

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY
SCHOOL**

Playden, Rye

LEA area: East Sussex

Unique reference number: 114520

Headteacher: Mrs Denise Freeston

Lead inspector: Mr Paul Evans

Dates of inspection: 23rd - 25th May 2005

Inspection number: 267898

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 - 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 107

School address: Houghton Green Lane
Playden
Rye
East Sussex

Postcode: TN31 7PJ

Telephone number: (01797) 280 277
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Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of Mrs Angela Soderberg
governors:

Date of previous January 1999
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Michael's Church of England Primary School is a smaller-than-average school providing education for 107 children, 59 girls and 48 boys, aged 4 to 11. Although situated in the village of Playden, East Sussex, the school attracts children from surrounding villages and the town of Rye. The number of pupils identified as being eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with the national average. There are no pupils in the school for whom English is an additional language. The proportion of pupils on the school's special educational needs register is below the national average, as is the number of pupils with a statement of special educational need. Children's attainment on entry to the school is slightly above average overall.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20737	Paul Evans	Lead inspector	Mathematics Music Physical education Religious education English as an additional language
9420	David Martin	Lay inspector	
7813	Kevin Wood	Team inspector	English Information and communication technology Geography History Special educational needs
27667	Carolyn Renault	Team inspector	Foundation Stage curriculum Science Art and design Design and technology

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

St Michael's Church of England Primary School is a **very good** school, in which pupils achieve **very well**. Children in the Foundation Stage are given a very good start and pupils are very well prepared for the next stages of their education. Standards are above expectations at the end of Year 2 and well above expectations at the end of Year 6. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent, governance of the school is good and subject co-ordinators monitor standards and achievement in their subjects very well. Pupils' attitudes are very good in the Foundation Stage and **good** throughout the rest of the school, and their behaviour is **very good**. The provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **very good** overall. The school provides **very good** value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils' achievement is very good by the time that they leave the school.
- Standards in English and literacy are above expectations at the end of Year 2 and well above expectations at the end of Year 6. Standards in mathematics and numeracy are well above expectations at the end of Years 2 and 6.
- The leadership and educational vision of the headteacher are excellent.
- The school does not have a hall and the school puts much extra effort into ensuring that this does not adversely affect pupils' learning.
- Pupils' behaviour is very good throughout the school.
- The quality of the curriculum is very good in the Foundation Stage and very good in Years 1 to 6.
- The quality of teaching and learning and the quality of the assessment of pupils' progress are very good throughout the school.
- There are inconsistencies in the quality of annual written reports to parents about the progress of their children.
- There are minor deficiencies and omissions in the school's prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents, but these have no adverse affect on pupils' education.
- The planning to improve the quality of provision for music is not fully in place.

Since the last inspection, the school has made **good** improvement. Standards in national tests, at the end of Year 2 and Year 6, are well above the national averages, for all primary schools. There has been good improvement in the quality of teaching and learning, pupils' achievement, the curriculum, the leadership and management of the school and in the school's overall effectiveness. Standards in national tests have been improved in Year 2 and have been maintained at a high level in Year 6.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Year 6 results

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

Key: A - very high; A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well*

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

Pupils achieve **very well** overall. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve very well and this is built upon successfully so that by the time that pupils leave the school, they have achieved very well from the time that they joined. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well, overall, because of the very good planning and support provided. Because of the small numbers in each year group, attainment on entry is different each year because of the different balance of pupils' abilities. Overall attainment on entry is slightly above the level expected for children of this age. Children in the Foundation Stage reach standards which are above expectations by the time they reach the end of reception class in all areas of learning. In national tests in 2004, at the end of Year 2, standards in English and mathematics were well above average. Teacher assessments showed that standards in science were also well above average when compared to all schools. Standards at the end of Year 6 were well above average in English, mathematics and science. Inspection evidence shows that at the end of Year 2, standards in English are above expectations. Standards in mathematics and science are well above expectations throughout the school. Pupils achieve well in information and communication technology (ICT) and standards are above national expectations throughout the school. ICT is very well used in the teaching and learning of other subjects. Pupils achieve well in religious education and standards are above the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus throughout the school. Art and design is a strength of the school, pupils' achieve very well and standards are well above national expectations for all pupils. Standards are above expectations at the end of Year 2 and well above expectations at the end of Year 6. Standards in physical education were not judged. Achievement in history and music is satisfactory for all pupils and standards are in line with expectations. Recently the school appointed a specialist music teacher with the aim of improving its provision in the subject.

Pupils' attitudes are very good in the Foundation Stage and good throughout Years 1 to 6, and behaviour is very good throughout the school. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social and cultural development is very good overall. Levels of attendance are very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is **very good**. The quality of teaching and learning is **very good** throughout the school. The quality of the curriculum offered to pupils is **very good** overall and there is a **very good** range of activities which enrich the curriculum. The care and welfare of pupils is **good** and provision for their health and safety is satisfactory. All pupils receive **very good** advice, support and guidance. Procedures for child protection are **good**. The school has **good** links with parents and the community and **very good** links with other schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are **very good** overall. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent and her management is **very good**. In a close partnership with the deputy-headteacher and all her team, she has an excellent educational vision for the school. Financial management is **good** and the governors have a **good** understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have a **very good** working partnership with the headteacher.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are **very happy** with what the school provides. In questionnaires, at their meeting with the lead inspector and when spoken to during the inspection, almost all were very complimentary about the school. Pupils are **very pleased** with their school. They have great confidence in all adults working in the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Work closely with the relevant authority to provide the school with a hall.
- Complete and implement the planning to further improve the quality of provision in music.
- Improve the consistency of annual written reports to parents.

And to meet statutory requirements:

- Correct the minor deficiencies and omissions in the prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Pupils' achievement is **very good** overall. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve very well and this very good start is successfully built upon throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well. Standards are **well above average** in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well by the time that they leave the school.
- Standards in English and literacy, mathematics and numeracy and in science are well above average at the end of Year 6.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in their learning and achieve very well.
- Children in the Foundation Stage achieve very well by the time that they join Year 1.
- Pupils' progress and achievement are very well tracked as they move through the school.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	17.4 (15.4)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	16.6 (14.7)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	17.6 (14.5)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 17 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
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English	30.0 (27.0)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	28.7 (29.6)	27.0 (26.8)
science	30.2 (30.0)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 15 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

1. Children join the school with standards which are slightly above average, overall. However, this varies each year because, with a small number of children in each year group, the differing abilities of a small number of children can change the profile of a year group. During their time in the Foundation Stage, children achieve very well and almost all reach standards which are above the expectations of the national early learning goals, in all areas of learning. Children's achievement and the standards that they reach are particularly well promoted in developing personal and social skills and language and creative skills. Very good strategies to assess children's progress mean that individual children receive appropriate help and support in their learning in this mixed-age class.
2. In the national tests at the end of Year 2, in 2004, pupils reached standards which were well above average in reading, writing and mathematics when compared with those in all primary schools nationally. Teacher assessments in science showed that standards were also well above average. When these results are compared with those of similar schools, they are well above average in all three subjects. The trend in the school's results, at the end of Year 2, has been above the national trend when taking all core subjects together and averaging results over the past five years. There was a fall in standards in 2003 but this was because the proportion of pupils with special educational needs was very high in a group of only 15 pupils. However, all pupils in the group achieved very well, as is shown by the very good assessment and tracking information which is used by the school to monitor the progress and achievement of all pupils as they move through the school.
3. Inspection evidence shows that at the end of Year 2, standards in English and literacy are above average. Standards in mathematics and science are well above average. Standards in ICT are above national expectations and standards in religious education are above the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Standards in art and design are well above national expectations. Standards in design and technology and geography are above expectations and standards in music and history are in line with expectations. Standards in physical education were not judged in either Key Stage 1 or 2.
4. In the national tests at the end of Year 6, in 2004, pupils reached standards which were well above average in English, mathematics and science when compared to all primary schools nationally. When compared to schools in which this group of Year 6 pupils performed similarly in their end-of-Year 2 tests, these results were in the top five per cent in English and well above average in mathematics and science. Because class groups are small and the difference of abilities of two or three pupils can change the overall ability level of a group, results vary each year. However, the school has maintained results which were well above national averages or in the top five per cent nationally for the past four years, except in English in 2003. Because of these factors, the overall trend in the school's results at the end of Year 6 is below the national trend, but standards have been maintained at a high level.
5. Inspection evidence shows that, at the end of Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science are well above average and all pupils achieve very well from

the time that they join the school. Standards in ICT are above national expectations and ICT is very well used in the teaching and learning of other subjects. Standards in religious education are above the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Standards in art and design are well above expectations and this is a strength of the school. Standards in design and technology and geography are above expectations. Standards in history and music are in line with expectations.

6. Several factors are responsible for pupils' very good achievement. The very good, highly integrated curriculum joins together learning in several subjects where they fit naturally together. Teachers' planning shows this clearly and many examples of ICT being used as a medium for teaching and learning were seen during the inspection. English and literacy skills are often used and developed in subjects such as history and geography and, similarly, mathematical skills are used in science or topics such as a study of traffic in the high street. This enables pupils to understand the broader areas of learning and thus promotes their learning very well. The quality of teaching is very good and teachers promote pupils' research skills whenever they can; they also develop pupils' skills as independent learners so that pupils often research topics for themselves, choosing for themselves, resources for learning from the school library or from the Internet. Another factor which promotes learning and achievement so well is the very good information gathered on pupils' progress. This is not only used to modify and plan future learning but also to set challenging targets for pupils and to track their progress towards those targets.
7. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well, because of the strong curriculum provided for them, the quality of teaching and support that they are given and because of the very good management of the provision for them by the headteacher who is the special educational needs co-ordinator. The school maintains a register of more-talented pupils and ensures that their particular gifts are promoted in their work whenever possible. These pupils also achieve very well by the time that they leave the school.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes to work are **good** and their behaviour is **very good**. The provision for pupils' spiritual moral, social and cultural development is **very good**. Pupils' attendance is **very good** and the school's actions to promote good attendance are good. Pupils' punctuality is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The innovative curriculum promotes spirituality well.
- Pupils develop very good moral and social attitudes.
- The school does well to provide a broad view of the multi-ethnic nature of Great Britain.
- Most pupils have very good attendance records.

Commentary

8. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good. The links between subjects such as art and science have enhanced the opportunities for spiritual development and in the best teaching the pupils' attention is drawn to appreciate the

beauty of nature and the wonderful gifts of skilled human beings. Assemblies and other celebrations enhance pupils' spiritual development very well.

9. The provision for pupils' moral development is very good. Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong and are involved in drawing up the "Golden Rules" for behaviour. The strong moral code is reinforced by all adults in a consistent way and behaviour and relationships throughout the school are very good.
10. The provision for pupils' social development is very good. Pupils demonstrate good attitudes to their work and very good social awareness, with older pupils taking responsibility for younger pupils in the playground or reading stories to them during wet break times. The school has clear policies to prevent and deal with bullying and racial prejudice. Pupils know what to do if they experience or observe bullying.
11. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. Pupils have a good understanding of their own culture and there are close links to the church and the local community which enhance and extend this knowledge and understanding. The multi-cultural nature of British society is dealt with well in this mono-cultural area through curriculum studies such as the recent Global Culture Week. Visits from a religious leader from another faith community support awareness of other faith traditions and cultures and pupils demonstrate good respect for the values and beliefs of others.
12. The lack of a hall places restrictions on the social and cultural development of pupils by limiting opportunities for visits from educational theatre, music and dance groups and also prevents gatherings of parents, pupils and the local community within the school.
13. The last reported figure, for the year 2003/2004, for overall attendance is very good, being well above that of most other schools. The amount of authorised absence was below the national rate and the amount of unauthorised absence was well below the national rate. These figures show a marked improvement from the situation at the time of the last inspection. The school has good procedures to monitor attendance and is diligent in working with the Education Welfare Officer and in contacting parents to establish reasons for absence in order to improve the record of pupils who cause concern. There have been no exclusions. Punctuality is satisfactory, with only a relatively small number of pupils being late each day.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	4.2
National data	5.1

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.0
National data	0.4

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is **very good**. The quality of teaching and learning is **very good**. The care and welfare of pupils is **good** and provision for their health

and safety is **satisfactory**. The school provides **very good** support, advice and guidance to all its pupils. Partnership with parents and links with the local community are **good** and links with other schools are **very good**.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **very good**. Assessment is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teachers' planning is very good.
- Teachers and their assistants work very well together to promote pupils' learning.
- There are very high expectations for pupils' attitudes and behaviour, throughout the school.
- The quality of marking and assessment is very good.

Commentary

14. The quality of teaching is very good. In the 26 lessons observed, the quality of teaching was good or better in 23 lessons and it was very good or excellent in 12 lessons. Teachers in almost all lessons present very good role models for pupils through their obvious enthusiasm and love of learning, which promotes in pupils good, and sometimes very good, attitudes to their lessons and their learning. The planning of lessons is very good and is particularly strong in promoting cross-curricular learning. Teachers plan to use ICT in almost all lessons and because of this, older pupils learn that using computers to learn in almost any subject is an option which is open to them. This strategy has become so commonplace that in one very good science lesson in Year 6, a significant number of pupils chose to use books that they selected from the school library, rather than be attracted by the option of using a computer and the Internet to research the human skeleton and organs of the body. This is the result of teachers planning not only to develop pupils' skills of research but also to involve pupils in discussions about how they can research and investigate in different ways. Teachers' planning always matches work to pupils' attainment at, at least three different levels and also shows which groups will have targeted support and which will be expected to work independently. Tasks are always linked in planning to the programmes of study of the national curriculum and when lessons involve more than one subject, the lesson focus for learning and assessment is very clearly stated. This high quality planning promotes pupils' learning and achievement very well.
15. Because of good, sometimes very good teaching and the effective support of teaching assistants, pupils with special educational needs achieve at least as well as their peers, and their progress is good. They generally meet the targets set in their individual education plans. Where there is individual support in classes, which is common, their progress is much enhanced.
16. The teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants is very good. Lesson planning is fully shared, with teaching assistants having their own copies of the plan for each lesson and being very clear about their role. In several lessons the class teacher prepared the whole of a mixed-age class for the parts of their task which were common to all. Then, the teacher's assistant took one or two groups, finalised instructions for their task and set them to work while the teacher worked with the remainder of the class to explain what they were going to do which was different. Thus the matching of tasks to pupils' levels of development is very good and because of this

very strong teamwork, all pupils have a very good understanding of their own learning. Also evident in almost all lessons are the very high expectations of all teachers and teaching assistants for good attitudes to work and very good behaviour. Because this is the norm throughout the school, pupils are keen to learn and behave very well in their lessons and these attitudes promote their learning and achievement very well.

17. The school has developed a pattern for the marking and assessment of pupils' progress which is very effective. Teachers mark all work and set aside the work of any pupils who are in need of support for personal marking sessions. Once lessons are begun, the teacher works with this group to re-emphasise what they were intended to learn during the previous lesson and works through the task with the group using very good questioning skills to prompt pupils' involvement and to identify any aspects of learning which require further revision. Often pupils are then set in pairs to work through their work together, identifying weaknesses and making improvements. This method of marking is very effective in promoting improvements in pupils' learning and in extending pupils' understanding of how they learn. During lessons, teachers and teaching assistants often make notes of significant progress in pupils' learning or of areas where pupils may need extra help. These notes are made on adhesive notelets which are later attached to the pupil's profile, which avoids re-writing and consequently is very effective in the use of teachers' time. After personal marking sessions, teachers and teaching assistants make notes of pupils who have made significant progress and of those, if any, who require further support. In this way the recording of pupils' progress is very efficiently handled. The assessments made are also used to advise feedback to parents and to contribute to the school's very challenging target setting and pupils' growing attainment and achievement as they pass through the school.

18. The quality of teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage is very good. The teacher and the teaching assistants form a very good team and provide work which is closely matched to the growing attainment of each child, based on the very good system that they use for assessing children's progress. This ensures that each child makes the progress that they should and consequently very good teaching promotes very good learning in the Foundation Stage.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 26 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
2	10	11	3	0	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **very good** and it is very well enriched. The school's accommodation is **poor** overall. Resources for teaching and learning are **good**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is very good, particularly in developing basic skills and positive attitudes towards learning.

- Teachers make good links between subjects, making the curriculum relevant and interesting and enabling pupils to practise skills.
- The school is well resourced but the lack of a school hall places constraints on curriculum provision.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- The school provides a very good number and a wide range of activities, visits and visitors that enhance pupils' learning very effectively.

COMMENTARY

19. The content of the curriculum for Foundation Stage children in the Reception Year/Year 1 class is very good. There are strong links made between the six different areas of learning and these effectively support children's learning. There is a strong emphasis on children developing personal qualities of self-confidence, independence and enjoyment in learning. Priority is placed on children acquiring literacy skills which equip them well for later learning.
20. The curriculum in Years 1 to 6 is very good. It covers all National Curriculum subjects, religious education, sex and drugs education and personal, social, and health education. Teachers plan their lessons so that links are made between subjects such as art, science and information and communication technology. This enables pupils to practise skills in a real context, for example, by using a digital camera to take photographs which are used as a basis for painting, or by using mathematical knowledge to design complex three-dimensional games in design and technology. This is proving very effective in providing high motivation for pupils and, as a result, they achieve very well.
21. The school enriches the curriculum very well with the support of parents and the local community. Parents with particular skills are frequently invited to work with the pupils to share skills and stimulate interest. Very good links with the local cluster of schools provide opportunities for pupils to develop their sporting skills and higher-attaining pupils have benefited from links between the cluster of primary schools and the local secondary school. The lack of a school hall limits the pupils' learning in PE, particularly gymnastics. The school compensates well by good use of the outdoor space and the on-site swimming pool. Regular transport to another school for PE is expensive in terms of curriculum time wasted as well as the cost of transport. The school cannot invite visits from educational theatre groups or provide enrichment to the curriculum through musical concerts and other performances and workshops because of the lack of a hall, constraining its cultural provision. Good efforts are made to compensate, for example, by a recent visit by the whole school, traveling by coach to another village hall to watch Indian dance as part of a recent multi-cultural topic. Similarly, social development is constrained because the school cannot invite parents to whole-school events and assemblies. The daily disruption and reorganisation of classrooms for assembly and midday meals again impact on curriculum time and organisation. The school provides a good range of after-school activities which include football, netball, swimming and St. John's Ambulance club. In addition pupils' enjoy educational visits which include a residential visit to promote their learning, and there are regular visitors to the school who bring additional richness to pupils' studies of many topics.
22. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Teachers and support staff ensure that pupils have sound access to the curriculum and make similar progress to their peers in their learning and personal development. The teachers and

teaching assistants have a clear understanding of their role and are deployed effectively to support pupils who need additional teaching and guidance in lessons.

23. The school is well resourced with good quality books and materials. The building is well cared for and has a good outdoor learning environment. There have been good improvements to the curriculum since the last inspection, with the exception of the key issue to provide a hall. The school development plan now covers all aspects of the school. Schemes of work are in place for all subjects and lesson planning is now consistent across the school, with a clear emphasis on learning intentions. These are well shared with all adults, including volunteers, in the Foundation Stage class. The very good links made between subjects have improved the use of time overall.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides well for its pupils' wellbeing, in a satisfactorily safe and healthy environment. It provides very good advice, support and guidance for the pupils and makes good arrangements to seek their views and involve them in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good support and advice given for pupils' personal and academic development.
- Pupils have trusting relationships with adults.
- The arrangements for pupils' entry into schooling are good.
- Arrangements for child protection are good.
- Some health and safety items require attention.

Commentary

24. The school has good arrangements for identifying and monitoring situations which may give rise to child protection concerns. Its policy, practices and staff training have been updated in line with recent legislation. There are good procedures and practices to meet the medical needs of pupils.
25. Pupils work in a generally safe and healthy environment. Regular property checks and statutory testing of fittings and equipment are carried out. However, the school has been made aware of some items which were noted during the inspection. Risk assessments are carried out prior to any external visits but these do not fully indicate how possible events should be dealt with if they occur.
26. Pupils receive very good support and guidance in regard to their personal and academic development. As a result of the very good relationships within the school, pupils would feel confident to approach an adult regarding any matters which were troubling them. Their personal development is aided through features such as the playground friends scheme, the sports leadership scheme for Year 5 pupils and the supportive manner in which pupils of all ages intermix. Pupils' academic progress is very well supported through targeted provision, the very effective use of marking and assessment and the use which is made of specific and known targets for individual pupils. Because teachers and teachers' assistants know pupils so well, they are aware of their individual strengths and weaknesses and have very good strategies for ensuring that all pupils are fully included in all activities.

27. Pupils who potentially have special educational needs are tracked from the point at which initial concerns are raised by teachers or teaching assistants and at a stage before they are formally identified as having special educational needs. This very good practice often results in improvement being made and the pupil concerned not being put on the school's special educational needs register. The school provides good pastoral support for all pupils. Planning for pupils with special educational needs is good.
28. The school has good induction arrangements for new pupils, which help to reduce any potential trauma for the child and assist with their early learning. For instance, children make preliminary visits to the school and parents are consulted about their child's level of personal and academic development. Parents are provided with good information which enables them to help their child at home, and their child's integration into the school is discussed after the child has attended for a few weeks. Pupils who join the school later than the reception class are also well provided for and report that they feel welcomed.
29. The school makes good provision for seeking and acting upon the views of pupils. Pupils take part in an annual survey to discover their views on various topics and occasionally issues are discussed in assemblies. As a result of these consultations, the variety of play equipment in use during playtimes has been extended. A Key Stage 2 council was formed to draw up rules for pupils' use of football cards and the school is examining whether to introduce a permanent and enlarged council. Pupils report that they feel their views are sought and valued.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Parents' links with the school are good and these links make a good contribution to pupils' learning. Links with other schools are very good and links with the community are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are very strong links with other schools through the cluster and other arrangements.
- There are good links between parents and the school and these have a strong impact on pupils' learning at school and at home.
- The quality and usefulness of pupils' annual reports could be improved.
- The use of homework is well developed and communications with parents are good.

Commentary

30. A substantial majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire prior to the inspection felt that they are well informed about the school's activities and their child's progress, but some felt that the school did not sufficiently seek and respond to their views. Evidence gathered during the inspection did not always support these views. The school provides a written report in the summer term which details what pupils have been doing. The report also sometimes gives targets for English and mathematics and the pupil's personal development. However, these targets are not consistently given nor are they always written in clear language. The reports are not always very explicit or helpful to parents as to how they could assist their child's learning at home or their personal development. There are also minor deficiencies in, or omissions from, other statutory documents such as the school prospectus and the

annual report by governors, but these do not adversely affect pupils' achievement or the standards that they reach.

31. Parents receive newsletters which keep them informed of forthcoming events. They also receive information regarding the curriculum and topic work for the term but this does not include guidance as to how parents could help their child at home. A parent handbook is issued each year and the new homework policy was issued to all parents. Parents of reception children receive advice on helping their child with writing and reading and their child's '*Foundation Stage Profile*' is discussed with them. Older children have spelling journals, homework folders and a reading record book which are available as a means of communication between home and school and, together with advice to parents on holiday topics, enable parents to make a good contribution to their children's learning at school and at home.
32. The school has a good policy for homework. It provides for a steady increase in pupils' work at home as they move through the school and often involves older pupils in researching a topic which some undertake on the Internet. Parents are kept well informed about homework expectations through home-school books. Although a small number of parents expressed concerns that there was not enough homework for pupils about to leave the school, inspection evidence does not share these concerns.
33. Parent consultation evenings are held each term. These meetings are well attended and provide parents with good opportunities to discuss their child's progress. The school follows up parents who do not attend the meetings. A large number of parents come into the school on a regular basis to help in classrooms. The school makes a good effort to discover the views of parents through annual surveys on both general topics and homework. The outcomes are reported to parents and the school responds to any issues identified. The school's capacity to hold whole-school events for parents is severely limited by the deficiencies in the accommodation.
34. The school has good links with the local community, despite the restrictions imposed by its accommodation, which are used to improve the teaching and learning of pupils. There are strong links with local churches, a local rugby club provides coaching and the village hall has been used to hold events such as a '*Culture Week*' that included Indian cuisine and dance. The school plays host once a year to local old aged pensioners.
35. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept well informed of their children's progress. An evaluation of special educational needs provision is included in the Governors' Annual Report to Parents and parents are given opportunities to be fully involved in termly reviews and target setting.
36. The school has very good links with other schools through its membership of a cluster of local schools and its '*School Sports Partnership*' with a local Secondary school. These links enable the school to share practices, run joint staff training activities, train Year 5 pupils as sports leaders, stage joint events for pupils and provide additional help for higher-attaining pupils. Collectively, these links make a significant contribution to the teaching and learning of pupils.
37. There are good arrangements for the transfer of pupils into secondary education. Parents are provided with relevant information and they and their children visit prospective schools and in turn are visited by staff from the secondary schools. Receiving schools are given information about any child who may find the transition

particularly difficult. These arrangements enable pupils to make the transfer with confidence.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are both **very good**. Leadership demonstrates outstanding clarity of vision and very effective inspiration from the top. Governance is **good**, but there are some minor breaches in fulfilling all statutory requirements.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and management of an innovative curriculum.
- Very good leadership and management are provided by senior staff and subject leaders.
- Governors are providing good support. However, there are some minor deficiencies in the information contained in the school prospectus and the annual report to parents.
- There is good financial management.

Commentary

38. The leadership and management of the school are very good. The outstanding contribution of the headteacher, in a close working partnership with the deputy headteacher, has had a significant and positive impact on the maintenance of high standards. Her strong vision to move the school forward is based on the very good relationships, educational improvement and an inclusive, caring ethos. She has developed a strong culture of support amongst the deputy headteacher, senior teachers and other staff, all of them subject leaders, and the teaching assistants. All staff receive very good opportunities to both improve their own professional skills and to influence others positively. With excellent leadership from the headteacher, the staff demonstrate very good teamwork and a high level of subject knowledge and expertise. Priorities for the development of their innovative curriculum are clearly identified and understood by all, leading to consistency across the school. The integrated curriculum has led to a conscious decision to mark pupils' work minimally, and instead raise the importance of discussion with pupils, especially in mathematics. The effective tracking and targeting of pupils and the subsequent high standards suggest that the school's approach is very beneficial. This good practice is shared in the school's cluster group and more widely.
39. The governors are providing good support, recognising the quality of leadership in the school. The Chair of Governors and the headteacher meet regularly and there is e-mail contact often with the Vice Chair. Governors are often in school and report back to meetings of the governing body. Their rolling programme of visits has been amended to provide for five new governors. A number of governors, indeed, were in school during the inspection, particularly to hear pupils read. This contact helps them to understand better the school's strengths and weaknesses.
40. Financial planning is good. There is good correlation between the budget and the School Improvement Plan. Educational priorities are supported well through funding. For example, the headteacher's assumption of the role of SENCO has enabled the recruitment of more teaching assistants. Similarly, funding for the new laptop computers is now from capital funds, so the school's cash can be clawed back and re-

deployed to fund the teachers' non-contact and preparation time allocation. The budget thus is well managed. Specific grants, such as those for pupils with special educational needs, are effectively deployed. Indeed, the provision for pupils with SEN is very good and has a beneficial impact on these pupils' progress and standards. The school implements the principles of best value well to further the opportunities open to pupils, and to provide school equipment. The school's self-audit of financial arrangements was deemed 'good' by the local education authority. A larger-than-usual carry forward of funds is earmarked for the provision of extra staff to provide non-contact time for all teachers during the coming year. The very good clerical staff, effectively and efficiently manage the day-to-day administration that helps the school to run smoothly.

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	343,526
Total expenditure	336,852
Expenditure per pupil	3,148

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	14,754
Balance carried forward to the next year	21,428

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation Stage is **very good**, and has made good improvement since the last inspection.

- Very good teaching ensures that children achieve very well, particularly in developing personal and social skills and language and creative skills.
- Very good strategies to assess children's progress mean that individual children receive appropriate help and support in their learning in this mixed-age class.
- Very good teamwork between all adults ensures that children settle easily into school and are secure and happy.
- The curriculum is very well planned and integrated so that most activities offer overlapping opportunities for development in all six areas of learning and are interesting and enjoyable.
- Leadership of the Foundation Stage is very good, with the Foundation Stage teacher setting high expectations for children's achievement.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children soon become self-confident and independent and enjoy learning through playing and exploring together.
- Relationships between adults and children are very good, with children quickly learning to speak confidently to other people.
- Children are happy in school.

COMMENTARY

41. There is a wide variety of pre-school provision so that children come to school with very different experiences. Some children are very self-confident and can play with others and sustain concentration well. Others are very shy and have little experience of being a member of a large group of children. They need lots of support in learning to speak to others, sharing toys, equipment and ideas. Overall, they begin school with standards in social and personal development above the national average.
42. The relatively small class size and the friendly ethos of the school mean that children soon become confident talking to the teacher, teaching assistants and other adults. They also get to know a wider group of children, and when offered the opportunity the majority choose to play in the large playground, where older pupils enjoy helping and caring for them. Very good teaching ensures that children experience a mixture of teacher-led activities as well as being given frequent opportunities to make their own choice, developing their sense of responsibility and autonomy.
43. The teacher and teaching assistants share a consistent approach to the way in which they listen respectfully to children so that children feel valued and learn to value the opinions of others in return. Children make rapid progress in their ability to play

together and take turns, so that disagreements are rare and they resolve differences well. All adults give lots of praise for good behaviour and good effort, so the children are constantly affirmed. They learn to sit quietly when asked to do so and are eager to please their teacher. They also develop a sense of community and belonging, demonstrated by their pride in their work when the headteacher came to admire decorated tabards they had recently made. Children achieve very well in this area, developing positive attitudes towards learning because of this very good teaching. Standards are well above the expectations of the early learning goals by the time that children join Year 1.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Priority is placed on the children developing literacy skills as a tool for learning.
- All adults take every opportunity to develop children's spoken language, listening skills and understanding through skilled questioning and discussion with individuals and small groups of children.
- Children learn and reinforce skills and knowledge about reading and writing throughout the day through a wide range of carefully planned and enjoyable activities.

Commentary

44. Because of the small numbers in each class the overall level of ability and skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing can vary considerably from year to year. However, the majority of children begin school with communication skills in line or slightly above what is normally expected. All the children in the Reception class have already attained the national goals set for them. By the time the children move into Year 1, their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills are above expectations.
45. The teaching and learning of speaking and listening skills are very good. Clearly identified learning intentions displayed next to activities, including those in the outdoor space, mean that throughout the day all adults, including voluntary helpers, are able to engage children in purposeful discussion and develop their vocabulary and understanding. During group activities the teacher and teaching assistants encourage children to express their ideas clearly by asking questions and giving time to listen to children's answers. When children choose independent activities the teacher or one of the teaching assistants gives time to talk with the child about their work, encouraging children to speak in sentences.
46. The very good direct teaching of letter sounds (phonics) followed by a range of activities designed to reinforce the learning through play means that children achieve very well and exceed the national goals set for them in developing phonic knowledge. Children enjoy listening to stories, looking at books and joining in with simple rhymes and songs. There is very good collaboration between the teacher and teaching assistants, so that whilst the class teacher worked with a focus group to develop phonic skills the teaching assistant read with excellent expression and questioning to engage the attention of a small group and reinforce their knowledge about the terms "author" and "illustrator" as well as their enjoyment of the story. The children have

ready access to a good range and know the difference between story and information books.

47. All children hold a pencil correctly and form recognisable letters. Some children are able to write simple sentences with phonically regular words spelt correctly. Very good teaching means that lots of opportunities are provided to encourage children to write for a purpose. For example, in the role-play Vets Surgery a “reception desk” was readily used by children to write notes and all the children had been involved in writing labels for the flowerpots in the outdoor space. A writing table in the classroom, containing a good range of paper and pencils and crayons of different sizes, encourages children to write as a chosen activity, developing very positive attitudes towards writing.
48. All adults contribute to the assessment and tracking system, making a note of individual children’s significant achievements to support future planning. The mixture of whole-class teaching, guided group work and individual support ensures that children of different levels of ability and attainment are all appropriately challenged and all achieve very well.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching provides rich opportunities for children to develop counting skills throughout the day as well as during numeracy lessons.
- Mathematical skills and knowledge are generally above national expectations.

Commentary

49. Every opportunity is taken to encourage children to count and develop mathematical vocabulary. The emphasis is on the language of maths and ensuring children have good understanding.
50. During a whole-class oral activity the children in Foundation Stage were able to join in alongside Year 1 pupils in this mixed-age class because they were well supported by teaching assistants. The lesson set challenging expectations which the children met, counting forwards to 100 and back. High expectations were also evident in the group tasks which followed. Hopscotch, fishing and jigsaw games in the outdoor area all reinforced children’s recognition of numerals 1 - 10 and their ability to count. The pairing of higher-attaining children with lower-attaining children is a deliberate and successful strategy as they learn quickly from their peers and the achievement overall is very good. For example, two children were helped to recognise two-digit numbers by the good questioning of the teaching assistant as she supported their play with play dough and plastic numerals; two able children were able to order two-digit number cards and made good progress in their understanding of place value. All the children have already attained the expected goals for this area and many will have exceeded them by the time that they join Year 1.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are provided with good opportunities to explore and investigate through lots of interesting first-hand experiences.
- Adults provide good support and encouragement for children to develop their skills of observation and critical thinking.
- The school strives hard to overcome limitations caused by its relative isolation and the lack of a hall which would facilitate enrichment in this area of the curriculum.

Commentary

51. The emphasis is on providing interesting first-hand experiences, which stimulate the curiosity and interest of the children and widen their knowledge and understanding of the world. They achieve well in this area and attain standards which are above expectations by the time that they join Year 1. The curriculum is well planned around topic themes such as “Plants and animals” so that all areas of the curriculum overlap. The outdoor space and adjacent garden are well used and good teaching encourages children to observe closely and notice changes and patterns in flowers, plants and trees and the world around them. For example, children planted a variety of annual plants in pots and a small garden area which they care for by weeding and watering; they make written labels, measure growth and make carefully observed drawings, paintings and collage. They enjoy finding out more about living things by talking and using books, pictures or computers. Their awareness and respect for different cultures and beliefs are promoted through topics such as the recent one on Japan. Children are capable of independent work on the computer, manipulating the mouse with competence and they show familiarity with programmable toys.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good opportunities are provided to develop confidence and control in handling natural materials, equipment, tools and construction toys, which help develop manipulative skills.
- Outdoor and indoor play helps ensure that children learn to move with increasing self-control and co-ordination.

Commentary

52. Children make good progress and the majority have already reached the expected goals for this area of the curriculum. Some children will have exceeded this when they join Year 1. The judgement on attainment is less clear in this section than in other sections on Foundation Stage. Very good planning and teaching mean that throughout the day children have lots of opportunities to handle tools and equipment, developing their manipulative skills in various ways, for example, using scissors and collage materials to achieve the desired effect. They demonstrate good awareness of safety. Very good teamwork between the class teacher and teaching assistants ensures that the outdoor space is used throughout the day, contributing to children’s good physical development. For example, children were able to learn to count as part of a numeracy lesson by playing a hopping game. They move with good awareness of space and are

able to use a range of wheeled toys to develop control and balance. They have access to the larger playground and climbing frame with adult supervision, and this provides a larger space to move more freely. The teaching is very good and ensures that they learn about the effects of exercise on their bodies and recognise the importance of keeping healthy. For example, the children were encouraged to notice their raised heartbeat and temperature when the teacher took them into the larger playground for a run.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are given good opportunities to experiment with a range of materials and ideas through creative play and guided activities.
- There is a good balance between the teaching of skills and knowledge and the provision of rich opportunities for children to experiment and reinforce their skills.

Commentary

53. Very good planning and organisation of the classroom space mean that children are able to experiment freely with materials such as paints, crayons, glue, fabrics and sequins to explore colour, texture and shape in making pictures and models. Very good direct teaching of skills such as paint mixing plus the establishment of good habits of caring for materials and equipment enables the children to achieve a very high standard in painting and collage. The very good teamwork between staff means that the particular artistic skills of a teaching assistant are well used to support children in developing painting skills. Children enjoy singing together but do not have enough opportunity for free experimentation with percussion instruments as an alternative means of expression. The provision of good props such as overalls, toy telephones and stethoscopes and soft toys encourages good imaginative play and language in the Vets Surgery. Standards are above expectations when children leave the reception class.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

The provision for English and literacy is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject is very well coordinated and managed.
- There is very good analysis of test data and consequent monitoring.
- The curriculum is innovative, and English skills are well used and developed in other subjects.

Commentary

54. In the national tests in 2004, standards at the end of Year 2 were well above the national average for all schools in both reading and writing. When compared to the results of similar schools these results were also well above average. Results in tests at the end of Year 6 show that standards were well above average for all schools.

When these results are compared to those of schools in which this group of pupils scored similarly in their end of Year 2 tests the school's results were in the top five per cent.

55. Standards are high in English and literacy. Inspection findings indicate that pupils' reading and writing levels at the end of Year 2 are above the national average and at the end of Year 6 are well above the national average. Pupils speak with confidence and can listen well, so that the standards of speaking and listening are good. Spellings are usually correct; indeed pupils are adventurous in their choice of words, so that standards are above average. Because of the good links with ICT, standards of presentation are good throughout the school.
56. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. Where teaching is very good, the teacher's organization and planning have a positive effect in focusing pupils' attention on the content of the lesson, which is often based in another subject such as history or geography. Teachers have high expectations such that pupils become engrossed and concentrate well. For example, in a good lesson, also in Year 6, pupils searched the Internet diligently for materials to help them in writing a book review of an emotive book concerning the death of a child's grandparent. The quality of support from teaching assistants makes a positive contribution to the maintenance of high standards. Teaching assistants know these pupils well, but also have good knowledge and understanding of ICT so that they can better support their Internet searching.
57. The subject coordinator encourages teachers to provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to write. For example, in a good lesson in Year 2, pupils confidently characterize the Giant's actions in a storyboard with suggestions for the speech bubbles, responding to the large handkerchief with, 'He's got a cold!' Pupils in Year 2 have lively ideas for the dragon. After reading '*Where the Wild Things Are*', an average-ability pupil found the words 'spooky' and 'scary'. A higher attaining pupil illustrated the dread:

"Sharp gnashing teeth
Blazing fire breath
In a scary dark cave
Terrifying!"
58. Lower attaining pupils in Year 6 write their versions of 'Nightmare': 'Every night, Alfie had the same dream, being chased by something horrible and determined'. Average and higher- attaining pupils in Year 6 write as eyewitnesses, 'A fox suddenly jumped into the road. There was a screeching of brakes and a red mini cooper swerved to the left and hit a tree'. Overall, these varied opportunities have a positive effect on the rate of pupils' progress and the high standards they attain.
59. Pupils have positive attitudes to books and show good skills of decoding. Pupils in Year 2 are mostly developing good library skills. They enjoy reading and speak of reading at home and at school. By the end of Year 6, the reading skills of the majority of pupils are sufficiently well developed to enable them to cope with most texts. For example, even an average reader in Year 6 enjoys a wide variety of reading, quoting his use of Rye Library and the school library. The guided reading sessions are well organized, encouraging pupils to read with expression and understanding. Older pupils are adept at using non-fiction books for projects, and understand the access provided by contents and indexes. Increasingly, pupils find information on the Internet, but still have good library skills. They enjoy the writing of Jacqueline Wilson and Dick King Smith.

60. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The coordinator has detailed knowledge of the current state of English and the Literacy Hour. She monitors teachers' planning and their delivery of the subject. This rigorous process contributes to the good achievement pupils make. The school's analysis of test data is thorough and its use in modifying provision is good. The subject is well resourced after a major spend on non-fiction books.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

61. The use and development of literacy skills across the curriculum are very good. Learning in literacy is often combined with learning in other subjects such as history, geography, science, mathematics or religious education. For example, pupils in Year 6 were keenly interested in the Yanomoni tribe of Brazil, in a combined lesson in literacy and geography. They were enthused in the PowerPoint presentation and aghast when the slides showed nose and lip piercing. The teacher's skilled open and closed questioning deepened pupils' thinking and sharpened their explanations of drugs used beneficially by these natives, or the effects of communal living in the central hut called the 'Yanno'. These factors positively enhanced pupils' learning in literacy and promoted their speaking and listening skills very well. The coordinator has innovative ideas about the integration of subjects within the curriculum in which literacy and English have very close links with ICT, history, geography, science, mathematics and religious education.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is very **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at the end of Year 6 have been maintained at a high level for a number of years.
- Teachers are imaginative in their lesson planning.
- The integration of mathematics is very well organised.
- The very good assessment and marking systems promote learning and achievement very well.

Commentary

62. In the national tests, at the end of Year 2 in 2004, standards were well above the average for all primary schools in England and against the results of schools in similar circumstances. In the 2004 tests for 11-year-olds, standards were well above average for all primary schools. When compared to the results of schools in which this group of pupils had similar results in their end-of-Year 2 tests, standards were also well above average. Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6, have been well above average or in the top five per cent nationally for the past four years. This represents very high performance by the school and good improvement since the last inspection. Provision for pupils with special educational needs in mathematics is very good. They are given work at an appropriate level to match their abilities, very good support when they need it and are often paired with more able mathematicians to undertake investigations. They make very good progress and achieve very well. More able mathematicians are consistently challenged and the school is working with the local secondary school to present them with even more challenging sessions from next

term. The level of pupils' work seen during the inspection was well above that expected for their ages, throughout the school.

63. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers are very enthusiastic in their teaching of mathematics. They show great imagination in their planning and in their lessons and this enthuses pupils to learn well because they learn to understand that mathematics is fun. In all three classes the standard of teaching was very good overall and the teaching and learning in two lessons were excellent. In a Year 3/4 class, the teacher used innovative methods such as 'Bob the right angle eater' to enable pupils to identify whether angles presented to them are greater, smaller or exactly 90 degrees. Another group drew and measured their own angles to within two degrees of accuracy using 180 degree and 360 degree protractors with great confidence. At the same time the teacher and the teacher's assistant guided and supported individual pupils. In the same lesson 15 pupils were using computers or programmable robots to study angles in various ways. The atmosphere was electric as pupils worked very hard to complete tasks for which time targets had been set. The enthusiasm and very good subject knowledge of the teacher and her assistant set the tone for an outstanding learning experience. This level of planning and preparation was evident throughout the school and underpins the very good provision in the subject.
64. Pupils' very good achievement is promoted and monitored by the use of innovative marking and assessment of their progress. Teachers and teachers' assistants make notes of pupils' significant progress or need for support during lessons. Progress notes are attached to the pupils' profile, contributing to a comprehensive profile of their achievement. Pupils are often gathered in a small group to undertake personal marking with the teacher, which often results in them working in pairs to identify errors in their previous work and to improve it. This often leads to a note of progress being added to their profile. This very good assessment information is used to report to parents about the progress that their children are making. However, there are inconsistencies in the quality of the annual written reports, with a small number not being as good as the best seen within the school. Assessment information is also very well used to plan future work in mathematics and also in the school's very good tracking system, which is very well used to evaluate pupils' achievements as they progress through the school.
65. The leadership and management of mathematics are very good. The subject co-ordinator provides very good support and guidance to colleagues. The monitoring of pupils' work and the quality of teaching and learning are used very well to ensure high standards and to drive further improvement. Mathematics is very well used in the wider curriculum. The quality of mathematical provision in the school represents a good improvement since the last inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

66. The use of mathematics across the curriculum is very good and is seen in the pupils' work in science, history, geography and ICT. In fact, mathematics is used wherever it occurs naturally in any subject and is very well embedded in the school's curriculum. Many mathematical experiences are based on real-life problems and as such are undertaken in a cross-curricular context with other subjects which naturally occur. In a geographical study entitled 'Should the High Street be closed to traffic?' pupils undertook a comprehensive survey of different vehicular and pedestrian traffic in the village. This involved a great deal of work involving data handling in various forms of

graphs, some hand drawn and some computer generated. The interpretations of these graphs were translated into analyses and predictions which pupils wrote at length. This project involved ICT, literacy and geography as well as mathematics, and discussions with pupils showed that the quality of their learning was very good.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Over the last five years, the school's results in national tests have remained consistently high.
- The curriculum is well designed to make learning relevant and interesting, with lots of first-hand investigation.
- Consistently good or very good teaching means that all children are highly challenged and achieve very well.
- Science makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development as they develop positive attitudes towards learning.

Commentary

67. Standards have consistently remained well above national average levels for pupils in national tests at the end of Year 6 for the past five years. Teacher assessment shows standards to be well above national averages at the end of Year 2. The relatively small cohort of pupils in each year group means that results can fluctuate when a few pupils in a particular cohort have higher or lower ability than average. During the inspection the standards seen in pupils' work was very good throughout the school.
68. Teaching is good throughout the school and sometimes very good, which enables all pupils to achieve very well. The subject has been carefully planned to integrate learning in other subjects, particularly ICT, maths and art. The very good assessment procedures used throughout the school mean that teachers are able to provide appropriate challenge and extension work for the most able pupils and also provide support and reinforcement, ensuring good understanding by less able and younger pupils in mixed age classes. Teachers use a good mix of teaching strategies, with good direct instruction as well as small group work where pupils can investigate and learn together. In the Year 1/2 class the teacher used a "mind-map" well to help pupils reinforce their understanding of flowering plants. In the Year 3/4 class the teacher helped the pupils consolidate their learning about the work of different parts of the plant by effective questioning during the review at the end of the lesson. In very good teaching in the Year 5/6 class the teacher had high expectations and has established a high level of independence in the pupils. She used very good questioning to develop the pupils' thinking. Resources are very good so that pupils have easy access to lap top and PC computers to record results or research information on the Internet, as well as to equipment such as a life-size skeleton and three-dimensional models of the human eye and ear for study of the human body. The outdoor environment is well used to provide opportunities for first hand investigations.

69. In Years 1 and 2, pupils' learning and achievement are good. In the lesson observed the pupils listened well to their teacher and to one another during discussions and showed interest in learning about the parts of flowering plants. They demonstrated good knowledge about the function of parts of the plant, with the higher-attaining pupils recalling facts about pollination. The younger and less able pupils in this mixed-age class were well supported by the good teamwork between the teacher, teaching assistant and trainee teacher. Pupils continue to learn and achieve well in Years 3 and 4, developing their knowledge and understanding about plants through a good range of textbooks and close observational drawings and paintings. The links with art and design enhance the children's appreciation of the beauty of nature. By Years 5 and 6, the pupils' research skills are well developed, with pupils making good use of them, for example, to further their knowledge and understanding about the human body. The pupils demonstrated excellent behaviour and attitudes towards work, supporting the very good learning taking place.
70. The very good leadership of the science coordinator has improved the consistency of teaching across the school and developed an innovative approach to combining science with other subjects. The subject has made good progress since the last inspection, with an improvement in the amount of first-hand investigative work carried out, the challenge for the higher-attaining pupils and the use of ICT within science lessons.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The provision for ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject coordinator provides good leadership and management
- ICT is used well to support pupils' learning in literacy, numeracy, science, history, geography, religious education and art and design.
- ICT is the linchpin of the integrated curriculum.
- Well-trained teaching assistants give pupils good, sometimes very good, support in lessons.

Commentary

71. At the time of the last inspection, pupils reached the levels expected for their age by the end of Year 2, and by the end of Year 6. A review of the inspection evidence indicates that standards have risen rapidly with the adoption of 12 laptop computers, and their integration into classroom work, and standards are now above national expectations throughout the school.
72. The teaching of ICT is good, sometimes very good. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to practise their skills, especially through the use of the laptops. In a very good lesson in Year 4, pupils used a template to compose a letter, or read on the laptop the 'Soldier's Tale', the letter written home by a Roman soldier in Britain. In a good lesson in Year 6, pupils accessed the Internet to find book reviews, and then a pupil used Microsoft Word to write a short autobiography in the character of the author. In a very good lesson, also in Year 6, pupils showed above-average research skills when finding Internet resources on the human skeleton. Pupils in Year 1 understand how to make a robotic toy move. These varied opportunities have a positive effect on the progress pupils make. Support for pupils with SEN is good, for

example, the modified program such as 'Clicker 4' for their mathematics work. They make good progress and achieve well. All pupils positively enjoy working with computers.

73. The subject coordinator's strong leadership has a good effect on the way ICT is taught and managed. Provision is enhanced by the timetabled use of the bank of laptops. Planning is good, leading to competent teaching. Resources are good. Accommodation is satisfactory and computer bays are attractive and well labelled to ensure access. The scheme of work has been adapted to meet the requirements of the integrated curriculum. It matches the school's needs well and provides a good framework for the development of skills. Pupils' progress is assessed and recorded using an appropriate checklist.

ICT ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

74. ICT is used well to support teaching and learning in writing and mathematics. Pupils find information for their history project on the Internet to support their learning about Roman Britain. ICT is the linchpin of the integrated curriculum. Pupils in Year 6 learn of the Brazilian Forest people, or search for healthy diets on the Internet. Pupils in Year 2 use the connection game on the PC in a mathematics lesson. Art is well supported when pupils in Year 4 use *Colour Magic* to edit photographs of their Rye Harbour sculptures. Pupils in Year 3 word process their, geography reports on Chembakolli, an Indian village, adding illustrations and using a variety of fonts. Pupils in Year 2 use the Internet to find out about Greek food, clothing and music and then compare these with what is available in Playden. ICT is a highly effective tool for teaching and learning in St. Michael's school and pupils' learning is particularly enhanced because of this.

HUMANITIES

Religious education

Provision for religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers plan very well to integrate much of their work into topics in other subjects.
- ICT is well used in the teaching and learning of religious education.
- The new co-ordinator has monitored and evaluated the quality of teaching and learning very well.

Commentary

75. All teachers plan to deliver the school's scheme of work for religious education on a regular weekly basis and this work is linked very closely to the locally agreed syllabus. Lessons were seen in most classes and the overall quality of teaching and learning was good. Teachers show good subject knowledge, know their pupils very well and thus are able to match work to their growing levels of ability. Much work in religious education is very successfully linked to other topics, as was the case when the Years 3 and 4 class studied a topic on India. An in-depth study of Hinduism was a part of this topic linking the beliefs of Hindus with elements of the history of their beliefs and how these were integral to the history of the country. In this integrated way the study of the religion became a much clearer learning opportunity for pupils. Pupils' learning is

promoted well and all achieve standards which are above the expectations for their age.

76. Pupils are often provided with opportunities to use ICT to research religious topics such as different places of worship or the beliefs of people of various faiths, such as the festival of Hanukah, in Judaism. Pupils make good use of computers for presenting their work well using the combination of text and graphics.
77. The leadership and management of religious education are good. The new co-ordinator has continued the work of her predecessor and has monitored the quality of teaching and learning by observing lessons and by monitoring pupils' work. In January and July each pupil's achievement is judged and this promotes the setting of further expectations for pupils' progress. Resources for teaching and learning are good but the co-ordinator has identified a need to increase the school's own collection of artefacts. The school has made good progress since the last inspection.

GEOGRAPHY

The provision for geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject is promoted well in the integrated curriculum.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.

Commentary

78. By the end of Year 2, standards in geography are above national expectations as pupils are able to make confident use of ICT to make searches on the Internet to find food, music and clothing of Greece. These they then compared with life in Playden. By the end of Year 6, standards are also above national expectations, again because of very good use of ICT in a traffic survey of Rye. Pupils plotted the findings on a map and created a table of results. They were also using their very good mathematical skills.
79. The teaching of geography is good, sometimes very good. Pupils in Year 4 word-processed their reports on Chembakolli, or on the exploits of Ellen MacArthur. The subject is closely linked to ICT and mathematics, especially for data handling. It is also closely connected to literacy. Pupils make good use of the Internet.
80. The leadership and management of geography are very good. The subject co-ordinator provides good support and guidance for other teachers and monitors the quality of teaching and learning and the achievement that pupils make. There is also high level co-operation about the inclusion of geography into the curriculum.

HISTORY

The provision for history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- History is promoted well in the integrated curriculum.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.

Commentary

81. By the end of Year 2, standards in history are in line with national expectations. Pupils have satisfactory knowledge and understanding of chronology through their study of Florence Nightingale's life, and the events leading up to Remembrance Day. By the end of Year 6, standards are also in line with national expectations. Pupils gain satisfactory knowledge and understanding of chronology by comparing conditions in Roman Britain with today. They identify great adventurers such as Christopher Columbus and empathise with a stowaway. Most make good progress in history, supported by their very good literacy skills. Pupils have good listening skills and respond well to good questioning.
82. The teaching of history is good. Pupils' enquiry skills are developing well using good quality resources, such as the computer package, 'Soldier's Tale' used by pupils in Year 4 when researching the Romans in Britain.
83. Leadership and management are very good. The subject is closely linked to literacy, especially for speaking and listening, and reading and writing. The subject co-ordinator gives good advice and guidance on the inclusion of history with other subjects. The quality of teaching and learning is very well monitored, as are the achievement and learning of pupils.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Although the main areas of the inspection were focussed in other subjects, the strength of the school's provision in **art and design** and **design and technology** simply could not be overlooked. Although few lessons were seen evidence was gathered in other areas for both subjects.

Provision in art and design and design and technology is **very good**.

84. The standard of the work in **art and design** is well above the national average, for more able pupils throughout the school and all pupils in Years 5 and 6. Pupils of all ages talk enthusiastically about their experiences and the different processes they use, and show pride in the good results arising from their efforts. A wide range of work of a high standard is displayed throughout the school which demonstrates good coverage of the programme of study, with a particular strength in observational drawing and painting. Clear progression and very good achievement are evident in the work seen.
85. Teaching and learning are good overall and very good links are made to other subjects, particularly science and information and communication technology. During the current work in science on plants and animals, the art and design enhanced the pupils' awareness of detail and improved the skill of close observation. In the Reception/Year 1 class the teacher's high expectations and good use of the particular skills of one of the teaching assistants enabled all the pupils to achieve well in their knowledge about mixing colour and their skill in drawing and painting flowering plants. Year 1 and 2 pupils have used a good range of materials to produce collage pictures and also produced clay tiles. The Year 1 pupils produced carefully observed sketches of sections of William Morris repeated patterns in their sketchbooks. The work produced by pupils in Year 3 and 4 of painted portraits entitled "Relationships" demonstrates very good progression in skill and also very good understanding of how

painting can be used to express emotion. Pupils are encouraged to review their work and develop appropriate vocabulary and personal opinion, as seen in a Year 3/4 lesson where pupils worked in pairs to discuss ways in which their recent sea-side sculptures could be improved. Very good teaching was evident in the work produced by pupils in the Year 5/6 class. In this class the pupils use sketchbooks very well to experiment with new techniques and ideas. For example, having been introduced to the use of a viewfinder, the pupils experimented in their sketchbooks with small oil pastel sketches, developed from their own digital photos in preparation for a larger painted landscape. Pupils showed very good skill in the use of pastels, with good awareness of colour and form and good evaluative skills. The teacher gave very good direct instruction on paint mixing in readiness for the next stage of their work. The use of sketchbooks is very good, in Years 5 and 6 and it is satisfactory in Years 1 - 4. Pupils throughout the school use computers and digital photography very well to support their artwork.

86. The co-ordinator provides very good leadership and support for teachers through detailed planning and resourcing for each unit of work and has prepared very good exemplars to support teachers in judging the levels of attainment when assessing work. She has good subject knowledge and has good awareness of the strengths and areas for development. She regularly monitors and evaluates teaching.
87. Many pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, say they really enjoy art lessons. Work in the subject supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well and makes a valuable contribution to the ethos of the school. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, particularly in the use of ICT and in linking art with other subjects.
88. The standard of the work in **design and technology** is above national expectations and pupils develop effective designing, planning and making skills. Teaching overall is good, and assessment is used well to monitor pupils' progress over time. Again, good linking of activities helps pupils develop skills across several areas of the curriculum simultaneously, and they achieve well. Younger pupils designed and made kites, using wooden struts and paper, and also folded paper fans as part of the recent multicultural topic on Japan in Year 1. In a lesson in the Year 1/2 class the pupils demonstrated a range of level of skill, with some having a high level of motor control to thread needles and use a variety of stitches and a small number needing support from teaching assistants. As part of the whole-school multi-cultural project the pupils in Year 3/4 studied India and designed and made two-wheeled vehicles. Older pupils followed up science and maths work to design and make three-dimensional games, demonstrating a high level of accuracy and care in measurement and construction. Pupils make good progress in their skills in design and technology as they move through the school.
89. The headteacher coordinates design and technology and she regularly monitors and evaluates teaching, the effectiveness of resources and the use of ICT to support work in the subject. Her excellent leadership and high expectations contribute strongly to the high standards.
90. **Physical education** was sampled during this inspection but no judgements are made on the quality of provision, the quality of teaching and learning or the standards that pupils reach. The school has difficulty in delivering the whole of the required curriculum because it does not have a hall in which to teach dance or gymnastics. However, the school works very hard to ensure that it does deliver the whole of the required curriculum in spite of the difficulties that it faces. This is a problem that has

not been overcome since the same finding was made during the last inspection, despite every effort of the headteacher, the governors and the parents. However, swimming requirements are fully met, there are good experiences for all pupils in the development of games skills, including a good range of sports clubs and the school works very closely with its local secondary school on the DfES 'Physical Education, School Sport and Club Links'. The well qualified and very enthusiastic and hard working co-ordinator is making progress, but knows that huge progress in standards and achievement will be enabled when the school hall is finally built.

Music

Provision for music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has recently appointed a music specialist to lead the subject.
- The new co-ordinator has reviewed and revised the school's scheme of work for the subject.
- Music is used well to promote pupils' knowledge and understanding of a multi-racial community.
- The planning to develop music fully throughout the school is not yet completed or in place.

Commentary

91. Standards in music are satisfactory for all pupils. The school had realised that it was struggling to deliver high quality provision for music because it did not have a music specialist on the teaching staff and determinedly searched for and appointed a specialist who now teaches each class in the school. The quality of her teaching is often good and she demonstrates a high level of knowledge and understanding of the subject. As she only joined the school after the start of this academic year, her good work in reviewing and revising the delivery of the subject is not yet complete. Consequently, while improvements are beginning to be introduced, the wishes of both the headteacher and the subject co-ordinator for a robust, exciting and exhilarating curriculum in music have not yet been achieved.
92. There is good use of a range of multi-cultural music which promotes pupils' cultural development and an understanding that different cultures have widely varying forms of music. This was observed in lessons in the school, and while this use of music is being developed well, there is still too much theory and a focus on listening skills rather than the realisation of what is intended by all staff, led by the headteacher and the coordinator, for all pupils to be regularly involved in writing and performing their own music. Good use is made of the local peripatetic music provision and a significant number of pupils are learning to play instruments such as the electronic keyboard.
93. Resources are good overall but the co-ordinator has identified where further improvements can be made to link in to her drive towards an exciting and vibrant music provision.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

94. No specific lessons were seen in the subject but from evidence gathered in other areas, it can be said that the school has a very good focus on developing elements of

citizenship in all its pupils. The school has high expectations for pupils' respect of others who are younger and in need of their thoughtful and caring actions and this is evident throughout the school and in the playground. The school has very good procedures for developing pupils' awareness of healthy living, including sex education and the awareness of the misuse of drugs and alcohol. The school uses its local community to enable pupils to know and understand key factors of living in a community, and they also study elements of how the community facilities could be improved. From looking at school planning, it is clear that all aspects of the required curriculum are taught to all pupils.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	2
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	2
Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	2
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	2
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

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