

# INSPECTION REPORT

**TATHAM FELLS CHURCH OF ENGLAND VOLUNTARY  
CONTROLLED PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Lancaster

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119379

Headteacher: Ms J Van Ryssel

Lead inspector: Mr F Carruthers

Dates of inspection: 23 – 24 May 2005

Inspection number: 268025

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: Community  
Age range of pupils: 4 - 11  
Gender of pupils: Mixed  
Number on roll: 37

School address: Lowgill  
Lancaster  
Postcode: LA2 8RA

Telephone number: 01524 261441  
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Appropriate authority: Governing body  
Name of chair of Mr George McIntosh  
governors:  
Date of previous 9 March 1998  
inspection:

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This very small, rural primary school is set in a remote village in an area of Lancashire renowned for its outstanding beauty. Almost all the pupils are White British. Two pupils are bi-lingual and have Welsh as their first language. The social and economic circumstances of pupils' families are broadly average overall. The attainment of the children when they start school varies widely from year to year because of the small year-group sizes. The attainment of the current Reception-aged children was broadly average on entry. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is similar to that found in most primary schools and no pupil has a Statement of special educational need. The needs of these pupils vary and include moderate and specific learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural problems and visual impairment. There are two classes of pupils. One is called the Key Stage 1 class and consists of the Reception-aged children and pupils in Years 1 and 2; the other is called the Key Stage 2 class, with pupils from Years 3 to 6. A high proportion of pupils join the school during Years 3 to 6 from other schools. By the way it is organised, the school offers *Wrap-around Care* for its pupils. There is a part-time, privately run Nursery class on site, which is subject to a separate inspection. The school has links with several other schools and gained a *School Achievement Award* in 2002. Religious education and collective worship are the subject of a separate inspection.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21285	Frank Carruthers	Lead inspector	English Science Art and design Design and technology Music Special educational needs English as an additional language
13450	Jenny Madden	Lay inspector	
8263	Margaret Forsman	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Geography History Physical education Foundation Stage

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

The effectiveness of the school is **excellent**, and the school provides a high quality of education in which pupils achieve very well. Standards are high. The leadership and management are excellent and the school is highly successful in including all pupils in the school's provision. As a result, the school gives **very good** value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school promotes high standards of attainment, attitudes to learning and behaviour;
- Through the school's excellent ethos, pupils take a full part in the life of the school and become confident and articulate. This is especially evident in late entrants to the school, who have often underachieved in previous schools;
- The headteacher drives the success of the school by her unbounded enthusiasm and her expertise;
- Teachers, including part-time specialist teachers, have high expectations for pupils and as a result the quality of learning is very good;
- Provision for learning outside lessons, such as extra-curricular activities, is excellent;
- The school is rightly very highly regarded by parents, who benefit from the excellent partnerships that the school forges with them and the community.

The school, which was considered to be effective and to provide a high quality education at the time of the last inspection in 1998, has maintained its quality and made very good improvement since then. Pupils achieve better in Years 3 to 6 than at the time of the last inspection because of the very good quality of teaching. Specialist teaching has been introduced to very good effect and the accommodation has been significantly improved. High standards of pupils' personal development have been maintained. The curriculum has been enriched and all aspects of care, health and welfare have been improved. Leadership, management and governance are all better than at the time of the last inspection and the two key issues have been fully addressed.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: 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.** With such small numbers in year groups, statistical information comparing the standards in the school with those of others is unreliable. Standards vary from year to year. However, tracking the progress of individual pupils shows clearly that pupils make good progress from starting in the Reception year to Year 2, and then very good progress from Years 3 to 6. The final column of the table above illustrates this point. It shows that performance in mathematics and science in 2004 put the school in the top five per cent of similar schools (shown by an asterisk in the table). Standards in the current Year 6 are well above average in English and mathematics, and above average in science

and information and communication technology (ICT). In the current Year 2, standards are average in reading and writing, well above average in mathematics, above average in science and average in ICT. Standards in writing in all age groups are a focus for improvement in the school's current development plan. Children get off to a good start in the Reception year and the children currently in this year group are on course to exceed the expected goals for learning in personal, social and emotional development, in communication, language and literacy, in mathematical development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. They reach the expected goals in physical and creative development.

**The quality of pupils' attitudes and personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is excellent.** Pupils' behaviour is very good. Attendance and punctuality to school are excellent.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school, including teaching and learning, is very good.** The teaching of English and mathematics is particularly good, and specialist teachers make a very significant contribution to pupils' learning in science, ICT and French in Years 3 to 6. However, this specialist provision is not available to benefit pupils in Years 1 and 2. The curriculum is very good and enriched by an excellent range of activities outside lessons. All aspects of care, welfare, health and safety are excellent and the school consults and involves the pupils very well through the school council. Partnerships with parents, the community and other schools are highly effective in promoting pupils' learning.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership, management and governance of the school are excellent overall.** The leadership of the headteacher is a key strength, and governors make a very effective contribution to the strategic planning of the school and fully meet the requirements of their role. Systems by which staff and governors check how well the school is performing and pupils are achieving are excellent. Parents are given very good opportunities to offer their views and the senior management of the school respond positively to proposals and suggestions.

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

Both parents' and pupils' views of the school are excellent. Parents are most warm in their appreciation for its work and how it provides a high quality education. They believe it continually goes the extra mile for the sake of the children. Pupils say they feel valued and they have full confidence in all members of staff. They enjoy school and participate in all its activities.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The most important thing the school should do to improve is:

- Pursue the drive to enhance the quality of provision for pupils in the Key Stage 1 class.

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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

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

Pupils achieve very well. By Year 6 standards are well above average in English and mathematics and above average in science and information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils with special educational needs and talented pupils make very good progress. Pupils achieve well in the mixed-age Key Stage 1 class.

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

- Standards of reading and writing are high by Year 6.
- Pupils become highly skilled at solving problems in mathematics.
- Children do well in the Foundation Stage (the Reception year).
- Pupils who join the school late in Years 3 to 6, including those with special educational needs, make rapid progress because of very good provision.

#### **Commentary**

1. This is a school which closely checks the progress of individual pupils and provides a high quality education. Consequently, it is highly effective in promoting the achievement of individual pupils. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress because teachers and classroom assistants are well deployed to provide them with one-to-one and small-group support. Those with gifts and talents are given the opportunity to explore their interests through activities both in school and at home. They achieve very well and also enthuse other pupils in the process. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. A significant number of pupils join the school in Years 3 to 6, often because their parents have been dissatisfied with their learning in other schools and some of these pupils have special educational needs. They make rapid progress because of the high quality of provision and the teachers' high expectations. Those with emotional and behavioural difficulties are given very good assistance by staff and specialist visitors and so make very good improvement. Parents express warm appreciation for the vast improvement in their children's attitudes to learning and attainment that they have witnessed.
2. Year-group sizes are small, so the statistical tables on standards in Years 2 and 6 have been removed from this part of the report. Even though statistics for such small groups are unreliable, there is a consistent pattern over the years of pupils making very good progress in English, mathematics and science from Year 3 to Year 6. Comparison with other schools in how much it adds to the pupils' achievements (that is, its value-added measure) shows that the school is doing very well. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Handwriting is now very good, and the all-round rate of progress made by pupils in Years 3 to 6 has increased.
3. High standards of reading, writing and problem-solving in mathematics are key features in Year 6. Teachers encourage pupils through their own enthusiasm for the subjects and use talented pupils as role models to galvanise others. For instance, the pupil-led writing club at lunchtimes is not just a valuable exercise in English. In it the pupils have to develop a business plan and, using 'money' they are given, make choices in producing a piece of writing to the high standards of a desktop publication.

Pupils are swept along in this pursuit of enjoyment and excellence, and the spin-offs are that standards are well above average in English and mathematics. Many pupils reach above the expected Level 4 in National Curriculum tests. Standards in science and ICT in the current Year 6 are above average. In science, one or two late entrants to the school have had insufficient time to fill all the gaps in their knowledge since joining the school. The main reason why pupils achieve well in these subjects is because of the quality of the specialist teaching.

4. Children get off to a good start in the mixed-aged Key Stage 1 class. They exceed the expected goals for learning by the end of the Reception year in personal, social and emotional development, in communication, language and literacy, in mathematical development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. They reach the expected goals in physical and creative development. The effective deployment of the class teacher and classroom assistant means that the pupils in the different year groups do well in this class. Standards in Year 2 have been frequently above average in reading, writing and mathematics, but they vary because of the small size and differing nature of each year group. In the current Year 2, standards in reading and writing are average overall and this reflects the make-up of the year group. Standards of writing are showing an improvement on last year's results. Writing in all age groups is a focus for improvement in the school's current development plan. Standards in Year 2 are well above average in mathematics, above average in science, and average in ICT.

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

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal qualities are excellent overall. Attendance and punctuality are excellent, as is the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Pupils' behaviour is very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their excellent attendance and punctuality.
- Pupils are totally involved in life and learning at the school and are keen to take part in everything it has to offer.
- The quality of personal development is such that pupils leave the school very confident and articulate individuals, ready for the next stage of their education.
- Some pupils, including a number who start at the school in Years 3, 4 or 5, have behavioural problems but the excellent behaviour management and work with parents ensure that the underlying problems are dealt with firmly and constructively.

### **Commentary**

5. Pupils arrive at the school in plenty of time for the start of the day, which is unusually early at 8.30a.m. There is a buzz of conversation and activity in the school as staff, pupils and parents arrive and pupils settle to work immediately, with a prompt start to lessons. In this environment, pupils whose attendance at other schools has been unsatisfactory have no such problems.

### **Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (97%)**

Authorised absence	
School data	3.0

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0

National data	5.1
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National data	0.4
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*The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

6. In lessons, pupils are very keen to work. They listen and concentrate very well and are often completely engrossed in the tasks as a result of the well-organised and challenging work. A wealth of extra-curricular activities engages pupils at lunchtime and after school, some organised by pupils, others by teachers and volunteers. These include, for example, a Latin club, a sports club and a newly-formed gardening club. Most pupils stay on after school to take part in the after-school club as well as the homework and sports clubs.
7. Pupils' personal development is based on giving each child in the school experiences based on individual needs. Consequently, as pupils move through the school they grow in maturity and imagination, and in understanding the needs of others and themselves. In the Key Stage 1 class pupils begin by acknowledging the achievements of others, through assemblies and circle times, when all have the opportunity to discuss and reflect on the feelings and emotions of themselves and others. They show very good support and encouragement for pupils with special educational needs. Older pupils have taken responsibility for organising lunchtime clubs in areas of learning they feel will benefit themselves and younger pupils. Pupils have very good opportunities to understand the significance of cultures other than their own through subjects such as English, religious education, geography and music. This excellent quality of personal development permeates the school and shows most clearly in those pupils who have spent their whole school life here.
8. A large percentage of pupils come to the school with particular needs, some of them having behavioural difficulties and coming from schools where they have underachieved. The school has excellent strategies to manage behaviour through its positive policy, its whole-school approach and its constant observation and monitoring of pupils' behaviour. Parents are always involved with any behavioural issues and are expected to apply the school's consistent practices in the home. Consequently, pupils' behaviour overall is very good, so that they work very well in lessons and enjoy happy and sociable play times. There have been no exclusions.

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

The quality of education is very good. Teaching, learning and the curriculum are very good. Provision for the care, welfare and safety of pupils, and the school's partnerships with parents, the community and other schools, are all excellent.

### **Teaching and learning**

Teaching, learning and assessment are all very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning are never less than good.
- The use of specialist teachers in the Key Stage 2 class makes the quality of teaching and learning consistently very good. This high quality provision, however, is not currently made available to pupils in the Key Stage 1 class.
- Classroom assistants provide very effective support for pupils' learning, including those with special educational needs.

- Teachers make excellent use of the time available for lessons.
- The marking of pupils' work and assessing of their progress give pupils a very good idea of how they are doing and what they should do to improve.

## Commentary

### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 18 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	9	8	0	0	0	0

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

9. The table above, which provides only a snapshot of the teaching in this school, is a true reflection of the quality of teaching and learning in general. This was very evident in sampling pupils' work over a full year. In both classes, the teaching of English and mathematics is consistently good or better. This is because of the very effective deployment of teachers and classroom assistants so that groups are kept as small as possible and there is not too wide an age spread in each. The teaching of the children who are in their Reception year is shared by the Key Stage 1 class teacher, who is in her first year of teaching, and her assistant. It is consistently good. Both teachers who teach the Key Stage 2 class, dividing the class into two groups, Years 3 and 4 and Years 5 and 6, are very experienced practitioners and account for a sizeable proportion of the very good teaching evident. Individual pupils who have special educational needs or who join the school late benefit significantly from these arrangements and from the teachers' insistence on very high standards of behaviour. They make very good progress as a result.
10. Teaching and learning in the Key Stage 2 class are enhanced by the use of highly skilled, part-time specialists in science, ICT and French. Their contribution is an example of the very effective use of the school's budget, because these teachers have a direct impact on the quality of pupils' learning. They have very high expectations of what pupils can achieve and enthuse the pupils by their love of the subjects. They plan and organise the pupils' learning very well. They contribute very successfully to the good and at times very good achievement of pupils in these subjects. This high-quality provision, however, is not currently available to pupils in Years 1 and 2 and there is scope for extending it so that these pupils too can benefit.
11. Lessons have very good pace, and time in them is used very effectively. Teachers set the pupils tasks to complete in a specific amount of time and are rigorous in keeping to the deadlines so that the pupils' learning moves on. The teaching time each week is well above the recommended minimum and this has the advantage that, where lessons need to be longer so that work can be finished, for example investigations in science, there is sufficient flexibility to allow for it.
12. Another key strength of the teaching is the quality of marking and the use made of assessments to check how well pupils are doing. The teachers mark pupils' work conscientiously and with close regard to how pupils can improve and how far they have progressed in reaching their individual and group targets. As a result, pupils are challenged very well and have a good grasp of what they are aiming at. Teachers track the pupils' progress over time very carefully and put in place measures to help individual pupils, such as extra adult support in reading and paired reading.

## The curriculum

The school provides a very good curriculum that is broad and balanced. The curriculum is enhanced by an excellent range of learning opportunities that enrich pupils' educational experiences. Accommodation and resources for learning are very good overall.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- Support for learning outside the school day is excellent.
- Provision for personal, social and health education is very good.
- All pupils have benefited from the significant improvements in the accommodation.

### **Commentary**

13. The curriculum is very well designed and integrated, with productive links between subjects. Children in their Reception year follow a curriculum that covers all the areas of learning and includes religious education. Good progress has been made in enriching and updating the curriculum since the last inspection. All statutory requirements are met.
14. The range of enhancements to the curriculum and the extra-curricular provision are excellent, particularly for the older pupils. There is significant specialist teaching. French is taught by a member of staff to all pupils in Years 3 to 6 and there is occasional expert input from friends and parents. In music pupils are currently developing composition skills with a visiting specialist as part of a Mini-Maestro project. The curriculum for pupils in the Key Stage 1 class is good but does not yet benefit from the same range of enhancements and specialist input. The school has further enriched the younger pupils' curriculum by making maximum use of the local environment.
15. Support for learning outside the school day is excellent. The range of extra-curricular activities is much better than that usually found in schools of this size. Although the school day begins earlier than usual, pupils are happy to stay on to attend a wide range of clubs and activities after lessons end. The school offers an after-school club with a range of informal activities. This is a great benefit to pupils who come from isolated localities and who would otherwise miss the opportunity to play with friends and talk to other adults. The lunchtime Latin club is very popular and some clubs such as the writing club are motivated by pupils and reflect genuine interests.
16. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good overall. Planning for pupils with special educational needs is particularly effective and closely matched to individual needs. The school has identified gifted and talented pupils, and they are well challenged, for example through curricular opportunities and the very effective links with the secondary schools.
17. Provision for personal, social and health education is very good. It is given a high profile as it is rightly considered essential to the school's ethos. The school meets its statutory obligations for health, sex and drugs education. Excellent use is made of specialist staff from a special school to teach elements of personal, social and health education. The school works well with several secondary schools to ensure successful transition for pupils at the end of Year 6.

18. The accommodation is very good overall. It is kept clean to a high standard and a major extension since the last inspection provides a sizeable classroom for the older pupils and space for ICT. It has removed the need for the hall to be used as a full-time classroom. The Reception-aged children have a very small separate teaching area but they benefit by sharing all the facilities of the Key Stage 1 classroom. They also have an imaginatively arranged outdoor play area. The school makes very good use of its resources.

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

The school provides excellent care, guidance and support for pupils. The school seeks, values and acts on the views of pupils very well.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school provides an environment that is safe and supportive and gives the highest regard to pupils' well-being.
- Pupils are very well known to staff, and their progress and personal development are checked and monitored, so that support is individually tailored to each pupil's needs.
- Pupils know that they are valued and that their opinions and views are taken into consideration in the day-to-day organisation of the school.

### **Commentary**

19. The outstanding care, guidance and support provided by the school are a very good improvement since the last inspection. There is a clear emphasis on the health and safety of pupils. Governors provide very effective support and, for example, regularly check the school and organise any necessary work to be done. Pupils too are involved in considering their own health and safety through home-safety quizzes and road and cycle-safety training. They also help to draw up the evacuation plans for each classroom in case of fire. Child-protection arrangements are comprehensive, and staff and responsible governors are well trained.
20. The school is acutely aware of the progress and performance of each pupil and specifically designs learning for each individual child. In a pre-inspection questionnaire, all the pupils said there was an adult in the school to whom they could turn when in need of support and advice. There are frequent discussions between combinations of staff, pupils and parents about pupils' needs, which can then be followed up by individual conferencing between pupils and designated staff. New pupils are assessed on entry to the school and their needs identified. The school makes very good use of the appropriate support services available, especially for pupils with special educational needs. All work is set to support the individual needs of pupils, including regular homework.
21. Pupils benefit from highly effective strategies to involve them in their own development and that of the school. The members of the school council are thoughtful and use their initiative to put their ideas into practice. For example, they run lunchtime clubs and visit a different school to see how a longer-standing school council operates. Staff work on a one-to-one basis with pupils to help them make progress, both academically and personally. Pupils have developed their own code of conduct for their classrooms. In lessons, they are able to work very well independently and develop their own strategies for solving problems because they know they are listened to and their opinions valued.

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

Partnerships with parents are excellent, whilst those with schools, colleges and the community are very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school and parents work together in outstandingly strong partnerships to ensure pupils are achieving as well as they can.
- Although the local community is very small and pupils travel long distances to attend, the school is very well supported in the locality and draws on a wide range of visitors to boost pupils' experiences.
- The school has close partnerships with local schools to share resources, expertise and skills, and also to extend the range of activities available for pupils.

### **Commentary**

22. These partnerships are a major strength of the school and have improved since the last inspection. They contribute significantly to the remarkable improvement made by pupils who enter the school part way through the primary phase, many with learning and behavioural problems. Parents play a full part in their child's learning and personal development. Almost daily contact before and after school between staff and parents keeps parents fully up to date with learning, behaviour and play. In this way, parents can support their children at home at every level, including if necessary joint strategies to improve behaviour. This is an extremely effective tool in changing attitudes to learning and behaviour.
23. The school has maintained the very high standard of community involvement since the last inspection. In spite of the isolated position of the school, it attracts support from the locality through the very caring and knowledgeable local governors, who use their skills to assist the curriculum and staff. They have been very pro-active over a period of time in ensuring school lunches are healthy. It is very difficult because of the school's locality and the extra costs involved for many visits and trips to be made, but visitors, including artists, poets and sports coaches, enhance pupils' learning. There is continuous contact with the vicar, who visits weekly, and pupils attend services to celebrate major festivals. A weekly after-school sports club is organised by volunteers, and local teenagers organise a games evening in return for use of the school field.
24. The school has very effective partnerships with a range of other small primary schools to extend the training available to staff and to make joint applications for funding. Other partnerships enable the school to share expensive resources and benefit from a wider range of expertise and skills. Teachers visit other schools to observe good practice in the management of mixed-age classes. Pupils benefit from the expertise of a local special school to extend their personal skills in such areas as dealing with change and anger management. They are also able to enjoy residential visits with pupils from three other local primary schools. Although the main associated secondary school is in another county, pupils are prepared very well for the move by visits and transitional work. Parents of pupils with special educational needs have direct liaison with the secondary school's co-ordinator for special educational needs.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management of the school are excellent. Governance of the school is very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Leadership provided by the headteacher is excellent. Her ambitious vision for the school drives its success.
- The school's monitoring of its performance and evaluation of its effectiveness are excellent.
- The school is fully committed to doing the best for all its pupils and is highly successful in this.
- The governing body has made significant improvements to all aspects of its role since the last inspection.

### **Commentary**

25. The headteacher is an excellent role model for all members of staff and pupils. She teaches for a higher percentage of the teaching week than would normally be expected of a headteacher in this size of school. Her energy, enthusiasm and vision give direction to the school. Very well supported by teachers and assistants, both full-time and part-time, and by a very effective governing body, the headteacher is highly successful in promoting the welfare and interests of all pupils individually and including them all in what the school offers. As a result, the school overcomes all the difficulties it faces, such as small numbers of pupils, mixed-aged classes and late entrants who join the school with special educational needs and low self-esteem because of earlier experiences in different schools. Governors and staff have excellent procedures to check how the school is performing. Decisions are taken at senior level to promote the quality of teaching and learning by directing funds towards its enhancement, in the form of specialist teaching, high quality classroom assistants and a learning environment that boasts more than is often offered in much larger schools.
26. At the time of the last inspection, the governing body was judged to have too little involvement in the school's planning. This is no longer the case. The governors are very well led by the chairman and fulfil all statutory requirements. Individual governors contribute much of their time and their specialist interests and skills to school, and take a close interest in all that is going on. Their relationship with staff is excellent.
27. Management of the school is excellent. All aspects of developing the expertise of staff through training and funding opportunities and through links with other schools are excellent. Management of workplace reform to alleviate the administrative demands on teachers is well in hand. The school runs very smoothly because of the high quality work of the secretarial staff. Financial management is very good. Governors and headteacher are committed to using funding to promote the best teaching and they seek funding from a variety of sources to boost provision, for example in promoting after-school clubs. They maintain an above average balance in order to maintain the quality despite dips in pupil numbers from time to time. Though the cost of educating a pupil at the school is very high compared to primary schools nationally, it is more in line with that of small schools. The school gives very good value for money because of the high quality of the provision.

### ***Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005***

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	177,742
Total expenditure	183,008
Expenditure per pupil	4,946

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	34,596
Balance carried forward to the next	29,330

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

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

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

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

- Arrangements for children starting school are very good.
- Reception-aged children receive good experiences for their age group in the mixed-aged class.
- Children are well equipped to begin the National Curriculum.

#### **Commentary**

28. At the time of the inspection, there were four children in the Reception year. Most children attend the pre-school nursery in the same building and are familiar with the school and the staff before they enter the mixed-aged Key Stage 1 class. Because the year groups are very small, the standards of attainment on entry differ significantly from year to year. Currently the attainment on entry is broadly average.
29. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage and achieve well. Most children exceed the expectations of the early learning goals in personal social and emotional development, communication language and literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world. They meet the expectations for their age in physical and creative development.
30. Children's **personal, social and emotional development** is better than expected for their age. The children work together, are aware of each other's feelings and take on responsibilities as part of the school community. At the time of the inspection, children's **communication, language and literacy** were above average. Most children write sentences independently and some read well. In **mathematical development**, children know and write numbers and are beginning to solve number problems. In their **knowledge and understanding of the world**, they appreciate the differences in the world around them, for instance naming hot or cold places. Progress in **physical development** is satisfactory. Physical skills such as throwing and catching are taught progressively and standards are average. In **creative development**, the children experience a good range of materials and techniques, from making felt material to weaving ribbon around spokes. Their achievement and attainment are satisfactory.
31. The quality of teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage is consistently good. Both members of staff have a good understanding of how young children learn. The expected curriculum is in place and there are good enhancements, such as a visit to a Hindu temple. Arrangements to assess the children's progress are good and provide effective tracking of individuals. Planning for the Foundation Stage is neatly integrated with the provision for pupils in Years 1 and 2 but retains the separate learning objectives. The integration allows children to extend themselves and to operate at the best level for them.

32. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good. The accommodation and resources are good. There is a very small separate teaching area but children share all the facilities of the Key Stage 1 classroom and have an imaginatively arranged outdoor play area to enjoy. Role-play provision at the time of the inspection included a hot-air balloon and a garden chalet equipped as Katie Morag's Post Office. The good standards observed at the last inspection have been maintained and further improved. New curricular and assessment procedures have been introduced and the quality of accommodation has been improved.

## **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2**

### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is **very good**.

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

- Pupils achieve very well and standards are well above average in all aspects of the subject by Year 6.
- Teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6 are very good because of the high expertise of teachers.
- Marking of pupils' work and checks on pupils' progress are very good and help the pupils to know what they need to do to improve.
- The subject is very well led and managed.

#### **Commentary**

33. Standards in the current Year 6 are well above average. Pupils are articulate; they read fluently, and their attainment in writing ranges from average to well above average. The writing of the most talented pupils is often quite stunning in its maturity and imagination. This is because of the high quality of learning experiences the pupils enjoy in lessons and in other ways, for instance in lunchtime reading and writing clubs and in homework assignments. Statistical information shows that, in past years, pupils have made very good progress from Year 3 to Year 6, and this is true of the current year group. Pupils with talents in speaking and writing are given every encouragement to express them and they achieve very well. A noticeable feature of this school is the rapid progress made by pupils who join the school late, for instance during Years 3 to 6. This is the result of high quality teaching and very good support for those newcomers who have special educational needs. Standards in the current Year 2 are average overall. The nature of this small year group accounts for this finding. There has been good support put in place to improve the individual pupils' reading and writing, for example through the local education authority's service for pupils with special educational needs and through school initiatives, such as reading sessions with older pupils. Overall, pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress. Standards of writing in the current Year 2 are higher than those found last year. The school is focusing in its current development plan on improving pupils' writing in all age groups.
34. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. It is very good in Years 3 to 6 because the two teachers have great expertise in the subject and have very high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They use oral parts of lessons and drama very well to prompt pupils' powers of thinking and expression. They provide pupils

with a wealth of opportunities to write for different purposes: poetry, narratives, reports, persuasive pieces and letters. The quality of marking of pupils' work is very good, giving clear indications of how well pupils are doing and what they need to do to improve. There is often a buzz of excitement in lessons generated by the enthusiasm of the teachers. No lessons were observed in Years 1 and 2 but it is evident from a scrutiny of the teacher's planning and pupils' work and from discussion with pupils that the quality of their learning is good. The teacher and classroom assistant work well as a team, taking turns to focus on the various age groups in the Key Stage 1 class. Here too the marking of pupils' work is clear and gives good indications of how to improve.

35. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. Teachers track the progress of individual pupils very well, using a range of assessments and plotting their progress on graphs to show how much they are making from one year to the next. They have used this information to spot any weaknesses. For instance, to improve the quality of the pupils' writing, there are lessons each week, in addition to those of the National Literacy Strategy, with a focus on completing a full piece of writing. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The quality of provision has improved and standards of handwriting, which were unsatisfactory, are now very good.

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

36. Pupils use their skills well in other subjects and standards are good. Older pupils particularly use reading and writing very well in researching work in subjects such as geography and history. Teachers promote report writing very effectively in these subjects and science, and narrative writing features frequently in religious education. Pupils use word-processing skills to draft and polish work very well.

### **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

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

- Pupils achieve very well.
- The needs of different ability groups in Years 5 and 6 are very well addressed.
- The use of ICT in mathematics is a recognised area for development.
- Pupils have a confident approach to solving mathematical and everyday problems.

#### **Commentary**

37. Standards in the current Years 2 and 6 are well above average. Pupils' achievement is good in Years 1 and 2, and very good in Years 3 to 6, where a significant number of pupils enter the school for the first time. In recent years, the upward trend in results in Year 6 has been better than the national trend. In 2004, results of National Curriculum tests in Year 2 were high against both the national average and the average for similar schools. The results for pupils in Year 6 were well above the national average and in the top five per cent of schools where the Year 2 results had been similar in 2000. Talented pupils and those with special educational needs achieve very well because of the very good provision.

38. The quality of teaching and learning accounts for these good standards. It is very good overall, being good in the Key Stage 1 class and very good in the Key Stage 2 class. Teaching at all ages includes a very good focus on the investigating aspect of mathematics. There is very good teaching of strategical thinking and the recognition of patterns in numbers. This enables older pupils to develop and explain their own strategies. Pupils enjoy the challenge of contextual problems such as penning sheep at sheep-dog trials and seating combinations for knights at a round table. Basic skills are established early. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 demonstrate good skills of mental mathematics, not only in the recall of facts but also in using their knowledge to solve problems. Well-organised lessons cater for all abilities and very good use is made of the expertise of both the two main teachers and the classroom assistants.
39. Procedures to check pupils' progress are very good and are used effectively to track pupils individually. Assessment information is used very well to help teachers with their planning. The grouping of pupils and the level of challenge and support are directly determined by the tracking information and by teachers' marking. This process has a positive impact on learning and is one of the factors which bring late entrants into the Key Stage 2 class up to speed with their peers.
40. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The co-ordinator has a very good overview of the subject. Performance is rigorously evaluated and the information is presented in useful forms. Links with the local secondary school have provided challenging activities for pupils, as well as units of work that pupils complete after the transfer at age 11. Resources for the subject are good. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good, particularly in standards and achievement.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

41. The use of mathematics in other subjects is at least satisfactory; in some respects it is good. Pupils develop skills of handling data early in the school. Pupils in Year 1, for example, confidently draw bar charts to record types of transport, and the calculating skills of pupils in Year 2 enable them to solve problems of scale in geography. Older pupils are encouraged to use skills of measurement for science and algebra to create formulae for spreadsheets. The school is currently developing better links between numeracy and ICT.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

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

- Specialist teaching in Years 5 and 6 helps pupils to make very good progress and to reach above average standards.
- The school makes effective use of the specialist interests of parents and members of the local community to enhance pupils' learning.
- Good use is made of ICT facilities in lessons, such as an interactive whiteboard, but the use of computers for pupils to record findings of investigations is underdeveloped.

#### **Commentary**

42. Standards in the current Years 2 and 6 are above average. In recent years, standards have frequently been in the top five per cent of similar schools. Pupils' achievement is good. Some late entrants to school, however, have difficulty catching up on all areas of knowledge and not all reach the expected Level 4 in National Curriculum tests in Year 6. Pupils have good opportunities to investigate and research topics and develop a good understanding of how to make a test fair in their investigations. Older pupils in particular use correct terminology very well. Throughout the school, pupils are encouraged to present their work neatly and they do. Talented pupils are given the opportunity to explore topics using the Internet and other sources of information and they display very good levels of understanding and curiosity. Pupils with special educational needs are given good assistance by teachers and classroom assistants so that most reach the expected Level 4 in National Curriculum tests in Year 6.
43. The quality of pupils' learning throughout Years 1 to 6 is good overall. Evidence from one very good lesson seen and from samples of pupils' work and discussions with pupils shows that pupils' learning is very good in Years 5 and 6 because of the quality of specialist teaching available. There is scope for extending this provision to younger pupils. The coverage of the science curriculum across the year groups is comprehensive and a number of special features add to the quality of the provision. The time allocated to teaching the subject in Years 3 to 6 is effectively used to complete full investigations without interruption. This helps pupils' learning. Where available, the expertise of friends and parents of the school is used successfully. A recent instance of this has been work on rocks and minerals, led by a geologist. The local environment, including the school grounds, pond and organic garden, is a rich resource for learning and used well. A priority in the current school development plan is to incorporate the potential for these resources in planning the curriculum for pupils in Years 1 and 2. Most aspects of ICT, such as using an interactive whiteboard, the Internet for research, a digital camera and microscope, are good and featured very well in the one lesson seen. An aspect for improvement is the use of ICT in the recording and displaying of the results of pupils' investigations.
44. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Assessments of how well pupils are doing are made regularly and are effective in tracking progress and eliminating weaknesses. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The good standards and provision have been maintained and the use of specialist teaching has improved.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Late entrants into the Key Stage 2 class make very good progress.
- There is high quality specialist teaching in Years 3 to 6.
- Lessons are well organised for mixed-age groups.

### **Commentary**

45. Standards in Year 6 are above average and in Year 2 they are average. Some pupils in Year 2 reach standards above this. Achievement in both classes is good. Younger pupils make good progress overall from their level on entry. Pupils in the Key Stage 2

class continue to make good progress as they meet the breadth and complexity of the programme of study. Some pupils who enter the school in Years 3, 4 or 5 with below average skills make very good progress to match the standards achieved by other pupils. This is because of the extent to which the school goes to help everyone to achieve their potential.

46. The quality of teaching is at least good and often very good. The skilled management of work in the Key Stage 2 class by the part-time specialist teacher provides pupils with the opportunity to achieve very well in different aspects of the subject. Pupils are confident and are able to apply skills to new situations, for example in creating a bank of images to represent furniture in the classroom. Pupils in Years 1 and 2, however, do not currently benefit from the specialist teaching and there is scope for developing this provision. Nevertheless, the pupils use their skills for a range of purposes, producing graphs, text and pictures such as creations in the style of Mondrian. Some are happy to work independently. Pupils are encouraged to see the usefulness of ICT in everyday life, for example, as they keep in contact with a parent undertaking the Global Challenge by email.
47. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The ratio of computers to pupils is better than the national average and the extended accommodation has allowed a suitable work area for pupils in the Key Stage 1 class. Procedures to assess and record pupils' progress are based on monitoring of pupils' work and are satisfactory. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and plans for the further development of the subject are well considered.

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

48. The use of ICT in other subject areas is good. Pupils make good use of ICT in literacy for drafting and redrafting work. In science, resources such as the digital microscope are used well, for example in the examination of rock samples and minibeasts. However, the use of graphics and data-handling programmes to record and illustrate the results of investigations is underdeveloped. The school has invested in a good range of subject software, which supports specific skills such as a timeline programme for history. With other local schools, teachers are working on embedding the subject in the mathematics curriculum as part of a project that will improve the provision further.

### **HUMANITIES**

49. It was only possible to sample the provision for **geography** and **history**. No judgement could be made about provision, standards or teaching. Available evidence, however, indicates that the subjects are taught regularly and often to a high standard. The skills are taught progressively and the curriculum, especially for geography, reflects the school's rural location well. There is very effective use of specialists among parents and the community, for example teaching about mountains and volcanoes, the water cycle and water management. There are good opportunities for visits to museums and for field trips, for instance during the annual residential visit.

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

50. These subjects were only sampled during the inspection. No lessons were observed in **art and design** or **design and technology**. Evidence from displays and teachers' planning shows that pupils have good opportunities to explore the work of famous artists and artisans, as well as art work from diverse cultures. Pupils design, make

and evaluate objects in line with the requirements of the National Curriculum for design and technology. Standards of work are generally good. One very good lesson of **music** was seen, which was part of a project on composition led by a specialist member of the local education authority's music service. Pupils in the Key Stage 2 class created patterns of sound using percussion instruments, mainly Indian in origin. The project had been enhanced by a visiting specialist in Indian music. It was clear from the response of pupils during the lesson that they had been highly impressed by his skills and had learned one or two of the more advanced techniques of drumming that he had demonstrated. The project is a further example of how the school goes out to enhance the quality of the curriculum and explore different cultures. As only one lesson of **physical education** was seen, it is not possible to make judgements on provision or standards. Available evidence, however, indicates that pupils receive a broad curriculum and are successful in many areas, for example football and athletics.

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

Provision in personal, social and health education and citizenship is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve very well.
- Personal development underpins the ethos of the school.
- Pupils gain personal qualities of tolerance, self-worth and concern for others.

### **Commentary**

51. There is a good scheme of work for the subject and regular teaching time is provided. The subject is given a high profile as it is rightly considered essential to the ethos of the school. Specialist teaching, for example in coping with change and assertiveness, helps the pupils' personal development. The school meets its statutory obligations for health, sex and drugs education. The success of the provision is evident in the very good attitudes demonstrated by pupils, their confidence and self-esteem and the strength of the school community.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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