2003 national tests the results were well above average overall while in 2002 and 2004 they were average. However, the data shows that they generally achieve well. The results of the 2004 national tests also show that the percentage of pupils who reach the expected level is above average, whereas those reaching the higher level are average. This is an improvement since the last inspection but there is still more to be done. The school's targets (which are now much more challenging) were generally exceeded at the expected level but those set for the higher level were not reached in 2004. **Pupils' achievements are good** in both the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2. There is no significant difference in the attainment of pupils with special educational needs, boys and girls and those from minority ethnic groups. The improvements in planning are generally paying off. Challenge for the more able pupils is evident in English, mathematics and ICT; although in science the programme of work and lesson planning pays little attention to this. This is why standards in science are only average and achievement only satisfactory. The high commitment to ICT and to pupils' individual skills in ICT means that they achieve well and use ICT in a way which is beyond expectations.

Personal development is **good**. Pupils feel secure because support for them is readily available. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall and they show particularly good skills in getting on with one another and caring for each other. Attendance is satisfactory and punctuality is good.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The quality of education is **good**. The quality of teaching and learning is **strong**. It is good in the Foundation Stage. Very good teaching was seen, although the proportion was low. This was where teachers had flair and imagination in the activities they presented. They captured the pupils' interest so much that learning was greatly accelerated and the pupils' knowledge was considerably deepened. In most lessons, teachers generally plan well for the different groups in their classes, although this is not consistent. Staff manage pupils very well, give them high levels of encouragement and expect a great deal from them. Teaching assistants provide good support, especially for pupils with special educational needs. Assessment is sound but is not always used sufficiently to improve planning and to ensure pupils are consistently challenged. Other aspects such as the good curriculum with good links between subjects, the good quality of care and strong links with parents, strongly contribute to the pupils' opportunities and progress.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are **satisfactory** with good features. The headteacher has a clear view of the school's strengths and where the school needs to improve and has steered the school well. She has planned sensibly and effectively for the handover to the new headteacher. The senior management team carries out its day-to-day work well but its role in strategic planning, although satisfactory, needs improvement. Co-ordinator's roles have developed over recent years but need to be extended further as stated previously. The work of governors is sound and they ensure that all statutory requirements are met. They are supportive, have the school's interests at heart, but some are too reliant on the headteacher's planning and information to enable them to monitor and evaluate the school's work.

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



Parents were effusive about the school's work and its relationships with them at the pre-inspection parents' meeting. The questionnaires completed indicate that they think this is a very effective school but a very small number think there is some bullying. Inspectors found no evidence of this, however. Overall parents have very positive views and pupils like school very much.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Improve the quality of teaching further to ensure that there is a greater proportion of very good teaching alongside improving planning and assessment, especially to meet the needs of more able pupils.
- Improve further the work of co-ordinators and strengthen co-ordination of the Foundation Stage.
- Improve strategic planning further and develop senior staff's and governors' roles in this process.

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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

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

Pupils achieve well and reach standards which are above average.

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

- Standards have improved but, occasionally opportunities are missed to raise standards even more.
- Standards in English, mathematics and ICT are above average.
- The pupils achieve well in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2.

#### **Commentary**

- 1 The headteacher has successfully raised standards, which are now good, with achievement of pupils also good. The good support and attention provided for pupils with special educational needs mean that they, too, achieve well. There is no significant difference in the attainment or progress of boys and girls or of the few pupils from the different minority ethnic groups. Pupils reach standards which are above average in reading, writing and mathematics and average in science. Standards have improved since the last inspection, although they have been better in some years than others. This reflects the make up of the pupils entering the school which is confirmed by the school's assessment results when children first enter the school. The table in the summary shows this variation. In the 2001 and 2003 national tests at the end of Year 2, standards were well above average, while in 2002 and 2004 standards were average, with some aspects of English occasionally below average. Although statistically the trend over four years has been downward, this is accounted for mainly by the lower results in 2002. The group taking the tests in this year had a high percentage of pupils with learning difficulties, something which is well documented by the school. However, the school has worked hard to improve English, and particularly writing.
- 2 Pupils achieve well in English. Standards in speaking and listening are typical for the pupils' ages. Pupils are confident in answering questions and give clear answers. However, they do not always produce sustained answers that include reasons for their opinion nor do they respond to the views of other pupils. This is because teachers miss opportunities during lessons to develop these higher level skills. Standards in reading are above average. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, are very positive about reading and develop skills well. Standards in writing are above average. Pupils' of all abilities use secure basic sentence structure with accurate punctuation. Handwriting is regular and letters are well formed. Pupils made perceptive observations that reflected their personal understanding. Higher attaining pupils produce extended sentences but they do not always make use of more complex sentence structures.
- 3 In mathematics, pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. More able pupils manage computation confidently and describe their methods in ways that are above that expected for their age. Their knowledge and understanding of the properties of shape is also good. Nevertheless, assessment information is not

used sufficiently at times to accelerate the progress pupils make in relation to their capabilities. For example, more able pupils could be set different challenges through investigation at times to increase the rate of their progress so that they achieve even more than they do. However, in both English and mathematics, pupils are on course to reach standards by the end of Year 2 which are above average and in line with the school's targets. Some could go further than they do if the school was to use assessment information more rigorously, such as for setting individual targets, and to build in even more challenge for higher attaining pupils.

- 4 Standards in science, as assessed by teachers at the end of Year 2, have fluctuated over recent years with those reaching the level typical for their age (Level 2) ranging from well below average to average and those reaching the higher level (Level 3) from below average to above average. Standards are now average and an average number are likely to reach the higher level. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory.
- 5 The pupils excel in ICT. The school's high commitment to developing pupils' skills, and the good use of ICT in lessons to support learning, strongly support pupils' attainment. Children are encouraged to use computers from the very start of their time at Rothwell and children in the Foundation Stage are very confident users.
- 6 Pupils achieve well in all the areas of learning in nursery and reception although achievement is slightly better in some areas. As a result, by the end of their reception year children are likely to exceed what is expected of them in their personal, social and emotional development, mathematical development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. They are on track to attain the early learning goals in the other areas of learning.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.3 (17.0)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	15.2 (15.9)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	16.7 (17.3)	16.2 (16.3)

*There were 86 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

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

Pupils' attendance is satisfactory and their punctuality is good. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils are very interested in school life and enjoy taking part in the wide range of opportunities provided.
- Pupils of all ages get along very well with each other and with their teachers.
- Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and pupils respond very positively.
- Pupils' social development is very good and is underpinned by the school's position at the heart of the local community.

**Commentary**

- 7 The last inspection found that pupils had good attitudes towards school and that they behaved very well. This positive picture has strengthened further over the intervening six years and pupils' attitudes and behaviour are now very good. Nine out of ten of the pupils who completed the pre-inspection questionnaire felt that they enjoy the time they spend at school and that their teachers make learning fun. Around one third of parents completed their pre-inspection questionnaire and they endorse the pupils' very positive views. The quality of teaching is good and, by planning interesting and stimulating lessons, teachers create a positive learning atmosphere that inspires pupils to do their very best. During the inspection, for example, a new mother brought her young baby into the nursery to help develop children's knowledge and understanding about growth. The children were fascinated to hear about her start to life, asked questions and drew comparisons with their own experiences. Although one of two individuals become distracted from time to time, most of the pupils can be relied upon to concentrate well and work hard. There have been no exclusions.
- 8 Relationships between pupils and with their teachers are very good and are based upon mutual trust and consideration. Pupils say that other children are friendly and think their teachers are fair and very approachable. Pupils' desire to please their teachers helps to create a warm and purposeful atmosphere within which pupils achieve well. Although the school does not keep records of bullying or misbehaviour, pupils and their parents say that any such incidents are managed well.
- 9 Teachers constantly stress the importance of good manners, and behaving sensibly quickly becomes a natural way of life for pupils. During lessons, teachers have consistently high expectations of behaviour so that pupils know exactly what they should and should not do. Pupils from all ethnic groups get along very well and there have been no racial incidents.
- 10 The school provides pupils with a good programme for personal development and they respond well. The school gives clear guidance on how pupils should respect one another and their social development is very good. Pupils enjoy using their initiative and relish being given responsibilities for various jobs around school. For example, they take it in turns to be the class 'helper of the day' and undertake various other day-to-day duties, such as returning the attendance registers to the office. They like being asked to do things and treat each other in a kind and considerate manner. For example, during the summer term, Year 2 pupils spend time with the nursery children, helping them with their reading and craft activities. Assemblies make a major contribution to pupils' moral and spiritual development. They learn to appreciate Christian values and are encouraged to empathise and understand the lives of those who are less fortunate. For example, one assembly theme during the inspection was 'working together' and pupils learned about 'Fair Trade' goods. Through role-play, they heard about the lives of workers on tea plantations and learned to recognise the fair trade goods logo on various groceries. Pupils clearly recognise the difference between right and wrong and this is reflected in the school's calm and friendly atmosphere. Cultural development is also good and pupils have a good knowledge of other faiths such as Judaism and festivals such as the Chinese New Year. The school is a focal point for the local community and makes very good use of local places of interest. Pupils also take part in traditional events such as the annual Rowell Fair and the Easter Bonnet Parade. These help the pupils to appreciate the town's place in history.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.8	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.*

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The quality of education is good. The quality of teaching and learning is strong. Other aspects such as the good curriculum with its good links between subjects, the good quality of care and strong links with parents, strongly contribute to the pupils' opportunities and progress.

### **Teaching and learning**

Teaching and learning are good. Assessment is satisfactory.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Careful attention to the quality of teaching has meant that it has not suffered as a result of staff changes.
- Teachers have high expectations of how pupils should behave and manage their pupils very well.
- Teachers provide well for pupils with special educational needs but, at times, more able pupils are not stretched enough.
- The use of ICT and teachers' questioning particularly strong features.
- Not enough use is made of assessment data in planning lessons or marking to help pupils understand how they could improve.

## Commentary

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 49 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0 (0%)	3 (6%)	36 (74%)	10 (20%)	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.*

- 11 Although there has been much staff disruption this past year, the headteacher has been firm in her resolve to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning has not suffered. Teaching remains a strength of the school. She has been careful to engage replacement staff who are known to the school and who have a good teaching 'track record'. She has also monitored and advised the few staff who have not taught in the school before, ensuring that the leaders for the area (such as for Years 1 and 2) have provided much oversight and support for new staff.
- 12 Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good. There is good staff expertise and knowledge of how to promote early learning skills. Teachers and other staff plan well together although there is room for better links between nursery and reception and opportunities to share areas and resources; the separate building and lack of overall co-ordinator do not help here. The provision for those with special educational needs is well planned. The school is successful in helping such children from the very beginning of their education because of the good teaching and support provided for these children.
- 13 Previous concerns about marking and planning to challenge more able pupils have been addressed satisfactorily and opportunities for assessment during lessons are now identified. There is still room for improvement, however. Assessment, appropriately, is still a focus for development. It is good in English, especially writing, and in mathematics. It is also good in the Foundation Stage where the 'profile' and teachers' own continuous assessments ensure they have a good knowledge of the children and what they need to learn next. Teachers' evaluations and ongoing records of pupils (such as those entered into their 'golden books') are a strong feature of assessment. The school has made some sound steps forward in using assessment information to set longer-term targets in literacy and numeracy since the previous inspection. Marking and assessment of work are carried out to best effect when pupils of different capabilities are set work that closely meets their differing needs. In most lessons this is the case, although at times more able pupils do not work at a sufficiently fast enough pace or deal with more challenging work than that

planned. There are personal targets in place for pupils, and they are proud that these relate to what they want to achieve, such as 'better handwriting'. However these do not tell the pupils enough about how to improve, nor do they link day-to-day work closely or consistently enough to the targets. In many lessons the work is soundly matched to the pupils' differing abilities but the school does not use assessment carefully enough to make this feature even sharper.

- 14 There are still some weaknesses with challenge in science, however, and this is why pupils do not consistently reach the higher levels. This is partly due to the way the programme of work is planned. Not all teachers ensure that the lessons they plan identify what the more able pupils will do and learn.
- 15 A particular strength is that support for less able pupils is good in most subjects and mostly evident in planning. Teachers and support staff have a good understanding of their needs and the next steps for them to undertake in learning. They are supported well in small group sessions with the specialist teacher and in class by teaching assistants. Targets in individual education plans are focussed upon well in the separately taught sessions, although they are not always used as working documents by class teachers. However, not enough attention is consistently given to the needs of more able pupils, although in some lessons teachers do use a variety of ways to extend their ideas.
- 16 One way of challenging pupils, and a particular strength of the teaching, is questioning. Teachers use questions skilfully to identify what pupils already know and understand. They ensure that the questions they ask extend and build on their knowledge in small steps and often expect that more able pupils can make bigger leaps in their understanding.
- 17 Staff organise their lessons well and always have a good range of resources and ways of teaching to interest pupils and stimulate their imagination. The use of the interactive whiteboards by teachers and pupils has had a very positive impact on learning. Teachers' confidence in using the whiteboards is developing and many teachers are well versed on how these resources can be used to maximum effect. They ensure that the plans for the topics are well considered and that ideas are developed so that pupils can make the connections with what they learn in other lessons. Very good questioning and the drawing of pupils' attention to the different aspects of what they are learning helps make these links well.
- 18 Staff always make it very clear how they expect the pupils to watch, listen and behave. Pupils display very good behaviour and attentional skills as a result. They are very keen and eager learners who work very hard and always try their very best to meet their teacher's expectations. They get much encouragement and this stimulates their willingness to try even harder. Their eagerness is directly linked to the interesting and challenging activities they undertake, although occasionally their attention wanes when the activity is more mundane and pupils have to wait their turn to take part. For example, in a music lesson for reception children where the teaching was satisfactory overall, pupils were asked to choose and explore instruments one by one while sitting in a circle. This slowed the pace of lessons and of learning. Some children lost focus because of the need to wait and watch others.

## **The curriculum**

The curriculum provided by the school for its pupils is good in the Foundation Stage as well as Years 1 and 2. The range of opportunities to enrich pupils' learning is also good. Accommodation and resources are good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school has responded well to national initiatives to help improve provision and meet individual pupils' needs more effectively.
- Strong links are made between subjects to produce a vibrant and interesting curriculum.
- The use of visits and visitors give a greater meaning and depth to the learning of the pupils.
- Good opportunities are taken to involve pupils in activities in the community and the arts that give an extra dimension to the pupils' learning.
- The spacious accommodation and good match of teachers to the co-ordinator roles support the good teaching overall.

### **Commentary**

- 19 The school's positive introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies has improved the teaching and planning in English and mathematics. Additional programmes, such as those to support pupils' literacy skills, are taken on with enthusiasm because of the school's philosophy that the child is at the heart of everything that it does. For instance, extra and additional literacy support is positive in helping pupils improve their skills and is taught well and systematically by well trained teaching assistants. Support for pupils with special educational needs is good; the work they do is well planned and they are effectively guided during lessons. Targets are clearly set in their individual education plans. Many of the targets, however, are what could be achieved through general everyday or half-termly planning focused on the different needs of pupils, thus leaving the main targets to focus on personal learning skills. For instance, pupils may have a target to spell simple three letter words when their main learning needs, which are not specified in their plans, are to watch consistently and listen carefully to instructions.
- 20 The school has also worked hard to ensure that what is planned for pupils is made relevant to them through topics which link all aspects of their learning. This means that, for instance, their work on Chinese New Year in the reception class also reflects their opportunities in role-play, Chinese art work and in writing. Art work particularly provides the medium to connect many aspects of pupils' work. This all helps to produce an enthusiasm in pupils and real understanding about what they are doing and why.
- 21 Good experiences are provided in science for pupils to investigate and experiment but the work planned does not extend the more able pupils sufficiently. Although the planning for ICT is not always systematic (because of the lack a long-term overview of what is taught and when), the way staff plan for the use of the computer and the way they build pupils' skills and opportunities successively mean that, despite this weakness, pupils achieve well and reach standards that exceed what is expected for their age.
- 22 The school creates a range of good opportunities to give the pupils an interesting and enjoyable curriculum and to extend learning. Clubs are mainly limited to football and French, which are paid for by parents. These are very well attended. Additional opportunities to support learning through the arts or through visits and visitors are good and enhance learning. A day with visiting artists supported pupils in the creation of very attractive silk paintings. An opera group involved pupils in the power and beauty of music. A scientific



theatre group gave added interest to the science curriculum. There are visits for each year group to locations that match topics studied and so give pupils a deeper understanding of their learning.

- 23 The local community is used well to bring learning alive. For example, a recent visit for pupils to the local Jesus Hospital stimulated development of study skills in history and gave opportunity for pupils to develop writing styles in English. This good use of literacy skills meant that pupils' work, including those with special educational needs, was personal, perceptive and imaginatively written.
- 24 Provision for personal social and health education is good. The school integrates this into other subject areas such as religious education and science. A scheme is used to help pupils towards a good self-image and this underpins lessons when pupils discuss personal relationships. Confidence is improved as a result and a good contribution is made to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.
- 25 Accommodation is good and all year groups work in spacious classrooms that have generous areas for practical work or group teaching. Outdoor areas are used well to enhance physical development and imaginative play. The nursery area play surface is to be upgraded soon. Resources for learning are satisfactory. Some are good such as for ICT while others, such as those in the nursery, are 'tired' and need renewing. There are a good number of teachers and an adequate number of assistants. The match of teachers' subject skills to the roles of co-ordinators is good and this supports the good teaching seen during inspection. Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils with special educational needs.

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

Arrangements to ensure pupils' care, welfare and health and safety are good. The care aspect is very good. The school provides pupils with satisfactory support, advice and guidance. The extent to which it involves pupils in its work and development is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils trust the adults in the school and say they would feel able to ask for help or advice if the need arose; relationships are very good.
- Good induction procedures help children to settle in quickly and make good progress in their work.
- Pupils are well looked after during the school day and health and safety procedures are comprehensive.
- Assessment procedures and data are not always used effectively to ensure pupils at different levels of attainment are suitably challenged.

### **Commentary**

- 26 During discussions, pupils say that they feel really well looked after at school and that they would willingly confide in their teachers if they had any particular difficulties. Parents are equally positive and analysis of the pre-inspection questionnaire shows that almost everyone regards members of staff as being very fair and approachable. Working relationships are warm and mutually supportive and parents also liaise closely with teachers to ensure that they are kept informed of any particular problems or circumstances. This very good teamwork and close partnership with parents puts teachers in a very good position to be able to spot any emerging difficulties at an early stage. The quality of care is evident in the

very good relationships between pupils and staff and the way the school promotes pupils' best interests, especially the good support given to pupils with special educational needs.

- 27 Parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting and those who completed the questionnaire share very positive views about the school's induction procedures. Inspectors agree and feel that parents' confidence is very well placed. Members of staff in the nursery liaise closely with local pre-school groups and reception and nursery staff also offer home visits to incoming children. Nursery children also attend whole school assemblies as well as Christmas and Easter productions. Incoming children can also attend several sessions prior to their admission and this helps new children to get to know each other and the various members of staff at the earliest opportunity. Year 2 pupils also help out in the nursery during playtime and read stories to the children. These sensitive and well thought-out arrangements help adults and children to get to know one another at an early stage. This familiarity helps children to settle quickly into school and make good progress from the moment they arrive.
- 28 First aid procedures are comprehensive and risk assessment procedures are good. Pupils who have medical conditions or who feel ill during the school day are well looked after. Child protection and health and safety procedures are comprehensive and members of staff are well-trained and fully aware of their individual responsibilities.
- 29 Pupils' achievement has improved significantly since the last inspection but there is room for better use of the assessment data that is now available. Pupils do not always know how they can improve their work and not all lessons are planned with the right level of challenge for pupils at different stages of learning. In addition, pupils have yet to become fully involved in discussing whether they have achieved the targets that are set and deciding what the next step should be.

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

Links with parents and the community are good. Links with other schools and colleges are satisfactory.

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

- Strong links with the community support the curriculum and pupils' personal development well.
- Parents provide good support for their children's learning.
- Parents are well informed about day-to-day school life and the progress their children are making.
- Procedures to deal with parents' concerns and suggestions are effective.

#### **Commentary**

- 30 Links with the local community are close and a wide range of visitors contributes to school life. Several members of the community also come in to hear pupils read and offer voluntary help during lessons. Local businesses provide generous support for school activities and have also provided raffle prizes and sponsorship for the soft play surface in the nursery. Representatives from community groups such as the local police officer, school nurse and churches visit to tell the pupils about their roles in society and sometimes help during lessons. Pupils regularly visit local places of historical interest, such as the Jesus Hospital and the Manor House. These provide pupils with a very good sense of history and they also take part in local events such as the annual Easter bonnet parade and The Rowell Fair. It also helps them to feel that the work they do is valued. These links reinforce the school's position at the heart of the community and help pupils to develop a strong sense of local identity.

- 31 Most of the parents encourage their children to work hard and to complete their homework on time. They make good use of the class libraries and many come in to help their children change their home reading books each week. They are very loyal to the school and there is little they would like to change. Parents unanimously agree that the teaching is good and almost all are confident that their children like school and that they are making rapid progress in their learning. Several regularly work as volunteers during the school day and members of staff really appreciate their reliability and the quality of their help. Parents provide generous support for the school association and the various social and fund raising activities organised, such as the annual family picnic. Some parents, however, book family holidays during the school term and these interruptions mean that their children miss out on the class work undertaken during their absence. These gaps in their knowledge could well place them at a disadvantage in the future.
- 32 Pupils' annual reports contain a wealth of useful information and provide parents with a clear indication as to how their children's progress compares with national expectations. Their children's targets are included, although they are not always measurable and subject specific. The school's website is easy to use, very clear and informative and regular newsletters also keep parents up to date. Year group newsletters also give advance information on the topics pupils will be studying each term and tell parents about special events such as class assemblies and how they can help their children at home.
- 33 The school encourages parents to be open and frank about voicing their suggestions or concerns. Although the school does not provide parents with any formal questionnaires, parents say that the headteacher and teachers are very approachable and that the school tries to accommodate any reasonable request. Inspectors agree; analysis of the parents' questionnaire shows that they are very pleased with the way the school listens and responds to their suggestions or concerns. A very small number of parents had concerns about behaviour and bullying, although inspectors found no evidence of any issues relating to these. The school community is very harmonious and staff have pupils' best interest at heart and deal with any potential difficult behaviour immediately and very successfully.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory with good features. The leadership by the headteacher is good and the management of the school is satisfactory. Governance is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher is a strong leader who leads by example and who largely knows what needs to be done to improve the school and standards in particular.
- School improvement planning identifies the correct priorities but the way in which the success of the plan is measured is sometimes imprecise and there is not a great enough emphasis on raising standards.
- The work of co-ordinators is satisfactory overall, although some have limited involvement in the evaluation the quality of teaching in their subjects.
- The senior management team have developed strong teams but are not sufficiently involved in strategic planning.
- Governors are supportive of the school but are not always as directly involved as they would like.

### **Commentary**

- 34 The headteacher embodies well the school's principles in everything she has done. These have been developed and honed over the 23 years she has worked in the

school and as a headteacher she has ensured a good balance between fostering pupils' good academic achievement and their good personal development. She successfully leads the staff team and works very hard to ensure that she has a firm grip on everything that happens in the school. She is successful in this and is particularly proud of the effective communication which means the school runs like a well oiled machine on a day-to-day basis. The principles of 'care, share, help, smile' are also reflected in the staff's high commitment to the school and in the pupils and parents themselves, especially their enthusiasm for the school and the way it fosters learning. The headteacher has clearly identified what needs to improve and has the pupils' standards at heart. She recognises well the variation in pupils' skills on entry and the job the school has to do to add value to pupils' achievements. There is a positive regard for the differing needs of pupils and especially in supporting pupils with special educational needs which the headteacher co-ordinates well. These are included well in lessons, with a good balance of separate specialist teaching support for pupils in Year 2. There is also a recognition that the challenge for more able pupils could be improved further, such as through even better planning and recognition of those who have a gift or talent.

- 35 The plan for the school's development is for one year only, mainly because the headteacher wished to plan only in short term. She recognised the need for the new headteacher to make her mark on the school's planning. This is appropriate. The priorities in the plan are well defined and accurate in terms of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, criteria for success are not always sufficiently sharp, although they are good where specific targets, such as in English and mathematics, are set to raise attainment. There is a mixed picture in terms of subject plans but overall they lack a strategic focus. Some are precise and identify key priorities for improvement. The lack of precision of success criteria is a general weakness of most plans and some are merely a list of tasks to carry out. They do not concentrate enough on raising attainment. Some subjects have plans for improvement which are out of date. This is where staff have been absent. However, the headteacher, with the support of senior staff and occasionally governors, have either maintained the provision or forged ahead with improvement. A good example of this is the continued development of ICT, the maintenance of its high profile in the school and the positive impact of the introduction of interactive whiteboards.
- 36 Teamwork is strong and senior staff have developed strong teams in each of their departments. Team planning is also strong and plans show they work together consistently and effectively. However, the plans do not always take account of the varied needs of each of the classes in the departments, although individual teachers often adjust planning and teaching styles to take account of these. The role of the senior staff is strong in relation to day-to-day management of their areas. They meet regularly with the headteacher and discuss a full range of matters, although recently no minutes of these meetings have been kept. They consider the actions to be implemented in the improvement plan but are less involved in its construction, monitoring or evaluation. A weakness is that there is no overall co-ordinator for the Foundation Stage and this limits strategic development of nursery and reception.
- 37 The roles of co-ordinators have developed satisfactorily since the last inspection, although some need to develop their skills further. Co-ordinators for English, mathematics and science regularly monitor planning, track pupils' progress and review the quality of pupils' work. They occasionally monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching but this is not a developed area and it is the headteacher that mainly monitors teaching. This occurs formally through performance management

(where there are sound systems in place) and through the headteacher informally working alongside teachers and also gauging pupils' progress in subjects through teaching classes. She does, however, have a good knowledge of the staff's skills. She has recognised that work for some pupils should to be better matched to their needs and abilities, and especially the more able pupils but planning has not been altered as yet to deal with this.

- 38 Governors are strongly committed to the school and their good support is valued by staff and the headteacher. They manage and monitor the budget well, keeping a close eye on the school's spending and targeting resources effectively where they are needed. They know the school's strengths well but many are reliant on the headteacher for information in relation to their monitoring of the school's work. Some have visited school to get a sense of how work is progressing in the subjects, although there is not a systematic programme for this or a way of reporting findings, other than informally. A new and enthusiastic governor voted onto the governing body sometime ago has not yet been able to undertake training for the role. Governors have been supportive in helping the school through times of difficulty. They fulfil their statutory responsibilities well. They recognise they need to be more involved in development planning and say they are waiting for the new headteacher to give them direction. However, although they value their working partnership with the headteacher, they also know that they need to be better informed in order to act more effectively as a critical friend to the school.

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

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	735,117
Total expenditure	719,975
Expenditure per pupil	2,215

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	22,350
Balance carried forward to the next	37,492

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

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

Provision for children in the nursery and reception classes is **good**. Most of the children start school with attainment comparable with those of the same age, although this varies from year to year. They achieve well in all the areas of learning. In a few areas achievement is slightly better. They are on track to attain the early learning goals, at least, in all areas of learning and most will exceed these. The quality of the teaching is good in each area of learning and nursery nurses contribute well to the quality of children's learning. Accommodation is satisfactory. The accommodation in both the nursery and reception areas is spacious with some very good outdoor features. These areas are used very well to enrich the ways that children explore the new ideas that they encounter and the skills they need to develop. The development of the Foundation Stage nationally has meant that the school has to work extra hard to sustain the range, balance and generally good quality of the activities in the two separate buildings. The school's thoughtful investment in computers has accelerated well the children's skills and ideas. In turn, the development of skills and ideas in ICT enhances the way they learn and prepares them very well for the future. Overall, the resources are satisfactory. They support a fruitful variety of experiences that extend outdoors but many resources are well worn and in need of replacement. Leadership and management are sound. There is no co-ordinator over the whole of the Foundation Stage to strengthen the provision generally, develop closer working partnerships between staff and raise attainment further. There are strengths in the teamwork in nursery and reception and a common understanding of how children learn best.

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

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

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

- Very positive relationships and well thought out priorities stand children in good stead as young learners.
- They have the freedom to explore, make decisions for themselves and at times negotiate with others in their play.
- Children with special educational needs are guided well by teaching assistants.

#### **Commentary**

39 Very caring relationships make the nursery a secure and warm place to be. They explore and respond to the tools and props around them with great interest because there is plenty of scope to develop many early skills. They play with purpose in the nursery and for sustained periods of time in reception. Teaching is good with very good features. Shared planning, good teaching methods and the effective pre-school preparations help all the children to settle very well to routines. Rarely does the pattern of the day intrude into the quality of play. The children cope well with new experiences in the nursery and are remarkably at ease with visitors. These strengths continue into reception. When new ideas are introduced adults provide guidance while needed then withdraw to let the children find their own feet. They learn to manage things for themselves very well and many of them play with their classmates

confidently. They are very well behaved and many of them can negotiate their play without conflict or disagreement. They are kind with each other and many of them can sustain their play independently for good periods of time. Those with special educational needs have suitable arrangements and make good gains in their skills from previous attainment because adults gear activities to their needs. Children's achievements are good and sometimes very good. They are on course to exceed the goals expected by the end of reception.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Reading and writing are well taught.
- The quality of conversation by adults is good when teaching small groups of children.

### **Commentary**

40 Teaching is good and children achieve well. They are likely to attain the goals expected by the end of reception, at least, and many will exceed these. Children in the nursery are confident to explore different activities and engage to converse readily with others. They readily contribute their own ideas and statements alongside others. They make very good headway when the quality of language is rich and linked to their own experience of life. They are provided with a good range of ways for them to learn how to find things out for themselves which extends their vocabulary and use of language. In reception there are plenty of opportunities to talk and progress is greater here where adults enrich the conversation to deepen the learning as children play. Occasionally, across both nursery and reception classes, language is not always fostered as effectively when children are learning during play situations. In their reading, children have a good understanding of traditional tales and stories. They know enough about characters and events in stories to reflect thoughtfully on what happens. They use their knowledge of letter sounds and simple words when they read and write messages. Many of the children write at great length at the start of Year 1 and as such, are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- In the nursery, there are a good amount and range of mathematical experiences indoors and out.
- In reception, the more able children quickly begin to calculate in their heads because they get plenty of practical play opportunities and strong teaching.

### **Commentary**

41 Teaching is good with very good features. Children in nursery do well in developing their understanding of the names of numbers, counting and simple mathematical

ideas. The good range of space outdoors makes a valuable contribution to children's awareness of size, comparison, weight and measure. In reception most of the children achieve the goals for this area of learning and those who have the capacity to achieve more in their handling of numbers, do so. Activities are well designed to meet the wide range of needs. The majority of children in nursery are starting to count towards 5. The work of reception children indicates that most can combine numbers to 10 and subtract. Once children attain the goals set out for this age, teachers are not complacent but teachers set children to work on tasks which support their learning at a higher level and cover work which is linked to attaining National Curriculum Level 1. For instance, children think about how they deal with numbers to get an answer then are prompted to describe their simple calculation. More able children can recognise numbers to 20 and can combine and subtract within 20. Overall, they achieve well and sometimes very well and exceed the goals expected by the end of reception.

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

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children have plenty of use of computer technology.
- Teachers plan exciting activities for children to explore and investigate.
- Some of the otherwise ordinary resources to support learning are used very effectively.

### **Commentary**

42 Teaching is good overall. Where it is very effective, it leads children to explore a very good variety of resources, tools and materials. They have a growing awareness and understanding of time, place, ideas and culture. In the nursery, children gain a lot from a visit of a baby and mother. More able children come up with questions and all the children respond with great interest to this significant event that bridges home and school. At times, the quality and range of resources are not stimulating enough to enrich learning but investment in ICT has accelerated progress in several areas of learning for all the children. For example, in reception, children explore exciting software involving simple problem-solving on the large electronic screen. In one instance, a child with special educational needs demonstrated his logical thinking and quick use of the tools to deal with the sequence of ideas. The ideas they encounter help them to progress well and sometimes very well. The children exceed the goals expected by the end of reception.

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in physical development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children in nursery and reception enjoy many activities that help them to develop stamina, and a wide range of physical skills, indoors and outdoors are developed.
- Children's ability to manipulate large and small tools develops well.

### **Commentary**



- 43 There are a very good range of opportunities to develop most of the physical skills set out for children to achieve. The breadth of tools, equipment and materials provides lots of practice and challenge so children want to use them. Teaching is good and experiences are designed to develop dexterity and strength in their manipulative skills. Most of these are extended outdoors in the well designed outdoor area where children race, climb and negotiate space. A strength of the provision is the continuous access and freedom to explore and calculate how to tackle new objects or experiences – such as how best to climb the hill after a fall of snow. Children in reception demonstrate a good range of skills, control and balance in their indoor lesson. They travel well, jumping, landing and negotiating space and speed better and more precisely than most of their age. The easily available resources, tools and props for learning and good teaching guidance help them to use equipment for themselves and explore different ways of making and modifying. For example, they use small pieces of sticking tape with ease. Children achieve well and reach the goals expected for their age, at least, and many will exceed these.

## **CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

The provision for creative development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good quality props for imaginative play encourage the children to play out stories from the past.
- Children explore the potential of computer technology and software easily and creatively.

### **Commentary**

- 44 Teaching is good and children achieve well. Music tapes are used well in the classroom to link together ideas and engage the youngest children in the repeated rhyme and rhythms of the songs played. Children enjoy their role-play in the nursery where some examples of good teaching raises the quality of learning. In one instance the teacher successfully played out a familiar scene at the baby clinic so that the children might develop their own. These children are hugely receptive to new ideas and eager to play. In reception for instance, they enter the world of knights and ladies using story, costume and props. Here adults nurture an early understanding of the past and slip in ideas to broaden the scope of their existing knowledge. Children's emerging ICT skills are very well promoted. They have plenty of time to use large screens to explore the tools. They paint on screen, change or erase huge swirls of colour electronically and experiment. In doing so, they achieve very well in this aspect. They reach the goals expected by the end of reception, at least.

## **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 1**

### **ENGLISH**

#### **English**

Provision in English is **good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Consistently good teaching supports the pupils' good attainment.
- The use of literacy in other subjects such as history gives pupils opportunities to write about their real experiences.
- Good use of the literacy planning supports good development of basic language skills.
- The co-ordinator manages the subject well but is not given sufficient responsibility for monitoring the quality of the subject.
- Assessment information is not always used well enough to identify what pupils need to know in order to achieve higher levels of attainment.

## **Commentary**

- 45 In the 2004 national tests and assessments, compared nationally and with similar schools, the Year 2 pupils' performance was above average in writing and average for reading. There has been inconsistency in the results in recent years, although in some years, such as 2002, there has been a higher than usual proportion of pupils with special educational needs. Variations in the standards reached by different year groups are also linked to variations of attainment on entry.
- 46 Currently, standards are above average in reading and writing and in line with the expected level in speaking and listening. The pupils achieve well. Performance at the higher levels of attainment is rising and the school is on course to reach its targets for these pupils. However, for some pupils attainment should be even higher.
- 47 Pupils are confident in answering questions and give clear answers. They also use shared talking opportunities to prepare answers to questions that require opinions. They listen well to instructions and are attentive when the teacher is addressing the group. As a result, they are able to concentrate fully when working at tasks. Sometimes, they do not give sustained answers that include reasons for their opinion. Nor do they always respond to the views of other pupils. This is because teachers occasionally do not provide enough opportunities during introductions or plenary sessions to develop these skills.
- 48 Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, enjoy reading. They choose favourite books on topics such as dinosaurs as well as stories. Lower attaining pupils use letter sounds to identify unfamiliar words and use illustrations to help them in this. Rhythm and expression are used well by average attaining pupils. They use punctuation to give greater meaning to what is read and use syllables to identify unfamiliar words. Information books are familiar to all pupils and the more able pupils use the contents and index well to locate particular facts. These pupils recount the plot and identify the nature of characters. This shows well when they explain the events in the story and predict the outcomes of the plot.
- 49 Pupils of all abilities write using secure sentence structure with accurate punctuation. Handwriting is regular and letters are well formed. Good writing was seen in work where pupils had visited the local 'Jesus Hospital' as part of a local studies project. Extended sentences imaginatively explained the purpose of the hospital. Pupils made perceptive observations that reflected their personal understanding. The most able pupils produce extended sentences. They use reasoning and speech at times. At times, however, there is insufficient use of more complex sentence structures by these pupils.

- 50 Teaching is consistently good. The very good relationships between teachers and pupils is a direct factor in the quality and quantity of pupils' work. Pupils have very good attitudes to their learning. Their work shows pride and presentation is neat. Teaching assistants are used well to support pupils with special educational needs. Access to learning is much improved for these pupils. Planning shows clearly the teachers' expectations for pupils of different abilities and this helps pupils to achieve well. However, opportunities for pupils to write at length and explore the possibilities of their imaginative writing skills are not regular and consistent. Analysis of pupils' work found insufficient examples of higher attaining pupils being challenged with more complex tasks.
- 51 There is good management of the subject with regular monitoring of planning and teaching. However, the leadership role has not been fully developed. Initiatives to raise standards are limited because of the co-ordinator's lack of opportunity to challenge teachers with more rigorous evaluation when monitoring. As a result, there is not always sufficient focus by teachers on what pupils need to know in order to achieve higher levels of attainment.
- 52 There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. The school has successfully addressed the key issue of raising attainment of higher attaining pupils and setting more challenging end of key stage targets. Standards are significantly higher for pupils of all abilities. Literacy skills are developed in other subject areas. Marking is now systematic and teachers regularly evaluate pupils' performance.

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

- 53 This is good. Other subject areas such as history, religious education and local studies make good use of literacy. There is good support for research, accessing information, and reading for different purposes. In most lessons, pupils are given good opportunities to contribute and share their views with others. This gives pupils opportunities to develop writing alongside the skills of explanation, and interpretation. However, these opportunities are not planned for in a structured systematic way. This means that further opportunities are not identified across the curriculum to increase the range of extended writing for the pupils.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils are on track to exceed the standards of most pupils expected nationally by the end of Year 2.
- Pupils are encouraged well to use their mathematical jottings to describe their workings and this enhances their ability to be methodical in their calculations.
- Assessment information is not used to accelerate progress for pupils of different abilities.

### **Commentary**

- 54 The slight differences in attainment from year to year when children start school tend to be reflected in the uneven trend of results in national tests. In addition, in some years there was high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. This make a big difference, as was the case in the 2002 tests where results dipped to a generally average standard. Inspection findings show that most pupils achieve well and that the school is effective in ensuring that the great majority of pupils attain

above average standards by the time they are ready to transfer to the next stage of their education. Taking all the evidence into account, the above average standards seen in the national tests in 2004 for pupils reaching the expected level and above are reflected in the standard of pupils' work seen in Year 2 now. For instance, more able pupils can calculate 45 divided by 5 and describe their methods in ways that are above that expected for their age now. Their knowledge of shape and understanding of the properties is good.

- 55 The work seen during the inspection shows that the pupils are making generally good progress and that their number skills are good. They understand that sets of numbers can be described in addition or multiplication and they can see that the outcome of  $4 \times 6$  is the same as  $6 \times 4$  and  $6+6+6+6$ . Pupils in Year 1 are starting to use mathematical jottings to record their ways of working – a productive move encouraged by the subject leader. Nevertheless, assessment information is not always used effectively enough to accelerate the progress pupils make in relation to their capabilities. For example, more able pupils are not always set greater challenges in order to increase their rate of their progress and attain at the higher levels of which they are capable.
- 56 The quality of teaching is good. There is good emphasis on mental arithmetic and on getting pupils to describe and explain their mathematical thinking. Lower attaining pupils are well supported by learning assistants and so they can deal sets of numbers to understand multiplication. There is a good amount of pupils' work. Children are encouraged to develop the skills to work in their heads and to communicate their calculations in their own ways as well as more formally, to good effect.
- 57 Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and work very hard. They persevere, often trying different mathematical methods to solve problems. Those with special educational needs make good progress because they receive close support from learning assistants and additional resources to help them learn.
- 58 Leadership and management are satisfactory. The subject leader steadily brings about improvement in a reflective team of staff that assure that pupils do achieve well. In addition, improvements in the use of ICT make lessons much more accessible and give pupils the chance to tackle mathematical ideas without the worry of recording mistakes. The school's comprehensive range of assessment information has improved soundly in use since the previous inspection noted the limited impact of assessment on pupils' learning and progress. There remains some way to go to ensure that this valuable information is used sufficiently to make sure that all the pupils achieve as well as they might given their different capabilities.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

- 59 This is satisfactory. Pupils use their mathematical skills in other subjects as relevant links arise. The school is at the stage of starting to formally plan numeracy links more systematically. New technology makes a huge contribution to pupils' learning and as their skills grow, there is a swell of achievement that reflects the speed at which pupils' understanding is growing. In Years 1 and 2 pupils explore simple block graphs well when they handle information using their strong skills in ICT.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Although the programme of work for science is sound overall, the planning does not take the needs of more able pupils into account sufficiently.
- Teachers plan interesting activities and as a result, pupils are highly motivated to learn about science.
- There is a good balance between opportunities to talk about what they are learning and written work.

### **Commentary**

60 Pupils' standards are in line with those nationally expected by the end of Year 2. An average number of pupils are on target to reach the higher level, although this is more because they have a good general scientific knowledge than work is specifically planned to meet their needs. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory, despite the good quality of teaching. This is because the programme that the pupils follow does not sufficiently provide challenging activities for the more able pupils and it is down to individual teachers to adapt the work. While pupils' ideas are mainly extended through very good quality questioning and the work undertaken allows more able pupils to extend their written answers, teachers' planning does not specifically show what they expect the more able pupils to do and particularly learn. Some staff are 'naturally' adept at challenging pupils and developing more 'advanced' concepts without the planning, while others need guidance. For instance, in the programme, the work on light insufficiently extends to higher level tasks such as on reflections and investigation does not always extend to developing prediction and fair testing ideas for more able pupils.

61 In addition, the school's analysis of its performance in science in the past few years has identified work in physical processes as weaknesses. Although more time has been allocated to science, there is still not enough teaching time to strengthen the work on physical processes.

62 Pupils enjoy science and they especially like the regular investigative work. Teachers make lessons interesting and in the best practice, consider the needs of different groups well. This was the case in a Year 2 lesson on natural materials, where activities were well planned and pupils with special educational needs were well supported. In addition, higher attaining pupils were challenged to extend their ideas on the uses of such materials in everyday life. Pupils are very keen and eager and enthusiastically ask interesting and searching questions. They are avid explorers. Their interest is sparked by the exciting activities undertaken in the Foundation Stage and built on well by teachers in Years 1 and 2 who plan work which links strongly with other activities which helps them make sense of what they are learning. For instance, Year 1 pupils working on the parts of plants learned that the roots anchored the stem. They carefully observed the layout of roots and learned to replicate them using blow techniques during a painting session in art.

63 Scientific ideas are developed through speaking activities and pupils are regularly asked to provide explanations for what they are thinking, doing, and the conclusions they reach. There is, however, a good balance between this and written work for producing simple reports and conclusions and recording, such as in tables.

- 64 The subject is satisfactorily led and managed. Although some time for co-ordination is allotted, the main thrust of monitoring has been to ensure that what is planned is taught. The pupils' work is examined about once or twice per year and some teaching has been evaluated in the past. There is little opportunity for networking with other schools and little specific training has been on offer recently. However, the co-ordinator recognises there needs to be a greater emphasis on ensuring all groups makes the progress they can. Assessment has improved and is satisfactory, although there is not always a process of internal agreement about the quality of work or levels. Development planning is more about what needs to be done, especially with regard to improving resources, and not a strategic plan to raise standards.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school's commitment to the provision for ICT is very strong.
- Pupils' confidence is developed from a very early age.
- Staff demonstrations are good but there is sometimes a lack of pupil involvement at these times.
- The development plan is out of date and lacks a focus on raising standards.

### **Commentary**

- 65 The school's high commitment to the development of ICT and associated resources, such as interactive whiteboards, has significantly increased over recent years and more are planned. Pupils have very good opportunities to use computers in the Foundation Stage and develop a considerable confidence which is built on well in Years 1 and 2. As a result, they achieve well and by the end of Year 2 reach standards which are above those expected nationally. This is because teachers have a good knowledge of their needs and abilities, keep good assessment records and know how to extend their skills. The programme of work supports this well, although there is no overall guidance about which topics should be taught and when. However, the staff do ensure all aspects are covered and have no qualms about extending the pupils' ideas further. This was well exemplified in a lesson on programming a simple robot where the teaching was very good. Mathematical and computer skills were used very well together to increase pupils' understanding of angles and in using prediction and trial and error methods so that pupils learned to plan routes and program accurately the robot's movement. The pupils were amazed at how their new found knowledge of turning angles had developed and how they could use their knowledge practically to solve a particular problem.
- 66 Teaching is good and staff have improved their own knowledge and confidence well. They carefully explain and demonstrate the skills they want pupils to learn but, at times, do not involve pupils as part of the demonstration, to show what they have learned thus far. Staff have embraced the use of the interactive whiteboards well but also ensure that this is used by pupils as a 'touch screen' resource. As a result, some of the youngest pupils in Year 1 develop some good skills for their age, such

as learn to use menus and understand the role of icons. Most load, save and print with confidence and write captions for their pictures.

- 67 The subject is soundly led and managed. The co-ordinator was absent during the inspection and over the last two terms the headteacher and a governor have supported continued improvement. The work that has been undertaken prior to her leave has had a positive effect. The pace of development has been satisfactory; the need to use ICT in a wide range of subjects has been emphasised and resources have improved, even though the actual subject action plan is out-of-date. Standards have clearly improved since the last inspection, even though the plan does not emphasise this.

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

- 68 This is good. It is used well in many subjects and pupils readily access the Internet to find information. They use software to create pictures in art and design, learn about animal habitats and the effects of the environment in science, and readily use it in mathematics for solving problems.

## **HUMANITIES**

A small amount of pupils' work in **geography** was sampled and one lesson was seen. The amount of information was insufficient to make a firm judgement about provision.

The school makes good use of the local area and also makes productive geographical links with local history around the school. In the Year 1, pupils benefit a great deal from the imaginative ways in which geographical ideas are planned to help them develop new skills and knowledge from the activities they undertake. The variety of games played, the use and exploration of Ordnance Survey maps to develop routes to and from school and the analysis of land features shows very clearly benefit pupils' learning. The work of these pupils indicates that they have a thorough knowledge and understanding of simple map work and know about some of the differences and similarities between types of accommodation.

It is not possible to make a judgement on provision in **history**. The school uses the community links and the historical legacy of the town to very good effect in pupils' studies of **history**. As a result, pupils have a deep understanding of the past and a growing sense of time beyond most their age. Very good visits, colourful costumes and factual information inspire the children and bring to life events and characters from the rich archives of the historic hospital and mansion house in the town. Pupils' skills of enquiry and their written responses relate the stories and ancient traditions at the heart of their community.

### **Religious education**

No judgement can be made about the quality of provision in religious education. No lessons were timetabled on the days of the inspection and no teaching was, therefore, seen. However, work and documentation sampled shows that:

- The school's policy follows the locally agreed syllabus.
- Links with the provision for pupils' personal social and health education are used well to develop their understanding and response to the meanings and values initially discussed in religious education lessons.

- Pupils' knowledge is enhanced by their detailed re-telling of stories in their writing and illustrations of the two faiths they study.

Pupils' work indicates that standards in religious education are at least satisfactory by the end of Year 2. They know that there are times during their lives when special events take place. Pupils learn about these events and the people involved from a Christian viewpoint, and links are also made to comparable practices within Judaism.

There is a suitable balance between pupils becoming aware of what constitutes differing beliefs and their knowledge of the facts about faith through story and conversation. Pupils in Year 2 write at length and with good detail about the stories from Christianity, some of which are planned to encourage the children to reflect on different experiences of life. Lessons are supplemented very well by school assemblies which help pupils to explore ideas about human experience in the world by considering issues such as 'Fair Trade'.

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

No lessons could be seen in **art and design** or **design and technology**, although some aspects were seen when pupils worked on topics which contained elements of these subjects.

In these subjects, it is not possible to make a judgement on provision overall, standards or the quality of teaching and learning. In the small amount of work seen, standards in art and design were above average. Of particular note, were the Year 2 skyline silhouettes, chalk drawing of trees and meticulously drawn pictures of medieval houses, which shows good skill and careful attention to detail. Year 1 pupils listen to stories about artists, such as Van Gogh, and display a real enthusiasm for art. During a recent art day, pupils drew their designs on silk and then painted them using special paints. The results are highly effective and are well and proudly displayed. The small amount of work in design and technology work seen shows that pupils' skills in making are above average. For example, they used different ways of making the foreground of their folded cards stand out from the background, such through a concertina paper folding.

Insufficient lessons were seen during inspection to make secure judgements about provision in **music** or on standards and teaching. From the observations made and discussion with the co-ordinator it is possible to make the following comments.

An enthusiastic music specialist oversees the subject and pupils have benefited from a good number of quality musical experiences, such as an afternoon with an opera group and a visit from the county instrumental group. They perform in a local schools' singing festival and for parents in a number of concerts. Satisfactory teaching was observed and pupils showed good use of imagination when listening to contrasting pieces of music. They responded well to the music and listened intently as they imagined scenes such as sunset over rippling water or danger and fear in a dark wood.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Provision for physical education is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The enthusiastic co-ordinator supports other teachers well and gives them confidence in their teaching.



- The better teaching uses imaginative images that encourage pupils to sensitive and graceful movement and shape.
- The scheme of work is structured well to provide progression in gymnastics and to link dance and music for better standards of movement.
- Games activities are less well developed than other areas of the curriculum.

### **Commentary**

- 69 Good leadership from an enthusiastic co-ordinator and good, challenging teaching results in pupils who have positive attitudes to their physical education lessons. Lessons are well planned, particularly to improve movement and control and pupils follow instructions carefully. Where the teaching is very good, the pace of the lesson is rapid and demonstrations are very carefully carried out to show the techniques that the pupils are to develop. This teaching sets challenges that capture the imagination of the pupils. Performance is extended and awareness of movement possibilities is increased as a result.
- 70 Standards and achievement are sound. Pupils perform sequences of movement with control and co-ordination. Pupils succeed in movement sequences that are in time to music with increasing complexity.
- 71 The co-ordinator is looking to develop links between dance and movement with a new scheme of work and this is intended to increase the depth of curriculum provision. There are some elements, at present which are under-represented such as swimming and games and this is why pupils' achievement is only satisfactory. The effectiveness of provision for games is reduced because there is need for greater expertise. However, there is some professional coaching from a nearby football club during after-school activities.

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

There was no opportunity to observe lessons in personal, social, health and citizenship education as none were timetabled during the inspection. The school integrates the subject into other subjects such as religious education and science. The planning for the subject is used well to help pupils develop a good self-image and this underpins lessons when pupils discuss personal relationships. Personal development and self-image have been a priority in the school's development plan and the development of opportunities has improved the subject provision in general. Confidence is improved as a result and a good contribution is made to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Although the school informally discusses pupils' views, there is no formal mechanism, such as a school council, to do this or to enhance pupils' opportunities for citizenship.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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