

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST ANDREW'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND VOLUNTARY
CONTROLLED LOWER SCHOOL**

Biggleswade

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109595

Headteacher: Mrs S Rolfe

Lead inspector: Dr J Coop

Dates of inspection: 6th to 9th June 2005

Inspection number: 267732

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Primary
School category: Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils: 3-9
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 435

School address: Brunts Lane
Biggleswade
Bedfordshire
Postcode: SG180LY

Telephone number: 01767 312311
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Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of Mrs S Gledhill
governors:

Date of previous 28th June 1999
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Andrew's is a larger than average Voluntary Controlled Church of England school that serves the market town of Biggleswade. The school has a twenty-place provision for pupils with speech and communication difficulties. Consequently, pupils come from an area beyond the school's locality. There are 435 pupils on roll between the ages of three and nine. Pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. The socio-economic circumstances of the school are average. Most of the pupils are of white ethnicity with 5 per cent from minority ethnic groups. One per cent (four) of the pupils are at the early stages of learning English. This proportion is average. There is no significant pupil mobility. As a result of the school's strong emphasis on social and educational inclusion, the profile of the school has changed since the previous inspection. Attainment on entry to the nursery is now below average overall. Due to current admission arrangements, approximately 40 per cent of the children in the nursery transfer directly into Year 1 and do not attend the reception class full time. This arrangement is changing in 2006. The school educates a varying number of children from Traveller families each year, but no pupils were in attendance at the time of the inspection. Sixteen per cent of pupils have special educational needs, which is below the national average, but the proportion in some year groups is well above the national average. Four per cent have a statement of special educational needs, which is well above

the national average. The proportion in some year groups is very high. Special educational needs include social, emotional and behavioural problems, autism and communication difficulties. The school has experienced high staff mobility, due to natural circumstances. The school received a third Healthy School Award in 2005.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team | | | Subject responsibilities |
|--------------------------------|--------------|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 31862 | Dr J Coop | Lead inspector | Foundation Stage Music Personal, social, health and citizenship education |
| 9614 | Mrs C Webb | Lay inspector | |
| 10611 | Mr M James | Team inspector | Science History Physical education Art and design |
| 22657 | Mr M Madeley | Team inspector | Mathematics Information and communication technology Design and technology |
| 29688 | Mr M Brammer | Team inspector | English Religious education Geography |

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **satisfactory** and improving school with some good features. Good attitudes to learning are nurtured within a very supportive family atmosphere. All staff and governors work well together and have a clear view of the way forward. They share a commitment to further improvement. The school provides **satisfactory value for money**.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards in physical education are above average across the school and pupils achieve well in reading and mathematics by the end of Year 2.
- Pupils' attainment in writing is below average and boys in particular do not enjoy the subject.
- Although the headteacher is well supported by the deputy headteacher, staff and governors, the roles of subject and year group leaders are not fully developed.
- Although the quality of teaching and learning is often good, it is not consistent across the school.
- Opportunities for pupils to use and apply their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills in other subjects are not fully developed.
- Pupils are happy in school, behave well and are very caring of all pupils, but especially those with special educational needs.
- The school cares for its pupils well and provides very good pastoral support and guidance.
- The school has established very good links with parents, the community, outside agencies and other schools that benefit the pupils greatly.
- The school provides a good range of additional activities that enhance pupils' enjoyment of learning.

The school has made **satisfactory** improvement since the last inspection. All issues identified in the last report have been addressed, but staff changes have slowed the school's overall improvement. The governors now have a much greater influence on the school's development. Assessment and monitoring procedures have improved so that the school is better placed to make further improvements.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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' achievements are **satisfactory** overall. Children make good progress in the nursery and reception classes but, due to current admission arrangements which limit the time available for full-time reception education, overall the children will not quite reach the expected goals. The exception is their personal, social and emotional development where they are in line to reach expected standards. In the 2004 national tests at the end of Year 2, standards were in line with the national average and similar schools in reading and writing

and above the national average and similar schools in mathematics. Current standards are in line with the national average in reading, mathematics and science, but below average in writing. At the end of Year 4 standards are in line with the national average in reading, mathematics and science, but below the national average in writing. Older boys in particular do not do as well as the girls in writing because they generally lack interest in this subject. In some year groups a very high proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs impacts on overall standards attained. Pupils with special educational needs and the few pupils new to speaking English make the same progress as other pupils in all subjects. Standards in religious education are in line with those expected in the locally agreed syllabus. Standards in ICT are average and standards in physical education are above average.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are **good** overall. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and generally behave well. Boys are increasingly motivated to learn, especially when teaching is interesting. Pupils are very caring of pupils with complex learning needs. Pupils enjoy coming to school; their attendance is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is **satisfactory**. **The quality of teaching is satisfactory** overall. Teaching has improved and is consistently good in the Foundation Stage. Children enjoy the interesting activities that are provided for them and learn well. Teaching in literacy and numeracy in Years 1 and 2 is good. Consequently, pupils in these subjects make more rapid progress. Teaching is often good in other subjects and year groups, but it is not consistent. This influences the overall progress that pupils make. In all classes, pupils with special educational needs and those who attend the specialist language provision are supported well by experienced and well qualified assistants and specialist nursery nurses who make a valuable contribution to learning for these pupils. Overall, there are good assessment procedures which are used to adjust planning where necessary, but the quality of marking is inconsistent.

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum that is enhanced by a good range of additional activities. Opportunities for pupils to use and apply their key skills, particularly writing, in other subjects are not yet fully established so as to make learning more meaningful and relevant. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is good and staff provide a wealth of interesting activities. The care of pupils is good. The school is sensitive to the needs of each individual and provides very good personal advice and support. Partnership with parents is very good and has much improved. There are very good links with the community and other schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall. The leadership of the headteacher is satisfactory. Supported well by the deputy headteacher, she has overcome difficulties related to staff mobility. She has developed a good team spirit amongst everyone who works in the school. There is a good awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses and how to move forward. The leadership team work well together and are fully supportive of the lead which the headteacher gives. The role of subject and year group leaders is developing, but still needs improvement in terms of monitoring and developing teaching and learning. Governance is good. The governing body is supportive and well informed. Governors fulfil all their statutory duties well.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are happy and supportive of the school. They appreciate the caring, family atmosphere. Pupils are equally happy with the school and like the recent improvements to the curriculum.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- raise standards in writing, particularly ensuring all pupils enjoy learning;
- strengthen the roles of subject and year leaders so they have more influence in ensuring that the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good in their subjects and year groups;
- provide more planned opportunities for pupils to use and apply their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in other subjects to help raise standards further.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Achievement is **satisfactory** overall. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well. Standards in mathematics, science and reading are average by the end of Year 2 and Year 4. Standards are below average in writing.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children in the Foundation Stage are making consistently good progress and achieve well.
- Pupils achieve well in reading and mathematics at the end of Year 2.
- Standards in writing are not high enough and older boys do not learn as well as girls.
- Standards in physical education are above average.
- There is the potential for standards achieved to be higher, but opportunities for pupils to use their key skills are not consistently developed.

Commentary

1. Assessment data shows that the attainment of children when they start in the nursery is below average in all six areas of learning. A wide range of interesting activities is provided that supports learning well. However, whilst all children in the Foundation Stage, including those new to speaking English and those with special educational needs or more complex learning needs, make good progress and achieve well, evidence shows that the overall attainment of children when they start in Year 1 directly equates to the amount of time spent in full-time education. Although, staff in the nursery work hard to challenge the part-time reception age children, who blossom in this highly supportive and effective learning environment, by the time they start in Year 1, overall the reception children will not quite reach the expected goals for children of this age in all areas of learning, the exception being in their personal, social and emotional development where, because of very effective support, they are on course to reach the expected goals.

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

| Standards in: | School results | National results |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| reading | 15.7 (16.4) | 15.8 (15.7) |
| writing | 15.1 (16.0) | 14.6 (14.6) |
| mathematics | 17.2 (16.8) | 16.2 (16.3) |

There were 102 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. In the 2004 national tests, results were average in reading and writing and above average in mathematics. Standards were better than schools with similar socio-economic circumstances in mathematics and in line with similar schools in reading and writing. Results from the teacher assessments in science were in line with the national average. In this school the proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs can vary considerably each year and in some years can be very high.

Nevertheless, the school has kept up with the national trend. In mathematics standards have been rising steadily because this has been a focus in the school.

3. Current standards are average in speaking and listening, reading, mathematics and science. Standards in writing are below average. Evidence shows that pupils have made good progress in speaking and listening, reading and mathematics and are achieving well in relation to their capabilities when they started in Year 1. Pupils have made satisfactory progress in writing and science. Taking the past three years together, there has been a marked difference between the performance of girls and boys in writing. Girls have achieved much better than boys in the school. The school is aware of this difference and has worked hard to close the gap. Evidence shows that in Year 2 this has borne fruit; boys are more engaged in lessons so the gap is closing. Inspection evidence shows that boys achieve as well as girls in lessons.
4. Standards at the end of Year 4 in speaking and listening, reading, mathematics and science are average. Pupils have made satisfactory progress in relation to their capabilities. In this year group, evidence shows that there is a well above average proportion of pupils with special educational needs and nearly 6 per cent of pupils have statements of special educational needs, which is very high in relation to the national average. This influences overall standards attained.
5. At the end of Year 4, standards in writing are below average and pupils' achievements are unsatisfactory. Despite the positive picture of improving boys' performance in Year 2, in Years 3 and 4 many boys do not seem as eager to learn as girls, particularly in the writing aspect of literacy lessons. The school is working hard to motivate the boys and in some classes teachers are adept at spurring the boys on, but some teachers find it more difficult to grab the boys' interest. Many boys state that they find writing 'boring'. In addition, there are missed opportunities for pupils to write at length and in a range of styles in other subjects. This means that pupils do not write as much as they could. These two factors have a direct impact on overall writing standards achieved.
6. Standards in physical education are above average across the school. Pupils make good progress and achieve well. This is a result of increased time and better teaching which reflect part of the school's strategy to motivate boys and also encourage healthy lifestyles. Standards in ICT are average and standards in religious education are in line with those expected in the locally agreed syllabus. Evidence indicates that standards in all other subjects are average. Although progress and achievement are satisfactory in these subjects, opportunities are not consistently used to make meaningful links between subjects. As a result, opportunities for pupils to use and apply their numeracy and ICT skills are not consistently developed to help pupils improve these skills in more interesting ways. This factor also impacts on overall standards attained.
7. Pupils with special educational needs and those who attend the language provision part time are well supported by skilled teaching assistants and well qualified specialist nursery nurses, as a consequence they achieve as well as their friends in lessons.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning are **good**. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Procedures to monitor and promote attendance are very good.
- Behaviour management strategies are not always used consistently so some older boys can be restless in lessons.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about having additional responsibilities.
- Pupils' knowledge of different cultures is not fully developed.

Commentary

8. Pupils like their school and the majority arrive in good time in the mornings. Their attendance is satisfactory, monitored very well and robust action taken when necessary. The education welfare officer makes random punctuality checks and is involved with the few families where children's attendance is causing concern. As a result, the levels of attendance have improved.
9. Behaviour and attitudes are good overall throughout the school and, although play is often exuberant and can appear to be 'no holds barred', it is friendly and no bullying was observed. Pupils state they are happy in school and feel safe. However, not all teachers are confident in their management of behaviour, especially of older boys. As a result, concentration can 'dip' in parts of lessons and progress is impeded. Pupils decide their own class rules, rewards and consequences and believe that fair sanctions are imposed if they misbehave. 'Fun Fridays', a recent innovation, are very popular. Because of the school's insight and knowledge of pupils with problems and the very good use of local agencies to support them, there has been only one permanent and three fixed term exclusions in the past year, all of the same pupil.
10. As a result of the Christian, caring ethos, positive moral values are quickly developed and the school is a friendly and sociable society in which all are included in activities. Relationships amongst pupils are good. They relish opportunities to take responsibility and carry out tasks conscientiously and well. 'Helping Hands' really do help! Pupils' personal, moral and social development is good and well promoted. In one Year 2 class, this good provision resulted in mature discussion of feeling 'left out' and how to help.
11. Pupils' knowledge of their own traditions and cultures is good and pupils are interested in learning more about other cultures and faith groups, which currently is satisfactory. Music, art and other lessons make a good contribution and visits, in addition to the wide range of visitors, enrich their cultural development well. Pupils' spiritual development is now good, an improvement since 1999. All listen attentively in assemblies as the current value, 'tolerance', is explained and exemplified through Christian example. Reflection is evident at these times and when pupils sit in the 'Willow Tunnels', while tadpoles and small frogs provide endless fascination for younger children as they ponder on the changes. As yet, opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are not planned for in lessons, but staff and governors have benefited from training on spirituality throughout the curriculum earlier this year, which is beginning to make a positive impact.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

| | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| Authorised absence | Unauthorised absence |
|--------------------|----------------------|

| | |
|---------------|-----|
| School data | 4.9 |
| National data | 5.1 |

| | |
|---------------|-----|
| School data | 1.0 |
| National data | 0.4 |

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

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

| Categories used in the Annual School Census | No of pupils on roll | Number of fixed period exclusions | Number of permanent exclusions |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| White – British | 436 | 3 | 1 |
| White – Irish | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| White – any other White background | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed – White and Black Caribbean | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed – White and Black African | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed – White and Asian | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed – any other mixed background | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British – Indian | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Black or Black British – African | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Chinese | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| No ethnic group recorded | 3 | 0 | 0 |

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. Teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory. The care of pupils is good. There are very good links with parents, the community and other schools.

Teaching and learning

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 52 lessons

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very poor |
|-----------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 0 | 4 (8%) | 26 (50%) | 20 (38%) | 2 (4%) | 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.

The quality of teaching and learning is **satisfactory**. Assessment procedures are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff in the nursery and reception classes make learning interesting and meaningful and, in Years 1 and 2, teachers teach basic literacy and numeracy skills consistently well.
- Although some teachers motivate pupils, particularly boys, and manage behaviour well, this is not consistent.
- Some, but not all, teachers use discussions and resources well to make learning interesting.

- Planning is thorough, but pupils are not always clear enough about what they are going to learn.
- Assessment information is used well in the Foundation Stage, English and mathematics, although the quality of marking is not consistent.
- Teaching assistants are used well to enhance learning, especially for pupils with special educational needs.
- Individual learning targets for pupils with special educational needs are not sufficiently specific or easily shared with the pupils.

Commentary

12. The quality of teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage is consistently good and often very good. This has improved since the last inspection. New reception class teachers have settled quickly into the school routines and are rapidly developing their skills. This is due to the very good support they have received from the Foundation Stage leader and the way that they have been made to feel valued members of the school team by the headteacher. Resources are used imaginatively to stimulate learning and, during planned and independent learning, staff interact purposefully with the children. All staff are constantly encouraging and extending children's learning and children make good progress as a result.
13. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall with some good teaching observed, but the overall quality of teaching is not consistent. Where it is good, such as in the teaching of literacy and numeracy in Years 1 and 2 and in some classes across all year groups, basic skills are taught in an interesting manner. The pace of learning is brisk and the teachers have the confidence to inject a little fun into lessons. This grabs pupils' attention and successfully enhances learning. Boys in particular enjoy learning when they have a variety of different tasks to perform or when given the opportunities to work in partnership with their friends. Most, but not all, teachers are confident to manage pupils' behaviour. Where teaching is less successful, the pace of learning slows, boys become restless and this is not always dealt with effectively. In addition, some staff are not skilled enough to handle class discussions and many are not confident in their use of resources such as the interactive whiteboards to aid learning.
14. Planning is thorough in the most part so that most, but not all, teachers have moved away from being over-reliant on commercial paper exercises. In the best lessons, the learning intentions are made clear to the pupils at the start of the lesson and reviewed in the lesson ends. However, in other classes the learning intentions are too vague for the pupils to understand and lesson ends are rushed and not used to recap on learning.
15. Overall, procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. In the core subjects of English and mathematics and in the Foundation Stage, assessment information is used effectively to ensure that pupils are provided with work that is well matched to their particular needs. The information is used particularly well in English to provide pupils with individual targets for further improving their work and it is used well in mathematics to place pupils in ability groups for lessons, which is having a positive impact on the standards achieved in these subjects. In science, whilst appropriate assessment procedures are in place, all pupils are usually presented with the same work and this does not adequately challenge the more able pupils. In other subjects, staff have a broad and satisfactory overview of pupils' attainments in relation to National

Curriculum levels and this information is now being used to plan lessons more successfully.

16. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. In the best examples, helpful comments of praise and advice are provided, but often marking is limited to ticks. In such circumstances, pupils are not made aware of ways in which they can improve the standard of their work further.
17. Although designated pupils attend the language provision for part of the week, all teachers in St Andrew's are teachers of pupils with communication and language difficulties. A highly skilled team of teaching assistants and specialist nursery nurses work alongside teachers and provide effective teaching and learning support. All staff in the school have established very warm and supportive relationships with the pupils. As a result, the pupils are very happy, make secure progress in relation to their complex educational needs and achieve as well as their friends when in mainstream lessons. However, both when in the unit and when in mainstream classes, there is an over-emphasis at times on commercial written exercises. Resources that would encourage the use of all senses to aid learning and also aid independent learning are limited. As a result, many pupils are over-reliant on teaching assistants and the nursery nurses to help them complete their work. Many teachers are new to the school. They benefit from a detailed induction programme and continued support in order that they can confidently meet the needs of special educational needs pupils. However, many teachers are not yet completely confident in their approach.
18. The progress of pupils who attend the language provision is carefully monitored so that the strategies can be adjusted if necessary. Currently, however, individual learning targets are too general and not yet shared with the pupils. This is a missed opportunity to involve the pupils in a partnership with their teachers about their learning.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **satisfactory**. Opportunities for enrichment are good. Staffing, accommodation and resources are **satisfactory** for the delivery of the curriculum.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Pupils do not have enough planned opportunities to use their key skills in other subjects.
- Meaningful links between subjects could be developed further to make learning interesting.
- The curriculum in the Foundation Stage and for physical education is good and has a positive impact on achievement.
- Good support for special educational needs pupils ensures they can fully access the curriculum.
- 'Fun Friday' activities and additional activities extend the curriculum well and make learning 'fun'.
- Limitations to the reception class accommodation mean younger children are disadvantaged.

Commentary

19. The school meets the statutory requirements to teach the subjects of the National Curriculum and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. It complies with the requirement to provide pupils with a daily act of collective worship. Provision for sex, drugs awareness and relationships education meets statutory requirements. It is taught through a well-planned programme, mainly in personal, social and health education lessons.
20. As a result of the hard work of the deputy headteacher, the school has begun to 'chunk' subjects in order to make learning more interesting, but this is not yet consistently developed in all year groups. The school is now sensibly keen to improve the links between subjects so as to give pupils better opportunities to use and apply their basic literacy, numeracy and computer skills in other subjects in order to provide greater independence and breadth of experience. These key skills are not consistently developed through other subjects at present.
21. The Foundation Stage programme is good. It provides well-planned opportunities for children to learn through play. The curriculum for physical education is good. Pupils benefit from and enjoy the additional time given to physical education and standards are rising as a result.
22. The recently started 'Fun Friday', which provides a carousel of interesting activities such as French and cookery, together with the good range of clubs and activities the school offers, extends the curriculum well and are enjoyed hugely by pupils. Pupils have the opportunity to learn to play an instrument and many take up violin, cello and treble recorder. They also extend their classroom studies by visiting places of educational interest, such as various Christian places of worship and places of historical interest. The school uses the locality well to further pupils' understanding of geography.
23. All pupils are treated equally and fairly. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good overall. Pupils' needs are identified quickly, advice sought and progress monitored, although currently individual learning targets are not specific enough to be easily shared with pupils or parents. Pupils with more complex learning or social and emotional needs are effectively supported in small groups for literacy or specific language or behaviour programmes. Younger children who are new to speaking English receive good support. Gifted and talented pupils are now identified and provided with additional learning opportunities. This ensures all these groups of pupils are more able to benefit from the curriculum and learning opportunities provided.
24. Resources are adequate in most subjects, though the computers are quite slow and will be replaced soon. Nursery accommodation is good and good resources throughout the Foundation Stage are effectively used to help children learn through play. Pupils and teachers are enthusiastic about and motivated by the interactive whiteboards fitted in Year 3 and 4 classrooms, but teachers are not yet fully confident in their use. Classrooms are of a good size. Since the last inspection, the school has established a library and a computer suite. However, they are both too small for a whole class to use them effectively and, because Year 3 has four classes, the school lacks a third reception classroom. As a result, the youngest reception age children are unable to benefit from full-time education, although staff work hard to minimise the disadvantage.

Care, guidance and support

The school has **good** procedures to promote the health, safety and welfare of all pupils. They receive **good** advice and guidance and **very good** support. The school has **good** procedures for consulting with pupils.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils receive very good pastoral support.
- Liaison with and use of local agencies are very good and the school supports vulnerable pupils very well.
- Pupils are actively involved in the work of the school.

Commentary

25. The good provision for pupils' health and safety noted in the previous report has been maintained and includes regular risk assessments and improved site security. The school has won three awards for its healthy schools work and has worked with a local supermarket to promote healthy eating. Trained personnel administer first aid and the headteacher and nursery nurse have up-to-date child protection training, which has been extended to all staff. They are aware of the procedures and what to do if problems arise. Personnel from the adjacent building site have been very helpful in talking to pupils and staff about health and safety.
26. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good and all pupils have an adult to turn to if they are worried, confident that concerns will be dealt with swiftly and effectively. Pupils agree this is a caring school in which individuals matter and the personal support and advice they receive is very good. Those attending the language provision sessions enjoy these and like the support they receive. All pupils who have special educational or other needs or who speak English as an additional language are well integrated. Many different agencies are involved with the school and they, as well as the Traveller Support Services, will always provide assistance when needed. The learning mentor is of particular help to those with low self-esteem. A strength of the language provision is the very effective partnership that has been established with a wide variety of support agencies who work with the school to provide support to pupils, staff and parents. This adds much to the quality of the provision and the progress that these pupils make.
27. Academic advice is satisfactory. Pupils know their individual targets and pupils find comments teachers make during lessons helpful, although not all marking of their written work tells them where and how to improve.
28. The school consults pupils regularly. Many chat to staff during the day and are not backward in giving their views. School council representatives, democratically elected, are proud to give the opinions and ideas of their peers. They know that the school listens to them and pupils feel they have a say in decisions made by governors and staff.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with parents, the local community and other schools are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are very involved with the school and are kept very well informed.
- There are now strong links with the local church.
- The school is very pro-active within the pyramid of local schools.
- Parental concerns about reception provision are being addressed.

Commentary

29. Partnership with parents is very good and much improved since 1999 due to the hard work of the headteacher. Home/school liaison is now very good. The school seeks parents' views through annual questionnaires and tries to help them in whatever way possible. They are appreciative of the education their children receive. Parents enjoy the class assemblies, their attendance at consultation and information evenings is good and workshops on science, numeracy, parenting and basic skills have benefited many parents. Some help in classes and the enthusiastic parent teacher association organises fun and successful fund-raising events, some of which have been dictated by children's wishes.
30. Despite some parents' doubts, inspectors find that parents are very well informed. Monthly newsletters, the governors' annual report, topic letters, plus consultation meetings and the approachability of staff all contribute to this. Children's annual reports are easy to understand and give clear indications of their progress in most areas.
31. Parents of children with special educational or other needs and those whose children attend the language provision on site are well informed about their children's progress and informed about any individual education programmes they have. The school works hard to keep those parents whose children travel some distance to the school informed and all statutory procedures in relation to statemented provision and annual reviews are well met. The school always ensures that parents whose first language is not English understand communications. Inspectors share parents' concern about some children going straight from the nursery into Year 1, but this is being addressed. New Foundation Stage staff are working hard to ensure that, in the coming year, younger children will be provided with a more suitable transition arrangement to the more formal Year 1 curriculum.
32. Links with the community, schools and colleges are now very good. The school is at the heart of the local community and many visitors from the local area come in to share their experiences with the pupils. Visits into the local area also significantly enhance learning. Many groups use the school facilities and links with the church have improved considerably. Well used as a resource and place of worship, the church is now an important part of school life. As part of 'Learning Community 5' the school has been very active, instigating subject liaison groups, leading personal, social and health education training and generally sharing practice and expertise with other colleagues. Secondary school work experience placements are over-subscribed and many trainee nursery nurses, student teachers and other students value the support and training they receive and many go on to join the school staff.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall the leadership and management of the school are **satisfactory**. The leadership of the headteacher and other senior staff is **satisfactory**. Management throughout the school is **satisfactory**. The governing body makes a **good** contribution to leadership and management.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has developed a good team spirit and has a clear vision for the future of the school, although the pace of change could have been more rapid.
- The good contribution of the governing body is helping the school to move forward.
- The roles of subject and year leaders are not yet fully developed so as to help drive forward improvements.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning could be more rigorous.
- The headteacher is successful in welcoming, including and supporting pupils of all backgrounds and abilities into the school.
- The school makes a very good contribution to teacher training and new staff are well supported.
- The language provision is organised effectively and there is a clear vision for the future.

Commentary

33. The leadership of the headteacher is satisfactory overall, but she has been a good leader in many ways. Despite many difficulties related to high staff mobility and an increasing number of pupils with complex learning, social and emotional needs educated in the school, standards for pupils at the end of Year 2 have kept up with the national trend. In addition, good progress has been made to improve relationships with parents, the community and the church. The school has taken more time to develop the role of the governing body and to build a constructive relationship with it. With the support from a strong chair of governors, members of the newly constituted governing body have rapidly improved their skills so that the overall governance of the school is good.
34. The governing body now makes a good contribution to the school. It is supportive and influential. Governors fulfil their statutory duties well and have a good understanding of the challenges that the school faces. They provide good support for its senior managers, but are not yet confident to challenge them about inconsistencies in teaching and learning.
35. The school knows itself well and it is recognised that despite these positive features the pace of improvement could have been more rapid. The school recognises that the quality of teaching and learning is not consistent enough and standards in writing are not high enough and is working to address these weaknesses. The headteacher, well supported by the new deputy headteacher and recently appointed year leaders, has developed a good team spirit and all staff are working together to build on recent improvements. As a result, the school is better placed to move forward.
36. The recently appointed co-ordinator provides very good leadership for the Foundation Stage. A clear sense of purpose and effective team work are leading to good standards of teaching and learning. As a result, children now get a good start to their education. New admission arrangements for 2006 will allow all children to benefit fully from full-time reception education. The school has firm plans to build new classrooms which will enhance the provision further.

37. The management of the school is satisfactory and staff with leadership and subject responsibilities are receiving relevant advice and support from the headteacher and deputy. As a result, they are more aware of how to fulfil their brief, but subject and year leaders are at the early stages of developing their skills. The performance management of teachers is satisfactory, but is not yet as effective as it could be in bringing about higher standards. Currently, subject and year leaders do not monitor teaching and learning with sufficient rigour. This is crucial if the school is to continue to build on recent improvement and ensure that the quality of education is consistent in all year groups and subjects.
38. The school is committed to welcoming, including and supporting pupils with complex learning needs and from different abilities and backgrounds. The headteacher, with the support of the special educational needs co-ordinator, works very effectively with parents and outside agencies to ensure that effective systems and procedures are in place to enable all pupils to benefit from the provision the school offers.
39. The school's induction arrangements are good. New staff are successfully helped to know the school policies and procedures, which is important given the high turnover of teaching staff. The school makes a very good contribution to teacher training. Both the headteacher and the deputy headteacher are closely involved in the school's work with different higher education institutes and the local school-centred initial teacher training consortium. This is helping to drive forward the school's development as some recently appointed good quality teachers have been trained in the school.
40. The language provision is led and managed well by an experienced practitioner who has generally maintained the quality of the provision since the last inspection. She is supported effectively by a dedicated team of special educational needs nursery nurses. All the pupils are highly valued members of the school community and are fully included in the life of the school. The school has a clear vision for the future direction of the provision when the current leader retires shortly.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

| Income and expenditure (£) | | Balances (£) | |
|----------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|--------|
| Total income | 1,088,390 | Balance from previous year | 98,079 |
| Total expenditure | 1,092,294 | Balance carried forward to the next | 94,175 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 2,499 | | |

41. The school's financial management is sound. It has a large under-spend for the last financial year, but this will be reduced by increased staff costs and a substantial percentage of the 11 per cent carry forward has been earmarked for the new reception block. The school now employs a local authority bursar to help forecast its income more accurately. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

The overall provision for children in the Foundation Stage is **good**.

42. Since the last inspection, several unforeseen staff changes led to the quality of provision declining in the Foundation Stage. The provision is now very well led and managed. As a result, there has been very good improvement made in the past eighteen months. The curriculum is well planned to meet the children's varying needs and the high quality of the nursery outside learning environment and recently enhanced reception class outside area adds a further interesting dimension to learning. Assessment of children's progress is good but, currently, the system does not provide staff with a clear overview of their class. This makes it more difficult for them to monitor overall progress. This is especially essential when the children start at three different times of the year. Currently, the different location of the nursery from the reception classes does not aid joint planning or sharing of resources.
43. Children transfer from the part-time provision in the nursery to the two reception classes in the term following their fifth birthday. This arrangement gives children either two or one terms of full-time education in a reception class, prior to starting school in Year 1. However, each year a significant number of younger, summer-born children remain part-time in the nursery prior to starting school in Year 1. Parents have expressed their concern about this arrangement. Consequently, this will change in 2006 when more space will be available.
44. Data shows that children's attainment when they start in the nursery is below average. Staff in the nursery work hard to ensure that the younger reception children are challenged and, because the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good and often very good, all groups and ages of children make good progress and achieve well overall. However, evidence shows that overall the children will not quite attain the expected goals by the time they start in Year 1 because of the amount of time spent in the provision. Children with complex learning needs, together with children who are new to speaking English, are valued members of the Foundation Stage community and because of sensitive support make good progress and also achieve well.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff are very supportive so that children settle very quickly into the class routines.
- Children are provided with very good opportunities to express their feelings, share equipment and to take turns.

Commentary

45. Children start in the nursery with below average personal and social skills. Very good teaching, together with very sensitive support and very clear routines, ensure that

children rapidly develop their confidence. As a result, children learn to share their toys with their new friends, take turns in simple games and enjoy trying out new activities, such as venturing out for circle games in the large school playground for the first time. This very good approach is continued in the reception classes where the high quality relationships between staff and children and varied interesting activities ensure that children develop a strong rapport with the staff and each other. Staff expect children to behave well and help each other. They openly encourage children to work independently so that increasingly the children are eager to learn and discover things for themselves. All children are sensitive to those with a high level of special educational needs or those who are not yet confident when speaking English and these children are highly valued members of the provision. This, coupled with warm praise and the encouragement that children receive, boosts their confidence and ensures they achieve very well. Overall, when they start in Year 1, most children will achieve the expected goals.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff are skilled at enriching children's understanding and use of language.
- Early reading and writing skills are promoted well.

Commentary

46. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good so that children in both settings make good progress and achieve well overall. Many children start with immature speaking and listening skills and find it hard to express themselves. During all activities, staff in the nursery and reception classes are skilful at fostering children's spoken language. When sharing healthy snacks in the nursery, for example, children are encouraged to contrast the 'juicy oranges' with the 'crunchy carrots', while in the reception classes staff use every opportunity to extend children's vocabulary and encourage them to use simple sentences. All staff are very patient when children with more complex language difficulties and those new to speaking English struggle to communicate. Specialist support is used effectively to ensure the children are fully included in all activities. Interesting games and activities, introduced in the nursery and continued in the reception classes, successfully introduce the children to the world of letter sounds, which older and more able children use to read simple books and to write labels and captions on the 'Bear hunt' maps. As a result of a good range of imaginative activities, many older and more able younger children will attain the expected goals by the time they start Year 1, but overall children will not quite reach the expected goals.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff in both settings make good use of other areas of learning to promote mathematical development.

Commentary

47. Teachers make effective use of the many well-planned activities to promote the children's understanding of shape, number and measure. Teaching is consistently good in all classes and all staff are particularly effective at linking learning in mathematics to other areas of learning. A strength is the way that staff provide an interesting range of practical activities to support learning. As a result, children are enthusiastic about mathematics and delight in discovering new skills or facts. In the nursery, children are proud to help the teacher count the children present and work out how many boys and girls there are. They learn to use positional language when helping describe where the Teddy is hiding and order numbers on Teddy's rocket. In the reception classes, children love the brisk range of counting activities when they learn to count in twos and, because staff join in their play, no opportunity is lost to extend learning. As a result of this purposeful learning environment, children achieve well but will not quite attain the expected goals by the time they start in Year 1.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a good emphasis on developing learning through first hand experiences.

Commentary

48. Children in both settings make good progress because they are introduced to a world of interesting practical experiences by staff who have a good understanding of the way that young children learn best. As a result of constantly good teaching, all groups of children are very interested in everything that is presented to them and achieve well. In the nursery, younger children learn about different foods when they make sandwiches for a picnic, enjoy observing their plants growing and know that builders wear hard hats to keep them safe when they play in the 'Builders' Yard'. In the reception classes, children delight in watching their tadpoles change and wait eagerly for the chicken eggs to hatch, consulting pictures in the books to help explain to visitors what they have learned. Older reception boys dig deep foundations for their own 'supermarket' walls, most reception children know maps have keys and are eager to talk about the recent 'wedding', recognising that a church is a special place. As a result, the children have a healthy curiosity about the world around them, but will not quite attain the expected goals when they start in Year 1 or the requirements of the locally agreed religious education syllabus for children of this age.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good use of the hall and outside areas is made to promote learning.

Commentary

49. The quality of teaching is good so that children in both settings make good progress and achieve well, but children will not quite reach the expected goals when they start in Year 1. Children achieve well because teachers effectively provide a wide range of activities which children enjoy. As a result, children often don't realise they are learning. At many points in the day children in both the nursery and reception classes are provided with good opportunities to participate in outside play. They eagerly use large equipment, such as bikes and the climbing frames, learning not only how to balance and climb, but also how to avoid each other. Staff join in these games and also lead children in more traditional playground games where children learn to move together, although some find it hard to skip, sing and move in a circle at the same time! In the hall, reception children use the space well and know they have to 'warm up' and 'cool down'. Many are confident to dribble a ball and kick it accurately to their friends. The children develop confidence and skills because of very good relationships with staff so that children keep trying even though some balls keep rolling away.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision for creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers make good use of themes to promote children's imaginative play.

Commentary

50. Children achieve well but, overall, by the time they start in Year 1 they will not quite have reached the expected goals. Teaching and learning are consistently good in all classes and a strength is the way that teachers plan activities around a theme such as 'Transport and Space'. This acts as a spur to develop children's imagination both in planned activities and when engaged in independent play. Good scope is given for all children to sing songs and in the reception class music is used very effectively to develop children's imaginations when they listen to *Gershwin* and then try to 'capture' the music on paper. Children sing enthusiastically and tunefully and are proud of their performance. As a result of lots of praise and encouragement, children in both the nursery and reception classes gain confidence and enjoy learning and this makes a positive contribution to learning.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Basic skills are taught well in Years 1 and 2.
- Pupils do not develop their writing skills well enough in other subjects.

- Many older boys do not enjoy writing.
- The role of the subject leader is not fully developed so as to ensure teaching and learning are consistent in all classes.

Commentary

51. Overall standards in English are average at the end of Year 2 and Year 4. Pupils in Year 2 did not meet the expected learning goals in communication, language and literacy when they were in the Foundation Stage. The good teaching in Years 1 and 2 has helped all groups of pupils to make good progress and achieve well overall so that current standards are average in speaking and listening and in reading. Pupils listen well, both to their teachers and their peers. This is seen in the sensible responses they make. By the end of Year 2, more able pupils read clearly and fluently and with understanding and enjoyment.
52. In writing, current standards are below average at the end of Year 2 and pupils have not made as much progress as they have in reading. Taking the past three years together, boys have not attained as well as girls in the school in writing. The school has worked hard to motivate the boys and evidence indicates that boys now achieve as well as girls in lessons but, although basic writing skills are taught well in specific lessons, pupils do not have enough opportunities to write in other subjects and this factor influences overall standards attained and the progress that pupils make.
53. At the end of Year 4, attainment in speaking and listening and reading is in line with expectations. Standards in writing are below average. Through its good assessment procedures the school has recognised standards in writing are not high enough and pupils' level of achievement in writing is unsatisfactory. It is taking steps to address it through, for example, individual learning targets, the use of 'once a month' books and some teaching in ability groups. Although evidence shows that more pupils are now attaining the higher level 3, it is too soon for these initiatives to have had more influence on overall standards achieved. Boys in particular do not achieve as well as girls and the fact that many older boys do not enjoy writing affects their attitudes in lessons. Coupled with limited opportunities to write in other subjects, this puts a limit on the progress they make when writing. However, given the high proportion of pupils with complex learning and language needs in the current Year 4, overall pupils' level of achievement in English is satisfactory.
54. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 3 and 4, but is good overall in Years 1 and 2. Although some good teaching was observed in all year groups, it is not consistent. In the best lessons, teachers give pupils the opportunity to practise their speaking and to reflect on their learning when they use talking partners. Pupils discuss a point with their partner, which helps to give them the ideas and confidence to report back to the whole class. In Years 1 and 2, teachers teach letter sounds well and this helps pupils to develop the skills they need to become independent readers and writers. Teaching is brisk and activities fun, as a result, the attitude and behaviour of younger pupils are good and these have a positive effect on their learning. Younger pupils respond well to their teachers, co-operate when they work in pairs and try hard on individual tasks. In Years 3 and 4, the pupils' attitudes are good overall, but often boys lack concentration and, when teachers do not manage this well, this adversely affects how well pupils achieve.
55. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Satisfactory improvement has been made since the last inspection. The two subject leaders have

arranged a good programme of curriculum enrichment that includes visits from theatre groups and a poet as well as a Book Week. This enhances the pupils' learning and makes it more enjoyable, particularly for boys. Overall, assessment procedures in English have improved and are good, but inconsistency in marking means that some teachers are more successful than others in showing pupils how to improve their written work. Currently, the subject leaders are developing their monitoring skills to ensure there is consistency in teaching and learning.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

56. There is a satisfactory range of opportunities for pupils to use and apply their literacy skills in other subjects. Reading for research and drama is used appropriately. Although some examples of pupils recording their work are seen in most subjects, there are too few planned opportunities for pupils to write at length and in different styles in other subjects. This is a missed opportunity to motivate boys and ensure that pupils practise their writing skills and help deepen their understanding of what they are learning in more meaningful ways.

MATHEMATICS

The quality of provision is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching ensures pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress.
- There are few planned opportunities for pupils to use their skills in other subjects.
- Teachers' marking does not inform pupils how they might improve their work.
- Classroom assistants are used well to support pupils, particularly those with special educational needs.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning to ensure consistency is not fully developed.

Commentary

57. Standards at the end of Year 2 have been rising steadily over the last five years and this reflects the good quality of teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2. Current standards at the end of Year 2 are in line with national expectations. This represents good achievement in relation to the pupils' capabilities when they started in Year 1. The pupils have benefited from good teaching which employs a variety of teaching methods that help pupils learn, whilst at the same time encouraging and motivating them.
58. At the end of Year 4, standards are average and pupils have made satisfactory progress. For Year 4 pupils, these standards represent satisfactory achievement because there are a large number of pupils with complex learning needs and special educational needs currently in the year group who influence overall standards attained. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make secure progress against their personal targets.
59. Good teaching is planned in detail using information from previous lessons to set work at the correct level for each group. Mental arithmetic sessions are demanding of pupils and extend their learning, though some teachers occasionally try to cover too much ground and the session goes on for too long. Well-planned use of classroom assistants helps pupils with special educational needs meet their mathematics targets.

60. In Years 3 and 4, teaching and learning are satisfactory with some effective features, like the quick-fire questions in the mental mathematics sessions. But although some good teaching was observed, it is not consistent across the year group. Low-level disruption in some classes occasionally makes it difficult for all pupils to learn effectively. In this aspect the team agrees with parents' views. In some lessons, the staff make little use of the functions of the interactive whiteboards to make learning interesting. In all year groups, pupils' work is marked and praised, but pupils do not know how to improve their answers because teachers rarely give them written suggestions.
61. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Assessment data has been analysed well and used to improve the curriculum and place pupils in sets according to their abilities which is helping pupils make better progress. Lessons have been observed, pupils' books scrutinised and staff provided with positive feedback, but monitoring is not sufficiently rigorous to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is consistent or that opportunities to use mathematical skills in other subjects are well thought out.

Mathematics across the curriculum

62. Pupils' use of their mathematical skills is satisfactory, but mainly unplanned. Pupils sort living creatures by type very well in science, use number and angle knowledge well to guide a programmable toy accurately and use simple coordinates to locate places during map work, but pupils have not always learned these skills in mathematics lessons before putting them to use and, as a result, the benefits are lost.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers do not always provide pupils with work that is suited to their varying needs.
- Pupils show good attitudes towards the subject and they enjoy undertaking experiments in particular.
- The subject leader currently has limited opportunities to check on teaching, standards and the overall provision for the subject.

Commentary

63. In the 2004 national teacher assessments at Year 2 the standards achieved by the school were broadly in line with those expected. Inspection findings show that these standards have been maintained this year. Standards are lower than those reported at the time of the previous inspection, but attainment on entry to the school is now lower than it was then. Current standards at the end of Year 4 are average. All groups of pupils including those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and their level of achievement is satisfactory in relation to their capabilities.
64. At the end of Years 2 and 4, pupils show a secure understanding of all aspects of the subject that is similar to that expected. Pupils successfully carry out experiments, using suitable equipment, making observations and recording their findings and have a secure knowledge and understanding of materials, plants, animals and electricity. Most pupils show considerable interest in the subject, displaying good attitudes and enjoying the practical work in particular. This ensures that they want to learn, work hard, concentrate well and are keen to find answers to the problems set.

65. In general, planning does not always make appropriate allowance for the needs of different pupils. Pupils are usually presented with the same activities, with the result that, on occasions, some pupils find the work too difficult, whilst others find it undemanding. Pupils' work is marked regularly but, while most teachers now add useful comments of support and praise, they do not always provide appropriate advice to help the pupils develop their work further. These weaknesses put a limit on overall standards achieved.
66. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Although some good teaching was observed, the quality of teaching and learning is not consistent. Lessons are suitably planned, with teachers throughout the school now beginning to make more provision for practical activities. Some allowance is also made for the use of ICT to support teaching and learning, although not all staff are confident in its use, they are keen to extend this use further. All teachers are careful to use and emphasise the correct scientific terminology and this benefits pupils' learning. The teachers have sound subject knowledge and provide clear instructions and helpful demonstrations of the work that is to be undertaken. Teachers and teaching assistants support all pupils in turn and this helps them all, including those with special educational needs, to make satisfactory progress.
67. The subject leader supports her colleagues well when required and her leadership and management skills are satisfactory. She has had some opportunity to observe work in other classes, but she has had less chance to study pupils' books or teachers' planning in detail in order to help identify ways to improve teaching and learning and the overall standards being achieved.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The quality of provision is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are highly motivated to learn new skills.
- Some of the hardware is unreliable.
- Although interactive whiteboards are a motivating feature of teaching and learning, not all teachers are confident in their use.
- The subject leader has made a useful start, but her monitoring role is not yet fully developed.
- Pupils do not have sufficient planned opportunities to use their skills in other subjects.

Commentary

68. Pupils' attainment in Year 2 and Year 4 is in line with national expectations. They learn about the normal range of topics from the national guidelines and inspection evidence shows that pupils make satisfactory progress and their level of achievement is satisfactory.
69. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Pupils are very keen to learn and bring to school significant experience of using computers and other technologies from home. Teachers build on this enthusiasm well, though both they and the pupils are occasionally frustrated by the unreliability of the hardware. Teachers use additional resources well, like the sound-activated models in Year 1. Pupils co-operate well and

work hard in pairs, in often quite cramped conditions in the small suite. The team agrees with parents and pupils that the interactive whiteboards are a highly motivating feature of teaching and learning, but staff do not, as yet, have the skills to use all the features to the full.

70. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Lesson planning and some lessons have been monitored and teachers have received feedback which has improved their confidence, but the monitoring role is not yet fully developed in order to have a more positive influence on driving up standards and developing teaching and learning. An assessment system is now in place and the co-ordinator is beginning to analyse the information. The school acknowledges that the subject's resources and accommodation can be a hindrance to learning and has developed a plan to improve them in the near future. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Standards have been maintained, interactive whiteboards have been installed in Years 3 and 4 and a suitable action plan to improve the main resources and accommodation has been developed.

Information and communications technology across the curriculum

71. Pupils' use of their ICT skills in other subjects is unsatisfactory. Much of the work undertaken is incidental, rather than planned to extend pupils' skills. The school knows that this is a weakness and is working on effective links between subjects so that this aspect of teaching and learning is developing.

HUMANITIES

72. During the inspection only one lesson was seen in **history** and no secure overall judgement can be made about the quality of the provision. However, from talking to pupils, examining their work and teachers' planning, evidence indicates that standards are average overall. In the one lesson observed in Year 2, the teaching was good, pupils' attitudes were good and pupils made good progress in their topic about castles. It is evident from talking to pupils that they enjoy the subject. Pupils in Year 1 could talk in detail about aspects of the Great Fire of London and those in Year 2 could talk about the lives of famous people such as Florence Nightingale, the Wright Brothers and I.K. Brunel. Pupils in Year 3 enjoyed comparing the life-styles of the Celts and Romans, whilst those in Year 4 were suitably knowledgeable about the Ancient Egyptians and the life of ordinary people during World War II. However, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to write in a range of styles or use and apply their other key skills to help them learn.
73. During the inspection no **geography** lessons were seen. The subject was sampled and no judgement is made about provision, teaching and learning or leadership and management. The school has identified the subject as needing development. Younger pupils have good attitudes to the subject when they talk about how they compared Biggleswade to a Scottish island and to Tocuaro in Mexico. They know why maps are important and how they have helped their learning. Older pupils in Year 4 have satisfactory attitudes to the subject. They have recorded little work in this school year so this is a missed opportunity for them to use and apply their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in a meaningful way. Pupils are, however, looking forward to a visit when they will compare where they live with a coastal town. The new subject leader for both subjects has made a satisfactory start in monitoring teaching and learning, but she has not been in post long enough to have had a more positive impact on developing the curriculum or teaching and learning.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils' knowledge of Christianity is good and is much more secure than their knowledge of other faiths.
- Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to write in different styles or use ICT to support their learning.
- Although the subject leader has developed enrichment activities well, she has not had sufficient opportunity to ensure the quality of teaching and learning is consistent.
- What pupils learn in religious education makes a good contribution to their spiritual, social and cultural development.

Commentary

74. The standards that pupils attain meet the requirements of the local agreed syllabus at the end of Year 2 and Year 4. All groups of pupils make satisfactory progress and their level of achievement is satisfactory. This is the same judgement as at the last inspection and improvement since then has been satisfactory.
75. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, but is inconsistent and what is recorded in the pupils' books varies from one class to another. The teaching of Christianity is stronger than other faiths. As a result, discussion with pupils shows that they have a good knowledge of Christianity. Pupils have a sound knowledge of other faiths, but are not secure in their knowledge and understanding. This partly reflects the emphasis placed on Christianity in the locally agreed syllabus. Younger pupils talk confidently about Moses as a leader who obeyed God. They know that Jesus often taught through stories and they understand what Christians celebrate at Christmas and Easter. Older pupils talk about different parts of the Bible and know about the significance of stained glass windows in churches. There is little evidence of pupils using ICT or writing at length to increase their understanding of the subject.
76. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory and reflect the development of the role of subject leader in the school. However she has not yet had time to develop teaching and learning. Nevertheless, a good programme of curriculum enrichment has been arranged which increases the pupils' understanding of Christianity. During their time in school, pupils visit a number of different churches. Local priests also come into school to make topics like baptism and weddings more meaningful. These visits and visitors make a good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

77. Physical education was examined in depth because the school has worked hard to improve the provision in order to enhance the health of the pupils. Art and design, music and design and technology were sampled.
78. In **art and design**, no lessons were seen during the inspection and so no overall judgement is made. However, a study of teachers' planning and examples of pupils'

work show that a suitable time is allocated to the subject during the year. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 have produced paintings of themselves and suitable observational drawings of small animals and fruit and vegetables. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 have produced such items as pictures of people to illustrate movement, observational drawings of things such as chairs and church artefacts and 3-D masks. Pupils throughout the school successfully produce work in the style of famous artists such as Van Gogh, Mondrian, Monet and Seurat, some of which is produced on a computer. The work is of the expected standard and pupils have taken care to finish the work carefully and thoughtfully. Discussions with pupils show that they greatly enjoy the subject and their attitudes are good. Teachers all take pleasure in producing displays of pupils' work that greatly enhance the learning environment.

79. No lessons were observed in **design and technology** because the school teaches this subject in blocks of time rather than a single lesson per week. Thus, no secure judgements can be made about provision, teaching and learning. From the available evidence pupils enjoy the subject and now have a good understanding of the design phase of the subject, which is an improvement from the last inspection. For instance, in Year 4 pupils considered how various money containers were made and what materials were used. This information was then used when designing their own purses and wallets. The curriculum consists of units from the government guidelines and meets statutory requirements. Teaching topics in blocks of time allows pupils to focus completely on their projects and complete them. This approach is new to the school and the advantages and disadvantages of it will be reviewed at the end of the year.
80. It is not possible to make a judgement about provision in **music** because only one lesson was observed. Music is an area of development for the school and it is acknowledged that currently some staff lack confidence to teach this specialist subject. A recently appointed subject leader has not yet been in post long enough to have had a positive impact on ensuring that the quality of teaching and learning is consistent, but visiting teachers are now used well to support teaching and learning. Younger pupils sing enthusiastically, but older pupils lack expression when singing in assembly.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Careful coaching of skills helps pupils to achieve well.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. They are very keen to participate.
- Few opportunities are provided for pupils to evaluate their own work.
- The subject leader has only recently joined the school, but she provides an enthusiastic lead to her colleagues.

Commentary

81. Standards are higher than expected by both Year 2 and Year 4. Standards have improved since the previous inspection mainly because increased curriculum time is made available and teachers are confident in their subject knowledge. Pupils in Year 2 have better than expected gymnastic skills and, in Years 3 and 4, pupils have well developed orienteering skills. By the end of Year 4, pupils have good co-ordination

and control when carrying out a range of gymnastic movements such as rolling, jumping and climbing. They show good balancing techniques and are keen to introduce quality into their work. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 attend swimming lessons during the year. They all become confident in the water and by the end of Year 4 at least 80 per cent can swim 25 metres. Swimming has been introduced since the previous inspection.

82. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers demonstrate skills well for pupils, their subject knowledge is good and they provide appropriate apparatus for pupils to use. Safety is correctly emphasised throughout. Teachers provide relevant advice and careful coaching to pupils about their work and this enables them all to achieve well. Whilst teachers regularly use pupils to demonstrate good practice, opportunities are often missed to allow pupils to discuss their work. This would help them identify areas for further improvement. Pupils enjoy physical education and they join in with enthusiasm, both when working alone and with others, and their behaviour is good. They like to do well. Lessons are fully inclusive and boys and girls, including those with special needs, work happily together and delight in learning.
83. The subject leader has only recently joined the school, but she is a good practitioner and provides suitable advice and support for colleagues and her leadership and management of the subject are good. She has continued the good work of the previous subject leader in contributing well towards both the good standards being achieved and the improvements that have been made. She observes lessons taking place in other classes and so is able to see for herself the standards being achieved. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities that are well supported by pupils, parents and outside coaches, and these contribute well to the overall provision for the subject.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

84. Only two lessons were observed so no secure judgement can be made about the quality of the provision. The subject is a strong focus for the school and the two subject leaders have worked hard to ensure that every teacher places a good emphasis on the importance of creating an environment where pupils can develop confidence, self-esteem and feel valued and respected as individuals. All pupils are encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles. There are regular opportunities for pupils to meet where they can discuss their innermost feelings and views. Most pupils are genuinely interested in what their friends have to say at these times, but some pupils find it hard to express their feelings. The school council is an active organisation and pupils' views are taken seriously. Opportunities for them to meet the Mayor and local councillors in the council chambers have provided them with a valuable insight into how democracy works. Opportunities for pupils to take responsibility as 'Lunchtime buddies' and to read to the nursery children successfully foster a healthy sense of responsibility towards others and positive attitudes to school.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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