

INSPECTION REPORT

BEACONSIDE CHURCH OF ENGLAND INFANT SCHOOL

Penrith

LEA area: Cumbria

Unique reference number: 112423

Headteacher: Mrs S J Fearn

Lead inspector: Mrs C A Field

Dates of inspection: 9th - 11th May 2005

Inspection number: 271729

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant
School category: Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils: 3 - 7
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 280
School address: Hutton Hill
Penrith
Cumbria
Postcode: CA11 8EN
Telephone number: (01768) 242 172
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Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of governors: Reverend A Hutchinson
Date of previous inspection: December 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Beaconside Church of England Infant School is located in the eastern part of Penrith. The school serves a mixed local neighbourhood comprising private and social housing and has 280 pupils from the age of 3 to 7 on roll. The profile of children's attainment when they start in the Nursery is well below average. Almost all pupils are of white British ethnic origin but a very small number are from Asian or mixed heritage. There are no pupils who are at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language. A broadly average proportion of pupils have special educational needs that cover a range of learning difficulties; a very small number has a statement. The school has the designation of *Strategic Special Educational Needs Provision* which means it caters for eight pupils who each have a statement to help support their specific learning and/or physical difficulties. A below average proportion of pupils take up free school meals but school managers identify that more are eligible but do not claim their entitlement. The level of mobility in school is below that seen nationally.

The school is involved in the *Leadership Development in Primary Schools* initiative and is part of a local education authority pilot focussed on supporting pupils with social, emotional and behavioural problems. The school was accredited with a government achievement award in 2002 and a *Healthy Schools Award* in the same year. The *Excellence in Early Years Kitemark* was awarded to the school by its local education authority in 2004. The school works in active partnership with a number of colleges to support family learning, adult education, student placements and joint training programmes.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
9479	C Field	Lead inspector	Personal, social, health education and citizenship
9428	J Butler	Lay inspector	
4099	R Braithwaite	Team inspector	Mathematics Geography Physical education
1189	S Brown	Team Inspector	Areas of learning in the Foundation Stage History Music
15414	D Carrington	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Art and design
20326	P Clark	Team inspector	Special educational needs English Design and technology
28882	B Jones	Team inspector	Strategic special needs provision

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PART A SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school provides an **effective** education for its pupils within a very caring and extremely supportive family atmosphere. Pupils are well taught and benefit from the school's exceptionally inclusive approaches that ensure everyone's individual needs are well met. The headteacher provides very good leadership and together with the dedicated staff and governor team ensures that the school moves forward. The school adds good value to pupils' education and gives **good** value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher is a very good leader who inspires others to realise the shared vision.
- Teamwork is a very great strength as are the very good relationships at all levels.
- Good teaching enables learning to be effective and most pupils achieve well as a result. However, the highest attainers in mathematics are not consistently challenged and this limits their achievement.
- Teachers' assessment of pupil's progress, though satisfactory overall, is not sufficiently focussed on supporting their next steps in learning. There are missed opportunities to use data to support target setting and pupil self-review.
- Very good provision ensures that all pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements, make good progress in their learning and social development. The work of learning support assistants is excellent.
- Very good provision is made for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The curriculum is very good with many excellent opportunities for enrichment. It supported very well by very positive links with parents and outstanding links with the wider community.
- Very good attention is paid to health, safety and welfare and pupils are very well looked after.
- Management systems are not rigorous enough in terms of monitoring and evaluation to give good support to the drive for raising standards.

The school has made **good** progress in most respects since its previous inspection six years ago. School leaders have a firm grasp on what works to the best advantage of pupils in school and are in a good position to continue to build for improvement now and in the future. The lack of explicit success criteria to judge the success or otherwise of the school improvement plan limits its usefulness as a tool to better support the process of self-review.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Boys and girls achieve **well** from their various starting points. The results in the table below show that in the 2004 National Curriculum tests, Year 2 pupils reached well above average standards in writing and above average standards in reading and mathematics. Standards were not as good as those in similar schools in reading, but were better in writing and in line with them in mathematics. The overall trend in raising standards is much the same as that seen nationally but as can be seen in the table the standards reached vary considerably every year.

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
reading	A	E	B	D

writing	A	E	A	B
mathematics	A	D	B	C

Key: A – well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average.

Current standards in Year 2 are average in English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT), design and technology and games. Standards are above average in art and design and singing. There was insufficient evidence on which to judge standards in history. The inspection of religious education is taking place later in the term as this is a church school.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities are **good**. Pupils are enthusiastic and confident learners. Behaviour is mainly good with just occasional lapses. Most pupils cooperate well and are willing to take on roles of responsibility, enjoying very good relationships with all members of the school community. Their spiritual, moral, social and personal development is **very good**. Attendance and punctuality are both satisfactory. There have been no exclusions in the history of the school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided is good with many very good features. Teamwork is a very great strength as are the very good relationships in all classes. Teaching and learning are good with the exception of mathematics where they are satisfactory. Here there is too little challenge for higher attainers in the work they are set and this inhibits achievement. In contrast, some good quality work has been completed in English and in ICT. Both subjects have been prime areas for improvement and the school's strategies are proving successful. Teachers use assessment satisfactorily to help them keep check on pupil progress. However, the process of setting and tracking the targets for individual pupils is not yet complete. There are some gaps in assessment procedures that mean pupils' achievement is not reviewed often enough. The excellent support given by learning support assistants to those pupils with special educational needs, including statements, is assisting their good academic progress and social development. The very good curriculum offers exciting and interesting activities that stimulate pupils' good learning. There is excellent enrichment provided through the clubs that run, visits and visitors programme and via the very positive links with parents and exceptionally beneficial links with the local and wider community. The programme for PSHCE¹ has been well conceived and is highly effective in preparing pupils very well for the next stage of education and later life.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good** overall. The headteacher gives very good educational direction and enables staff to work together in equal partnership to ensure its success. The school ethos places pupils at the centre of all decisions and this results in an outstanding commitment to inclusion. The leadership team has a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development, and works effectively to bring improvement. Governors are good critical friends and hold the school fully to account. The school is aware that a more systematic review of quality and standards is required and the inspection findings confirm that this is a key area to be improved.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents hold very positive views about the quality of education their children are receiving. A few parents would like to see communication improved. The school is aware of this and are looking at different solutions to extend the ways in which it keeps in touch with parents. Pupils say they are very happy to come to Beaconside Church of England Infants School

¹ PSHCE refers to personal, social, health education and citizenship.

and can think of very few ways in which to improve it. They find it friendly and interesting and say the teachers are kind.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Insist that planning and tasks consistently include sufficient challenge for potentially high attaining pupils, particularly in mathematics.
- Add rigour to monitoring and evaluation activities so that senior and middle managers have more extensive information about standards, teaching and learning to support the drive for raised standards.
- Ensure that assessment and target-setting systems and marking are used consistently to plan pupils' next steps in learning, to track their achievement and to involve them in reviewing their progress.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Pupils' achievement is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Boys and girls achieve equally well from their various starting points.
- The standards reached by Year 2 pupils in the 2004 National Curriculum tests were well above average in writing and above average in reading and mathematics.
- Standards are above average in art and design and singing.
- Potentially higher attaining pupils do not receive a consistent level of challenge to help them reach the standards of which they are capable, particularly in mathematics.
- Pupils with learning difficulties achieve well due to the outstanding support they are given.
- There is good capacity for improvement.

Commentary

1. Standards are improving at a broadly similar rate to that seen nationally. However, they tend to vary year on year depending on the profile of each year group. Many pupils currently in Year 2 started at a well below average baseline in the Nursery and have achieved well to reach average standards in most subjects. The current Year 1 is a far more capable group academically and they are on track to achieve above average standards. The school sets challenging targets to assist in raising standards but does not assess on-going learning frequently enough to make sure that pupils are on track to achieve them. This is a missed opportunity to support the effective strategies in place that are bringing improvement. The climate for raising standards in school is positive, and the inspection team has confidence in the school's capacity to work towards even better effectiveness.
2. Current standards in Year 2 are average in English, mathematics, science, ICT, design and technology and games. Achievement is good. There was insufficient evidence on which to judge standards in history. The inspection of religious education is taking place later in the term. Standards are above average in art and design and singing. Pupils are talented artists as the high quality display of their creativity shows. Singing in assembly was observed to be tuneful, sweet and uplifting. Pupils master complicated songs and learn words quickly and without the need for visual prompts. Pupils who show a musical talent are being well catered for by the school's extra curricular programme.
3. Basic skills are given good attention and this results in confident learners. ICT skills are being well developed and this is a significant improvement since the time of the previous inspection. ICT is integral to pupils' studies and involves them in very practical *hands-on* activities that many find suits their learning style. Pupils enjoy using the computers, often independently as they work through tailor-made programmes to help with literacy and numeracy. Reading and writing have been the main areas of focus this year and the school's strategies to bring improvement are proving successful. Two members of staff have been trained in reading intervention and give good support to those who need it and enable them to achieve well. Parents too give positive support to home reading and good foundations are being set in the early

years upon which pupils' skills can be built. The Early Literacy Support Strategy (ELS) is being used well to help those in danger of under achieving in Year 1. The school has recently been part of a Beacon School cluster group working collaboratively to support its work on developing literacy and the positive impact is well demonstrated in pupils' written work. For example, a range of good quality story writing and poetry is on display in Year 2. In thinking about poetry the pupils have said that "*it is like a song without a tune or a story with words missing*". Two members of staff have undertaken training to enable them to introduce a mathematics recovery scheme and this work is adding value to lower and middle attaining pupils' achievements. The next step, as the school is aware, is to ensure that higher attaining pupils are set sufficiently challenging work so that their achievement is the best it can be.

4. The table that follows shows that Year 2 pupils reached well above average standards in writing and above average in reading and mathematics in the 2004 National Curriculum tests. Standards were below those seen in similar schools in reading, above average in writing and average in mathematics. Standards were much better than those in 2003 in all tested subjects. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher level 3 was in line with that found in similar schools in reading and mathematics and above this in writing. The profile of standards reached in 2004 was very similar to that reported by the previous inspection in 1999 in reading but much improved in writing and mathematics.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.4 (14.0)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	16.3 (12.7)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	17.2 (15.7)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 75 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. Pupils with learning difficulties achieve well due to the outstanding support they are given. The very effective focus on communication skills is proving highly successful in supporting these pupils to access a full curriculum and make gains in their learning. Pupils with special educational needs are enabled to reach higher standards in practical or creative activities, such as music, art and design and physical education than academic ones. For example, in a Year 1 assembly with a dance component, pupils with special educational needs made good progress in building movement skills and using self-expression as they worked creatively and performed in front of parents and friends.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils have **very good** attitudes to school, they are keen to learn and their behaviour is **good**. Enjoying very good relationships with all members of the school community, their spiritual, moral, social and personal development is **very good**. Attendance and punctuality are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are very keen to come to school and have very good attitudes to learning.
- They relate very well with other children and with adults.

- The school provides a rich and supportive curriculum designed to nurture the whole child and encourage all aspects of their personal development.
- Pupils respond very well and become caring, tolerant and reflective individuals who share a desire to do well together.
- Behaviour is good in lessons and is happy and harmonious at playtimes.

Commentary

6. Pupils say they are very happy to come to Beaconside Church of England Infants school and can think of very few ways in which to improve it. They find it friendly and interesting and say the teachers are kind. In an assembly based on the celebration of Children's Day in Japan, they were able to demonstrate that they have clear ideas of what they would wish for their own futures.
7. The underlying strength of this aspect is the depth and quality of the commitment of all adults who work with the children to provide a consistent, loving and inspiring environment in which the many strands of each child's development are nurtured and encouraged. In a fully inclusive setting, pupils learn to accept and understand each other's differences, and develop very good relationships with each other. Good collaboration is a feature in many lessons, and very young pupils demonstrate some impressive teamwork both at work and at play. Pupils grow in confidence, happily make choices and respond to the wealth of opportunities provided for them by making very good personal development which prepares them well for the next stage of their education and makes them very good ambassadors for the school.
8. Pupils are very keen to learn and to do well in lessons. They try hard and are enthusiastic to contribute answers in whole class sessions, even when the subject is quite sensitive and personal. For example some Year 1 pupils were very open and honest about their feelings and thoughts on the death of a loved grandparent. Teachers give pupils a rich set of experiences designed to teach them about other cultures and life in other parts of the world. Multicultural understanding is also promoted well, through hosting visitors from the local and wider community. Creative arts feature prominently in developing pupils' cultural awareness.
9. Moral teaching is based on very good role models and a discreet use of praise and rewards as well as highlighting occasions when pupils overstep the mark. Behaviour in lessons is mainly good and most pupils cooperate well and are willing to take on roles of responsibility. Very occasionally, a small number of older pupils lose their concentration, become fractious and distract the learning of others. Outside in the playgrounds pupils play together very well and make really good use of the varied and attractive facilities and playground toys. Pupils who have problems in managing their own behaviour are extremely well supported. There have been no exclusions in the history of the school.
10. Attendance is satisfactory and in line with figures seen for primary schools nationally. Punctuality, which is satisfactory, has been a concern and the school has focused on this as shown, for example by the display by Year 2 pupils entitled "It's not great to be late". There has been some positive impact from this but the school aims for even better time-keeping at the start of the day. Lessons begin and finish to time.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
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School data:	5.6	School data:	0.0
National data:	5.1	National data:	0.4

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided is **good**. The very good curriculum offers worthwhile experiences for the pupils with excellent enrichment. Pupils receive very good care and support. The school has a very good partnership with parents and has forged strong links with other schools and excellent links with its community for the great benefit of pupils.

Teaching and learning

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching enables learning to be effective and most pupils achieve well as a result.
- The work set for the highest attainers in mathematics is not always challenging enough and this limits their achievement.
- Teachers' assessment of pupils' progress though satisfactory overall, is not sufficiently focussed on supporting pupils' next steps in learning.
- There are missed opportunities to use data to support marking, target setting and pupil self-review.
- There are strengths in the teaching of pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements. Teaching assistants make an excellent contribution to supporting learning and are pivotal to these pupils making such good progress.
- Monitoring and evaluation systems need now to focus on identifying and promoting those features of teaching that result in the most effective learning.

Commentary

11. The school's very good climate for learning has been sustained since the time of the previous inspection. The provision for homework is good and secures parents' positive support for their children's education. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy their lessons and have good fun.
12. Strengths in the Foundation Stage reported by the previous inspection have been built on as demonstrated by the award of Cumbria's prestigious *Kitemark* that recognises good practice. Consistently good teaching across all areas of learning in Nursery and Reception classes ensures that the youngest children in school receive a good start to their education. Very good teaching in the Nursery promotes personal and social development very well and results in the children developing a positive self-image from a very early age. Children across the Foundation Stage see themselves as effective learners and are taking full advantage of the exciting learning opportunities being provided because of the staff emphasis on promoting confidence and personal self-esteem.
13. Classrooms in Years 1 and 2 are busy and productive places of work in which the pupils enjoy their lessons. Very good teamwork is at the heart of the good learning taking place. A much higher proportion of good or better teaching was observed than

is typical as shown in the table that follows. Support staff who work in all years, and specifically in helping those pupils with special educational needs to integrate into class sessions, are highly effective. In some instances their input is pivotal to enabling these pupils to make the progress of which they are capable. However, in some aspects of their wider role, for example in supporting learning in the opening sessions to lessons, they could take a more active role. All other characteristics of teaching are at least satisfactory and mainly good, but there are inconsistencies in practice that need to be ironed out. For example, teachers make insufficient use of on-going assessment to feed forward into planning suitably challenging work for all pupils that could accelerate higher attainers progress in mathematics. Shared approaches to planning and assessment work satisfactorily and are undoubted aides to the good level of effectiveness. Assessment is used effectively in English to chart progress and this offers good pointers for development in other subjects. The school has rightly begun to sharpen assessment practice, led by the newly appointed deputy headteacher, and is moving towards implementing an *Assessment for Learning* strategy with support from the Primary Strategy Leadership Programme. The inspection team agree with this planned improvement and have identified it as a key action point, together with the need to tighten up on marking and involving pupils in self-review. Additionally, monitoring and evaluation systems need now to focus on those features of teaching that result in the most effective learning, being identified and promoted widely. The creation of a revised learning and teaching policy could help in this respect.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 49 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0 (0%)	6 (12%)	35 (72%)	8 (16%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

The curriculum

The **very good** curriculum offers worthwhile experiences for the pupils with excellent enrichment. The quality and quantity of accommodation and resources meet the needs of the curriculum well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good provision ensures that all pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements, make good progress in their learning and social development.
- The curriculum is largely successful in meeting the different needs of the pupils.
- The opportunities for enrichment are excellent.
- The accommodation and resources are good overall but sometimes the open-plan nature of the unit-based classrooms makes them noisy.
- The school is improving outdoor provision for play and environmental studies and the features in place so far are of high quality.

Commentary

14. The curriculum is in better shape than at the time of the previous inspection. ICT provision has been enhanced significantly. The very good curriculum is broad and balanced and enriched by well-chosen visits, very good links with other schools and excellent links with the local and wider community. All subjects meet statutory requirements. The good provision made for English is central to pupils' good achievement during their time at school. The school has worked hard to raise pupils' basic skills and its strategies are proving effective with still more improvement work planned to continue this year in mathematics.
15. The school is totally inclusive and goes to great lengths to accommodate the needs of the full ability and age range of the pupils. The curriculum for the children in the Foundation Stage is well planned and delivered. The cross-curricular links between the areas they experience are well made. The *Excellence in Early Years Kitemark* was awarded to the school by its local education authority in 2004. Pupils with special educational needs are given full and effective access to the National Curriculum. All staff ensure that pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated into the life of the school. These pupils take part in school visits, productions and any other chosen activity. The school has made a useful start in considering the needs of those pupils with special gifts or talents and is responsive in its practice, for example in enabling those with sporting or musical talents to have additional practice. The school is working actively with the partner junior school and other Cumbrian schools to develop best practice. The register drawn up by the coordinator shows 26 pupils with gifts and talents that teachers have identified. There are record sheets in use to track progress. What is now needed is to tighten up the identification process and to make more consistent provision in lessons, particularly for the very able mathematicians.
16. Pupils are provided with a range of high quality experiences in the aesthetic, creative and physical aspects of the curriculum that add considerable enrichment to their academic and social development. Local artists, puppeteers, willow weavers, a ceramicist, musicians, vicar, police, vet, nurse, dentist and forester have all been into school to share their skills experiences with the pupils. The numerous overseas teachers who visit as part of the *Comenius* project add an international dimension to the curriculum. Local businesses are very active in support of curriculum innovation, for example a major power supplier has supported Year 2 pupils' work on solar energy. The school also makes itself available as a community resource and enables local residents to use its ICT resources to support life-long learning.
17. There is an excellent range of extra-curricular experiences provided including after school clubs in singing, karate, football and French. Pupils took part in an art exhibition as part of the Penrith Christian Festival last summer, worked alongside the Northern Sinfonia orchestra, participated in a dance project and are currently taking part in the *Wise Minds* project.
18. The accommodation is presented well; it is bright, stimulating and well maintained. However, sometimes the open-plan nature of the unit-based classrooms suffer from noise transference. The developing out door space is a very positive feature. Resources for learning are well chosen and support pupils' learning effectively. Display is of good quality and gives high status to pupils' personal achievements.

Care, guidance and support

The school takes **very good** care of its pupils and supports them **very effectively** in their academic and personal growth.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Care, welfare, health and safety procedures are very effective.
- Pupils are very well supported, advised and guided but the recording of pupils' academic and social progress could be sharper.
- Pupils' views are listened to, respected, and acted upon.
- Relationships between pupils and the adults in school are very good.

Commentary

19. The pupils are very much at the heart of the school's work. Parents told inspectors how much they like the family atmosphere created that enables their children to learn with confidence. Pupils are seen as unique individuals and their needs are known thoroughly by the staff of the school and the response to these needs is committed and successful. The school has developed very effective systems to ensure that pupils are very well cared for, their health is safeguarded, and that they work in safety. Parents are very appreciative of the work that the school does to ensure their children's well-being and these views are justified.
20. Staff are very alert to particular needs and the support and guidance provided for pupils is of very good quality. The pupils come from very diverse backgrounds, and include pupils with severe learning difficulties, those who are vulnerable and some who are particularly talented. New arrivals, some from travelling backgrounds, have their needs carefully assessed and there is close monitoring of their progress. The school is currently in a pilot programme known as *SEBs* that involves weekly taught sessions aimed at helping pupils manage their own behaviours and develop coping strategies. Staff respond to the diversity of need in a very successful way. This is especially the case of the teaching assistants who provide outstanding support for those pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements. These pupils are welcomed into school, they are fully involved in its activities and they respond with vigour to the stimuli provided for them to learn effectively. The work for these pupils is based on very careful assessment of need and a very focused programme of work that leads to the step-by-step development of skills. The necessary improvement to assessment *for* learning rather than *of* learning, and discussed earlier in this report, will ensure that such academic guidance is more uniform across all attainment groups, and hence, improved over its currently sound quality.
21. A significant factor in the harmonious, collaborative work in lessons and the good rate of achievement is the quality of relationships between the pupils and adults. Such relationships are very good.
22. The views of pupils are heard, celebrated and followed up. Although there is no School Council, which is perhaps a missed opportunity, the pupils have a voice. For example, pupils respond very positively to the *Head's Challenge*, which results in the award of a £35.00 cash prize for the winners to decide how it is to be spent. Recent prizes have been spent on items to enhance cooperative and positive play at lunchtimes and break and musical instruments.
23. The school's efforts to provide very effective support, welfare and guidance are enhanced by the highly effective partnerships formed with external educational, medical and social support advisory agencies. Additionally, partnerships with schools

in Sweden, Denmark and France are usefully in place to support developments in combating racism and promoting social inclusion.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There is a **very good** partnership with parents in support of their children's education. **Good** links with other schools and colleges, and **excellent** links with the wider community provide a wealth of enrichment opportunities for the curriculum that give pupils tastes of life far beyond their own locality.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has forged very good, mutually supportive links with parents.
- Excellent links with the wider community, including international projects, enrich the pupils' learning experiences considerably.
- Healthy eating is very well promoted through a community scheme.
- Good links with local schools include collaboration on curriculum development for citizenship education.
- Reports for parents do not give clear information about how well pupils are doing in relation to National Curriculum targets. There is not enough information about progress and achievement in ICT.

Commentary

24. Parents are full and equal partners in support of their children's education and the school goes to considerable lengths to promote this aspect. In a spirit of mutual support, families are given the opportunity of developing their own skills, for example through the family literacy project, and parents are inspired to raise their ambitions for their children by schemes like *Aim Higher*. The school accommodates community learning schemes, and encourages parents to further their own learning and qualifications.
25. Parents are very supportive of school policies and help both at home and as classroom volunteers, providing support for reading and other activities. They have provided significant support to the school's quest for Healthy School status, particularly in helping with the development of raised beds for growing vegetables, and in running the food co-operative. As well as generous fund-raising through the Parents/Teacher Association, other parents with specialist skills in areas of arts, crafts and music are welcomed into school to lead workshops and demonstrations.
26. The school keeps parents well informed about all aspects of their children's progress, but there are aspects of the pupils' annual reports which need attention. More detail is required when reporting on information and communications technology, and in giving a clear picture of how well each pupil is doing in relation to national expectations.
27. Links with the wider community are excellent. The school makes extremely good use of a rich diversity of expertise at home and abroad to enrich the curriculum. Long-standing links with Swedish and Danish schools have been extended to a school in France, which gives staff the opportunity to exchange ideas and pupils gain a first hand contact with scholars in mainland Europe on the internet. Environmental education is a strong feature which has benefited from links with industry and business, as well as the local foresters. A good example of this partnership is the

project funded by a power company in which pupils measured and recorded weather conditions.

28. There are strong links with the parish church which is attended by the whole school every term. This partnership sustains the Christian ethos and allows innovative approaches to spiritual development like the reflective and expressive opportunities provided through *Godly play*. Other members of the local community including police, dentist and nurse provide expertise in the personal and social education programme.
29. Good links with other schools and colleges encourage collaboration on aspects of personal and social education, including writing a curriculum booklet on dealing with life-threatening illness and bereavement. Pupils from the neighbouring junior school act as playground buddies and help to smooth the transition into the next key stage. College and university links play a key part in the promotion of education opportunities for parents, and the school houses the very effective strategic facility for special needs for the local cluster of schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership, management and governance is **good**. The headteacher gives **very good** leadership.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the headteacher is very good; she gives a very clear steer to the school and works in a quiet, determined way to ensure its success.
- The leadership team provides good leadership with the focus on the right aspects that will bring continuous improvement.
- Management systems are not rigorous enough in terms of monitoring and evaluation to give good support to the drive for raised standards.
- Whilst the subject management teams generally provide effective leadership, no one is charged with the overall responsibility for the performance of each subject.
- The school is well governed by an involved, interested and supportive team of governors.
- The school adds good value to pupils' education and gives good value for money.

Commentary

30. Beaconside Church of England Infant School is led in a quietly determined manner by the hard working and very committed headteacher. She has very high expectations and aspirations for the school, which frame the clear sense of direction and purpose in its work very successfully. The headteacher has built a strong team of professionals within school who fully support her leadership and who subscribe totally to the school's core priority of ensuring that every pupil is valued, encouraged to do well and included in all activities that take place. This results in a very caring, happy and friendly learning community where pupils' achievement is good.
31. The headteacher is well assisted by the leadership team, who are growing in confidence and who have a positive impact on the work of the school. This group has a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development, and works effectively to bring improvement. The efforts of the leadership team are complemented well by the teams responsible for different subjects and aspects of the school's work. However, whilst subject leadership is generally good, there are no identified individual

subject leaders. This fact, coupled with imperfections in the monitoring and evaluation process, means that there is not yet a sufficiently rigorous view of subject performance. This restricts the strategic view of the school held by the school leadership team. Additionally, although the school improvement plan usefully flags the prime aspects that are ripe for more work, it would benefit from the inclusion of explicit success criteria to better support the school's self-review. The headteacher and her senior colleagues recognise that there is scope for improvement in management systems that give better emphasis to maximising pupils' achievement. Current professional development is very focused on leadership aspects of provision. Performance management is seen as a positive process to support improvement and plans are well on track to meet the timetable for workforce reform and remodelling in terms of release time for planning and assessment.

32. Governors are confident in role, very well informed and clearly have good personal knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for improvement through their many and varied associations. There are mutually respectful relationships between the senior leadership and governance teams and it is apparent that the open-style of management in school is conducive to innovation and helps the school move forward. The governors are growing in confidence in their interpretation of data and their skills of asking timely questions about the school's performance. Governors are led well by the very involved and committed chair; they ensure that the school meets its statutory requirements and are increasingly influential in shaping the vision and impact of the school. They have a good oversight of the budget and they ensure that spending decisions are prudent and matched carefully to the priorities of the school. The school has received a positive, recent audit report of its financial procedures. The larger than usual carry forward shown in the table that follows is earmarked savings so that staffing levels may be maintained in the light of the forecasted likely fall in intake. The budget as shown below, is relatively small, and a below average amount is spent on each pupil. The school adds good value to pupils' education and provides good value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	730,543	Balance from previous year	45,817
Total expenditure	714,277	Balance carried forward to the next year	62,083
Expenditure per pupil	2,497		

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURE

The strategic provision made for pupils with special education needs

The strategic provision made for pupils with special education needs is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and management, including excellent teamwork underpins the very good provision.
- All the pupils with statements are achieving well from their various starting points.
- There are high quality resources available to support the good teaching and learning.
- Close contact with the local education authority (LEA) and relevant agencies, and the additional support they provide, adds extra value to these pupils' experiences.

Commentary

33. The Strategic Provision was opened three years ago for eight pupils with severe or profound and multiple special needs relating to learning and/or physical difficulties. Pupils range in age from Nursery to Year 2, six boys and two girls. The provision is sponsored by the LEA, with support levels being supplemented through the school's own budget. The school works in effective consultation with a number of other local schools in the Eden area, which each make strategic provision for pupils with special educational needs.
34. The school is totally inclusive and goes to great lengths to accommodate the needs of all its pupils. All pupils with statements are fully included into mainstream classes and have full access to the curriculum. Success is dependent upon total school co-operation and the highly skilled support of learning assistants. Teaching and learning are good. Relationships throughout the school are excellent. The majority of pupils with special educational needs are keen and eager to learn. Pupils apply themselves to the best of their abilities and are very responsive to the excellent support given, especially in one to one situations to assist their personal as well as their academic progress. All staff ensure that pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated into the life of the school, however, progress is slower when personal support is not available in main school lessons. Language reinforcement is ever-present. A picture/symbol system is used very effectively to assist communication for some pupils. Speech and language therapy is provided by external specialists and compliments the school's own approaches so that pupils receive a high level of support to help their development. Great attention is paid to pupils' personal development and the staff plan flexible timetables to cope with some pupils' extreme emotional and behavioural difficulties. The quality and use of resources is exceptionally good. Two sensory experience rooms, one with water therapy equipment and withdrawal spaces are used as required and were observed to be very beneficial in supporting the specific needs of some of the pupils. The tranquil atmosphere created has a very noticeable effect on calming behaviour. However, sensory work could extend further with the use of aromatherapy and experiences could be enhanced by the addition of a music therapy input. Some pupils have extremely complex needs. First-rate handling of a Nursery child with multiple special needs showed deep understanding by the teacher. Movement restrictions for some pupils affect their learning, though vast improvements are seen since these pupils first joined the school. Two pupils, for example, arrived in wheel chairs. They have made tremendous effort in physiotherapy sessions and can now walk and run. Specialised facilities for pupils with physical needs are excellent and enables them good access to the curriculum.
35. There is very close contact with parents and carers. Parents greatly value the work of the Strategic Provision. There is careful planning for a pupil's induction or transfer to another school, and close collaboration with other schools in the area to share resources and expertise. Links with outside agencies are exemplary. Expert advice from a physiotherapist, occupational therapist and speech and language therapists ensures growth in essential areas of development.
36. The Strategic Provision is led and managed very well. The head teacher and governors thoroughly support the work taking place and rightly flag it as a real strength of the school. It is highly successful in addressing the complex needs of the pupils. Organisation is highly effective in daily and longer-term planning. The special needs

co-ordinator, although part-time, works closely with the Foundation Stage manager to oversee the very good provision. The two co-ordinators work hard to ensure that the overall provision for special educational needs pupils is very good. They are strongly committed to providing the best possible chances for these pupils and work well despite having only minimal time for paired work within the school day. The members of staff responsible for coordinating special educational needs very carefully track the progress of pupils with special educational needs. Designated governors are fully involved in monitoring the overall provision and holding the school to account. They are knowledgeable and, through good systems of planned and informal visits, keep the governing body fully informed of developments related to budget allocations.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The children receive a secure and stable start to their educational life.
- Teaching is consistently good, with some very good teaching seen in the Nursery.
- Support staff make an excellent contribution to the children's learning.
- The high-quality well-planned curriculum provides a good balance between self-selected and adult-directed activities, with a strong emphasis on the development of literacy skills.
- Whilst leadership in the Nursery and Reception is good there is no one taking overall responsibility for leadership and management of the Foundation Stage to provide a clear overview.
- Assessment is satisfactory, but systems are not yet well embedded. This has rightly been identified by the school as an area for further development.

Commentary

37. This good provision has been well sustained since the last inspection and further improvements, in particular to the outdoor learning environment, have enhanced children's learning experiences well. The school is justifiably proud of its award of the *Excellence in Early Years Kitemark*. There are very good induction procedures and parents are very positive about the start children receive to their education.
38. When children start in the Nursery, standards are well below the expected level in communication, language and literacy, and in personal and social skills. Children achieve well in the Nursery and Reception classes which comprise the Foundation Stage, because teaching is good. Nevertheless, by the end of the Reception Year a significant proportion are unlikely to achieve all of the expected goals for personal, social, communication and language development. Children with special educational needs achieve as well as others in the Foundation Stage as a result of the very good provision made for these children. Children with statements are very well integrated in all activities planned in the Nursery. Practice is totally inclusive. The good range and quality of resources contribute well to children's learning, in particular, the well-structured learning in the outdoor environment.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes enables all children to achieve well.
- Classroom routines are well established; independence is well promoted.
- Personal, social and emotional development is integral to all class activities.

Commentary

39. Children start in the Nursery with skills which are well below those expected for children of this age. They settle quickly and are soon familiar with classroom routines. Their skills develop well as a result of good teaching, well-planned activities, very good relationships and high expectations of behaviour. Attitudes to learning are good. Children listen carefully and participate enthusiastically in all class activities. They learn to share, take turns, work in groups and develop independence such as in self-registration. The adults provide very good role models. Children develop an understanding of right and wrong and behave well. Personal, social and emotional development underpins all activities in the Nursery and Reception classes. In spite of good achievement a significant proportion are unlikely to achieve all aspects of the goals expected for this area of learning by the time they leave the Reception class.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below those expected for children of this age at the end of the Reception Year, particularly in speaking and reading. Writing skills are better with some higher attainers writing independently and at length.
- Good teaching enables children to achieve well; the emphasis given to writing is paying dividends.
- Excellent support and intervention in role play extends the children's literacy skills well.

Commentary

40. The level of communication, language and literacy skills is well below the expected level when children start in the Nursery. Language skills are particularly weak with a high incidence of speech problems and language delay. Good teaching throughout the Nursery and Reception classes enables children to practise their skills and improve well. Although they achieve well, many are unlikely to achieve all of their goals in this area of learning by the time they start in Year 1. For example, in a Reception class lesson, one boy replied "Wabbit" when shown a picture of a rabbit. Another child responded "Him not warm" in answer to a question. A significant number of children have a limited range of vocabulary and have difficulty in expressing themselves clearly. Higher attainers use phonic skills to build simple words and write a sentence about a story independently. They name and sound the letters of the alphabet and make plausible attempts to spell unknown words. Lower attainers failed to recognise and pick up on the repetition in a familiar story, "The Bear Snores On". Children enjoy a range of stories, rhymes and songs. They listen well and participate with enthusiasm. Very well structured role play and high quality intervention engages children very well in speaking and listening. In the Nursery, children visit the travel agent, plan a holiday, pack their case and sunbathe on the beach. Café play in the Reception's outdoor learning area is well resourced and very well structured. Children write orders and bills, make phone calls, and co-operate well with each other in the shared play. The adults engage children very well in conversation. A significant proportion is unlikely to achieve the early learning goals, particularly in speaking and reading, although writing skills are stronger.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and resources are used well to help children acquire a mathematical vocabulary.
- Basic number skills are reinforced well.
- A good variety of practical activities, including role play, are provided to help children learn.

Commentary

41. Mathematical skills are below the level expected when children start in the Nursery. Good teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes helps them to achieve well. Confident delivery, very good use of questions and building on children's own experiences are some of the teaching strengths enabling learning to move forward. The good quality learning environment in the Nursery outdoor area contributes very effectively to mathematical development. A mathematics trail, sequencing "Rosie's walk" for example, reinforces spatial vocabulary as children climb over, under, round and through various objects. They count and order the number of Rosie's eggs and match values of eggs along the way. A similar shape trail introduces two-dimensional shapes and consolidates mathematical vocabulary very well. Learning is fun, with number rhymes and songs used well by all the adults in the Nursery and Reception classes to help children develop their mathematical language and understanding. Basic number skills are reinforced well. Children construct simple graphs such as favourite car colours and favourite storybook characters. Role play areas provide good opportunities for the development of number skills. Higher attainers in the Reception classes count reliably to 10 and beyond. They record horizontal addition of three items from the shops, and a few confidently add together these amounts. Very high attaining mathematicians have their needs well met through ability grouping for such activities and challenging problem-solving tasks. Higher attainers use comparative language with confidence as they take away from a set of up to ten items and say how many are left. Lower attainers are unable to record sums without significant support and are not especially confident when forming numbers. By the end of the Reception Year, the majority of children are likely to achieve the expected goals in their mathematical development, but a significant proportion will not.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching enables children to achieve well.
- Good quality resources are used well to enhance learning effectively.
- Cross-curricular links are a strength.
- Classroom displays contribute well to this area of learning.

Commentary

42. Children enter the Nursery with below average skills in this area of learning. The good teaching, good range of well-planned experiences and good links to other areas of learning, enable children to make good progress and achieve well in their knowledge about the world.
43. In the Nursery children plant seeds and know they need sun and rain. They explore floating and sinking and are familiar with the changes in the lifecycle of a butterfly. They are aware that bread and pasta, for example, change when they are cooked. In one lesson seen, children made simple maps of their journey to school, beginning to understand the purpose of a map. The outdoor area supports this learning very well as children used the wheeled toys to follow routes and pathways, reinforcing earlier learning about road safety. Careful intervention extends the play well. In the Nursery and Reception classes children enjoy a range of construction kits. Reception children build on their knowledge and understanding of life cycles. They design and make bears using split pins, plant bean seeds and control the mouse with the expected level of skill when using the computer. Good links with literacy and history extend their knowledge of life in Victorian times. The very well structured Victorian home corner and good display of Victorian artefacts enhance this learning very well. Good links with mathematics enable children to explore the properties of water. They work together in the outdoor area, using funnels, guttering, tubing and a variety of containers. Good questioning by the class teacher helps the children to make decisions, work co-operatively to investigate and experiment with the resources provided. Most children are likely to achieve the level expected at the end of the Reception Year. Learning is enhanced effectively through displays and good learning environments.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

44. No judgement is made about provision in physical development as it was only sampled. Only part of a lesson was observed where physical development was the focus. Children have good access to a range of equipment to develop their hand to eye co-ordination. All children have good access to a range of very well structured outdoor areas. In the Nursery, they use wheeled toys which they pedal and steer with confidence. The children in the Reception classes use the field and playground regularly for fine skills work such as ball control, ropes for climbing and swinging and hockey sticks to begin learning game play. Opportunities to use climbing apparatus on a regular basis are more limited, although children do have access to the main hall. The newly developed outdoor area for Reception classes has improved provision well.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and this enables children to enjoy a good range of activities and achieve well.
- Creative activities are used effectively to support learning in other areas such as literacy and mathematical development.

Commentary

45. Skills in creative development are below the expected level when children start in the Nursery. Good teaching enables children to achieve well through a good range of well planned activities including painting, drawing, printing, collage and modelling. The adults work hard to help children to develop appropriate control of pencils, crayons and brushes. Good opportunities are provided for children to make choices and practice cutting and sticking. Children are expected to take responsibility and develop independence in these activities. Very good use is made of role play areas for imaginative and creative play, which is extended well, through timely intervention. Children enjoy a good range of songs and rhymes and they explore a variety of percussion instruments. Musical activities are a regular feature of the outdoor learning area, where children use tape recorders and listen and perform together. Children sing with enjoyment and enthusiasm. The majority of children are likely to achieve the goals for this area of learning by the end of the Reception Year.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and this is why learning is effective.
- Pupils with special educational needs receive very good support and this enables them to achieve well to reach their personal literacy targets.
- Pupils' progress and attainment are well tracked and recorded.
- Teachers' marking does not always target what needs to be done if standards are to improve in writing.
- The subject leadership is effective and there is good capacity for improvement.

Commentary

46. The school has made good progress in improving the provision for English since the previous inspection. Standards are improving at a broadly similar rate to that seen nationally, however they tend to vary year on year depending on the profile of each year group. Current standards are broadly average in speaking and listening, reading and writing in Year 2. This year group contains a high proportion of lower attaining pupils. Nevertheless, their achievement over time has been good. A direct result of this is that a lower proportion than seen nationally is likely to reach the higher Level 3 in National Curriculum tests. The achievement of boys and girls of all abilities is good overall. Pupils with learning difficulties achieve well in all aspects of English, especially reading, because of the good focus that is placed on reading together in small groups, each supported by a well trained adult. The school is aware of the need to continue to raise standards, particularly in extending opportunities to promote writing skills in other subjects, for example history and geography. There is very clear evidence from lesson observations and analysis of pupils' work that most of the present Year 1 pupils are working at standards above those expected for their age.
47. The school has rightly placed a strong focus on developing pupils' literacy skills. Strategies to develop speaking and listening skills underpin everything the school does, as it is an area of weakness clearly identified when children start school in the Nursery. Good teaching extends pupils' vocabulary, sentence construction and their understanding of spoken language and this is one of the main reasons why most

pupils achieve well. Teachers plan opportunities to introduce new vocabulary and help pupils find alternative ways of expressing ideas and meanings. In the better lessons, questions posed required more than single word answers and pupils were encouraged to speak in whole sentences. In the very best lesson the development of speaking and listening was particularly good, with higher attaining pupils in Year 2 engaged in thoughtful debate.

48. Pupils take great pleasure in reading both at school and home. Pupils' love of reading is the result of the rightful high emphasis that the school places upon this area. Most pupils are confident to talk about the characters in their books, explaining the story plot with good conviction and retelling the story in their own words accurately. Lower attaining pupils in Year 2 have a narrow vocabulary on which to draw and their limited speaking ability holds them back in describing their likes and dislikes about a particular book. This group of pupils also has limited strategies to identify unknown words and the school is tackling this effectively through tailor-made reading sessions supported by an adult. The school has rightly placed recent emphasis on developing 'Book Corners' in respective classrooms and the purchase of additional fiction and non-fiction books holds good for the future in the development of pupils' enjoyment and pleasure in reading. Parents are fully involved in supporting reading activities at home and they regularly complete their child's reading diary. This has a positive effect on pupils' learning across the school.
49. Writing has rightly continued to be the main thrust in the subject's development. This additional focus is having the desired effect in Year 1. In a very good lesson observed in Year 2, a carefully selected range of interesting everyday items such as carrots and paintbrushes clearly challenged pupils' writing skills as they described their features in humorous verse. Pace and expectations clearly extended the small group of higher attaining pupils. Pupils worked with care and effort and were proud and confident to read their creative work to the class during the final part of the lesson. A very good range of class management strategies enabled very good relationships to create an enjoyable working atmosphere. This underpinned the subject matter that appealed equally to boys and girls, and promoting good achievement. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good and resources are used effectively throughout the school, contributing well to pupils' learning. All teachers expect pupils to behave well in lessons and pupils respond well and work with good independence, especially in Year 1. In otherwise good lessons observed in Year 2, the pace and expectations do not always extend the higher attaining pupils and sometimes work set for them is not hard enough to challenge them to the full. Although the content of pupils' writing is often of satisfactory quality, in some instances handwriting and presentation are not as good as they could be. There appears to be no established convention for the dating of work. Pupils do not always have models of good handwriting when teachers write on whiteboards, as some do not give enough attention to layout or presentation.
50. A good range of assessment strategies is in place. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to be more involved in charting their own learning through self-evaluation. The recently introduced target setting is not well embedded and is not consistently reflected in the marking of pupils' work to help pupils improve. The end of year reports to parents at present lack any identifiable targets that would support learning at home. Homework is set weekly in Year 1 and Year 2 and includes spellings and reading as well as research tasks for pupils to undertake. Discussions with pupils confirmed that they clearly value the support of their parents hearing them read at home which, in turn, reinforces their successful learning in school.

51. Leadership and management are effective within a team structure approach and are well focused on raising standards. Much has been achieved so far. The English team has worked hard with the support of other staff and learning support assistants to improve standards and achievement in English and there is good promise for sustaining improvements in the future.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

52. Pupils use their literacy skills in a satisfactory manner to support learning across other subjects. However, there is still room for improvement. Too often the use of commercial worksheets restricts pupils' literacy development, for example in history and geography. The school is aware of these shortcomings and through its own monitoring and evaluation activities is working towards improvement. Pupils speak clearly to each other in small and large groups and they use their reading skills to access other subjects effectively. Some work is not as well presented as it could be and high expectations are required about how work should be set out, dated and self corrected. The use of ICT is a developing strength as pupils increase their keyboard skills and produce some good examples of word-processed work. The full potential of ICT to successfully develop pupils' speaking and listening skills was observed during a video link with a reptile specialist. Pupils were positively encouraged by teachers to listen and ask a range of questions related to the husbandry of a variety of reptiles. This was a fully inclusive session that used modern technology to create a very productive learning session.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good in mathematics.
- The achievement of many lower and middle attaining pupils is good.
- The standards and achievement of higher attaining pupils is satisfactory overall but inconsistent.
- The quality of teaching and learning, whilst satisfactory overall, is typically good in practical lessons. Assessment though satisfactory is not sharp enough to aid better achievement.
- Pupils enjoy mathematics, and this makes a very good contribution to their personal and social development.
- Monitoring and evaluation in mathematics lack rigour.

Commentary

53. The standards in mathematics are at similar levels to those reported by the previous inspection. However, the inconsistent level of challenge for higher attainers raised then as an issue is still apparent today. The team in place to lead mathematics work well together to share ideas and pool resources. However, their leadership drive is not strong enough. The school is alert to this weakness and key staff are currently undertaking leadership training to help mathematics move forward. There is good capacity for the subject to improve in the future.
54. Standards in mathematics at the end of Year 2 are average. Most pupils enter Year 1 with standards as expected nationally at that age. Pupils make satisfactory progress in

Years 1 and 2, and achievement is generally satisfactory. However there are variations in progress and achievement between different ability groups. Pupils with special educational needs make good, and a few make very good progress in their learning. Many lower and middle attaining pupils also achieve well, but higher attainers do not make as much progress as they should. This is reflected in the fact that whilst most pupils in their National Curriculum tests in Year 2 attain the level expected for their age, few attain a higher standard on a consistent year on year basis. Over the last four years standards have varied from below average to well above average. In 2004 pupils' attained standards that were above average and Year 1 are on track to reach this standard too. It is unlikely that standards will reach above average levels this year.

55. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. However, during the inspection good classroom teaching and learning were observed several times. The school has targeted improvement in learning in aspects of shape and space with success. Good teaching, based on practical mathematical experiences, was observed throughout Year 1 when pupils were provided with a good range of resources they quickly learned about symmetry and two-dimensional shapes. A feature of the good teaching in mathematics is the high quality support given to pupils with special educational needs, or those with learning difficulties. Many adults, including well-qualified and dedicated special support assistants, make an invaluable contribution to successful learning. Evidence from pupils' books and some lessons shows that higher attaining pupils do not make enough progress. This is because teachers are insufficiently challenging, and they do not always believe that these pupils could manage more difficult tasks. In fact pupils' work shows that they frequently complete work quickly and accurately, but do not move on to work which will stretch them. Questioning in mental mathematics is also aimed mainly at middle or lower attainers and this restricts the level of challenge and higher order thinking skills of higher attainers.
56. Pupils enjoy their learning in mathematics. They are confident, keen to answer, and work well with each other. They are very responsible when working on their practical activities and when working independently on their computers. They are especially mindful of the needs of other pupils and are always ready to help those with difficulties. Lessons in mathematics make a very good contribution to pupils' personal and social development. There are some nice cross-curricular links developing, for example pupils in Year 2 have created very colourful drawings entitled *Terrific Tangrams*.
57. The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. A strong team ethic is very evident between the four members of the management team. They have a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses within their own areas of influence. However, their equality in responsibility means that none is taking a complete overview of the whole school picture, as, for instance through consistent monitoring of teaching and learning. This is holding back more rapid improvement in mathematics. The school is currently undertaking leadership training as pre-requisite to reviewing roles and responsibilities in the near future. Inspectors agree that this action is appropriate.

Mathematics across the curriculum

58. Mathematics is used satisfactorily across the curriculum. It is used effectively in ICT where pupils often use computers independently when working on a personal

programme of activities in mathematics. Teachers successfully develop links between mathematics and science, and design and technology, all of which extend pupils' understanding well. For example, in Year 2, graphs are used as a means of presentation to show who has ever travelled on a bus, plane or train or in a car.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are average by the end of Year 2 and achievement is good.
- Science is well taught, which ensures pupils build knowledge and skills systematically through the school, though there could be more consistent challenge for higher attainers.
- There is an effective emphasis on practical investigation and fair testing in science.
- Assessment, target setting and monitoring and evaluation are ripe for enhancement.
- Science is well led and it is managed soundly, though there is no overall subject leader.

Commentary

59. Over recent years standards in science have fluctuated from year to year because the proportion of pupils from different attainment groups has varied. For example, standards below average in the Year 2 teacher assessments in 2003 but were above average in 2004. Currently, standards in science are average in Year 2 and above average in Year 1, as there continue to be significant differences between year groups. However, pupils in both year groups achieve well.
60. The curriculum for science is firmly based on practical investigation, which gives pupils ample opportunity to develop good skills of simple prediction, fair testing, careful observation and appropriate recording of the outcomes of their investigations. The development of such skills is enhanced because long and medium term planning is systematic in its focus on the step-by-step increase of knowledge and skills. This systematic development was demonstrated well in a Year 2 lesson to investigate the effect of changing the gradient of a ramp on the distance travelled by model vehicles. The pupils talked confidently about what they expected to happen and they also explained clearly to the teacher that one variable, the gradient, could be changed, but that all the other variables must remain the same if the test was to be fair. They predicted the distance travelled, albeit rather expansively, and conducted the test carefully. Not only did this lesson help the pupils extend their science knowledge and skills well, but it also made a good contribution to their speaking and listening skills.
61. Science is well taught. This was amply demonstrated during lesson observations but also by the scrutiny of pupils' past work. It is evident that skills and knowledge are built well and that pupil's work productively and purposefully because teaching methods are good. Lesson planning is not sharp enough to identify consistently the additional expectations required of higher attaining pupils, though in the lessons observed and in pupils' past work, especially in Year 1, the degree of challenge for such pupils is often good.
62. The subject team lead the subject well. They have appropriate priorities for the development of the subject, including the consolidation of assessment procedures. At

present, management of science is satisfactory, as the systems to underpin good achievement, such as monitoring and evaluation of provision and results and the setting, sharing and tracking of targets are not rigorous enough. The subject team recognise that improvement to these areas is due and they are united in the resolve to meet the challenge. As in the case of other subjects, no one person has overall charge of science, which contributes to the currently less than full picture of subject performance held by leaders.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision in ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in ICT and standards are at least average in all strands of the subject by the end of Year 2.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about their tasks in ICT and they work productively and purposefully.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Resources and accommodation are very good and this impacts very positively on pupils' achievement.
- ICT is well led, which has resulted in good improvement since the previous inspection.
- The curriculum is very good and there are very effective links to other subjects.

Commentary

63. The improvement to ICT has been good since the 1999 inspection. The school now possesses a very well equipped ICT suite, a very comprehensive range of software and has developed an innovative curriculum that makes very good use of the Internet to link to schools across Europe. ICT is taught largely on a cross-curricular basis and this benefits both the development of ICT skills and knowledge and the strengthening of standards in other subjects. Currently, overall standards at the end of Year 2 are average, which reflects the different make-up of the year group this year. There are a significant proportion of pupils in Year 2 with learning difficulties, including some quite significant special educational needs, which clearly impacts on standards. It is evident, however, that standards in Year 1 are above average. Internet-use skills are particularly well developed in both of these year groups and, overall, achievement is good for all pupils, including those with specific needs.
64. ICT is a popular subject in school. Pupils enjoy their lessons, they are enthusiastic and they work hard. The skills of collaborative, independent work are built well because most tasks are based on small groups and pairs working together. Pupils' personal and social education benefits from these arrangements and their speaking and listening skills are extended effectively.
65. Teaching quality is good and there is evidence of very good teaching in the subject. Staff are very confident in their use of ICT and constantly seek to upgrade their skills. The school is regarded as a trailblazer in the county in terms of its innovative approach to ICT based education, and this reputation is fully justified. The video-conferencing link via the Internet with external agencies and other schools, both in this country and in Europe, is used to the very good advantage of the pupils, whose experiences are widened considerably by contact with a diverse range of *friends*. The challenge provided for higher attaining pupils is strengthened considerably by such

work. In general, higher attainers do well in ICT because of the practical, hands-on, investigational tasks that are the root of most work.

66. The curriculum is very good and encompasses all strands of the subject. During the inspection, the focus was on control technology, particularly through the use of *Roamer*, the programmable robot-like vehicle. In learning how to give instructions to *Roamer*, and to draw shapes on screen, Year 1 pupils were observed to extend their mathematics, English and ICT skills in an equally very good manner.
67. ICT is well led by the subject team and management is sound. Assessment is satisfactory, though the subject team recognise the need for the updating of procedures. They also identify monitoring and evaluation of provision and achievement as a key priority for the further improvement of ICT. These priorities are entirely appropriate.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

68. Links between ICT and other subjects are strong. The school has purchased a wide range of good quality software to enable pupils to use computers in many aspects of their work in subjects such as English, mathematics, science and art and design. Most of the work to build pupils' ICT skills and knowledge is undertaken in cross-curricular topics. For example, during the inspection there was an effective video-conferencing session for Year 1 pupils that focused on the study of animal habitats. During this session the pupils learned much more about animals and their needs, especially the king snake that they watched on screen. They were fascinated by its diet of frozen mice bought from the frozen-mouse shop! In addition to the building of scientific knowledge in this way, the pupils learned about the speed and power of video links over the Internet. In another original session, Year 2 pupils logged on to a Danish website and listened to a group of schoolchildren in Copenhagen as they recited catchy rhymes. The pupils then wrote their own poems of a similar nature.

HUMANITIES

Religious education

69. This subject is to be inspected later this term under section 23 of the School Inspections Act 1996.

History

70. No judgement is made about provision in history as it was only sampled. Scrutiny of pupils' past work, alongside discussions, indicates that the curriculum offers worthwhile experiences and meets all the requirements. Pupils enjoy a broad range of worthwhile experiences through a good curriculum, enriched by visits and visitors to school. History is taught through a topic approach and good cross-curricular links are made to other subjects, such as geography, art, literacy and numeracy, with written work in Year 2 mainly linked to stories, for example, 'Florence Nightingale' and 'The Great Fire of London'. Pupils find out about the past using photographs, pictures, artefacts, reference books, as well as through visits to school by different people to share their experiences including senior citizens from the local community. Artefacts, such as those found in the Victorian home in the good display in the Reception unit, contribute well to the children's understanding about the past. Although pupils' historical knowledge is suitably addressed the focus on the development of skills could

be sharpened. An overuse of worksheets evident in books is a constraint to promoting pupils' personal enquiry skills. Opportunities for extended writing are limited in this subject. Assessment is satisfactory overall but marking is not sharp enough to enable pupils to know how to improve their work.

Geography

71. No judgement is made about provision in geography as it was only sampled. Scrutiny of pupils' past work, alongside discussions, indicates that the geography curriculum meets all the requirements. Standards are judged to be broadly average. Pupils in Year 1 have made plans of the school grounds, including naming features such as the car park. Pupils in Year 2 have also produced colourful work recently comparing St. Lucia with Penrith. Pupils enjoy field trips to the many glorious local geographical features, such as Bassenthwaite Lake. They are also encouraged to show care and respect for their local environment and are currently involved in gardening activities including composting. Staff and pupils have been involved in establishing links through the *Comenius* project, with other schools in France, Denmark and Sweden. This is proving to be a very effective cross-curricular link between geography and citizenship. The headteacher's personal links with Japan are used very successfully to heighten pupils' geographic knowledge about a country very different to their own and to appreciate diversity very positively.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design

72. No judgement is made about provision in art and design as it was only sampled. From the evidence gathered, teaching is good and standards are above average. The very effective curriculum for art and design is displayed around the school in the form of pupils' responses to a wide range of stimuli. These displays include work from pupils of all ages and attainment groups and show that the development of skills and techniques in art and design is secure. Pupils put painstaking effort into their work, and there are some high quality results, such as the Reception paintings of almond blossom in the style of Van Gogh. These paintings are very carefully completed, with very good attention to detail. The development of pupils' knowledge and skills is enhanced by the good use of ICT, which is shown in the display of Year 1 pupils' work where they have made an original pencil sketch and transferred this to computer, using a basic graphics program. Much of the art and design work in school is based on studies made in the outdoor environment, such as Year 1 work on fledgling ospreys, which they studied in real life during a visit and then tracked via a web-camera when back in school. Some very effective work with visiting artists and craftspeople results in good levels of creativity in pupils' work. Overall, pupils' experiences in art and design make a very valuable contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and, especially, cultural development, and to their arts education.

Design and technology

73. No judgement is made about provision in design and technology as it was only sampled. From the evidence gathered, it is possible to judge that standards are broadly average and that over the course of the year pupils are taught all elements of the subject.

74. The curriculum offers worthwhile experiences for the pupils. In Year 1 pupils have designed a range of puppets with moving parts by incorporating the use of split pins. In Year 2, pupils developed winding mechanisms to raise 'Incey Wincey Spider'. They have designed and made well-constructed models from cardboard strung effectively around manufactured axles and wheels. Initial designs are clearly labelled before manufacture, including plans and materials required.
75. There has been no time available for subject leaders to evaluate and monitor the quality of teaching and learning to check that what has been agreed is taking place in lessons. There are no assessment procedures in place and this is an omission as it limits the information needed to plan for pupils' next steps in learning and better aid the teaching of specific skills.

Music

76. No judgement is made about provision in music as it was only sampled. However, it is evident from teachers' planning, the prospectus and discussions with staff and pupils that music plays an important part in the life of the school and as such has a high profile. Pupils are provided with a very good range of worthwhile experiences, including extra-curricular activities such as the Singing Communities Choir.
77. Standards in singing are above average. Pupils sing tunefully with enthusiasm and enjoyment in lessons and assemblies reflecting good teaching and learning in this aspect of music. In a Year 1 singing lesson, pupils' skills were systematically developed. Pupils performed confidently to the class and their singing standards were above average. The good use of ICT to support pupils with special educational needs enhanced the learning experiences for these pupils. Pupils are taught music by class teachers and the music specialist who contributes significantly to the good standards being achieved. In a lesson in Year 1, pupils used a good range of percussion instruments to compose music for the story of Jack and the Beanstalk. They understood terms such as *pitch* and used the instruments with satisfactory skills. The music specialist provided a good balance between listening, appraising and performing in this well-planned lesson. Her good teaching enabled pupils to achieve well.
78. The quality of the curriculum is good and the subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to participate in concerts, such as Celebration 2000, when the school joined with others for this performance with the Abbey singers. Such opportunities contribute very well to pupils' overall music experiences. Visitors to school, such as members of the *Northern Sinfonia*, enrich the music curriculum very effectively. Cross-curricular links to other subjects through topic work are a strength; for example, in a study of St Lucia, children learn about steel drums and Caribbean music. The subject is well led and soundly managed. The subject leader provides clear direction for music. Assessment procedures are satisfactory.

Physical education

79. No judgement is made about provision in physical education as it was only sampled. Scrutiny of pupils' past work, alongside discussions, indicates that the physical education curriculum is firmly in place throughout the school, as it was at the time of the last inspection. During the inspection, pupils in Years 1 and 2 were observed to achieve average standards in games and dance. They show great enthusiasm for

their activities, and work together very responsibly. They are well managed by their teachers, and pupils with special educational needs receive very good support in physical education and are fully included in all activities. Two after school clubs, in soccer and the martial arts are provided for pupils, and they have also received specialist coaching. As a result of training in 'Top Sport' for teachers and non-teaching staff, it is planned to provide two hours physical activity a day for pupils in the near future.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

80. No judgement is made about provision personal, social, health education and citizenship (PSHCE) as it was only sampled. The programme for PSHCE has been well conceived and is highly effective in preparing pupils very well for the next stage of education and later life. It is innovative in character, and involves the teachers in writing some new sections of the curriculum to develop pupils understanding of themselves as citizens. This is made possible by the excellent links the school enjoys with the wider community, including European schools contacted through the *Comenius* project. The *Kidsafe* programme deals with all aspects of child safety and pupils learn about how to look after themselves from the many varied talks they receive from visitors from the public services.
81. PSHCE is taught through a variety of activities including specific lessons and assembly themes. The very good relationships prevalent in school underpin honest and open expressions of feelings and questions that help pupils to learn difficult lessons about life, health and death. A large focus of the PSHCE programme in recent years has been the goal of reaching Healthy School status, which has been accomplished by an impressive programme of improvements to school dinners, the outdoor play areas, and a higher profile for healthy eating involving growing, eating and bulk purchase of fruit and vegetables through a community co-operative scheme. To further their citizenship opportunities, pupils have many opportunities of speaking in front of large audiences through their high profile in the county.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3

Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	3

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	1
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	1
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3

The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	4

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