

INSPECTION REPORT

ST JOHN'S C of E VC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Buckhurst Hill, Essex

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115094

Headteacher: Mr Peter Tidmarsh

Lead inspector: Mrs Helen Ranger

Dates of inspection: 13th – 16th June 2005

Inspection number: 267819

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: 4 to 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 312

School address: High Road
Buckhurst Hill
Essex
Postcode: IG9 5RX

Telephone number: 0208 504 2934
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Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of Mr Peter Nicholson
governors:

Date of previous 5 July 1999
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

With 312 pupils, the school is larger than average. Its pupils are aged from 4 to 11. It is situated in St John's Parish in Buckhurst Hill, but due to its great popularity with parents, pupils are drawn from a wider area, including other parts of Essex and east London. Pupils mainly come from economically advantaged backgrounds and levels of entitlement to free school meals are low. Eighty-seven per cent are from white British families. The remainder come from a wide range of ethnic minority groups and almost all of these pupils speak English fluently. When children are admitted to the reception classes, their attainment varies widely, but is at least average overall. Compared with national averages, a low proportion of pupils have special educational needs (4 per cent) and this includes four with Statements of Special Educational Need. Over the past few years, a higher than average number of pupils have entered or left the school during the year, other than at the main transfer times, although this mobility last year was low. The school is a member of the Epping Forest Primary Consortium that works to improve primary education locally and it works closely with a local sports college to develop its physical education provision. It is part of the Essex E-Confident programme, which aims to promote success in information and communication technology in schools.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
22223	Helen Ranger	Lead inspector	English as an additional language English Modern foreign languages Information and communication technology Music Physical education Personal, social and health education and citizenship
9163	Geoffrey Humphrey	Lay inspector	
30573	Sonia Bosworth	Team inspector	Special educational needs Foundation Stage curriculum Science Art and design Design and technology
17543	Bob Coupe	Team inspector	Mathematics
24019	Ken Parry	Team inspector	Geography History Religious education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an **effective** school that has many very good features. Against the background of a very caring Christian ethos, pupils achieve well overall. The oldest do very well. Skilled teaching ensures that pupils reach standards that are often above or well above average. Leadership and management are good. The improvements of recent years have justifiably made the school very popular with parents and pupils. It gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headmaster, staff and governors successfully provide a rich and rounded education for the pupils.
- Pupils reach standards that are well above average by Year 6 because teaching is good overall and particularly good at the top of the school.
- The high quality of care and a very purposeful atmosphere for learning encourage the pupils' very good attitudes, behaviour and relationships.
- The curriculum is very good and is enriched by an excellent range of extra activities.
- There are excellent systems for seeking and acting on pupils' views.
- Standards in English are high overall, but writing is not developed as well as other aspects of the subject.
- Good assessment arrangements are helping to raise standards in several subjects, but need to be extended more widely.
- There are too few opportunities for the youngest children to show independence in their work.

The school has improved well since its last inspection. Pupils' performance in national tests is better, especially in Year 6 where results have risen faster than the national trend. Many of the good features noted in the previous report have been maintained or enhanced further, particularly pupils' attitudes and behaviour and the quality of the curriculum. The school has improved its provision in information and communication technology (ICT) and in scientific enquiry well and subject leaders are now more effective. The site and building have been greatly improved. However, there has not been enough progress in establishing more effective assessment procedures for all subjects and this remains an area for development.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Key: A* - in the highest 5 per cent nationally; A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D -

below average; E – well below average

Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.

The achievement of pupils from all backgrounds is **good** overall and very good in Years 1, 5 and 6. The children in reception achieve well and are on course to exceed the levels that are expected nationally by the end of the year in all areas of learning, including their personal, social, language and mathematical development. By Year 2, pupils are working at above average standards in speaking, listening, reading and science and are well above average in mathematics. Their writing is average. By Year 6, attainment is well above average in English, mathematics and science, although again writing is not as strong as other aspects of English. The improvement of writing standards is a current initiative across the school that is beginning to have a positive impact. Standards across the school are above average in ICT and religious education and pupils achieve well in these subjects. The inspection did not focus on other subjects.

Pupils' personal development is **very good** overall. Spiritual, moral and social development are very good. Cultural development is good, with the multi-cultural dimension increasingly considered. Behaviour and attitudes to learning are very positive. Attendance is well above average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching and learning are **good** overall across the school and are very good in Years 1, 5 and 6. Lessons are varied, planned well and engage pupils' interest. Behaviour is managed very well. The school deploys its specialist teachers and the team of teaching assistants very effectively and they help to promote the good quality of learning. Occasionally, the more able pupils spend too much time on routine tasks and are not challenged enough. Assessment systems are mostly good. They are effective in reception and in the key subjects of English, mathematics, science and ICT, but are not used well enough in other subjects to check how well pupils have done or to support teachers' future planning of lessons.

The curriculum is very good, especially in the outstanding range of extra activities, such as clubs and visits that are offered to pupils. However, there are too few opportunities for reception children to choose and plan their own learning. Staff care for pupils very well and offer high quality pastoral support, encouraging an excellent degree of trust between adults and children. There are extremely good arrangements for collecting pupils' views and ideas which help to make individuals feel valued. There is a very effective partnership with parents who support the school and their children's learning very well. There are very productive links with the wider community, including other schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good** overall. The headmaster is well respected and has effectively improved the school in recent years. He provides good leadership and is supported well by an able deputy head, a committed and energetic staff team and a skilled and competent governing body. Management is good. The school's overall performance is monitored and analysed well to ensure its continuing

development, although governors could be more rigorous in determining how academic standards can be raised. There is a very good ethos and pupils of all backgrounds and capabilities are included very well in activities. Financial and strategic planning are thorough. The governance of the school is good and statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents hold very positive views of the school and are mainly very satisfied with its provision. Pupils are proud of their school and feel they are valued and well supported by the staff.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- improve the quality of the school's self-evaluation by implementing manageable and effective assessment systems in all subjects and areas of learning;
- provide more opportunities for children in the reception classes to show independence in their learning;
- continue the efforts to ensure that pupils' achievements in writing are as good as other aspects of English.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Pupils' achievement is **good** overall and **very good** at the top of the school. Standards in English, mathematics and science are **well above average** by Year 6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in Years 1, 5 and 6 make very good progress because they are taught very well.
- Standards in reading are high, but writing standards are not as strong.
- Pupils with particular learning needs are supported well and make similar progress to their classmates.
- The school's performance in the Year 6 national tests has improved well over recent years.

Commentary

1. Pupils now make better progress than at the time of the last inspection and standards of attainment are higher. Effective leadership by the senior managers and subject leaders is promoting the rise in standards.
2. In the Foundation Stage¹, children achieve well because of good teaching and support. They are admitted to the school with levels of attainment that vary widely, but are at least at the levels expected for their age. They are on course to reach above average standards by the end of the year. Most are likely to achieve the nationally expected goals in all six areas of learning², and a significant proportion will exceed them. Good parental support, especially with reading, also extends children's skills well.
3. In the 2004 assessments of pupils in Year 2, results were well above the national average in reading and mathematics and above average in writing. When compared with schools with similar intakes, results were above average in reading and mathematics and average in writing. The improvement in results over the past five years has been in line with the national trend.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	17.5 (18.0)	15.8 (15.7)

¹ The Foundation Stage covers both nursery and reception years. In this school, it is the reception year only.

²The nationally agreed areas of learning are personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and physical development.

writing	15.4 (15.6)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	17.5 (18.0)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 46 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

4. Inspection findings are that pupils currently in Years 1 and 2 achieve well overall and particularly well in Year 1. Attainment by Year 2 is above average in speaking, listening, reading and science. It is average in writing and well above average in mathematics.
5. In 2004, the school's results in the National Curriculum tests in Year 6 were well above average in English, mathematics and science. When compared with schools whose pupils achieved similar scores when they were seven, the results were average in English and above average in mathematics and science. The school exceeded the targets it set itself for mathematics. In English, it exceeded its target for the proportion of pupils who would reach Level 4, but did not reach its Level 5 target. The targets for 2005 are considerably higher and very challenging. The school's assessments of Year 6 this year indicate that they may not be met. Over the past five years, the school's results in this age group have improved at a faster rate than the national trend.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.6 (29.1)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	29.5 (30.4)	27.0 (26.8)
science	30.5 (31.1)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 44 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

6. Inspection findings are that pupils achieve well in Years 3 and 4 and very well in Years 5 and 6. The pupils in Year 6 this year have built well on the very good results they achieved at the age of seven. They have attained well above average standards in speaking, listening, mathematics and science, and above average standards in writing.
7. The school caters effectively for pupils from all backgrounds. Boys and girls do equally well and the school does well to ensure that the variations in performance between the genders are smaller than the national picture. Lower attaining pupils with special educational needs and the higher attainers, including those with particular gifts or talents, achieve as well as others in each class. They receive good support from the teachers and teaching assistants and are given work that is matched well to their capabilities. The school has identified and supports well the most able pupils in each subject area. Therefore, the most able pupils achieve well in the infant classes and very well during their junior years. Pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds make similar progress to other pupils. The small number whose first language is not English are monitored closely and achieve very well.
8. Pupils achieve well in religious education and reach standards that are above those expected in the county's agreed syllabus at the ages of seven and 11.

Achievement is also good in ICT, which was a key issue for improvement at the time of the last inspection that has been tackled well. Pupils' skills as seen in the computer room are well above average, although they do not have many opportunities to practise them further in the classrooms, so that overall attainment is above average at the ages of seven and 11. The inspection did not cover other subjects in detail, but samples of work indicate that pupils' achievements are at least good and sometimes very good.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and values are **very good**. Their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **very good**. Behaviour and the consideration and courtesy pupils show towards others are **very good**. Attendance is **very good** and punctuality is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils show excellent engagement in their learning and other school activities.
- Pupils are extremely willing to take responsibility and contribute to the life of the school.
- Pupils' behaviour and the quality of their relationships with others are very good.
- Attendance levels are high.
- Pupils demonstrate very good spiritual, moral and social qualities.

Commentary

9. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour, personal development and attendance have significantly improved since the previous inspection. Pupils of all ages have very good attitudes towards their learning. They demonstrate high levels of interest and engagement in their work and other school activities. They are equally capable of working independently, in pairs and in larger groups. They sustain excellent levels of commitment and concentration because the work they are given is well matched to their learning needs.
10. Attendance is well above the national average. The school has achieved these high attendance levels partly through rigorous monitoring and also through gaining the full co-operation of parents. It also provides a stimulating, enjoyable and interesting curriculum with many additional activities at lunchtime and at the end of the school day, so that pupils want to attend.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	3.8	School data:	0.2
National data:	5.1	National data:	0.4

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

11. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good. Pupils demonstrate care and consideration for each other, are courteous and polite towards adults and welcoming towards visitors. They are confident, engage adults in conversation, hold doors open and allow others to go first. Relationships throughout the school are very good and the small numbers of pupils from other ethnic and cultural backgrounds are included very well within the school community. There is no evidence of bullying and pupils are confident that, should it arise, adults will help them to deal with it. The implementation of the school's behaviour policy and system of rewards is consistent and successful. No pupil has been excluded for at least the last five years.

12. Pupils are encouraged to take on many responsibilities around the school and there are very good opportunities for them to develop their leadership skills. The school council takes its responsibilities very seriously and has a significant influence on the life and work of the school. All Year 6 pupils are prefects and each year a head boy and a head girl are elected to represent the school. The house system provides many other opportunities for leadership development, for example through the appointment of house captains and leadership roles in sports and other competitive activities.
13. The spiritual, moral and social development of pupils is very good and their cultural development is good. The spiritual ethos of the school is very well established. There are very good opportunities for pupils to explore their own values, feelings and emotions through literacy, drama, religious education, music, history and art. Personal and social values are strongly promoted through assemblies and the comprehensive personal, social and health education programme. The school provides a very clear moral code with a strong emphasis on the principles of equality, inclusion and diversity. As pupils mature they demonstrate a capability to act in accordance with their own principles and are well equipped to challenge injustice and discrimination. All of this results in a strong sense of community within the school.
14. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of British cultural heritage and traditions are very good. Although there are only a small number of pupils from other ethnic and cultural backgrounds, the awareness of other cultures and of the multi-cultural nature of many communities in Britain is developed soundly.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching, learning and assessment are **good**. A **very good** curriculum is enhanced by an **excellent** range of extra activities. The care of pupils is **very good**. There is a **very good** partnership with parents and with the wider community.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good** overall and are **very good** in Years 1, 5 and 6. Assessment procedures are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good in Years 1, 5 and 6 and ensures that pupils learn very efficiently.
- Specialist teachers and teaching assistants enhance the quality of education very well.
- Lessons cater well for the needs of the full range of pupils.
- There are too few opportunities for reception children to show independence and make their own choices.

- Assessment is effective in the core subjects and ICT, but not developed well enough to raise standards in other subjects.

Commentary

15. The school has improved the quality of teaching since its previous inspection and this is having a positive impact on pupils' achievement. There is a high proportion of good and very good teaching, especially in Years 1, 5 and 6. This reflects the success of the school's initiatives to raise standards in these age groups. Lessons in these classes are very interesting and challenging and are based on high quality relationships in the classroom. Teachers' methods involve all pupils very well and are adapted to suit different learning styles. Across the school as a whole, teachers are very successful at engaging pupils in their learning and in securing high standards of behaviour. As a result, pupils learn efficiently in a pleasant working atmosphere.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 35 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4 (11%)	11 (31%)	17 (49%)	3 (9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

16. The school delegates more lessons to specialist teachers and to teaching assistants than is seen in most primary schools and this is very successful. Teaching assistants lead art and design and ICT lessons and specialist teachers enhance pupils' learning in music and physical education lessons very well. Lessons in these subjects ensure that the expertise available on the staff is used very effectively and standards are rising as a result.
17. A significant strength of many of the best lessons is the extent to which the requirements of all pupils are addressed. Teachers' plans ensure that pupils of all capabilities have work suited to their needs. For the lower attainers and those with special educational needs, teachers and support staff take very good account of pupils' individual targets in class and in individual and small group work. These pupils make very good progress towards their own targets and achieve well in lessons. There are equally good arrangements for the more able pupils and those with particular gifts or talents. Teachers' questioning of these pupils and very challenging activities ensure that they perform at a high level in many lessons. However, a few of the less effective lessons are characterised by insufficient challenge for the higher attainers or support for the lower attainers. In these, the higher attainers are required to complete simple, routine tasks alongside the rest of the class rather than being stretched further by activities more suited to their abilities. As a result, they are not fully engaged in lessons and do not achieve as well as they could. Activities are occasionally too complex for the lower attainers and expectations of what they can do are too high.

18. Teaching and learning are good in the Foundation Stage in all areas of learning. All teachers and teaching assistants work well together to provide an effective range of activities that help young children to achieve well. However, the majority of activities are directed closely by a teacher or teaching assistant and there are limited opportunities for children to make regular independent choices from a range of relevant activities across the six areas of learning.
19. In the Foundation Stage, good assessment arrangements help teachers to plan effective groupings in the teaching of communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. The school is at present developing manageable ways to improve assessments in all areas of learning still more, so that teachers are well informed of each child's current attainment and can plan suitable activities. In Years 1 to 6, assessment procedures are good at tracking pupils' achievements in the key skills of literacy, numeracy, science and ICT. Some elements, such as the tracking of particular groups of pupils according to gender or ethnicity have very good features. The arrangements are increasingly being used by teachers to ensure that all pupils are making the progress expected and to check that suitable work is planned. Assessment systems are informal in other subjects with no agreed whole-school policy. As a result, there has not been enough progress on a key issue from the last inspection which was to improve the assessment and monitoring of the full range of subjects. Teachers have a satisfactory understanding of pupils' overall standards that enables them, for example, to complete a pupil's annual report. However, they still do not have enough secure detail about pupils' ongoing achievements to enable them to plan efficiently and ensure that standards rise across the curriculum as a whole.

The curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is **very good**. There are **excellent** opportunities to broaden pupils' experiences through extra-curricular activities. The school's accommodation and resources are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is organised very effectively in Years 1 to 6 and contributes very well to pupils' achievements.
- There are too few opportunities for children in the reception classes to choose from a range of activities.
- An excellent range of visits, visitors and club activities increases pupils' interest and enjoyment in their learning.
- There is very good provision for pupils with particular learning needs.
- The computer room is too small for whole-class lessons.

Commentary

20. The school has improved the quality of the curriculum very well since the last inspection. It has addressed the weaknesses identified very effectively. The curriculum is very well planned and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and religious education. The school plans effective links between

subjects and considers a wide range of learning styles that help pupils to learn well. The very good personal, social and health education programme contributes very well to the whole school ethos. Literacy and numeracy have a high focus on each class timetable. The school has recently extended the curriculum for Years 5 and 6 pupils to include French lessons.

21. The school provides a good curriculum in the reception classes with all the required areas of learning included well. There is a strong emphasis on communication, language and literacy and mathematical development that promotes good achievement in these key skills. However, there are not enough opportunities for children to select activities themselves across all areas of learning and to use resources independently.
22. The curriculum is organised very well to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and those identified as needing additional support for literacy. There is good support for pupils whose home language is not English. Work is planned carefully to extend and challenge the most able pupils in most lessons. These pupils have relevant, additional homework each week and opportunities to excel in line with their capabilities.
23. The school provides an excellent range of visits, visitors and club activities that stimulate pupils' enthusiasm for learning and increase their knowledge and skills. Visits link very well to pupils' current areas of study. The school makes very good use of the environment of Epping Forest and the local library in all year groups. Pupils' interest is motivated greatly by themed weeks such as Arts Week, Science Week and Health Week. There is high participation in sport and competition with local teams in a wide range of sports activities. All clubs are attended very well. The school takes a very active part in local music festivals and art exhibitions and the orchestra plays at parish events.
24. The school has improved the school grounds and building greatly since the last inspection. The main building has been refurbished and the newly built hall provides a very good space for physical education lessons, whole school assemblies and school lunches. The grounds are attractive and have sufficient areas for pupils to play or sit quietly. However, the space in the computer suite is extremely cramped for teaching whole classes and it is difficult for some pupils to see the overhead screen. The school has three 'temporary' classrooms, which are not as attractive and practical as the rest of the building and where the school is not able to install some of the most efficient ICT equipment that it uses elsewhere. There are plans to build permanent classrooms to replace these when funding has been secured.

Care, guidance and support

The provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is **very good**. Provision for support, advice and guidance is also **very good**. Pupils' views and opinions are sought and acted on **extremely well**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The ethos of the school is very caring and supportive.
- There are very good arrangements for child protection, health and safety.
- The support given to vulnerable pupils is very good.
- Outstanding consideration is given to pupils' views and opinions.

Commentary

25. The welfare and pastoral support provided by the school are very good. Staff know and understand their pupils well and are sensitive to their personal needs. They create an environment within which everyone is encouraged to work hard and achieve to the best of their ability. Pupils are provided with very good advice and guidance overall, although the absence of assessment arrangements in some subjects diminishes this a little. There is very good awareness of the needs of vulnerable pupils and their families and the arrangements for child protection are very good. Very good individual education and behaviour plans are in place for relevant pupils. Regular monitoring by teachers and support staff ensures that the targets set for pupils are challenging but also realistic and achievable. The school draws on the support and advice of social services and other outside agencies, such as the education welfare service, when necessary.
26. There are very good arrangements for ensuring that the school environment is healthy and safe. The headmaster and site manager oversee the implementation of the school's health and safety policy. For the governing body, health and safety practice is monitored by a governor who in professional life is well trained and experienced in health and safety procedures. There is good advice and support available from the local education authority when required. The provision for first aid is very good. Pupils are well supervised and taught to use school equipment safely and to observe high standards of hygiene. The school is cleaned and maintained to a good standard. The personal, social and health education programme ensures that pupils have a good understanding of the value of pursuing a healthy lifestyle.
27. The relationships and mutual trust between pupils, and between pupils and staff are excellent. Pupils say that when they have concerns or need to seek help they are confident that staff will listen and respond to their needs. The school council provides an excellent consultative link between pupils and the school management. The school values the views of its pupils and responds to them exceptionally well. The induction arrangements for supporting children when they enter reception are good. The Foundation Stage co-ordinator promotes good liaison with a local pre-school but does not yet receive information about children's level of attainment in the six areas of learning. Overall, the quality of welfare and support provided by the school has been well maintained since the previous inspection. In some respects, such as the quality of relationships and the value placed on the views of pupils, it has been strengthened and further developed.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has developed a **very good** partnership with parents. There is **very good** involvement with the wider community and with other schools and colleges.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents have very positive views of the school.
- There is very good information provided about the curriculum and about pupils' progress in most subjects.
- There is very good consultation between the school and parents.
- Pupils benefit from the close links with other schools.

Commentary

28. The school has built on the good provision in this area identified by its previous inspection. It has established a very good partnership with parents that enables them to play a key part in their children's education. Very effective two-way communication, including regular surveys of parental opinion, ensures that the school has a very good understanding of their views and opinions and is able to deal quickly with any problems or concerns. Parents are very supportive of the school and express high levels of satisfaction with the quality of education and care provided. The quality of the information provided about the curriculum, related topic work, the extensive range of additional activities and their children's attainment and progress is very good overall. It is very effective in those subjects where teachers have access to secure assessment arrangements and for children with special educational needs.
29. The termly progress reports provide a good overview of pupils' personal and academic development, usually with clear indications of their progress, effort and attainment. The attainment data from each pupil's tracking and monitoring records for literacy and numeracy are shared with parents as graphs attached to end of the summer term reports. There are termly consultation evenings, which are very well attended. Children's targets and strategies for raising attainment further are shared with parents at these meetings.
30. Parents support the school very well. There is a very active parent-teacher association that organises regular social and fund raising events, some of which attract the interest of the wider community. Many local organisations and individuals have been very supportive of some of the fund raising activities, particularly where there are clearly identified projects such as the installation of security cameras around the school. Many parents regularly volunteer to help in school, and with educational visits and extra-curricular activities. There are strong links to the parish church to which the school is affiliated and pupils regularly attend church services to celebrate the main Christian festivals. Through these and other outreach activities, such as the appearance of pupils in national television programmes, the school has become widely recognised by, and involved in, the community it serves.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Both the leadership and management of the school are **good**. The headmaster is an **effective** leader and is supported **well** by the senior staff. Governance is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headmaster provides caring and purposeful leadership and has raised standards in the school well.
- There is a very good ethos in the school and a strong spirit of teamwork.
- Teaching, learning and the curriculum are monitored and improved well.
- Governors are knowledgeable and effective, support the school well and manage the budget efficiently.

Commentary

31. The headmaster, working closely with the staff and governors, has moved the school forward well since the last inspection. Improved teaching and a much richer curriculum are promoting pupils' progress more effectively. These have had most impact in Years 5 and 6 where provision is now very good and standards have risen faster than the national trend. The headmaster has a clear view of where further improvements are needed to ensure consistency across the school, and is working to ensure that this is realised. He is supported well by his deputy who works closely with him and shares the vision for improvement. Under the current leadership, the school has justifiably become very popular with parents, pupils and staff. They appreciate and contribute to the very good atmosphere and the climate of mutual respect that permeates all activities, in line with the school's stated aims. This promotes high standards in pupils' academic achievement and their personal development. Inclusion is promoted very well throughout the school. There is very effective management of pupils with special learning and language needs and a strong focus on valuing each pupil as an individual.
32. The climate of the school encourages further development well. Compared with the last inspection, subject leaders now have a much clearer view of their roles and responsibilities and how these fit into the development of the school as a whole. They check standards in the school effectively by sampling pupils' work, analysing performance data and observing lessons. They have been enabled to fulfil these roles because the school has succeeded in implementing national workforce reforms more rapidly than many others. As a result, teachers are released from full-time classroom commitments to develop their own practice and that of their colleagues. There are very good procedures for the induction, training and performance management of staff. However, the school has not acted to improve assessment across all subjects in line with the key issue from the last inspection. This means that teachers do not have a full view of standards, and the impact of leadership and management on pupils' overall achievement is good rather than very good.

33. The governors support the school well and are led well by their chairman. They ensure that statutory requirements are met. They bring a wide range of skills and expertise that benefit the school. They are well briefed about many of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are prepared to question and challenge the staff when necessary. However, they are not always rigorous enough in identifying where academic standards should rise for the school to achieve its ambition of being very effective. They liaise well with subject leaders but, again, the absence of assessment systems in a range of subjects means that they are not in a position to guarantee that their decisions are having a positive effect on the full range of pupils' achievements. Their overall planning for the school reflects well both the school's immediate priorities and longer-term factors such as the maintenance and further improvement of the premises and the numbers of pupils likely to be admitted in future years.

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	834 660	Balance from previous year	22 139
Total expenditure	849 194	Balance carried forward to the next	7 605
Expenditure per pupil	2 704		

34. The budget is managed efficiently and supports the school's educational priorities well. Day-to-day administration is handled very well by the school secretary, and the headmaster and governors operate careful control of the school's finances. They ensure good value for money in their spending decisions. In the past few years, their efforts have been particularly successful in securing substantial improvements to the accommodation. They have a firm grasp on how they will manage a tight budget this year and they plan for the future well.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

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

35. Attainment on entry to reception classes varies widely and the school's data indicates that it is, overall, at least at the level expected for four year olds. Children achieve well because of good teaching by an enthusiastic team of adults who provide a stimulating range of activities that capture and maintain children's interest well. Most tasks are closely directed by a teacher or teaching assistant, particularly during the morning sessions, so there are few opportunities for children to select activities themselves from a relevant range or to use resources independently, which limits aspects of their achievement in all areas of learning. Children with special educational needs are supported very well, with understanding and skill.
36. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good. The co-ordinator works well with teachers and support staff to improve the organisation and development of children's learning. Children's achievements are recorded well, although the co-ordinator and teaching staff are developing further manageable ways to ensure that day-to-day assessments are noted consistently and used well to plan work at the correct level for all children. There has been good improvement in provision from the last inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Adults establish a purposeful working atmosphere where children grow in confidence and develop enthusiastic attitudes to learning.
- There are limited opportunities for children to make decisions about their choice of activities.

Commentary

37. The children achieve well and exceed the expected learning goals by the end of the reception year because of good teaching in this area. Staff establish a calm and secure working atmosphere where children become increasingly confident in carrying out the work that adults have asked them to do and, when given the opportunity, in selecting tasks for themselves in the outdoor area. Children respond well to frequent praise and encouragement and most try hard to do their best. Rules and routines are clearly and consistently established. Teachers provide good opportunities for children to learn how to behave socially, such as taking turns in 'circle time' and listening to other children, or in working co-operatively with others in their group. The school has a good

outdoor area, where relevant role-play and other activities are set out and these are supervised well by parents each afternoon. Apart from a reading area, other activity areas linked to children's current learning are not routinely set out in classrooms and children only use the outside space on a rotational basis across the two classes. This limits children's independence, ability to initiate ideas and enjoyment in exploring challenges they choose for themselves.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children want to learn because the skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing are taught in an enjoyable way.
- There are not enough opportunities for children to use writing skills in independent play situations.

Commentary

38. Teaching is good and learning reflects this, so that all children achieve well. Overall, most children exceed the expected early learning goals in this area of learning. Teachers and their assistants constantly talk to the children during their activities and expect them to listen carefully and to respond with properly constructed sentences. In whole-class discussion, children are encouraged to make a contribution and adults constantly provide very good models of speech. As a result of this guidance by adults, most children enter Year 1 with speaking and listening skills that are above those expected for their age. Teachers put great emphasis on the link between letters and sounds and nearly all of the children have good skills in using combinations of sounds to make words and work confidently on reading activities. Most children have reading skills that are above those expected for their age at the end of the reception year. Children's skills in writing are lower on entry than speaking, listening or reading. Very careful support is given to ensure that they form their letters correctly. Good links are made between reading, writing and spelling and teachers effectively guide children to use letter sounds to build words in their own writing. Most children have achieved the level of attainment expected and can write a simple sentence with full stops. Higher attainers write a sequence of sentences, mostly using correct punctuation, as a simple story or account. Although children have good, structured activities to extend their writing skills during literacy lessons, during the inspection there were no opportunities for children to practise their emerging writing skills independently.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Interesting and motivational practical activities develop children's confidence and knowledge of number and money.

- Activities to increase and consolidate learning are limited.

Commentary

39. By the time children enter Year 1, attainment is above average. Almost all have achieved and many have exceeded the expected levels. Children's very good attitudes to mathematics contribute greatly to their good achievement. The quality of teaching is good with lively strategies to keep children busy and enthusiastic. Teachers plan activities that are matched well to children's abilities and prior learning, so that children achieve well in numeracy lessons. Children can count along a number line to 20 and most are confident in counting backwards from 10. They recognise a range of coins, with the most able using coins up to £2. Most use a range of strategies for the early skills of addition and subtraction. Teachers guide children well to apply their skills. For instance, groups of children practised 'buying' and 'selling' fruit in a lesson, after working with a range of coins. This activity was available as one of the activities during the afternoon in the outdoor area. A small group of children reinforced their prior learning well and very seriously took on the roles of 'shop-keeper' and 'purchasers'. However, there are few opportunities for children to extend their learning through independent activities for mathematical development in the classroom.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A good range of activities is planned for children to learn about the world around them.
- In some activities children are guided too much.

Commentary

40. Teaching and learning are good overall and promote good achievement. By the time children enter Year 1, most are above the standard expected for their age. Teachers provide interesting activities to stimulate curiosity. Children explore sand and water frequently when it is their turn to use the outdoor area. They have frequent opportunities to make artefacts, but often these demand little imagination and do not challenge them to select tools and use a variety of joining techniques independently. There are many practical experiences to observe and study living things. Children respond well to good quality, first-hand experiences such as a visit to a farm, pond dipping and growing cress seeds, and they learn well about the world around them. There is a good programme of work for religious education. Children celebrate Christian festivals and learn about the beliefs and customs of children from other cultures around the world from well-chosen stories, artefacts and discussion. ICT is taught well. Children build on their very good mouse control to use a variety of programs competently and produce simple graphics and text. They use

computers to consolidate their learning in reading and mathematical development.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Activities are challenging and enjoyable.
- There are few opportunities to use large toys in the outdoor area.

Commentary

41. Good, and often very good, teaching and learning help children to achieve well. All children are likely to attain the expected level of attainment at the end of the reception year and most will exceed it. The school has improved the outdoor area for reception children very well since the last inspection and children have regular opportunities to increase their manipulative skills in water and sand trays. However, the school has a limited range of large-wheeled toys for children to use and these are not available every day. This limits overall achievement. Nevertheless, children have good opportunities each day to use the school's adventure playground for climbing and balancing. Teachers work effectively with the school's physical education co-ordinator in lessons in the school hall. Children use the space very sensibly and safely and show good control. They demonstrate a good understanding of the need to warm up before physical activities and improve their skills in hopping, jumping, running and skipping well. Children show increasing dexterity in their control skills when using equipment like scissors, pencils and small building bricks. Most cope very well with buttons and fastenings.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The emphasis on developing children's creative imagination is effective.
- Children do not have enough opportunities to explore all areas of creativity independently.

Commentary

42. Children achieve well because of good teaching. Most achieve above the expected level for their age. Skills in drawing and painting improve well because staff encourage and teach new skills very sensitively. Children paint with firm brush strokes, select colours deliberately when printing and completing attractive collages with a range of materials. No music lesson was seen, but teachers' planning shows that children's skills are extended well. In assemblies, children sing enthusiastically and learn new songs quickly.

Teachers' assessments of music show that children achieve well over the year. The outdoor area includes good resources for imaginative play and dressing up. Children demonstrate good imaginative ideas and creative skills in acting out different roles in the class shop or characters in their own story. Recently, children made their own stick puppets and decorated them attractively for puppet shows. As children work on literacy and numeracy activities all morning, art, music and other creative activities are not freely available throughout the day to extend their achievements in this area of learning.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Modern foreign language (French)

43. The school has very recently started to provide weekly French lessons to pupils in Years 5 and 6. Their second lesson took place during the inspection. Pupils are keen to learn and responded well. The visiting teacher gave them a very good model of spoken and written French. She combined oral and written work well. Almost all pupils are at a very early stage of learning, but showed good progress in using basic vocabulary to take part in a simple conversation. Early indications are that this is a positive addition to the school's curriculum.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is especially good for the oldest pupils who achieve very well in Years 5 and 6.
- Pupils do not achieve as well in writing as in other aspects of English.
- The subject leaders work closely with senior staff to ensure the subject develops further.
- Pupils apply their skills well to other subjects.

Commentary

44. The school has maintained the good provision in English identified by the previous inspection and has further improved the standards attained by its oldest pupils. As a result, overall improvement has been good. The 2004 assessments of pupils in Year 2 were well above the national average in reading and above average in writing. The results for Year 6 were well above the national average in English. Performance in this age group was average when compared with the schools that achieved similar results when pupils were tested at the age of seven.
45. Inspection findings are that pupils achieve well overall. This includes both boys and girls, the more able pupils, those with special educational needs and those whose first language is not English. Achievement is good in the infant classes. Standards are above average overall. Standards and progress are better in speaking, listening and reading than in writing where they vary too much between classes. This weakness has been identified by the senior managers. They have taken action to remedy it, but this is yet to have a full impact. By Year 2, standards are above average in speaking, listening and reading, and average in writing. Teachers' assessments show that, as in 2004, a smaller than average proportion of pupils have reached Level 3 in writing.
46. In the junior school, achievement is good in Years 3 and 4. It is very good in Years 5 and 6 where the drive to raise standards in recent years has been successful. Pupils reach well above average standards by Year 6 in speaking, listening and reading. Standards in writing are at least above average, but, as in Years 1 and 2, not as strong as the other aspects of English. This relative weakness in writing has been identified by the school and is a focus for current improvement in all age groups. The oldest pupils are very effective listeners, and articulate and confident speakers with a wide and interesting vocabulary. They read a wide range of texts very competently. They have positive attitudes to reading and read extensively both for information and for pleasure. Their written work is structured and presented well, with handwriting that is mostly good. Standards of spelling and punctuation are above those expected of this age group.

47. Teaching and learning are good. They are very good in Years 1, 5 and 6. The teachers plan well in age-group teams and most lessons cater well for pupils of all abilities. However, in weaker lessons, the most able pupils spend too much time on routine tasks and often do not complete the more challenging activities that are planned for them. This limits their rate of progress, especially in writing. The very good lessons are characterised by skilled questioning by the teachers, very effective use of the available time and by high levels of involvement and activity on the part of the pupils. In all age groups, teaching assistants are used very effectively, especially to support pupils with particular learning or behavioural needs.
48. Leadership and management are good. The two subject leaders liaise effectively with the senior managers to share information about pupils' performance and how it can be improved. Teachers make regular assessments of individual progress and use these to set targets with pupils, so that pupils know what to do next in their learning. Teachers are increasingly using available data to check that all individuals are making the progress expected of them.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

49. Pupils apply their English skills well to other subjects. In writing, this was an issue for improvement from the previous inspection that has been addressed well. The development of speaking and listening skills is encouraged widely and classes currently have targets to improve this further. These targets are used well by teachers and pupils, for example, ensuring that younger pupils speak in whole sentences and older pupils use correct subject terminology. Teachers' planning increasingly identifies cross-curricular opportunities for pupils to read and write and these are most effective in science and the humanities. There has been good improvement in the extent to which ICT is used to practise and apply pupils' English skills across a wide range of topics.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils of all capabilities achieve very well.
- Teaching is very effective and is based on very good systems for checking pupils' progress.
- Very good leadership and management are ensuring that standards continue to rise.
- Pupils are very enthusiastic learners.

Commentary

50. The school has improved well and has continued to build effectively on the above average standards reported at the time of the last inspection. The

assessments of pupils in Year 2 have been well above the national average for several years. When compared with the national picture, the performance of pupils in Year 6 has varied considerably over the past five years, from average to very high. This age group has performed very well in the past two years. The 2004 test results were well above the national average and above the average of similar schools. Inspection findings are that pupils of all abilities make very good progress and those currently in Year 2 and Year 6 attain well above average standards.

51. The reason that pupils do so well in mathematics is that teaching is very good and has improved substantially since the last inspection. Lessons are planned very well and systematically develop pupils' skills, especially in number. Teachers have high expectations of pupils, their subject knowledge is very secure and they promote very good relationships in their classes. Work caters for the full range of pupils. The arrangements to group pupils in Years 3 to 6 in year groups for this subject mean that work can be targeted efficiently to pupils' needs. Support staff are deployed very well to give help to individuals and groups as necessary and 'booster' classes add well to the quality of provision. Teachers give clear and helpful feedback to pupils on how they can improve. As a result of these factors, pupils are very keen learners and are developing very positive attitudes to the subject. They enjoy lessons, concentrate well and are determined to succeed.
52. Within this very positive picture, the lessons that are a little less successful than others are characterised by pupils not all being engaged in the 'starter' activity or by a lack of open-ended investigations to challenge the higher attainers even more. The school was criticised in its last report for using too many unsuitable worksheets in mathematics. This is no longer the case. However, the workbooks that have replaced the worksheets do not always contain the best activities to move pupils' learning forward efficiently, especially for the younger pupils. The subject leader has recognised this and has plans to ensure that pupils' written work is even more focused on the skills that teachers seek to develop.
53. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The subject leader samples pupils' work, observes lessons and checks teachers' planning. She uses the information gained effectively to evaluate the curriculum and to establish a clear view of standards across the school. Working in conjunction with the school's senior managers, she establishes clear action plans for further improvement. The school uses its detailed assessment procedures well to inform its planning for development.

Mathematics across the curriculum

54. The use of mathematics across the curriculum is good and is an area of current focus for further improvement, reflecting the school's commitment to forging effective links between subjects. Pupils use their skills in work in the computer suite. In science, pupils measure, collect and analyse data. In design and technology and geography, teachers have checked that their planning exploits

opportunities to practise and apply pupils' mathematical skills and knowledge. Good book resources support the school's efforts in this initiative.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in Years 5 and 6 achieve very well because of consistently very good teaching.
- The co-ordinator has led the development of scientific enquiry skills very well and this has significantly improved standards.
- Pupils are very enthusiastic and work very confidently with each other in practical experimentation and investigation.
- The co-ordinator does not evaluate pupils' learning and achievement sufficiently rigorously to raise standards further.

Commentary

55. Standards attained by pupils at the end of Year 2 are above average. This is an improvement on the assessments made for the 2004 group of pupils. Standards attained by pupils at the end of Year 6 are well above average. They reflect the results of national tests for the past two years. There has been very good improvement in standards since the last inspection. Through effective leadership, the quality of teaching, learning and pupils' achievement have improved significantly, especially in the development of scientific enquiry skills which was a key issue for improvement from the last inspection.
56. Pupils' achievement is very good overall. It is good in Years 1 and 2 where all topics have a good practical element. 'Real' experiences such as a visit from a hen or observing the stages of the growth of a bean help to promote good learning. Occasionally, teachers direct pupils' learning too closely and this limits the development of independent scientific thinking and ideas. Progress increases in the junior classes. It is particularly good in the mixed-age Year 5/6 classes, where teaching is consistently very good. By Year 6 most pupils can raise their own scientific questions, devise experiments and explain their findings coherently, which were weaknesses at the time of the last inspection. Pupils with special educational needs are supported very well by teachers, teaching assistants and by other pupils during practical activities. Consequently, they make similar progress to their peers and very often achieve the expected level of attainment for their age.
57. Teaching and learning are very good overall and are raising standards of pupils' attainment. They are good in Years 1 and 2, and some very good teaching was also seen in lessons. The strength in practical work runs right through the school, with teachers sharing a common understanding of the importance of scientific enquiry in helping pupils gain the knowledge and understanding of the subject. Pupils respond very well to teachers' high

expectations and challenge in investigational work and experimentation and can talk knowledgeably about what they have done and what they have found out. Teachers discuss and review lessons with pupils very well and work hard to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities, with probing questions and helpful support. Teachers ensure that pupils use a very good range of recording methods, particularly in junior classes, so that they practise their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills very well. A very good range of visits and visitors contributes very well to pupils' scientific understanding.

58. The subject is led very well and its management is good. The subject leader has monitored teaching and learning very well by looking at teachers' plans and pupils' work and by observation of class lessons. She has supported staff very well and helped them to improve the teaching and learning in science. Assessment procedures are good. Although assessment information is collected from most year groups, pupils' progress is not tracked closely in all areas of the subject, nor are pupils' test answers analysed consistently to pinpoint possible weaknesses in learning. This lack of information does not ensure that the subject leader identifies and focuses rigorously enough on areas for further development across the whole school. There are very good events to enhance the subject, such as Science Club and Science Week to extend pupils' experiences and knowledge.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have improved greatly in recent years and there is a very clear vision for how to develop the subject further.
- Pupils are taught well by the specialist assistant and their progress is assessed effectively.
- Teachers plan work in the computer room very well in a wide range of subjects, but ICT is not used widely by pupils in their classrooms.
- The computer room is very cramped.

Commentary

59. At the time of the previous inspection, ICT provision was unsatisfactory and a key issue for improvement. The school has successfully improved its provision. Pupils of all abilities now achieve well and reach standards by Year 2 and Year 6 that are above average. By Year 2, most pupils use computers independently, for example to search a database for information about dinosaurs. By Year 6, pupils use computers, video cameras and interactive whiteboards confidently and competently as an integral part of their work in many subjects.
60. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan work that is tailored well to fit in with other topics being studied. New skills are mostly taught by a specialist

teaching assistant who takes all classes for weekly lessons in the computer room. Her very good subject knowledge and clear explanations ensure that pupils make rapid progress. Pupils show obvious enjoyment and application in these lessons. However, the room is very cramped and contains only fifteen computers for use by a whole class. Other machines are not in very regular use in the classrooms and some of the software used in the computer room cannot be used on classroom machines. The school has rightly identified the need to provide pupils with more direct 'hands on' experience and, to this end, is providing new laptop equipment for classrooms very shortly. This will enable the pupils to apply their very good range of skills to the full range of their work even more effectively. It will also supplement the good use that is made already of interactive whiteboards and mobile projectors in the junior classes.

61. The subject is led and managed well by the co-ordinator who works very closely with the specialist teaching assistant. They have ensured that the required curriculum is now taught in full and have introduced good assessment arrangements which clearly show pupils' progress and identify any gaps in provision that need to be acted on. These improvements have addressed well key issues from the previous inspection. Their comprehensive monitoring and thorough action planning are ensuring that the subject continues to develop well throughout the school.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

62. Teachers' plans make very good links between work in ICT and other subjects. Pupils are enabled to practise and apply their skills in meaningful tasks. They record work from literacy lessons and enhance its appearance. In mathematics and science, they effectively manipulate and present data, and use spreadsheets, sensors and a digital microscope. Pupils of all ages use Internet research and computer-based work effectively in subjects such as science, history and geography, including for homework tasks. Digital video cameras are often used to record and evaluate work, in subjects such as physical education. ICT skills are also used well in activities that are not based on subjects. For example, pupils produced a DVD about bullying that received national publicity last year.

HUMANITIES

63. **Geography** and **history** were not a main focus of the inspection. No lessons were seen, but work was sampled. A broad range of pupils' current and previous work was examined and other evidence was drawn from discussions with teachers and pupils, photographs and teachers' planning. Although on this evidence it is not possible to make secure overall judgements about provision, indications are that the curriculum for both subjects meets requirements and standards are at least in line with expected levels.
64. The quality of pupils' work is better overall in history as a result of the richness of the experiences provided and pupils' very good use of their well-developed literacy skills. This is clearly evident in the strong sense of empathy that comes through in their writing. The school has quite rightly identified the need to ensure that the particular skills of each subject are developed more systematically as pupils move through the school.
65. In both subjects, first-hand experiences are used effectively to enhance pupils' learning. In history this regularly involves role-play and drama to stimulate pupils' interest and bring their learning to life. In both subjects, the use of visits and the local area, including the surrounding forest, are used extensively to support teaching and learning. In geography, there needs to be a sharper focus on specific fieldwork techniques. There are increasingly meaningful links with other subjects such as science. Good links were also seen with ICT when pupils in Years 5 and 6 investigated the world's mountains using their good computer skills to construct a database. There are no formal arrangements for assessment, a key issue from the last inspection that has not been addressed. As a result, teachers do not have a full picture of pupils' attainment and progress in these subjects.

Religious education

Provision in religious education **is good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' knowledge of Christianity and other religions is good.
- Teaching is good and deals effectively with sensitive issues.
- Good links are made between the subject and everyday life.
- There are no whole-school procedures for assessing pupils' progress.

Commentary

66. In Year 2 and Year 6, pupils achieve well and standards have been maintained since the last inspection and are above the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress when learning about Christianity, other major world faiths and when considering the similarities and differences between the religions. They understand that religious education has a high priority in the school.

67. By Year 2, pupils are familiar with Bible stories, such as the story of Jonah, and are beginning to appreciate the importance of festivals such as Easter and Diwali. Discussions with Year 6 pupils show that they are keenly interested in finding out about different religions. They are well informed and understand many aspects of a range of world faiths. They know that all religions have distinctive traditions and lifestyles and that people's beliefs make a difference to the way they live their lives.
68. Teaching and learning are good overall, and often very good, as exemplified in two of the three lessons observed. Particular strengths include teachers' good subject knowledge and the stimulating activities that they plan. Artefacts, video, the Internet, Bible readings and well-written stories are used successfully to motivate pupils and to sustain their interest. In Year 6, pupils' learning about ceremonies and initiations was considerably enhanced through drama, mime and the use of video to record their performances. Teachers use good strategies to ensure that lessons relate well to pupils' everyday lives. This was demonstrated very effectively in Year 1 when the story of St Francis led to an interesting discussion of 'saintliness' and how this could be used to become a better person.
69. The subject makes very good contributions to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are regular visitors to the neighbouring church and visits are also made to a synagogue and a mosque to support their learning in particular studies. Perceptive prompts by teachers encourage pupils to consider their own attitudes and beliefs while respecting those of others. They help pupils to confront sensitive issues as in Years 5 and 6 when they attempt to answer questions such as 'Where is heaven?' and 'What does God look like?'
70. The subject leader is knowledgeable and enthusiastic and makes a sound contribution to the overall leadership and management of the school. Although teachers make good use of questioning to check understanding during lessons, there are no formal procedures for assessing pupils' progress. This was a key issue for improvement at the time of the last inspection that has not been remedied.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

71. The inspection did not focus on any of these subjects in detail. Overall provision was not judged, but pupils' work was sampled and discussions were held with subject leaders. None of the subjects have adequate assessment arrangements to ensure that pupils are achieving as well as they can. This is a continuing weakness identified by the last inspection that the school has not rectified.
72. In **art and design**, teachers' plans show that the subject has a good programme of work, which follows national guidelines. Evidence from photographs and work on display indicates that standards are above those expected nationally across the school and that pupils achieve well. The subject

is led well by a specialist teaching assistant, who has been instrumental in improving provision. She assists in the organisation of a very effective Arts Week, when all pupils have very good experiences using new techniques and crafts. The range of work carried out by pupils is good. Much of this is inspired by the good introduction of the work of famous artists, such as Van Gogh, and Paul Klee and living artists such as Richard Long and Philip Cox. Although pupils have sketchbooks, these are used infrequently. This limits their achievement in developing designs and practising drawing or painting skills before they apply them to their work. The sketchbooks do not aid teachers in assessing pupils' progress over time. Pupils have very good opportunities to visit national galleries and a local secondary school provides a very good extension of skills, in master classes for higher attaining pupils. Work on display shows good use of computer programs and good links to history, science and religious education.

73. Parts of a few **design and technology** lessons were seen. The school's programme of work follows national guidance well, but has only recently been revised, so has not been operational for a full year. The limited evidence of work seen in lessons, in pupils' books and models, and the artefacts on display indicates that standards and achievement vary widely across the school. No evidence of pupils' evaluation of their own completed projects is available as pupils and teachers state that these are carried out orally. Standards of design and making skills are above those expected in Year 1 and pupils can explain well what they have done. In Year 2, pupils do not have enough opportunity to plan their own tasks. Teachers demonstrate new techniques effectively, but guide pupils too closely for them to use their own ideas. This restricts the development of pupils' design skills. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are beginning to improve their skills, although these are still broadly in line with those expected for their age. The plans for 'moving monsters' are simplistic, but each of the satisfactory, completed models is different and applies pneumatics well. In a good lesson, pupils demonstrated a keenness for the subject as the teacher guided them well with pertinent questions to evaluate their own structures and make relevant improvements. In Years 5 and 6 pupils have very good opportunities to apply their knowledge from other subjects in the planning and making of 'buggies'. Pupils carry out research about cars and aerodynamics and make detailed plans. The finished, motor-driven buggies are above the standards expected by the end of Year 6 and some are well above these standards. The subject is led and managed satisfactorily. Although she has helped teachers in the planning of some projects, the 'caretaker' subject leader has had few opportunities to evaluate and improve classroom practice. She has very relevant plans to develop the teaching of skills in the subject in future.
74. In **music**, the school makes very effective use of specialist teaching. In the only lesson seen, the music teacher organised an excellent session that maintained pupils' enthusiasm and concentration extremely well. Pupils' attainment was much better than is expected for their age. Achievement was high, including for the most able pupils who were given even more challenging tasks than the rest of the class. In a singing practice, pupils practised their skills satisfactorily, but opportunities were missed by those leading the session to improve the quality of performance. The music teacher's planning ensures that the requirements of

the National Curriculum are met. There are very good arrangements for pupils to learn a musical instrument. This starts at Year 2 with recorder lessons and at least half of the older pupils learn woodwind, string, brass or keyboard instruments. A choir and orchestra meet regularly and perform well, for example, as part of assemblies. They contribute to concerts, performances in the church and local music festivals. The combination of high quality class lessons with the wide range of additional activities means that music makes a valuable contribution to the school's curriculum. The music teacher manages this provision well and, because she teaches all classes, has a good overview of standards. However, her lessons are not formally observed by senior staff. Together with the lack of any structured assessment arrangements, this means that the school is not collecting the monitoring information it needs on the achievements of the full range of pupils to enable it to move the subject forward efficiently.

75. **Physical education** is a current focus for development in the school. At the time of the last inspection, standards in the subject were satisfactory, but the lack of a large hall limited achievement in gymnastics. Since then, the building of The Barn has ensured that the accommodation now meets the needs of pupils, although no gymnastics lessons were taught during the inspection to judge current provision. Almost all pupils meet the required standard for swimming by Year 6 and many exceed it. On the evidence of a small number of lessons in dance and games, the main current initiatives for development are progressing successfully. These have focused particularly on the oldest pupils in those aspects of the subject where they have had least experience in the past. The co-ordinator gives very good support to teachers by working alongside them in many lessons and demonstrating good practice. Other teachers have considerable expertise and this was seen in a very well organised dance and drama lesson with Year 1 that ensured the participation of all pupils and led to significant improvements in performance. The co-ordinator gains a reasonable oversight of standards across the school because he participates in many lessons. Teachers do not formally assess pupils' individual achievements to aid their planning of subsequent lessons, although they have started to use digital cameras to demonstrate and record the quality of pupils' work. There is an extensive programme of extra-curricular sport and fitness activities that greatly benefits those pupils who take part.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

76. A sample was taken of this area of the curriculum. The school offers all its pupils regular lessons and discussion sessions. Programmes for sex and relationship education and drugs awareness are in place. The two lessons seen were of high quality. In one, the nature and consequences of racism were explored very sensitively with Year 6 pupils who responded maturely. The teacher encouraged a high level of debate and elicited very thoughtful comments from the pupils. In a Year 2 lesson, pupils took turns to offer their thoughts on how they behave towards family members. The teacher established an atmosphere where they talked confidently and politely to each other and reflected on others' contributions.

77. The school places great importance on developing pupils' personal qualities and did this very well in the examples seen. The work links well to other projects, such as the making of the DVD of 'The Big Bad Bully' and the regular 'brain gym' sessions. The qualities of respect and care that are promoted are carried over by pupils to the rest of their work in school and are evident in their very good general demeanour and maturity. Set alongside other elements of provision such as the school council, assembly programme and community links, this curriculum area promotes a very positive ethos that contributes significantly to the success of the school.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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