

INSPECTION REPORT

Rowena Nursery and Infant School

Conisbrough, Doncaster

LEA area: Doncaster

Unique reference number: 106695

Headteacher: Mrs C Fallon

Lead inspector: Mrs E Linley

Dates of inspection: 11th – 13th October 2004

Inspection number: 267596

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 category: Community
Age range of pupils: 3 – 7 years
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 161

School address: Gardens Lane
Conisbrough
Doncaster
South Yorkshire
Postcode: DN12 3JY

Telephone number: 01709 863109
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Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of governors: Mrs C Mills

Date of previous inspection: 18 January 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Rowena Nursery and Infant School is situated in Conisbrough near Doncaster. The school serves an area of high unemployment and is therefore a member of an Excellence in Cities Small Action Zone, in which it plays an active part. Children enter the reception class in the September prior to their fifth birthday. Most children have attended the school's nursery before starting school. When children start in the nursery, their attainment is generally well below what might be expected nationally, and their language and numeracy skills in particular are very limited. 161 girls and boys attend the school, plus 52 part-time nursery children. There are no pupils whose first language is believed not to be English. An above average percentage (31.6) of pupils are entitled to free school meals. The school has 19 pupils on its list of special educational need. Of these 5 have a formal Statement of Special Educational Need, and this above the national average. Rowena Nursery and Infant School received a school achievement award in 2003 and is currently working towards the Charter Mark for Inclusion.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
27281	Mrs E Linley	Lead inspector	Foundation Stage, music, physical education and religious education
9798	Mrs V Ashworth	Lay inspector	
18790	Mr G Morgan	Team inspector	science, information and communication technology, art and design, design and technology, and personal, social and health education.
11371	Mr F Ravey	Team inspector	mathematics and geography
27777	Mr R Greenall	Team inspector	English, history, special educational needs and English as an additional language.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a highly effective and inclusive school with many excellent features. As a result of very good teaching and an excellent focus on inclusion, pupils achieve very well overall and, by the time they leave the school, they attain standards that are broadly in line with national expectations. Leadership and management are outstanding. The school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school's ethos for learning is excellent and pupils achieve very well.
- The leadership of the headteacher and key staff is excellent.
- Management and governance are very good.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is excellent.
- The curriculum is enriched with excellent opportunities for learning.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall.
- The quality of care, welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and their behaviour is excellent.
- Relationships throughout the school are excellent.
- The school's commitment to inclusion is excellent.

The school has improved very well since its last inspection. The issues identified at that time have been addressed. In addition, further improvements have been made in provision for special educational needs, pupils' behaviour, the curriculum, teaching and assessment, leadership and management and attendance. The school continues to take its role within the community very seriously and works very well with parents so that they can help their children in their learning. The school's commitment to enabling all its pupils to achieve their best led to an achievement award in 2003.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Year 2 results

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
reading	C	B	B	A
writing	D	B	C	A
mathematics	E	D	D	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*

Pupils' achievement is very good. Children's attainment on entry to nursery is well below what might be expected nationally. They make a very good start in their Foundation Stage and the majority are likely to achieve the goals they are expected to reach by the end of their year in reception in their personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and physical development. They do not reach these goals in communication, language and literacy or mathematical development. Children's skills on entry to school are generally very low in these areas of learning, but they still achieve very well. Pupils make good

progress in the infant classes and continue to achieve very well over time. Those who have special educational needs also achieve very well. Pupils attain above average standards in reading and in science and average standards in writing, speaking and listening and in mathematics. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are in line with expectations. In religious education, pupils meet the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. They achieve in line with expectations in music and physical education.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and this represents very good improvement since the last inspection. The ethos of the school is excellent. All staff have very high expectations for pupils' conduct and this promotes excellent relationships in school. Pupils have excellent attitudes towards learning and their behaviour is excellent. Pupils are very positive about school life and their attendance is now average, which again represents an improvement since the last inspection.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided is very good and teaching and learning are very good overall. Very good use is made of teaching assistants and they make a very positive contribution to pupils' learning. Pupils with special educational needs are also taught and supported very well. Assessment and its use to respond to pupils' needs are excellent. The school also provides an excellent level of care for the emotional and physical needs of its pupils. As a result, children develop high self-esteem and achieve very well. The very good curriculum is enriched by many excellent opportunities to develop children's learning. Curricular provision for children who have special educational needs is also excellent. The accommodation and resources give excellent support for learning. The caretaker contributes significantly to maintaining the school premises to such a high standard. Excellent links are established with parents and the wider community. Parents greatly appreciate the workshops that the school provides for them and, together with their involvement in reading and mathematics mornings they feel well supported to help their children to learn. This very high quality partnership contributes strongly to the excellent ethos for learning. The school also enjoys a very positive working partnership with its local junior school, and plays an active part in the Small Education Action Zone to promote good early years practice with other schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are excellent overall. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent, and the excellent leadership skills of the deputy headteacher support her very well. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage and of special educational needs are also excellent. All leaders in school show an excellent commitment to inclusion and this underpins the school's ethos. The overall management of the school is very good, as is the governance of the school. Governors demonstrate a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and they are fully committed to supporting the school to raise standards still further. Together, governors, leaders and all staff form an excellent team.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents expressed the highest regard for the school which is valued as a mainstay of their community. The children are very happy in school and enjoy the many very good opportunities and excellent experiences it gives them.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- To continue with the planned improvements identified in the school development plan

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards achieved and pupils' achievement over time are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- From a low start children achieve very well.
- By the time children leave the school, they attain standards in reading and science that are above average.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well.

Commentary

- 1 Children start school in nursery with skills that are well below what is considered typical for their age. Very good teaching in the Foundation Stage enables children to achieve very well. As a result of children's very good achievement, standards by the end of reception are likely to be at the expected levels in four of the six areas of learning. These are: personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and physical development. The exceptions are communication, language and literacy, and mathematical development. Children's skills on entry to school are generally very low, although they still achieve very well in these areas of learning. Pupils continue to achieve well as they move through Year 1 and 2, and overall their achievement is very good by the time they leave the school.
- 2 In English, pupils achieve very well; they attain above average standards in reading and average standards in speaking and listening and writing. The school places significant emphasis on the promotion of pupils' language skills from the moment they start in nursery because of their specific needs. The promotion and celebration of language are a strength of the curriculum and this is evident in the celebration of pupils' work in displays. The school has worked hard to remove potential barriers to learning. This is seen, for example, in the reading mornings shared with parents and the reading clubs that emphasise that reading and writing are fun. Similarly, aids to learning are provided through the excellent provision for pupils with special educational needs. As a result, pupils with special educational needs achieve very well. The school maintains a high level of concern for these pupils. An impressive array of provisions is used with great understanding, skill and effect to enable these pupils to progress at the best rate of learning that their individual difficulties allow.
- 3 Pupils attain average standards in mathematics and above average standards in science. This success represents pupils' very good achievement in relation to their capability. When children start school, they have limited experiences of number and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. As a result of the excellent enrichment of the curriculum through maths mornings, extra-curricular clubs in mathematics and opportunities to make learning fun through practical experiences, pupils achieve very well in mathematics and science. Similarly In ICT, pupils achieve very well and attain standards that are in line with expectations for their age. Pupils' confidence to use ICT is high and their success is once again supported very well through the school's clear partnership with parents. For example, an ICT workshop is run for parents so that they can support their children's achievement more effectively.

- 4 In religious education, pupils attain standards in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus and are in line with expectations in music and physical education. Art and design, design and technology, history and geography were sampled during the inspection and so no overall judgements have been made on provision and standards in these subjects.

Key Stage 1

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.3 (16.9)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	15.2 (15.0)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	15.5 (16.1)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 68 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

- 5 The school's results in the national tests for 2003 showed that overall standards by the end of Year 2 were above average in reading, average in writing and below average in mathematics. When compared with similar schools, pupils' performance was well above average in reading and writing and average in mathematics. The 2004 results show that improvements have been made overall in reading, writing and in mathematics. Furthermore a marked improvement was seen in achievement at the higher levels in mathematics in 2004. The average achievements of boys and girls from 2001 to 2003 show that girls in Year 2 have outperformed boys in reading and writing. The school takes seriously all pupils' achievement in all subjects and has put in place many excellent strategies to remove barriers to learning. As a result, no significant variation in attainment between boys and girls was noted during the inspection.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are **excellent**. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall. This is a good improvement since the last inspection. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' attitudes to school and towards each other are excellent.
- Behaviour is excellent.
- Attendance is now satisfactory and improving.

Commentary

- 6 Pupils' excellent attitudes to school and to their work contribute very positively to the warm, harmonious and friendly atmosphere within the school, as well as to their personal development and overall attainment and achievement. The pupils like their school very much and enjoy the sense of belonging that it gives them. They enjoy learning and are very enthusiastic about their work because everything they do is made interesting and fun. This very positive attitude to work is encouraged from the moment the children enter the nursery. It is promoted extremely well through a wide range of very well-planned activities, both during and outside the normal school day.
- 7 The staff provide excellent role models for the children. After only a short time in school, the pupils are showing very good attitudes to work and are behaving extremely well. They are willing to take on small responsibilities from an early age, and because of the excellent

opportunities which are given to them, they become very effectively involved in the life of the school. As they grow older, the pupils respond very well to the increasing responsibilities which are offered to them.

- 8 Provision for promoting children’s spiritual, moral social and cultural development has improved since the last inspection and is now very good overall. Provision for social and moral development is excellent, and for spiritual development it is good. Pupils are successfully encouraged to reflect on a wide range of issues during assemblies, in circle time, and at other times during the school day. Pupils feel that school is a happy place to be and they play well together. Older pupils show care and consideration for the younger ones, particularly in their roles as Rowena Rangers, which they take very seriously. Instances of bullying are extremely rare. The school has very clear behaviour guidelines, and the teachers have very high expectations. There are no exclusions. The pupils have a very clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong, and thrive on the encouragement and praise they receive. All achievements are celebrated and the pupils show developing confidence and self- esteem as they progress through the school. They are polite, friendly and well mannered when talking to adults. They listen attentively in lessons, answer questions eagerly and respect the feelings and views of others. Their cultural development is good. The pupils are learning to appreciate their own culture and those of others, both in lessons and outside visits, and through the many visitors who come into school.
- 9 Attendance has improved over the last year and current statistics for 2003/2004 show that it is now satisfactory. School has worked very hard to achieve this improvement. The majority of parents are supportive and ensure their children’s regular and punctual attendance, although a small minority find this more difficult. The practice of taking family holidays in term time adversely affects the pupils’ attendance. However, the school ensures through its excellent partnerships with parents that any absence does not have a negative impact on pupils’ overall achievement.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2002/2003 (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.8	School data	0.5
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

Exclusions

There have been no exclusions.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided is very good. Teaching and learning are very good and all staff contribute to the very high quality of curricular provision. Excellent partnerships with parents and the community contribute significantly to the quality of education. The level of care shown for all children’s needs is excellent and this exemplifies the school’s excellent commitment to inclusion.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are very good overall. The quality of assessment is excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The excellent team of staff ensure that teaching and learning are fun.
- Staff very skilfully intervene and support to ensure that pupils' learning is continuous.
- Very close liaison between teachers and assistants ensures a consistent approach to teaching.
- Pupils' individual needs are met through the excellent use of assessment information.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 42 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (5%)	21 (50%)	14 (33%)	4 (10%)	1 (2%)	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.

- 10 Rowena Nursery and Infant School shows an excellent commitment to inclusion. Everyone associated with school works very hard to create a learning environment where all pupils feel safe and secure and where they know that learning is fun. Parents play a full and active part in the teaching and learning process and are very appreciative of the staff's high quality subject knowledge and experience. They know that a high quality of teaching and learning is typical of any and every school day. Most importantly they know that their children love coming to school because working and playing hard are fun. They know that their children achieve very well because of this very important factor.
- 11 The staff form an excellent team and together they plan an exciting range of activities that are both interesting and stimulating. Teachers' planning is very good overall and effective links are made between subjects. This is a feature of the development of literacy skills across the curriculum, where every opportunity is taken for speaking and listening, reading and writing to be developed and celebrated. Pupils are provided with very good opportunities to apply their knowledge, skills and understanding, and learning is not viewed as isolated experiences specific to the subject that is being taught. During the inspection a very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was observed. This was as a result of a lack of challenge for pupils to improve their work and so pupils repeated what they already could do. This is rare, however, and generally pupils achieve very well because staff very skilfully intervene and provide support and challenge to ensure that learning is successful and continuous. Teachers and assistants engage pupils in purposeful conversations and question them to assess their development and to promote their skills across the curriculum. Very good teaching and learning throughout the school are exemplified by the excellent use of assessment. This ensures that activities are planned and, when required, adapted to meet pupils' individual needs. As a result, pupils' learning is continuous and reflects the very high expectations of the staff for pupils to always achieve their best.
- 12 The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good. This is because teachers and support staff work together to maintain full and accurate detail of each pupil's progress, and also to use that information to match challenge and support precisely to individual need. Well-trained and skilful classroom assistants make a very strong contribution to pupils' learning. They give intensive, focused and very effective support, both within and outside lessons. Their trained skills embrace a range of special provisions, such as speech therapy, 'Time to Talk' and the Reading Clubs, that significantly raise achievement in key areas of spoken English and literacy.

- 13 The relationships established between pupils and adults are very good; mutual respect is evident and pupils respond well, demonstrating excellent attitudes to learning. Pupils' confidence and self-esteem are high because they know that, even if they answer a question incorrectly, their contribution will be valued. Because of the staff's expertise, for example in the well-judged use of praise and encouragement, children achieve very high standards of personal development and this in turn aids their overall achievement.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **very good**. It is innovative, exciting and enjoyable and enriched with excellent opportunities for learning. Accommodation and resources for learning are excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is made relevant for the pupils and is highly innovative.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is excellent.
- The school creates excellent opportunities for enriching the curriculum, particularly in mathematics, reading, ICT and the creative arts.
- Provision for pupils' personal, social, and health education is very good.
- The accommodation and resources are excellent.

Commentary

- 14 The highly innovative curriculum leads to high levels of pupil motivation. Policies and schemes of work are reviewed regularly to ensure that pupils' curricular experiences are always relevant. The curriculum fulfils all statutory requirements, including religious education and the daily act of worship, and is now broad and balanced. This represents very good improvement since the last inspection. Thorough planning enables the school to link subjects together very effectively and this helps pupils to understand that reading and writing have relevance beyond the boundaries of the English lesson. For example, in Year 1, English, information and communication technology, art and design and design technology all supported this term's history topic on Victorians. Assessment opportunities for these activities are excellent.
- 15 The provision for pupils with special educational needs is excellent. Teachers' careful planning for pupils who have special educational needs is firmly rooted in their excellent individual education plans. Classroom assistants fully understand the targets and activities particular to each pupil. As a result they focus pupils on small steps for success, challenging them to do their best and recognising the need for these pupils to achieve a measure of independence by trying things for themselves.
- 16 Training in specialised skills strengthens the work of support staff, enabling them to run specific programmes such as 'Early Literacy Support' and 'Time to Talk'. Because speech is an area of special need for many children, two of the support staff have trained in speech therapy. The reading clubs that meet daily include many pupils with special educational needs and significantly promote their progress in reading. All these provisions give these pupils full access to learning opportunities. They are an outstanding strength of the curriculum. The priority given to inclusion results in all children, whatever their abilities, being supported to reach their true potential.
- 17 Pupils' health education is covered very well. They learn about healthy diets in science lessons, wash their hands carefully before lunch and are given a piece of fruit at playtimes to promote a healthy lifestyle. The science curriculum also covers an awareness of the dangers of taking medication/ drugs unsupervised. The school has taken the decision not to provide formal sex education lessons but its policy is to answer pupils' questions honestly and clearly as they arise through nature study.

- 18 The provision for extra-curricular activities, including visits and visitors, is a significant strength of the school and has a very positive effect on the pupils' enthusiasm for school life. During the lunch hour and after school a wide range of clubs richly extends learning opportunities, for example in reading, mathematics, records and information communication technology. In these clubs pupils enjoy the opportunity to be in smaller groups and spend time doing something they really enjoy. This is another example of the fun element in the curriculum. Teachers and support staff give freely of their time to support these clubs. The 'Two Village Project' has given opportunities to enrich the curriculum with artists working alongside the children, and pupils regularly visit Cannon Hall Farm and the Elsecar Heritage Centre to extend the history and science curriculum.
- 19 The pupils are very fortunate to be taught in excellent accommodation. Teaching areas are large, well arranged, clutter free and equipped with excellent resources. The recently built reception wing is particularly spacious and well designed to meet the needs of the younger pupils. The school is clean and well maintained, and the attractive art work on display contributes to a conducive learning environment. The school caretaker takes pride in maintaining a building to a high standard of decor with appropriate attention to health and safety.

Care, guidance and support

The procedures for ensuring the welfare, health and safety of pupils are **excellent**. The support, advice and guidance given to pupils, including child protection, are **excellent**. The pupils are very effectively involved in the life of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school takes extremely good care of its pupils and in this respect it is excellent.
- The provision of support, advice and monitoring is excellent as it is based on thorough monitoring of individual needs and progress.

Commentary

- 20 Each child in the school is extremely well cared for and treated as an individual. Child protection procedures are excellent and all members of staff are fully briefed on their responsibilities. There are very close links with outside agencies to support childcare and learning. Routines for dealing with the safety both of the building and on outside visits, first aid and accidents are very well established. Safety checks are carried out regularly.
- 21 Pupils feel that school is a happy and safe place to be in. Teachers know the pupils very well and they very effectively promote pupils' personal development. Their monitoring of it is excellent. The use of teaching assistants to support pastoral care is excellent throughout the school. The school is also meticulous in its checking of pupils' progress and in providing very high levels of support, advice and guidance in their academic lives. An example of this is seen in the provision for pupils with special educational needs. Pupils with special educational needs, including those who have statements of SEN, benefit from very good care, guidance and support. This is always informed by thorough assessments, meticulous records, and regular reviews that involve all staff. The school works closely with external services, whose expert assessments help to tailor guidance and support to individual needs so that each pupil grows in achievement, self-awareness and self-esteem.
- 22 Induction arrangements are excellent. Children settle well into the new routines and the teachers get to know them very well. Extremely good care is taken of those who enter school whatever their age or stage of learning. Pupils are encouraged to think and give their views in

class, in play and particularly in circle time. As a result, the pupils love their school and feel totally involved in its life and work.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The schools' links with parents and the community are **excellent**. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Links with other schools and colleges are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents have an extremely high regard for the school.
- They receive very high quality information about all aspects of school life.
- The school has developed very good links with the community and is held in very high esteem.

Commentary

- 23 The parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting were full of praise for the way in which the school is run and agreed that their children achieve very well regardless of ability. The school has been successful in actively involving parents in their children's learning. In regular weekly reading and mathematics sessions at the beginning of the day, parents work alongside their children and support their learning. These sessions are well attended and are designed to ensure that learning can be fun. Parents speak highly of these opportunities to share their children's learning and appreciate the open approach the school has to supporting both them and their children. Parents feel that they, as parents receive exactly the same high standard of care as the children.
- 24 The school provides excellent information on all aspects of school life, including equal opportunities. A very detailed prospectus is followed by regular letters home and parental questionnaires, and very good quality pupil reports. Parents feel they know about things before they happen, which they greatly appreciate. They are also given detailed information on how to help their children at home in literacy, mathematics and science. A large number of parents were observed working very successfully with their children in school during the mathematics mornings. The school also holds a weekly "Let's Read Together" session that is equally popular with parents and their children, and an information technology workshop for parents. The school sees close partnership with parents as the 'key to success' for pupils who have special needs. It ensures that parents of these pupils are fully and continuously informed about their targets and progress, so that they know how home support can boost that progress. The staff and head teacher are keen to involve the parents in everything the school does and parents enjoy this activity and involvement. The parents concluded that they could not find any areas for further improvement and that "school makes learning fun".
- 25 The school is very highly regarded within the community and opens its doors for various workshops, including family learning, information technology and the European Computer Driving Licence, and a weekly coffee morning drop-in session. Many visitors come to the school and the pupils are taken out into their local area to broaden their knowledge of where they live and where they belong. The 'Two Villages' Project' has been extremely valuable in linking the school, the parents and the older residents of the two communities in sharing and creating photographic records and works of art. Business links have been developed to some extent within the EAZ initiative, which is a further improvement since the last inspection.
- 26 There are very strong links with the main 'feeder' junior school and the transfer of pupils works very well. There are some shared facilities with the adjacent high school and the head teacher works hard to maintain good working relationships with all the schools in the area. High school pupils are welcomed for work experience and students from St. John's College

York are assigned to the school for teaching practice. This is a school brimming with activity, which serves the community extremely well.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **excellent** overall. School governance is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The governing body is very effective in guiding the school and checking the quality of its work.
 - The headteacher provides excellent and inspirational leadership, and motivates other staff to do the same.
 - The school's very close and successful attention to evaluating its own performance helps to keep it on track in its quest for excellence.
 - The impact of this high quality leadership and management is a school in which excellence meets enjoyment very successfully.
 - Strong and effective financial management successfully underpins strategies for improvement.
- 27 The governing body has great ambition for the school, which it sees as being a very big influence at the heart of its local community as well as a place of educational excellence for its pupils. To realise this vision, it has taken the unusual step of setting up a community committee that will link the school even more strongly with the local area. Governors show a clear understanding of the importance of early years' education and of parental involvement in enabling each child to work to their potential. The governing body is well aware of the school's main strengths and of its continuing priorities for development. Members demonstrate this knowledge when they cite specific examples of improvement and how this has been brought about, for example in mathematics.
- 28 The governing body keeps itself well informed about the work of the school through reports to its committees and to the full governing body, through meetings with members of staff and through regular visits by governors to the school to watch it at work. Governors take very seriously the need to keep themselves fully updated about their responsibilities, as a result they regularly attend local training sessions and forums. Governors are shortly to undergo training in the processes of school self-evaluation, but are already aware of the principles of this through the excellent position statements detailed in the school improvement plan. The governing body is always ready to ask challenging questions of senior managers, whilst also supporting them in driving the school forward to meet its very challenging goals. Performance management is kept under close scrutiny. The governing body fulfils all its statutory obligations, for example, in monitoring the implementation of the school's Race Relations Policy, but goes far beyond this in assisting and shaping the work of the school.
- 29 The headteacher is an inspirational leader of the highest order. Her vision for the school is crystal clear and is supported fully by all staff as well as by pupils, governors and parents. Her ambition is to combine the highest possible expectation of pupils' all-round achievement with a school that is a place of refuge and support for every pupil and their parents. For the headteacher, 'OK' is never good enough – she seeks perfection and is immensely self-critical in so doing. She saves the very highest expectations for herself – but those she has for others are hardly lower! She leads by example and is likely to appear in lessons at any time, staying for a while to check the quality of teaching and learning before moving on. She expects the same commitment from her senior managers and other staff. A mark of her success as a leader is that she gets it. Her greatest pride is in the school's immense success in promoting pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence. Pupils' excellent attitudes, behaviour and personal qualities fully justify this pride.
- 30 The headteacher's power to inspire others is evident in the excellent work being done by other staff throughout the school. Delegation works very well in this school because those to whom tasks are delegated are held accountable through performance management and

other reviews and, more importantly, because they share the same quest for excellence. Support staff are included in this and as a result they make a significant contribution to the work of the school. Senior managers such as the deputy headteacher provide the high quality of managerial procedures that ensure the vision of perfection is kept on track and moving forward. Self-evaluation is thoroughly embedded in the school and is often grounded in excellent procedures for tracking the work of individual pupils and providing them with the learning programmes they need. Close attention to training staff and allowing them to observe best practice in the school also supports very effectively the school's commitment to excellence.

- 31 The leadership and management of special educational needs are outstanding. The coordinator knows her job extremely well, is tireless in her commitment and keeps meticulous records. She ensures that support is trained and organised efficiently so that staff time and expertise have maximum impact on pupils' learning. She maintains great attention to detail in reviewing individual plans and keeping governors, parents, colleagues, resources and practices up to date. As a result, provision is much better than when the school was last inspected. This commitment to excellence is also seen in the deputy headteacher's brief to lead and manage the Foundation Stage. Her very high expectations of herself and staff, plus the excellent working partnership with parents, contribute significantly to children's very good achievement in the nursery and reception classes.
- 32 In addition to all this, one vital ingredient makes the Rowena recipe for success irresistible: in this school, **learning is fun**. The school is full of examples of how to combine 'excellence' and 'enjoyment' in education, from exciting history projects that teach pupils so effectively the skills of literacy whilst developing their understanding of history, to mathematics and reading clubs that allow parents to share in the fun of learning with their children. In this way the school counteracts those early barriers to learning that related to very low skills in language, literacy and numeracy and so aids achievement. To borrow an expression from the headteacher, to have been '*Rowena-ized*' is to have benefited from a high quality of education and care that provides a wonderful educational experience and an excellent foundation for future learning.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	640679
Total expenditure	640040
Expenditure per pupil	2747

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	24469
Balance carried forward to the next	25107

- 33 The governing body and key staff manage the school's finances prudently whilst ensuring that staff get the very best resources to enable them raise pupils' achievement to high levels. The governors' finance committee is well informed and ensures that the budget set reflects the school's educational priorities. Budget monitoring is thorough and spending is monitored carefully to ensure best value. The headteacher, in particular, has an acute sense of what represents best value for the school and this has brought resources of high quality into the school at favourable cost. Regular monthly meetings to check budget spending are attended by the chair of finance, the headteacher and school administrator. The link between governors and school administration is a secure and most useful one, linking day-to-day knowledge of administration with the more strategic viewpoint of governors. Day-to-day administration itself is excellent, underpinning the governors' broader financial management most successfully.

- 34 The cost of educating pupils at the school is broadly average. However, as the school enables its pupils to achieve very well by providing them with very good teaching, very good learning opportunities and a curriculum that is immensely enriched, it gives very good value for money.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation Stage is **very good** and overall this represents good improvement since the last inspection when provision was at that time again judged to be strong. Children's introduction to school life begins with an excellent induction that is enhanced by the excellent partnerships established with parents. Children settle very well into school. This is because staff introduce routines very quickly that make children feel safe, secure and confident. Children achieve very well in this environment, because teaching is very good; the curriculum is enriched with an excellent range of learning opportunities, and individual needs are very well met.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum very effectively allows children to initiate their own activities, make choices and decisions and develop independence.
- Excellent relationships exist between staff and children.
- Staff are extremely skilled at promoting children's personal development in everything they do.

Commentary

35 Teachers very skilfully promote children's independence by giving them a very good choice of tasks and the opportunity to make choices and decisions. In tandem with the wonderful opportunities that are made available for children, they are taught from the moment that they start in school to take responsibility for themselves. For example, in the nursery children know that they have to clear up after they have finished painting to make sure that their resources are ready for the next person. With careful instruction and encouragement, children were observed to wash up their paint palette and brush and put them away neatly, and what a sense of achievement was seen on the children's faces!!

Example of outstanding practice

Adults provide excellent role models

Adults provide excellent role models in the calm and quiet manner they use when they talk to children. Praise and encouragement go hand in hand with the staff's very high expectations of children to be polite, and from an early age they are encouraged to say 'please' and 'thank you'. The extremely positive attitudes of all staff, in response to children's efforts, enhance children's self-esteem and spur them on in their work.

36 Staff pass on their very caring attitudes by example. They very sensitively deal with problems that children face and encourage them to empathise and consider others' feelings. For example, in a reception class, Rosie the Bear joined the children at circle time and, from her magic bag of stories, 'Frankie's First Day' was taken out to share. This story

enabled the teacher to talk very skilfully with the children about their fears of starting school. 'Were any of you a bit scared on your first day?' Whilst one child said, 'No', another replied, 'Yes, I was a bit scared'. Because of the excellent relationships that exist, children were secure enough to share their concerns, and by very careful questioning and sensitivity the teacher developed their confidence still further.

- 37 Children's personal development progresses very well indeed during their time in the nursery and reception classes because staff are extremely skilled at promoting it in everything children do. By the end of the time spent in the Foundation Stage, consistently very effective teaching ensures that the majority of children meet the required expectations for their age for personal, social and emotional development.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent procedures for assessing and tracking children's progress are in place.
- Staff work very well with parents to ensure that they are fully involved in their children's learning.
- Children's communication, language and literacy skills are very well developed across the curriculum.

Commentary

- 38 When children start nursery, many of them have very limited skills in language and communication. Because of the children's needs, the school places great emphasis on the importance of speaking and listening and, throughout the Foundation Stage, all activities are planned with this in mind. For example, 'Time to Talk' is an initiative that develops children's early language skills very well through the very skilled teaching of a nursery nurse. Teachers and support staff in the Foundation Stage use very good questioning skills to encourage children to develop their speech and to listen carefully. Teaching is very good and, because of the school's excellent procedures for assessing and tracking children's progress, teachers know what to plan for the children to ensure that their needs are met. This excellent use of assessment means that staff provide the right amount of support and intervention to ensure that all children achieve as well as they can. This applies to all ability groups. Those who have special educational needs are very well taught and this enables them to practise and consolidate the skills they have learnt. Similarly those children who are more able are challenged very well to develop their reading and writing skills.

Example of outstanding practice

The way that parents and staff work together to aid children's learning and achievement

A significant contribution to children's very good achievement is the school's excellent partnership with parents. Staff work very well with parents to ensure that they are fully involved in their children's learning. For example, parents have the opportunity to attend a reading morning that is held weekly. During this time they hear their children read, join in with language games to support letter recognition and work on letter jigsaws. They also see how their children's reading and writing are developed so well through the excellent opportunities that enhance the curriculum.

- 39 A particular feature of provision is the opportunity for children to develop their communication and language skills across all the areas of learning. For example, because of the children's intense interest in building work during and after the construction of the new reception classroom, Bob the Builder features significantly in the classrooms and outdoor environment.

Tasks are set for children to extend and reinforce their communication skills and, with the positive affirmation of 'Yes we can', children know that learning is fun as they are challenged to complete Bob's tasks. Bob the Builder's 'job cards' are clearly very much enjoyed! As a result of very good provision, children achieve very well and although the majority will not quite meet the expected levels for their age in communication language and literacy by the end of the Foundation Stage, they will still have made significant strides in their learning.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Opportunities for children to explore and investigate are always available and learning is always fun.
- The staff's excellent use of assessment information ensures that activities are matched and adapted so that they meet children's needs very effectively.
- The excellent accommodation and resources are used very well by staff to aid children's achievement.

Commentary

- 40 Children start school with limited experience and awareness of number shape and space. Because of this, the Foundation Stage staff make sure that planned opportunities engage children at all times in practical situations that will strongly support their mathematical development. For example, children in nursery are engaged in counting from 1 to 9 and beyond if possible in the role-play area of the 'Rowena Crusty Cob'. In outdoor activities, focused adult support means that children have worthwhile matching experiences when they discover shells in the sand and carefully match them to a No 5, for example. Opportunities for children to explore and investigate are always available and learning is always fun.
- 41 Children achieve very well as a result of very good teaching. Activities are exciting and stimulating. For example, in reception, children learn about number through 'number puppies'. When 'Wizzy', the puppet, was unable to write a number 4 on the whiteboard, the children explained how to write it properly and clapped at his eventual success. The teacher asked just the right questions to ensure children's understanding and made very effective links to learning about shape with the introduction of a square with 4 sides. The staff's excellent use of assessment information ensures that activities are matched and adapted to meet children's needs very effectively. Similarly, very good links are made to support children's language development; for example, the teacher used a 'big book' to introduce 'number puppy 4' and the children listened intently as the story unfolded.
- 42 The accommodation and resources to support children's learning are excellent, and their use by the very experienced staff makes a significant contribution to the children's very good achievement. Parents too, during the weekly maths mornings, have the benefit of seeing the resources in use and of supporting their children in their learning. By the end of the Foundation Stage children have made significant progress in their mathematical development, and the majority of children achieve standards that are just below expectations for their age.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The planned curriculum for knowledge and understanding of the world is enhanced by many excellent additional learning opportunities.
- Children are successfully improving their skills in using ICT.
- Wonderful opportunities are provided to develop children's spiritual awareness.

Commentary

- 43 Opportunities are planned to extend the children's learning both in and out of school. For example, all the classrooms in the Foundation Stage provide exciting environments for learning. In nursery, children have the opportunity to bake bread. They watched with delight as the ingredients were placed into the bread maker and began to change. They then compared what it was like to make bread by hand. Very good teaching ensured that the children were totally absorbed in the activity, and very effective questioning served not only to assess the children's understanding but also, once again, to develop their speaking and listening skills.
- 44 Children are readily improving their skills in using ICT. 'The children make very good independent use of the computer and, by the time they are in the reception classes, they have well-established skills in confidently controlling the mouse. They produce pictures using the programme 'Dazzle', and more able children have the confidence and ability to print their own pictures with little adult assistance.
- 45 Out-of-school visits give children opportunities to develop an awareness of where they live and to recognise local features through walks. They develop an understanding of the importance of valuing living creatures, for example by 'looking after' caterpillars; photographs show how children watched with amazement as they changed into butterflies. Again, no opportunity is lost to develop language skills as children write about 'three things they have learnt from the book Butterfly and Caterpillar'. As a result of the high quality provision and teaching and learning that are in place, children achieve very well and are set to achieve the goals expected for their age by the end of the Foundation Stage.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Outdoor provision contributes very well to children's physical development.
- Provision for children with special educational needs is excellent.
- Very good planning for the available range of activities ensures that all children are purposely involved and achieve very well.

Commentary

- 46 The planned opportunities for children to develop a significant range of skills beyond the classroom are very good. Outdoor provision, as planned for reception-aged children, enables them to develop their physical skills very well and this is supported by an excellent range of resources. The school's range of scooters, tricycles and other wheeled toys enables children to develop their skills of riding and keeping their balance very well as they negotiate the marked 'highway'. Other children act as engineers as they put up road works, and those in the employ of 'Bob the Builder' seek to repair the nursery gate and make alterations to the house where Bob's birthday party is being conducted! At all times staff are

totally engrossed with the children and 'in role'. Their very good teaching enables children to develop their physical skills with confidence.

- 47 In nursery, children have similar opportunities and are supported equally very well as staff embark upon a train ride in the play area's train. The school's excellent commitment to inclusion is exemplified in its provision for children who have specific physical disabilities. Children are supported very well by the very careful attention of the nursery staff. This is another demonstration of the excellent provision for children who have special educational needs.
- 48 Children enjoy the many different activities that are available for them to develop their physical skills. Water play enables them to coordinate pouring skills and work out when containers are full or half full. Children's fine motor and manipulative skills are developed very well through opportunities, to use play dough for example and to handle malleable materials and tools with safety. They learn to squeeze, pull and roll the orange dough that supports the focus in nursery on 'the colour of the week'. Like Bob the Builder, children build with large bricks and with other materials; they use scissors, pencils, paintbrushes and small construction equipment to support their developing physical skills. The very good planning for the available range of activities ensures that all children are purposefully involved and achieve very well. As a result of the very good provision, teaching and learning, children are on course to meet expectations of their age in their physical development by the end of the Foundation Stage.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **very good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers plan a stimulating range of activities to develop children's imagination and creativity.
- The time allocated at the end of the nursery session is too long for children to be fully focussed on their activities.

Commentary

- 49 Very good planning for this area of learning ensures that children have very good opportunities to experience a wide range of creative activities. Similarly, very good teaching ensures that children anticipate the activities with clear enjoyment. For example, in reception, as part of their project on fish, children explored different media and developed a range of different skills very well. Using easels, they produced large paintings of rainbow fish and used simple strokes and bright colours well to suggest the scales. Other children stitched a fish shape onto coloured felt, whilst some made clay fish and clearly enjoyed their activities. In nursery children explore the colour, shape and form of pieces of fruit before they begin their paintings and again no opportunity is lost to develop children's language skills. Children patiently wait to share resources and they consistently demonstrate the excellent relationships that exist within the school.
- 50 Singing and music making are activities that children particularly enjoy. At the end of the nursery session children have the opportunity to sing songs following story time or to play instruments. Although this is a worthwhile activity, the length of time is too long for very young children and they became restless and lost concentration during the sessions observed. None the less, children enjoy music making and reception aged children enjoy singing songs all together in the hall. Overall, children achieve very well and are on course to meet the expectations for their age by the end of the Foundation Stage, in their creative development.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of achievement are above average overall and pupils achieve very well from a low starting point.
- Achievement is excellent in reading, very good in writing and good in spoken English.
- Consistently very good teaching and learning drive this high achievement.
- A very rich and well-resourced curriculum strongly supports learning for all pupils, both within and out of lessons.
- Extremely effective leadership and management continually improve provisions and performance.

Commentary

51 Standards are above average in reading and average in writing and spoken English. This represents very good achievement, as pupils' attainment is low when they start school. The school is very successful in enabling different groups to achieve equally well in relation to their capabilities and prior attainments. Pupils with special educational needs do very well, and many achieve the expected standard in reading and writing by the time they leave. More challenging expectations are raising the attainment of more able pupils, particularly the boys.

Example of outstanding practice

In reading, highly effective systems and resources combine with very good teaching to promote outstanding achievement.

Key strengths are:

- the excellent assessment procedures that enable the school to track and promote the progress of different groups and individuals; to set targets that pupils understand and work towards, and to inform all tasks that teachers ask pupils to do;
- book resources that are rich in range and quality, and organised and used to stimulate enjoyment and enable different pupils to learn at their best rate;
- increasingly effective methods for enabling pupils to gain meaning and learn from what they read;
- the keen participation of parents in the weekly 'reading morning' and the frequent meetings of the reading clubs. (These popular sessions help parents to see how best to promote high achievement for their children as skilled and active readers)
- strong provisions for reading at home that work very well because of the very close and active partnership between parents and teachers;
- very effective uses of books and reading activities in other subjects such as history and science;
- excellent support and guidance for pupils who find reading difficult;
- the new and exciting development of a library.

52 In writing, provisions of similar richness promote very good achievement. Systems for home support, and for assessing, tracking, guiding and supporting individual progress are equally effective. Very good individual portfolios of work record progress over time, and reveal the strong impact of the school's agreed methods for developing the key skills of handwriting and

spelling. They also show how well work is geared to different needs whilst giving all pupils good opportunities to write both factually and imaginatively, at length and in different subjects.

- 53 In speaking and listening, pupils achieve well from a low starting point. This is because staff provide good models of how to talk and listen for different purposes. It is also because they create good opportunities for pupils to talk in small groups and in different roles to explore ideas or find things out. For instance, towards the end of a very good lesson in Year 2, pupils asked questions to find out what the members of one group had learned from the information book they had just read with the teacher. The questions lacked confidence and skill, but the focus on learning skills was both imaginative and intense. Speaking and listening activities do not always support reading or writing so well. Policy and the use of assessment and targets are relatively limited in this area, and there is scope for the school to develop pupils' learning skills more informatively through speaking and listening. All pupils would gain from this. At present many lack the skills in social talk to enable them to combine roles in play, work together to solve problems, and support each other's learning.
- 54 Teaching and learning are very good overall, and almost every lesson seen maintained this level of quality. In these lessons, teachers developed new learning with clarity, pace, enthusiasm, engaging rapport, and high but realistic expectations for different groups of pupils. They used excellent assessment information to set the right balance of challenge and support, and to choose resources that both stimulated interest and organised learning actively. As a result, pupils acquired new learning coherently and enjoyably, worked with productive energy, and became aware of how the new learning combined with earlier learning.
- 55 In almost every aspect of English, provisions and standards are far better than when the school was last inspected. The process of improvement has been driven by the energy and vision of the coordinator and the professional commitment, ability and teamwork of her colleagues. It has been underpinned by the school's aspiration for its pupils and by its dedication to strong core principles, such as partnership with parents and inclusion. Many of the provisions are unique to the school and, as in the case of the reading clubs and reading morning, highly imaginative and richly resourced.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

- 56 Overall, English and the rest of the curriculum support each other well, particularly in respect of reading and writing. The excellent 'big books' that pupils have written bear powerful witness to the quality of opportunity for pupils to record what they have learned in, for example, history and science, from their reading, their investigations and their visits to places such as Cannon Hall. Whilst good opportunities also exist for pupils to practise and extend their spoken English skills to support learning in other subjects, this remains an area for development.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils of all attainments achieve very well because of high quality teaching and a very well-planned curriculum
- Curricular enrichment is excellent, having a very significant impact upon standards, achievement, pupils' attitudes to learning and parental support for that learning.
- Excellent assessment procedures ensure that pupils' progress is tracked very closely and that they are helped make the best progress possible.

- Excellent subject leadership has a very strong impact upon pupils' achievement and the enjoyable nature of the mathematics curriculum.

Commentary

- 57 Children start in the nursery class with well below average attainment. They leave Year 2 with attainment that matches the average for all schools nationally. This indicates very good progress, which is evident in the very good achievement seen in lessons. Throughout the school, pupils are encouraged and expected to work to their potential, and they do. Teachers provide practical and exciting work for pupils of all attainments, with a focus on pupils having to think and to learn actively in order to develop their understanding and skills. Teaching is very good overall, and sometimes excellent. The key factors in its success are:
- very good relationships between staff and pupils, combined with high expectations of what pupils should achieve to produce a very positive climate for learning;
 - a very good understanding by teachers of the subject matter being taught so that pupils are clear about what they are to learn;
 - very good use of high quality material resources and of other staff and helpers to make sure pupils receive support for their learning when they need it. This is evident for all groups of pupils but especially so in the way support staff work so effectively with pupils who have special educational needs;
 - excellent interpretation by teachers of the commercial schemes in use in the school, resulting in pupils being given exciting and well-tailored learning opportunities;
 - excellent assessment of pupils' progress and learning needs during lessons so that these are addressed effectively.
- 58 Very occasionally, teaching is less effective and only satisfactory, when, for example, a task given to average attaining pupils is not well matched to their learning needs and they do not achieve as well as they should.
- 59 Further reasons for the school's success in promoting high achievement lie in the excellent enrichment activities that supplement lessons. The school's 'Maths Mornings' are a joy to experience. Parents are welcomed into classes for about half an hour each Tuesday morning and play mathematics games with the children. The social impact of this has only to be seen to be evident, but the cultural impact upon pupils' and parents' perceptions of mathematics is also very profound. All work (or play) happily together, using books, games and computers. The message is clear ; **'Maths is fun – enjoy it!'** Out-of-school mathematics clubs were originally set up as part of the school's response to the need to raise standards amongst higher attaining pupils. They have taken root and flourished, with pupils delighted to join them and further enrich their studies. These clubs have contributed significantly to improvements in standards over the past two years and mean that, despite some erratic performance in previous years, overall the school has made good improvement in mathematics since its previous inspection.
- 60 Such response to analysis of test data is a good example of the school's excellent approach to assessment in mathematics. Having bought a commercial scheme, the school proceeded to develop it further to suit its own needs. Now a tightly focused, very well-managed system of assessment is in place that enables teachers to assess pupils' progress together at half-termly intervals. All aspects of pupils' progress in mathematics are very thoroughly checked and then entered into the school's overall assessment analysis system. The result is high quality information about individual pupils that enables teachers and support staff to provide learning programmes that suit their needs.
- 61 These very influential initiatives and procedures are managed in an extremely effective manner by the subject co-ordinator. Her own subject knowledge is excellent and her position as a reception year teacher allows her to influence what is happening at the foundation of

mathematical learning. Her own very good practice is an excellent example for other staff. Her ability to pull together all the different strands of learning and enrichment indicate excellent qualities of management.

Mathematics across the curriculum

62 The school plans well to develop pupils' skills of numeracy in other subjects. The policy for mathematics details several areas in which links are formally planned. These include English, science and ICT, but also extend to pupils' personal and social education. During the inspection, pupils were observed using numerical calculation during scientific investigation and examples were seen of pupils learning the early skills of mapping in geography, using simple grid references. Teachers often made reference to mathematical vocabulary in lessons, sometimes focusing on an unusual spelling pattern.

Example of outstanding practice

The impact of weekly 'Maths Mornings' on pupils' and parental attitudes to the subject

Every Tuesday morning from 9 to 9.30 a.m. parents are welcomed into classes to play mathematics games and share in mathematics activities with their children and their children's friends. It is not unusual to see a dozen or more parents in a class of around 27 pupils, together with the class teacher and learning support assistant. In an atmosphere that has that buzz of quiet yet excited enjoyment, adults and children play games together, share ideas and solve puzzles. The teacher, who has already set out the activities with close attention to differing needs and to encourage a broad range of mathematics activity, moves around unobtrusively as a facilitator, stopping occasionally to assist with a learning point. The basis of the session is '*Maths is Fun*' and it is clear, from the pupils and parents at the computer to those involved selecting from the menu of the 'transport café', that fun is quite definitely being 'had'. Then, around 9.30, parents quietly say their goodbyes and drift away, leaving pupils thoroughly 'warmed up' for their daily numeracy lesson.

SCIENCE

Provision for science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils develop scientific knowledge and understanding very effectively.
- A clear focus on investigation and experimentation during lessons enables pupils to develop a good understanding of scientific ideas.
- Very good teaching and learning enable all pupils to achieve very well.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Commentary

63 Provision for science and the standard pupils are attaining have improved since the last inspection, and pupils in Year 2 are on course to achieve standards that are above average by the time they leave school. The school's focus on pupils' learning of science through practical work enables them to acquire knowledge and understanding from first-hand experience and this makes science more meaningful and fun.

64 A strong emphasis on carrying out practical investigations and experiments raises the quality of learning, so that pupils in Year 2 achieve very well and attain a good standard for their age. Teachers challenge higher attaining pupils very well by asking them what steps they should take to make sure that their scientific tests are fair. Whilst actively investigating forces, these pupils successfully tested a simple hypothesis that they had formed. Pupils in Year 1 showed similarly purposeful enjoyment of practical activities when they investigated materials

that would be attracted by a magnet. They recorded their findings using a Venn diagram and discussed in small groups how to make sure the test was scientifically fair. Pupils with special educational needs are equally very well supported and enjoy the practical applications of the subject. Resources to support pupils' practical work are of a very high quality and deployed very well in school.

- 65 The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers question pupils skilfully so that their understanding of new ideas is drawn from existing knowledge. Teaching is organised so that pupils have opportunities at the start and conclusion of each lesson to review what they know, can do and understand. This provides a continuous cycle of learning and consolidation that stands the pupils in good stead. In addition, frequent opportunities for pupils to make their own decisions on many aspects of devising an experiment have led to deeper understanding of scientific ideas and a developing independence. In Year 2 the use of mind maps at the end of a topic is an effective way of consolidating and assessing learning. Pupils play an important part in the assessment process because it involves them in discussing ideas.
- 66 Relationships between pupils and adults in the classroom are outstanding. There is an infectious enthusiasm for learning and pupils respond to this readily. They react positively to being trusted and respected and this leads to a growing feeling of self-confidence. Assessment is excellent. Teachers know the strengths and weaknesses of each pupil's knowledge, skills and understanding because they are assessed effectively during every lesson. The results are noted in the assessment files and confirmed by means of tests, some of which have been devised by the school.
- 67 Science is very well managed. The development of science teaching and learning has a high profile. The science curriculum is enriched significantly by visits to places such as Cannon Farm, the National Railway Museum, and by visiting theatre companies who specialise in promoting the science curriculum. Similarly, many cross-curricular links are planned into the science curriculum. For example, pupils read science 'Big Books' which the school has made to link literacy skills and science teaching, and these are used very effectively to promote learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision for Information and communication technology (ICT) is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is good overall.
- Teachers are very confident in using resources and helping pupils to make good use of ICT opportunities in other subjects.
- Pupils achieve very well over time and their confidence to use ICT is high.
- The school runs ICT courses for parents and a computer club for pupils.

Commentary

- 68 The quality of provision for ICT has improved since the last inspection. As a result, pupils are on course to meet expectations for their age by the time they leave Year 2 and this represents very good achievement over time in school.
- 69 The ICT curriculum has benefited from a heavy investment in new technology. For example, high quality whiteboards and resources support teaching and learning. Staff training has been equally effective in enabling teachers to develop the expertise to exploit this technology to its fullest, not only to teach basic skills but also to enhance teaching and learning in other subjects. The school has a well -equipped computer suite, the layout of which enables pupils to have more than adequate space to work in pairs when necessary. Teaching assistants

who work alongside pupils in classes are also confident in using ICT. Consequently pupils with special educational needs make good progress. In one session, however, when pupils used a word processing program and were asked to write a sentence about a recent visit, they lacked the necessary literacy props that are readily available in the classroom to structure their sentence. This restricted their progress and is one of the reasons why the computer suite is not currently used to its full potential.

- 70 Children benefit from teaching that is good overall and sometimes very good. In one lesson in Year 2, pupils were taught to open a file, change the font colour, close the file and save. The process was very clearly explained and pupils were very well supported throughout the session. They worked independently whilst the teacher assessed and recorded their progress in a log book. The pace of the lesson was very good and the pupils made very good progress.
- 71 Confidence levels are high amongst pupils, they enjoy the subject and show good keyboard skills. Information and communication technology supports lessons in many subjects and the pupils enjoy the challenges posed. The computer club is well attended and pupils have undertaken a variety of tasks to improve their skills. They have been taught how to send emails to each other and their teacher as well as to make book-cover designs using a paint package.
- 72 The subject is well managed and led by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable subject leader. She has a good idea of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject and there are plans to develop the subject further.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

- 73 There is very good use of ICT across the curriculum. The introduction of the interactive whiteboard has enabled this to be a strong feature of the school. Information and communication technology is planned into all subject areas and is used effectively in lessons to support learning. There is a particularly strong focus in English, mathematics and history. Staff use online facilities and parents have been offered computer courses in order to give them skills to support their children. A very good website provides parents with a good insight into life at Rowena Infant and Nursery School.

HUMANITIES

- 74 Insufficient evidence was available during the time of the inspection to make secure judgements on provision in history and geography and so these subjects have been sampled.
- 75 Only two part-lessons were seen in **history** and no firm overall judgement on provision can be made. However, evidence from pupils' work, teachers' planning and brief discussion with pupils clearly indicates several strong features of the subject. A very limited sample of work completed by pupils at the end of Year 2 last year shows good historical understanding for their age. Pupils wrote extensive accounts of the Great Fire of London. They used their good knowledge of the facts to describe the main causes and consequences of the fire in well-sequenced news reports. In another convincing account, they imagined the fire through the eyes and feelings of a Londoner of the time. Pupils used their reading and writing skills very well to support their learning in history. This strong link was also seen in the very good 'big books' written by pupils in Year 1 about their recent visit to Cannon Hall and their learning about the lives of Victorian servants. The books show their good understanding of how 'real fact books' are set out and used. First-hand experiences, through visits, role-play and authentic resources, enrich pupils' learning, making it stimulating, active and memorable. As a result, pupils talk with excitement and proud knowledge about the work of Victorian servants. They also apply their knowledge when enjoying a story, pointing to evidence of Victorian life in the pictures and words.

- 76 No lessons could be observed in **geography** and too little information could be gathered to make overall judgements about standards or provision. The curriculum is properly planned and includes good cross-curricular links with English, maths, ICT and personal and social education. It is enriched by educational visits. Pupils' progress is assessed twice yearly and the written comments made become part of each pupil's personal record of achievement. The subject is well-resourced. The school's strong bias towards integrating core skills into other subjects was evident in the well-presented and well-composed leaflets pupils in Year 1 made to attract visitors to nearby Conisborough Castle. Sound skills of early map making were also evident, as was pupils' developing awareness of the characteristics of life in their own locality.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Provision for religious education is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A well-planned curriculum enables pupils to value others' beliefs and learn about different cultures.
- Highly effective partnerships with parents aid pupils' learning and achievement.
- Teachers ensure that learning is interesting and thought provoking.

Commentary

- 77 When children start school in the nursery class, they have limited knowledge of the world around them, but this is developed very well during their time in Foundation Stage. This very good achievement is built upon well as pupils move through Years 1 and 2, and over time pupils achieve very well. As a result, the standard of work they produce meets the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus for their age.
- 78 Pupils learn the importance of valuing others' beliefs through a well-planned curriculum that includes the study of another faith. Pupils compare and contrast Christianity with Islam through the study of religious stories and, whilst the focus is on Christianity in Year 1, pupils in Year 2 learn more about Islam. The curriculum is effectively enhanced by planned visits to, for example, St Peter's Church. Once again we see the school's commitment to working particularly well with parents to support their children's learning. The co-ordinator has prepared notes and guidance about the trip for parents to ensure that they are fully involved and can support their children's achievement effectively.
- 79 Teaching is good overall and this was reflected in both lessons that were observed. Teachers ensured that learning was interesting and thought provoking. It is a testament to the excellent relationships that exist in the school that teachers have the confidence and expertise to tackle complex issues with young children. For example, in a Year 1 class, the teacher used resources very well to consider what it would have been like to be the 'mummy' or 'daddy' who had to put their baby in a basket in the way that happened to Moses. The questioning used effectively prompted pupils' thinking skills and the improved use of speech and language.
- 80 The subject is well led and satisfactorily managed. The coordinator has a clear vision for, and commitment to, the development of religious education throughout school. Assessment of pupils' work is an integral part of the pupils' record of achievement and supports the school's excellent approach to assessment. The coordinator recognises, however, the need for a more thorough monitoring of teaching, learning and pupils' work in order to maintain a better strategic overview of the subject's development.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

- 81 In art and design and design and technology, lack of evidence, particularly of teaching, rules out firm overall judgements on provision and standards.
- 82 In **art and design**, inspectors have taken into account pupils' past work, teachers' planning and discussions with pupils. It is evident from the striking displays in corridors and classrooms that art and design has a high profile and enhances the learning environment. Teachers effectively use art as a vehicle to enhance work in other subjects such as science, history and ICT. Pupils clearly take pride in their work, which is equally highly valued by school as it is very well framed and displayed throughout school. Pupils have the opportunity to study great artists. For example, in Year 2 they have studied the work of Mondrian and used a variety of materials to reflect his use of primary colours. Information books about great artists such as Rembrandt, Van Gogh and Monet are displayed in corridors and the 'Two Village Project' has given pupils the opportunity to work alongside practising artists who have inspired them.
- 83 In **design technology**, the nationally recommended programme of work has been thoughtfully adapted to ensure that skills are taught systematically and that pupils' learning develops in successive steps throughout the school. The quality of teaching in the one lesson seen during the inspection in Year 2 was very good. This lesson featured the pupils making model vehicles. The lesson was very well planned and resourced so that all pupils had enough time to spend on practical work. Very good support from teaching assistants ensured that all pupils made good progress and their behaviour in the lesson was excellent. Pupils could talk confidently about the processes they had used in designing their vehicle and were able to evaluate the finished product. They also used technical language, and displays around the room supported their understanding of the subject's special vocabulary very well. Design and technology is very well resourced and effective links are made between art and design and design technology to aid pupils' learning and enjoyment.

Music

Provision in music is **good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The strong focus on music in school inspires pupils into wanting to take part.
- Teaching and learning are supported very well by an excellent range of music resources.

Commentary

- 84 There is a strong focus on music in school that inspires pupils to want to take part. Pupils enjoy music. They all join in enthusiastically in the lessons, and also in assembly, where music plays an integral part. At these times pupils have the opportunity to celebrate birthdays in song and some pupils volunteer to accompany the school with tambourines as everyone sings with gusto and enjoyment. In one assembly, pupils kept beat with the music well and were confident to perform in front of others. Similarly, pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 sang well, with expression and clear diction. When the dance of the 'Sugar Plum Fairy' played at the end of assembly, pupils knew who the composer was and listened very well to the music as they left the hall.
- 85 The teaching of music is good overall. Pupils know what is expected and participate fully in lessons. Where teaching is very good, the teacher has very good subject knowledge and used this very well to make the lesson challenging and yet fun. As a result of her continued encouragement, pupils recognised the difference between rhythm and pulse and performed very well in two parts, one half of the class singing the tune and the other singing out the beat

of 'Nick Nack Paddy Wack'. The use of ICT features in lessons, as the interactive whiteboard creates very good imagery to accompany the songs that pupils sing. Pupils also use ICT packages, such as 'Compose Word Jr', to compose their own music. Very occasionally, teaching is less effective and only satisfactory when opportunities to extend pupils' learning are missed and instead pupils reinforce for too long what they already know. Overall, pupils' achievement is good and they attain standards that meet the expectations for their age.

- 86 Pupils' response to music, however, is very good. As always they show excellent attitudes to learning and their behaviour is equally good. Their learning is supported very well indeed by the excellent range of resources that the school has to offer. Coupled with their effective use, these are significant in maintaining pupils' interest and enthusiasm. In addition, the school enriches the curriculum with excellent opportunities to share music with visiting musicians, such as woodwind and string ensembles. A percussion player who visited school brought a range of percussion instruments to share with the pupils, and included instruments from different countries such as a 'dohl' from India. In this way the music curriculum contributes very well to pupils' cultural development.

Physical Education

Provision in physical education is **good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The planned curriculum for physical education echoes the school's excellent commitment to inclusion.
 - Pupils are enthusiastic and responsive and try their best to succeed.
- 87 The planned curriculum for physical education echoes the school's excellent commitment to inclusion. The policy is very clear about provision for pupils who have special educational needs, be they physical or otherwise. The progression of skills in physical education as pupils move through Years 1 and 2 is very clearly laid out. As a result, the teaching of physical education is very well planned and effectively aids pupils' achievement, so that standards attained overall meet expectations for their age.
- 88 In the lessons observed, teachers ensured that pupils 'warmed up' and had due regard to space. They used pupils well to demonstrate good examples of, for example, balance and travelling from one place to another. Where teaching was seen to be excellent, pupils achieved very well indeed as the teacher had very high expectations of their concentration. Pupils showed very good skills for dribbling and trapping balls; they used space well and had good control over their movements. Where unsatisfactory teaching was observed, the teacher did not make clear her expectations of pupils and not enough opportunity was given for them to improve their performance. As a result, they practiced what they could already do. Throughout all lessons, however, pupils displayed very good and usually excellent attitudes to learning. They were enthusiastic and responsive, and tried their best to succeed.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, Social and Health Education and Citizenship

Provision in Personal, Social and Health Education and Citizenship (PSHEC) is **very good** and pupils achieve very well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- School gives very high priority to pupils' personal development.

- Teachers provide excellent role models for pupils.
- Rowena Rangers are given responsibilities to care for younger pupils and are proud of their role.

Commentary

- 89 It is abundantly clear that the school gives very high priority to pupils' personal development and, from nursery to Year 2, pupils constantly achieve very well in developing of personal qualities and skills. Personal qualities are promoted through activities in the classrooms and outside lessons. Pupils are encouraged to develop self-discipline and to consider the needs of others at all times. They are taught in a friendly, caring atmosphere that sets an excellent example of respect for others and of supportive relationships. This is reflected in the pupils' excellent behaviour at all times. In sessions when pupils sit in a circle to discuss issues with each other, there is a clear focus on respect for others' opinions and values. There is also a very good spotlight on listening carefully to others because pupils know they will have to share their partner's and not their own views with the whole circle. These experiences provide a good foundation for social development. Pupils' self-esteem grows stronger; they gain in self-confidence and their listening and speaking skills improve.
- 90 Teachers provide excellent role models for pupils; they are constantly kind, attentive and caring towards the pupils in their care. They remain calm at all times, and if a child does not conform to the school's 'Golden Rules', teachers will take time to encourage good behaviour and explain why it is necessary. To become a good 'Rowena Person' is an important accolade and celebrated in school assemblies. The 'Rowena Rangers' are given responsibilities to care for younger pupils and are proud of their role.
- 91 In this way, pupils develop a sense of citizenship. They begin by looking at their own school environment, the people in it and the need to care for the building internally and externally. They value visits to local areas, and the visitors who come into school to enrich the curriculum. Pupils are aware of what their community can offer them, and compare this with those people less fortunate than themselves, in other parts of the world.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	1
The effectiveness of management	2

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