

INSPECTION REPORT

BEAL VALE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Shaw, Oldham

LEA area: Oldham

Unique reference number: 105672

Headteacher: Mr J Richards

Lead inspector: Mr G R Logan

Dates of inspection: 16th – 18th May 2005

Inspection number: 271733

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	222
School address:	Salts Street Shaw Oldham Lancashire
Postcode:	OL2 7SY
Telephone number:	(01706) 847 185
Fax number:	(01706) 299 939
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr C Richards
Date of previous inspection:	January 2000

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Beal Vale Primary School, a modern open-plan building, serves Shaw, an extended village community which is now part of the Oldham conurbation. There is a significant proportion of social housing in the immediate area; much of the property around the school is in traditional terraced style. With 222 pupils, including 30 in the Nursery, Beal Vale is of similar size to many primary schools around the country. A high proportion of pupils are from White European backgrounds, with around 10 per cent of mixed-race, Asian or Chinese heritage. Sixteen pupils are at an early stage of learning to speak English. A well below average proportion of pupils (five per cent) have special educational needs, mainly for moderate learning difficulties. Three of these have statements of special educational need. The school experiences a lower level of pupil mobility than would be typical of many urban schools, with around 11 per cent of pupils leaving or joining the school at other than the expected points. Most of this occurs in Year 3 or subsequently. In addition, a significant number of children join the school only for the Nursery year, to be replaced by new entrants to Reception. The proportion of pupils receiving free school meals, over 23 per cent at present, is above the national average (18 per cent) and has been increasing. When they enter Nursery, most children have social and language skills that are below average. In 2003, the school gained the Healthy Schools award. It currently has a significant involvement in the Network Schools initiative. The headship of the school has changed twice since the last inspection in January 2000.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
11810	Mr G R Logan	Lead inspector	Mathematics Music Physical education English as an additional language
9146	Mr M Brennan	Lay inspector	
32636	Mrs G Hepworth	Team inspector	Science Geography History Religious education The Foundation Stage
20007	Mr T Neat	Team inspector	English Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology Special educational needs

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an **effective** school. It has a very supportive, caring ethos and successfully provides for a diverse intake. Standards are particularly good in Years 1 and 2. Pupils benefit from a broad and imaginatively developed curriculum and achieve well in a wide range of activities. The school has effective leadership. It provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Provision in Years 1 and 2 is of high quality; standards are above average and pupils achieve very well as a result of the very good teaching.
- Teaching and learning are very good in Years 1 and 2 and good elsewhere.
- Mathematics is taught particularly well; standards are well above average by Year 6.
- The headteacher and the governing body ensure that the school is well led.
- Pupils have good attitudes to work and behave well. Relationships are good.
- Pupils with special educational needs are supported well; those who do not have English as a first language make very good progress.
- The school's links with its main secondary school are a significant strength and make a very good contribution to pupils' learning.
- Curriculum development is very good. The curriculum is broad, with good opportunities for enrichment. Involvement in Network Learning has had a very positive impact.
- Attendance, whilst improved, is still below average.
- The accommodation has unsatisfactory features which affect pupils' learning.
- Aspects of assemblies, including the level of staffing, could be improved.

The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. All the key areas for development have been successfully tackled. Improvement in provision for religious education has been good. Planning and target-setting continue to develop. Standards in writing have improved. Overall, there has been a satisfactory improvement in standards, notably in Years 1 and 2.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average.
Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.*

Pupils achieve **well** over time. Most children enter Nursery with below average attainment, particularly in speech and communication and in their social skills. Although they achieve well in Nursery, some children do not go on to Reception and others enter at that stage. Much groundwork has to be repeated in Reception. Again, children achieve well and the majority of children reach the standards expected at the end of the Reception Year, with a few exceeding this level. Standards in Year 2 currently are above average in reading, mathematics and science, and well above average in writing. As a result of pupil mobility and a higher proportion of pupils with learning difficulties, standards overall by Year 6 are not quite so strong. Nonetheless, standards overall in Year 6 in 2004 were the highest yet recorded. Standards in Year 6 at present are well above average in mathematics and average in English and science, reflecting the school's significant strength in the teaching of mathematics. Pupils' literacy skills are used satisfactorily across the curriculum. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) have improved, and pupils' ICT skills are used well to support learning in other subjects. Standards in physical education in Year 2 are

above those normally found. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because of the good support they receive. Pupils with English as an additional language achieve very well in the lower school and soon catch up with the others as a result of the very good support they receive.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities are **good**. These factors contribute well to their learning. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good**. Relationships and behaviour are good, overall. Attendance is unsatisfactory; punctuality is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching and learning are **good** overall, but very good in Years 1 and 2. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good. Assessment is used well in the Foundation Stage and satisfactorily elsewhere to support the planning of pupils' work. Pupils are increasingly expected to evaluate the quality of their work; good examples of this were observed. Across the school, pupils show a good level of commitment. Learning support staff are very effective. The curriculum has been creatively developed and is good, with effective links between subjects. The commitment to shared networked learning is providing significant enrichment for pupils and staff. Pupils have a good range of opportunities for learning, with a good extra-curricular programme. At times, noise levels within the open-plan accommodation make it difficult for some pupils to concentrate, whilst the space for the Reception class is barely satisfactory. Pupils receive good care and support. Systems for monitoring pupils' development are good. Very good induction procedures in the Foundation Stage help new children to settle quickly. Child protection procedures are good. The level of supervision in assemblies is not sufficient. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is good. School lunches are of good quality. The school has a good partnership with parents and with the community and a very good partnership with other schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher, strongly supported by the senior management team, provides good leadership. The school's monitoring systems are satisfactory. Subject co-ordinators, particularly in the core subjects, are effective. The school's evaluation of its work is good. The governing body provides good support for the school. Financial management is good. Statutory requirements are met. School administration is efficient.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very happy with the school. They are happy with the standards achieved and the commitment of the staff. They feel that the school is well led. The level of parental involvement is good. Pupils enjoy school. They work hard and participate eagerly in activities. They relate very well to their teachers; relationships are a significant strength.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Continue current efforts to improve levels of attendance further.
- Seek opportunities to improve unsatisfactory aspects of the accommodation.
- Increase the direct participation of pupils and the focus on spiritual development in assemblies and tackle health and safety concerns by ensuring that more staff are present.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Pupils' achievement is good overall. Standards are particularly good in Year 2, with very good achievement in Years 1 and 2.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 2 are well above average in writing and above average in reading, mathematics and science; pupils achieve very well as a result of the rigorous teaching.
- Standards in mathematics are a strength of the school.
- Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- Pupils for whom English is not their first language are supported very well and make very good progress.
- Some of the impetus for progress achieved in the Nursery is lost when children leave at the end of the year; new children at that stage need a lot of support.
- The changed nature of pupils' backgrounds, with an increasing proportion of pupils with learning difficulties, means that standards overall, though still at least average, are not as strong in the juniors as in the infants.

Commentary

1. Children's attainment on entry to Nursery is below average overall, with limited speech and restricted social skills. As a result of the good teaching and the good provision, most children make good progress. At the end of the Nursery year, a number of children, often the more able, leave to attend other schools. New children enter the Reception year with varied pre-school experience. Considerable input is needed to take this new group forward. Although they achieve well in Reception, only a relatively small group of children exceed the Early Learning Goals by the end of Reception. The great majority of children, however, achieve the expected goals. Children benefit from very good induction procedures and settle well into school routines. Good teaching, planning and assessment procedures ensure that children make good progress and achieve well. Children with special educational needs achieve well because planning is carefully focused on their needs.
2. Following an average performance overall in 2002, standards in the national tests at Year 2 rose steadily in subsequent years, showing a positive trend of improvement. In 2004, standards were well above average in writing and mathematics and average in reading in relation to all schools nationally. Standards were well above average in relation to similar schools. An above average proportion of pupils in reading and science and a well above average proportion in writing and mathematics achieved the higher Level 3 in 2004. Projections for the current Year 2 indicate that overall performance is likely to be broadly similar to 2004. Inspection evidence suggests that standards in Year 2 currently are well above average in writing, and above average in reading, mathematics and science. Underlying literacy skills are good and are used regularly in subjects across the curriculum. Speaking skills have been a focus for development through the philosophy programme and this is having a positive effect upon standards. Pupils have average skills in ICT by the end of Year 2. Standards are above those normally found in physical education and similar to those expected in the remaining subjects.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.4 (16.4)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	16.3 (15.4)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	17.6 (17.5)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 28 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. Standards at the end of Year 6 are not as strong as in Year 2. Performance is less consistent overall, showing some variability between years and subjects. The Year 6 cohort in 2003, for example, had a high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and performance was below average overall. In earlier years, standards in English were never lower than average, while standards in mathematics were never less than above average. Although average in 2004 and improving, performance in science has, over time, been the weakest of the core subjects, and a recent focus for development. Overall, the school's performance in 2004 was the strongest of the last five years. Standards in Year 6 were well above average in mathematics, and average in English and science in relation to schools with a similar level of free school meals. The rate of improvement made between the end of Year 2 and Year 6 was above average overall in 2004. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 6 did well in mathematics, with a well above average proportion of the year group achieving the higher Level 5. Standards at present show a satisfactory improvement on those reported in 2000, the year of the previous inspection. The school's prediction, and inspection evidence supports the view, is that standards at present are very similar to those indicated in 2004, with well above average performance in mathematics and average performance in English and science. Standards in ICT are average.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.4 (26.3)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	28.9 (26.5)	27.0 (26.8)
science	28.9 (26.5)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 30 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. Pupils in Year 6 in 2004 had achieved well during their time in the school. Inspection evidence indicates that pupils are currently achieving well over time. However, there are variations in the progress pupils are making. Overall, the consistency of achievement at present is best for pupils in Years 1 and 2, where the teaching is particularly rigorous and expectations are very high. These pupils are well motivated by inspiring teaching. The stability and cohesion which characterise Years 1 and 2 is progressively diluted with increasingly pupil mobility in Years 3 to 6. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs increases in this phase, as new pupils enter with identified needs. In addition, the level of pace and challenge in the teaching in Years 3 to 6, and consequently of pupils' motivation, is more variable. Although analysis of recent performance data indicates that there are significant variations in the performance of girls and boys in English, with boys doing less well, this was not evident during the inspection. The school significantly exceeded its appropriately challenging targets in English and mathematics in 2004.
5. Most pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their prior attainment, thanks to the good support they receive from teachers and their assistants. Pupils from minority ethnic groups achieve well, and by Year 6, their performance is at least comparable to that of the majority. Pupils with English as an additional language constitute a significant minority. They receive very good support in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 to 4 and their language deficits are progressively reduced because of the quality of the input they receive. By Year 4, almost all are functioning well in English and achieving as well as the other pupils, so that little direct support is needed. Attainment for these pupils is similar to that of their classmates. The school is advantaged by the fact that there is a high level of stability in

this group and very few pupils enter the school after the Foundation Stage with minimal or no English.

6. Pupils' literacy skills are promoted satisfactorily across the curriculum. There are satisfactory opportunities to record, write and communicate in other subjects. Speaking skills are a current focus for development. The application of numeracy skills is satisfactory. There is an increasing emphasis on practical and investigative activities in science, a major current area for development.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Despite good monitoring procedures, the overall level of attendance is unsatisfactory. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Personal development, including the provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school promotes good relationships effectively.
- There is a strong moral code which has a very positive influence on pupils' attitudes and behaviour.
- Attendance levels, though slightly improved, are below the national average.
- There are unsatisfactory aspects of the arrangements for assemblies.

Commentary

7. Relationships at all levels throughout the school are good. Pupils respect their teachers who listen to their ideas and provide the necessary support when required. Pupils are helpful and friendly to one another. The School Council promotes responsibility and confidence and takes the lead in organising a valued 'buddy' system in which older pupils support those who are younger. In the Nursery, the environment is warm and supportive, fostering a positive image of school from the start. As pupils move up through the school, the high level of co-operative working between teachers and year groups, together with aspects of the curriculum such as the philosophy programme, provide them with life skills and an appreciation of the benefits of collaborative working. This was evident in a number of lessons, but particularly in science, where planning ensured that pupils worked together in groups to carry out research. In addition, a successful personal, social and health education lesson in Year 6 required pupils to present their findings verbally and encouraged them to show respect by listening to one another.
8. Other than in one class in the upper school, where there was spasmodic evidence of challenging attitudes by a very small number of pupils with identified needs, the atmosphere in school was calm and productive throughout the inspection. This reflects the school's desire to instill a strong moral code, with high expectations of behaviour and well-established routines. In over 90 per cent of lessons observed, behaviour was good or better. In the corporate areas, pupils move around sensibly and hold doors open for one another when necessary. The school involves pupils well by consulting them on policies for anti-bullying and racism and, through discussion in personal, social and health education sessions, they are given good opportunities to gain an appreciation of the difference between right and wrong. This was particularly evident in a Year 6 lesson on the role of the police in society, during which pupils made some perceptive observations. Conversations with pupils indicate that they have a high regard for their school.
9. Although acts of collective worship meet statutory requirements, with opportunities for singing, reflection and exposure to moral tales, the reliance on pre-recorded music means that assemblies lack the warmth and spontaneity of live performance. Furthermore, there is no provision for class assemblies where pupils can perform in front of their peers and parents. The lack of such opportunities prevents pupils from experiencing the inner glow that these

occasions produce, as well as the positive impact of such events on pupils' speaking and listening skills and on their self-esteem.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.7	School data	0.6
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.

10. In the current academic year, attendance has shown a slight increase of one per cent on the 2003-04 figures (above) to 93.3 per cent. However, it remains below the national average and is therefore unsatisfactory. The improvement has resulted from closer monitoring and introducing a range of incentives to encourage good attendance. In this work, the school enjoys a strong relationship with the Education Welfare Service who visit regularly to identify concerns. Where there are problems, they will contact the families concerned to offer support and develop strategies to improve attendance. Unfortunately, despite the school's best efforts, there remain a significant number of parents who choose to take their children on holidays during term time.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good. Teaching and learning are good overall. The curriculum is good, with good enrichment activities. Pupils are cared for well. The partnership with parents is good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is good overall, with a significant amount of very good teaching. Pupils are challenged and learn well. Assessment procedures are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good in the Foundation Stage, very good in Years 1 and 2 and good in Years 3 to 6.
- The high quality teaching in Years 1 and 2 is a significant strength of the school.
- Teaching assistants support pupils with special educational needs well.
- Noise intrusion between classes affects pupils' learning at times.
- Assessment procedures are satisfactory, with further work to be done.

Commentary

11. At the last inspection, teaching was good overall. Teaching was of a consistent quality across the school. The link between planning and assessment was not as strong as it might be, while targets were not always shared with pupils. Evidence from the current inspection indicates that the quality of teaching has continued to improve.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 40 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1 (3%)	13 (32%)	19 (48%)	7 (17%)	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.

12. Children are well taught and achieve well in the Foundation Stage. All of the teaching is good or better, with just under one-third being very good or excellent. Teachers encourage children and engage their interest well. Planning is effective and is firmly based on careful assessment of children's achievements. Teachers and classroom assistants work well together to provide a stimulating learning environment. Pupils are motivated well by the interesting practical activities and, in consequence, learn successfully.
13. Teaching is good overall across the main school. However, it is significantly stronger, being very good, and more consistent in Years 1 and 2 than in Years 3 to 6 where it is good overall. Well over four-fifths of teaching is good or better in Years 1 and 2, with around two-thirds being very good. One-fifth of the lessons seen in Years 3 to 6 were very good or excellent.
14. The high expectations of many staff have a very positive effect on pupils' learning. In Years 1 and 2 as a whole, staff are focused on supporting and extending pupils' basic skills and are working very effectively. Achievement in these aspects is very good. The rigour and challenge of the teaching has a very positive effect on pupils' learning. Pupils are well-motivated by the teaching and this accounts for the rapid progress which they make. The team is cohesive; they plan together closely and there is a seamless and dynamic relationship between the Foundation Stage and the infants which promotes pupils' progress very well. Their achievement is very good as a result. Teaching in Years 3 to 6, whilst competent, faces the challenge of increasing diversity within classes. Pupil mobility is a more significant issue by that stage, bringing with it a higher proportion of pupils with learning difficulties. Some have challenging behavioural issues and these can take up a significant amount of teachers' time. However, this is only an issue at present in Year 5. Generally, pupils across the school are well motivated and show a good capacity to work collaboratively. More could be done to encourage them to be self-sufficient, independent learners. Noise intrusion between classes in the open-plan building affects learning in some lessons.
15. Planning is good overall and is well focused on individual needs. It is very good in Years 1 and 2. Clear objectives are set for learning and explicitly shared with pupils. There is a very good focus on the development of basic skills in literacy and numeracy. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are used effectively to promote pupils' learning, particularly in numeracy. Increasing use is made of ICT to support learning across subjects. Teachers' methods are chosen well to enable pupils to gain knowledge and develop understanding. The use of homework to support pupils' achievement is good.
16. All teachers are familiar with the Code of Practice for pupils with special educational needs, who are identified as soon as possible on entry to school. Teachers prepare lessons conscientiously with a view to meeting the needs of all pupils through the provision of different tasks for different ability groups. Teaching assistants work effectively with these pupils, contributing strongly to the good progress they make.
17. The school currently has a small group of pupils at an early stage of English language acquisition. The school gives good support to such pupils, particularly in the early stages. The bilingual support assistant is particularly effective in nurturing their confidence and pupils make rapid progress, so that the deficits in understanding which are evident in the Foundation Stage have been mostly eradicated by Year 3 or 4. Thereafter, such pupils usually work at least at the same level as the others. They make rapid gains with their English skills and their progress is monitored closely. Few pupils enter the school with English as an additional language beyond the age of six. The support assistant provides valuable service in providing liaison between the school and families from minority ethnic groups, particularly where family skills in English are limited.
18. Assessment procedures are good in the Foundation Stage and satisfactory in the main school. Progress in the key core areas is tracked carefully through the school. The systems are of increasingly good quality and the school has made steady progress in this area. Data is accessible, but is not yet used as well as it might be by all staff. Not all co-ordinators have analysed available data rigorously. Staff undertake some analysis of pupils' work and regularly

review pupils' writing. Some progress has been made on developing individual pupil targets, but there are still inconsistencies, particularly in mathematics. There is a good level of on-going informal assessment. Plenary sessions are often used well for this purpose. In addition, pupils are being trained to evaluate their own learning and this is a regular element in lessons such as physical education.

The curriculum

The curriculum is broad, well-balanced and interesting, and is enhanced by a good range of activities beyond the expected lessons. There are sufficient teachers and support staff. Resources are good. Accommodation is unsatisfactory, with some weaknesses in the outdoor provision for the Foundation Stage.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Activities based on the Oldham Network Learning Community initiative, such as the philosophy lessons in the infants, enhance the curriculum in innovative and imaginative ways.
- The quality of planning and teaching of mathematics promotes high standards.
- Very good links with the local secondary school are helping to raise standards in science and mathematics.
- The accommodation imposes some restrictions upon curricular provision.

Commentary

19. The curriculum is well planned, regularly reviewed and enables all pupils to achieve well. Though there is a focus upon literacy, numeracy and science skills throughout the school, the curriculum as a whole is well balanced and pupils are achieving at least satisfactorily in subjects other than English, mathematics and science. Effective links are being developed so pupils see the purpose of their learning. Long-term planning is thorough and is based on a yearly cycle. The curriculum is regularly reviewed and updated to take account of new developments and to improve its relevance to the pupils. The school has made a commitment to developing philosophy and pupil enquiry skills as part of the Network Learning project, where the school works with other schools in the district. This is enriching the quality of the curriculum and is having a positive effect on standards, particularly in Years 1 and 2. A daily act of collective worship of a broadly Christian nature is provided.
20. The school provides good support for pupils with special educational needs. The co-ordinator works closely with staff and parents to support the learning and progress of these pupils. Individual education plans are detailed, with appropriate targets identified and strategies suggested to achieve these. This helps pupils to take a full part in lessons. Pupils with special educational needs have good support in class and also when withdrawn in small groups. Reviews are completed effectively and parents are regularly informed. Work in lessons is carefully planned to match the needs of all pupils.
21. The interesting range of lesson activities captures pupils' interest and imagination and contributes well to achievement in the school. This reflects the school's commitment to enhancing and extending the curriculum. A particular feature is the teaching of French to pupils in Year 6, Spanish in Year 5 and German in Year 2. National guidelines form the basis of the curriculum and subjects are reviewed on a regular basis. Literacy, numeracy, science and ICT skills are developed effectively and are used effectively within other subjects.
22. The ethos of the school is very good. It is characterised by a good commitment to the quality of opportunity for all pupils. A good programme to develop pupils' personal, social, health education and citizenship is in place. This is well supported by the work in philosophy which helps to develop pupils' confidence when discussing sensitive issues. Pupils are very well prepared for their moves to and between the different stages of education. There are strong links between the local secondary school and the pupils in Year 6. Staff from the secondary

school regularly teach mathematics and science to the Year 6 pupils. These arrangements enable pupils to feel more confident when they transfer to secondary school as well as helping raise standards.

23. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities during the day and after school. These include opportunities for pupils to join in sporting activities. Planned activities and educational visits, including the annual residential visit for pupils in Year 6, make a good contribution to pupils' social and physical development and pupils value these opportunities.
24. There is a good match of teachers and support staff to meet the needs of the curriculum. Resources are good but the accommodation is unsatisfactory. The building is open-plan with small classroom bases and noise from adjacent classrooms sometimes affects pupils' ability to concentrate. The limitations in the Foundation Stage accommodation restrict free access to outdoor facilities for the children in the Reception class. However, the school makes best use of what is essentially a poor building, by good use of display reflecting the many curricular opportunities. The premises are looked after with care.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for the care and welfare of pupils is good. Procedures for support, advice and guidance based on monitoring are good. The way in which the school seeks and acts upon the views of pupils is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The arrangements for rewarding non-academic achievement are good.
- The arrangements for pastoral care, including health and safety and child protection, are good.
- School lunches are of good quality.
- The school is effective in seeking pupils' views.
- The level of supervision during whole-school assemblies is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

25. Beal Vale staff know their pupils well and, as a consequence, pupils trust them to provide help when needed. Staff intuitively monitor pupils on a daily basis and appropriate action is taken. There are good systems for rewarding non-academic achievement, through stickers, class awards and the weekly Praise Assembly, which provide an informative reference guide to personal development over the year. Effective monitoring of personal development is undertaken at the end of each term when all staff meet to conduct a thorough review of each child's progress. These are vital in sharing information so that staff can take the necessary action when incidents arise.
26. Arrangements for the care and welfare of pupils are good, with staff demonstrating an empathetic approach to their pupils. At a formal level Child Protection procedures are of good quality, with good detailed records of concerns. Much work has been done to ensure the school complies with all the necessary health and safety records. The local education authority has provided helpful guidelines on policies and audit procedures. The school is well served by a conscientious caretaker who carries out a daily visual check to ensure that the site is safe. The caretaker is well supported by the governing body, which carries out termly audits of the building. School lunches are of much better quality than is often seen. They are nutritious and served with pride by a conscientious catering staff.
27. The school reaffirms its strong commitment to developing self-esteem by giving pupils the opportunity to have a say in how it is run. The School Council is well established, providing a useful forum in which pupils may raise their views. These views are valued, for instance, when the Council was consulted during the review of the Anti-Bullying and Anti-Racism

Policies. The Council also oversees the *Buddy* system, where pupils provide friendship and support for those who may feel isolated. It also undertakes fundraising and has been instrumental in the acquisition of playground games and the markings for the infant playground.

28. During the week of the inspection three assemblies were observed. On two occasions, one member of staff was left in charge of more than 200 pupils. From the point of view of health and safety and behaviour management, this level of supervision is inadequate.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are good. Links with the community and other schools and colleges are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The partnership which the school has with its parents is good.
- The influence of the Network Learning activities in fostering links with local schools has been very positive.
- The impersonal nature of the annual reports to parents is a weakness.

Commentary

29. Beal Vale has established good links with its parents, a finding borne out by both the inspection questionnaire and the school's own annual surveys. Those attending the parents' meeting confirmed that information, in the form of newsletters and regular contact with staff, is good. The vast majority of parents feel welcome in school and they are encouraged to help out in classes when they can. As part of the programme for Lifelong Learning, the school is running an accredited adult literacy course aimed at helping parents to understand how their children learn. Although the numbers of people attending is small, the effect, for those who do, is significant. Attendance at the three parents' evenings is good and the school is well served by an informal support group which is successful in raising additional funds via the annual Christmas disco and Summer Fayre.
30. Much of the impetus for the very good links which have been established with other schools is provided by the Network community, whose aim has been to analyse learning styles and, from that, explore what will make a difference. Now in its third year, it has had a significant effect on the teaching of numeracy, through co-coaching between teachers. The innovative philosophy programme has also helped to promote speaking and listening skills amongst pupils. Perhaps its greatest benefit has been in providing a regular forum to share good practice. There are good links with the four secondary feeder schools to ensure that the transition to Year 7 is well managed. Beal Vale enjoys particularly close ties with Royton and Crompton Secondary School, whose science, mathematics and language teachers are regular visitors to school.
31. At the pre-inspection meeting, a number of parents raised concerns about the annual reports to parents. They regarded them as impersonal. The inspection team agrees with this view. The reports tend to read the same for different children. Whilst they set targets, these are hidden in the main text so that they are difficult to find. There is also no clear indication of the level at which each child is working and whether this is appropriate to their age.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. The quality of leadership by the headteacher is good and he is ably supported by the deputy headteacher. The quality of governance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Although fairly new to the job, the headteacher has a clear picture of how he wants the school to develop.
- The performance of teaching staff is managed very effectively.
- Management, although good, is not yet as strong as leadership.
- The governing body is very supportive of the school and is led well by its very experienced chairperson. Governors can improve their gathering of information.
- Management decisions and practice have helped to make teaching better.

Commentary

32. The vision the headteacher has for making the school better is based securely on helping each pupil to get the best out of his or her schooling. The development of pupils' thinking skills, and helping pupils to learn how to learn, form the bedrock of his strategy to achieve this goal. The very strong teamwork of the whole school community ensures that his vision is shared by all. The strength of collective leadership is helping to raise standards in Years 1 and 2 and, to a lesser extent, in Years 3 to 6 where teacher turnover is greater, and some staff are relatively new.
33. The very strong links that the headteacher has forged between the processes involved in managing the performance of staff, the plans for improving the school and the professional development of teachers are a powerful vehicle for moving the school forward. The links ensure that the efforts to achieve the objectives of the school improvement plan are focused, concerted and successful.
34. The leadership of the other key staff is good, overall. The team of senior staff steers the work of the school and monitors its work well in most respects. The extent to which the leadership of subjects is helping to increase pupils' achievement varies and school recognises the need to continue work already begun on strengthening the role of the subject co-ordinator, for example in analysing the standards that pupils achieve.
35. The headteacher manages the school well. Processes and procedures are kept under review and staff and pupils work in a supportive environment. The arrangements for the induction of new teachers are excellent. Measures to assess and record the year-on-year progress made by individual pupils are efficient, but the analysis of the achievement of groups of pupils, for example boys, is not yet fully effective. This means that the school does not have a clear enough picture of how well the teaching is contributing to the achievement of all pupils. The school has identified this as an area for development.
36. The very positive close working relationship between the chair of governors and the headteacher contributes well to the governors' understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, the way in which the governing body collect information about the work of the school is not systematic enough. The lack of involvement of more governors to take an interest in subjects such as information and communication technology and of agreement about the purpose of visits to the school and how these are reported back to the full governing body are currently weaker aspects. Many of the governors have worked hard for the school over a long period and among their successes is the much improved fabric of the building. Some governors work in the school regularly, giving their time very generously to assist staff and pupils.
37. The school's decision to become involved in the Oldham Network Learning Community and the monitoring of teaching and learning carried out by the headteacher are helping to improve the quality of the work in classrooms. The impact of these factors is seen in the improvements in teaching since the last inspection. The concerted effort to ensure that teachers coach and support each other, in order to improve their strengths and deal with the weaknesses in their teaching, has had a positive effect on learning.

38. Staff and governors work hard to see that all pupils have a fair chance to succeed. The management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs and for pupils whose home language is not English is good. This has a positive effect on the achievement of the pupils concerned. The school recognises the need to improve the arrangements it makes to support gifted and talented pupils.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	585,332
Total expenditure	572,202
Expenditure per pupil	2,601

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	39,645
Balance carried forward to the next year	52,775

39. The school benefits from having a stable workforce. This is clearly a benefit in ensuring continuity but it also means that staff salaries comprise the largest proportion of expenditure, leaving little room for manoeuvre when it comes to setting a budget to meet the school's educational priorities. However, the school does benchmark its performance against similar schools and this exercise demonstrates that it uses its resources well and adheres to the principles of best value. Once a year, all governors are involved in a valuable session during which they put forward ideas to be included in the school improvement plan. Subsequently, the headteacher carries out a cost analysis and reports back at later meetings on those ideas which can be taken forward. Overall, financial management is good. Although the current carry-forward is slightly above the recommended level, the school has clear plans for additional spending on the premises. School administration is effective.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good. As a result, all children achieve well.
 - Children's personal and social skills are well developed.
 - Induction arrangements are good and children settle quickly.
 - Communication with parents is good.
 - The outside provision is not easily accessible for Reception children.
40. At the previous inspection, provision for the Foundation Stage was judged as good and this remains the case. The quality of teaching in the Nursery and in Reception is good.
41. Children get off to a good start with their education in the Foundation Stage and this is one of the reasons why they achieve so well by the age of seven. When they start in the Nursery in the September after their third birthday, most of the children have attainments that are below average overall and many have limited speech, a narrow vocabulary and underdeveloped social skills. The school's very good induction procedures introduce children and their parents to school expectations and routines right from the start so that children settle to school life happily, gain in confidence and make good progress in their learning.
42. At the end of Nursery, a number of children leave to start in other schools. As a result, the Reception class receives a significant proportion of new children in September. Most have had varied pre-school experience. This has an impact on planning. For example, last year the Nursery lost a number of high achieving pupils, many who were likely to have exceeded the Early Learning Goals. Because of the new children entering Reception this year, there is a smaller proportion who will exceed the Early Learning Goals. This changes the attainment profile of the cohort. Despite this, all children in Nursery and Reception achieve well.
43. The Nursery and Reception classrooms are stimulating and well organised but the Reception classroom appears dark because of the lack of windows. Access to the outside play area is restricted and therefore opportunities for constructive outside play are missed. This is an area that the school is trying to rectify. The curriculum is well planned to incorporate all the areas of learning, whilst in the Reception class it makes an effective bridge with the National Curriculum. This works well in making an early start on literacy and numeracy. All adults work well together as a team and provide good role models for children. Staff concentrate on developing language and social skills that pave the way for learning in all subjects. The classroom assistants make a very valuable contribution to the teaching and overall provision, particularly in the support given to children with identified special educational needs. A bilingual support assistant very effectively supports children who enter school with limited knowledge of English, enabling them to make very good progress.
44. Across the Foundation Stage, there are good systems for assessing and monitoring children's progress for each of the six areas of learning. These are included in each child's record of achievement. Although the co-ordinator was absent for most of the inspection, it is clear that the Foundation Stage is well led and managed. Teaching and learning continued smoothly in her absence with little evidence of disruption to routines and children continued to achieve well.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good because very good relationships are established with adults and other children.
- Staff provide good opportunities for children to work independently and to co-operate with each other; they set children a very good example.

Commentary

45. In this area of learning, the majority of children are likely to achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of their time in Reception. Many of these children are likely to exceed them. The quality of teaching is good, enabling children to achieve well. This area is rightly a priority and underpins all the teaching and learning that takes place. Children are encouraged to be confident and try out new activities and are given opportunities to choose for themselves. Nearly all develop the confidence to speak up in a group. Adults intervene well when groups of children are playing, by talking to them and asking questions which encourage them to think and consider. Children in Nursery and Reception have opportunities to join the other pupils for assemblies in the hall and quickly adjust to being part of a much larger group. Provision for the social and emotional development of these children at lunchtime is very good.
46. Staff treat each other with respect and provide good role models for these young children. Adults work well as a team and provide a calm, well-ordered and secure learning environment. Most Nursery children are happy to leave their parents and quickly become engaged in their chosen activities. They behave well and co-operate well together in outdoor play. Reception children enter school confidently and most listen sensibly during whole-class sessions. Children are learning to take turns to speak and listen to what others have to say. Adults effectively model appropriate behaviour. Children make good progress in developing their attention and concentration. In Reception, children sustain their work in directed activities because adults praise them and challenge them to try new things.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching helps children to develop their communication and early literacy skills well.
- Children make good progress in learning to read and write.

Commentary

47. Although most children enter school with below average communication, language and literacy skills, most of them achieve well and are likely to attain the expected goals by the end of Reception. This is because of consistently good teaching. In particular, many children have difficulty with language and communication skills. However, staff take every opportunity during activities to develop children's speaking and listening skills and all children, including those with special educational needs and those whose first language is not English, make good progress. Regular small group sessions led by an adult provide other opportunities for children to share their ideas. In these situations, children start to sustain attentive listening and develop the confidence to respond with relevant comments.
48. Teaching is planned well to cover all aspects of this area of learning. Staff have a clear understanding of how young children learn. Well-organised and purposeful activities are

provided which motivate children and help to develop their reading and writing skills. In Reception, whole-class shared reading of big books such as *The Bear Hunt* helps children to enjoy stories and to understand that words and pictures carry meaning. Through suitable games and activities, children are already beginning to recognise some familiar words, the sounds of letters and how they are formed.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's achievement in mathematics is good.
- Staff provide a wide range of interesting activities to develop children's knowledge and understanding.

Commentary

49. The majority of Reception children are likely to meet the goals in this area and many will exceed them. Teaching of mathematics is good and children achieve well. An appropriate emphasis is placed on teaching mathematical skills through a wide range of practical activities, songs and games. For example, children in Nursery could name two- and three-dimensional shapes while making pictures with the use of shapes. They begin to develop an understanding of shape, size and position, using words such as smaller/larger and more/less. They learn to count up to ten and beyond. Through simple practical activities, they can find one more or one less than a number.
50. In Reception, the children can count beyond ten. They consolidate their early learning by recognising and matching numbers up to 20 and beyond. Higher attainers start to record their calculations. Staff are skilled at questioning children while they are engaged in games and activities in order to develop their mathematical understanding and mathematical language. Learning is reinforced well through good use of counting songs.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children experience a wide range of activities that extend their knowledge of their world.
- Children become confident in the use of computers.

Commentary

51. Children achieve well and make good gains in their understanding of the world. Most children are likely to reach the goals set for the end of the Reception year. In both Nursery and Reception classes, they make good use of computers independently and are confident in their use of the mouse and keyboard. Adults use good questioning skills to encourage the children to think about what they see. An example of this was a class discussion in Reception where children used many descriptive words when encouraged to talk about the similarities and differences between two bears.
52. Children in both age groups have many opportunities to take part in a good range of role-play that reinforces their learning about the wider world. They have access to a range of interesting resources so that they can investigate and explore. These are used effectively to initiate learning. They learn about the properties of materials, such as sand and water, and experiment with them freely. The attractive displays and photographs show evidence of recent activities.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children handle tools and small equipment safely and with increasing control.
- In Nursery, a well-planned range of activities, both indoors and outside, helps children practise and improve their skills.
- Reception children have restricted access to the outside play area.

Commentary

53. Nursery children benefit from the wide range of well-planned activities. Although the designated outdoor area is small, children enjoy using large toys and improve control of their actions. In wet weather, access to a covered area means that children are still able to experience appropriate activities. As a result of good planning, adults ensure the area is well set out so that, for example, children are encouraged to park their large wheeled toys in the correct place, have access to a variety of activities and enjoy the space to run in. Movements are well co-ordinated for children of this age.
54. Reception children benefit from access to the school hall and enjoy developing control over their bodies in well-structured lessons. They improve their balance and awareness of the space needed to work in. Children run and jump enthusiastically, although a few find this difficult. Access to the outside play area is restricted and therefore opportunities for constructive outside play are missed because the Reception area is small and dark and children in this area particularly need regular opportunities to play on large toys and improve control of their actions. This is an issue that needs resolving quickly. Activities in the classroom enable children to develop control of finer movements such as those needed to control a pencil. By the end of Reception, most children control a pencil and other colouring tools well, use scissors competently and manipulate small construction toys effectively. They manage the controls of a computer well.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good links are made with other areas of learning.
- Children experience a good range of materials, colours and textures.
- Children have good opportunities to be creative through imaginative role-play.

Commentary

55. The majority of the Reception children are likely to meet the Early Learning Goals and many will exceed them. Children have access to a range of activities such as paint and construction equipment. They are taught basic skills and techniques in their creative work. Many activities are linked to other areas of learning.
56. Opportunities are taken to use music as a starting point. The Nursery nurse led the children very well in songs with actions. The overall good teaching helps children to use their creative skills effectively. Children use a wide variety of paints, paper, card and fabrics. In Nursery, children enjoy free painting and use colour confidently. They observe and draw with care. In Reception, children use form and texture to make pictures of bears. They were able to explore what happens when colours mix and there were good opportunities for language development. Children engage in imaginative role-play, both through role play areas and in

small world play with model figures. In Nursery they enjoy the garage area where cars are 'serviced' and 'filled with fuel'. In Reception, the story of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* was enacted with great conviction and enjoyment. In this work, as in all areas of learning, children are well supported and achieve well.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well as they pass through the school.
- Very good teaching in Years 1 and 2 results in very good achievement.
- The provision for developing writing skills is good overall, but higher-attaining pupils do not get enough guidance on how to improve.
- Good work is under way to further raise standards in speaking and listening.
- Standards in handwriting are relatively weak.

Commentary

57. Children joining the school in the Reception class have lower levels of ability than those found usually. By the time they leave most pupils attain at least average standards in English. This represents good achievement. The standards attained by pupils at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 have improved since the last inspection. Writing standards in Year 2 have risen much faster than the national rate of improvement.
58. The very effective teaching and close co-operation between the teachers in Years 1 and 2 help pupils to make very good gains in relation to their capabilities. The results of the national tests taken by pupils at the end of Year 2 have risen over the last few years, especially in writing. Inspection evidence and the information held by the school indicate that the outcomes of the tests this year are likely to show standards that are above average in reading and well above average in writing compared with all schools. In relation to schools operating in similar circumstances, reading standards are likely to be well above average and writing results to be in the top five per cent in the country.
59. Teaching is good in Years 3 to 6, but the effect of pupils moving in and out of the school more frequently and a higher incidence of pupils with learning difficulties than in Years 1 and 2 mean that standards are not as high. Also, the benefits from a number of initiatives begun relatively recently will take time to affect positively the results gained by pupils at the end of Year 6. Nevertheless, achievement is at least satisfactory. Inspection findings show that the standards attained by pupils in Year 6 in the national tests this year are likely to be average compared with all schools, and above average when judged against similar schools. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well and make good progress. Those at the early stages of learning English are supported very well by the bilingual support staff, particularly in the lower part of the school. They make brisk progress in the early stages and the majority are soon working at a level similar to the others.
60. The use of devices such as planning sheets to help pupils structure their stories correctly have a good effect on writing standards. This is especially strong in Years 1 and 2. The high expectations that teachers have of what pupils can achieve boost their progress significantly. However, generally teachers do not provide enough indication in their marking of the work of higher-attaining pupils to help them to move forward more swiftly. Throughout Years 1 to 6, the relative lack of opportunities for free writing of stories and poetry reduces the choices that pupils make and detracts from overall progress.

61. Standards in speaking and listening are average by the end of Year 6. However, good work is under way, led ably by the co-ordinator for Years 1 and 2, to improve attainment across the school. The skilful use of drama in Year 1 is helping to give pupils a good start in developing their speaking skills. The strong drive to provide opportunities within lessons is shared by all teachers, but there is some inconsistency in implementing this policy. The inclusion of philosophy in the curriculum for all classes and the adoption of the national guidance for developing speaking and listening skills are also helping to raise standards. The co-ordinator for Years 1 and 2 has just finished drawing up lists of strategies that teachers can use for each year group. The progress already made in this work has contributed to the above average standards in speaking and listening attained by pupils at the end of Year 2.
62. The collective leadership of English is good overall. Good links with the community, such as those with the local church, provide a real stimulus for writing. Very valuable work is under way to improve the provision for developing oracy. However, the subject co-ordinator's role in analysing pupils' attainment is not effective enough to ensure she fully understands what is needed to further raise standards. Standards in handwriting, although broadly satisfactory, are not as high as in other aspects of pupils' work. This is largely due to teachers leaving it too late to teach pupils how to join letters to form a fluent script.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

63. Although informally planned, the opportunities for pupils to develop language skills in other subjects are at least satisfactory. The drive to improve speaking skills is beginning to have a positive effect on pupils' performance in areas of the curriculum where discussion and collaboration are needed, such as mathematical investigation and scientific enquiry. The school is currently drafting a programme of work for speaking and listening and is aware of the need to identify how the relevant activities will be incorporated in the planning for other subjects.

Modern foreign languages

64. Whilst it is not possible to make an overall judgement on provision, the school has worked hard to provide good opportunities for pupils to gain experience of a range of foreign languages. Currently, these include German in Year 2, Spanish in Year 5 and French in Year 6. Of these, the weekly Spanish lessons in Year 5 are taken by a member of staff from the local secondary school, as part of their outreach work. The other languages are taught for one or two terms by the school's own staff.
65. Two sessions, one each in Spanish and French, were observed. The Spanish lesson was taught with flair and pace, challenging pupils well to reiterate phrases and to respond to the teacher. Although pupils' learning is still at an early stage and there is some reluctance to respond enthusiastically and with confidence, they have a growing vocabulary. Year 6 pupils have had less exposure to French and their learning is still at a very early stage. They were observed rehearsing basic phrases relating to names and the weather, using an interactive ICT program for part of the time. They find the technology motivating and this part of the lesson moved at a brisk pace.
66. Overall, this initiative, first started four years ago, makes a valuable contribution to links with the secondary school and adds significantly to the breadth of the curriculum and to pupils' cultural awareness. The links between language learning and ICT are well developed. The content covered is based upon national guidance for the early stages of foreign language learning.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision in mathematics is a strength of the school.
- Standards are above average in Year 2, and well above average in Year 6. Pupils achieve very well in Years 1 and 2 and well in Years 3 to 6. Higher attainers are well supported.
- Expectations are particularly high in Years 1 and 2 where teaching and learning are very good. Teaching and learning are good In Years 3 to 6. Good use is made of practical and investigative work.
- The leadership of mathematics is good.
- The quantity and quality of pupils' recorded work are significant strengths.
- The school receives very good support from its main secondary school.
- Individual pupil targets have yet to be implemented across the school.

Commentary

67. Standards in mathematics are above average in Year 2 and well above average in Year 6. Support for higher-attaining pupils is particularly effective, with a challenging, rigorous approach across the school and specific input in Year 6 by staff from the secondary school. This has underpinned the increasing proportion of pupils attaining at the higher levels in recent years. Around two-fifths of the pupils in Year 2 - a similar proportion to 2004 - are working confidently at the higher Level 3, whilst almost half of the pupils in Year 6 are likely to achieve the higher Level 5 in the national tests in 2005. Apart from a dip in all subjects in 2003, the school has been effective in raising standards in mathematics in Year 6 year after year over the last five years. However, the real strength lies in the sustained increase in the proportion of pupils in Year 6 who attain at the highest level.
68. Pupils' achievement is very good in Years 1 and 2 and good elsewhere. The current Year 6 group has achieved well, as did the previous cohort and the great majority of pupils who have their full education in the school. In general, pupils of all abilities do well. In the lessons observed, achievement was stronger in Years 1 and 2 than in the juniors because of the greater rigour and consistency of the teaching seen. Over time, however, and as seen in pupils' work samples, the picture is stronger. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs, and of the small group of pupils at an early stage of learning English, is similar to that of the others, particularly when they receive good support. A small group of pupils with behavioural issues in Year 5 can be slightly disruptive at times, affecting the learning of others. For the most part, this is managed well. Those with limited English tend to start at a disadvantage to the others but, with good support, the deficit narrows through the first three years so that, by about Year 4, their attainment is comparable to that of the others. By Year 6, pupils from minority ethnic groups are attaining standards at least as good as, and often better than, the majority.
69. There is a strong focus on teaching basic numeracy skills. Pupils experience a broad range of work, with good opportunities for independent recording from the beginning. Expectations of the presentation of work are high throughout the school and pupils are taught to structure their thinking and their recorded work carefully. The school makes good use of practical and investigative work to secure pupils' understanding of key mathematical concepts. A good example of this was seen in Year 2, where pupils were beginning a challenging investigation with dice, which would eventually embed an initial understanding of the concept of probability. Overall, investigative work is a stronger feature and more systematically planned up to Year 4 than in Years 5 and 6, where content is more sparse. Pupils make good use of practical resources, such as whiteboards, to help work out their answers. The weekly input by staff from the secondary school is a real strength and is contributing very well to the development and extension of pupils' mathematical thinking in Year 6.

70. Teaching and learning are good overall, but very good in Years 1 and 2. This strength in the teaching in the infants is what enables pupils to make such sustained progress from a below average start in school, to the above average standards seen at the end of Year 2. In the best lessons, teachers place an emphasis on thinking skills and a strategic approach to problems. There is considerable rigour in the teaching in Years 1 and 2, where pupils are constantly challenged in lessons. Pupils are very motivated by the brisk pace and constant questioning and this is what spurs them on to do so well. There is constant ongoing assessment to test pupils' understanding. There is some, though not extensive, use of computers to support learning in mathematics. Pupils' very positive attitudes to their work contribute significantly to the success which they achieve. Learning is affected on occasion by the persistent intrusion of noise from other teaching areas and this affects concentration.
71. Teachers use informal assessment well to guide their planning of future work. Some pupils have individual targets for mathematics, but this is not yet fully implemented across the school. Discussion sessions at the beginning and end of lessons are used very well by teachers to evaluate pupils' understanding. Marking is of good quality across the school, with clear guidance as to how pupils can improve their performance. Homework arrangements are effective and well managed, and deepen pupils' understanding well.
72. Leadership is good. The co-ordinator is an effective teacher and provides an appropriate role model for others. She has a clear understanding of standards and teaching quality across the school and of what needs to be done to move the subject forward. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

73. Pupils use mathematics satisfactorily to support their work in other subjects, primarily in graphing to support science, measuring water evaporation in geography and cutting and measuring in design and technology. There are good links with ICT, with a good range of software available to extend pupils' understanding of mathematics.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The consistently high quality of teaching in Years 1 and 2 enables all pupils to achieve very well.
- Pupils have positive attitudes that make a significant contribution to their achievement.
- The regular link with the local secondary school is helping pupils in Year 6 to gain greater understanding of how to plan investigations.
- The development of enquiry skills is supporting pupils' ability to use and apply their scientific knowledge and understanding.

Commentary

74. Standards are above average at the end of Year 2 and average at the end of Year 6. Inspection evidence indicates that pupils' achievement is good overall, but very good in Years 1 and 2. A significant proportion of pupils are expected to reach or exceed the expected Level 2 by the end of Year 2. At the end of Year 6, the majority of pupils are expected to reach the appropriate Level 4 but the percentage of pupils attaining the higher level is expected to be lower than the national average. Overall, standards at Year 2 are slightly better than the 2004 results, when standards were above the national average for all schools and similar schools. Standards at Year 6 are average and similar to those in 2004. The relatively small numbers in each year group means that standards can vary from year to year but pupils' achievement is

consistently good and better than national expectations and, overall, this is having a positive effect on standards. Improvement overall has been satisfactory.

75. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and sometimes very good in the way pupils are challenged to think, learn independently and develop enquiry skills. This is particularly so in Years 1 and 2. It is not always reflected in pupils' books because lessons are characterised by their practical nature. In the very good lessons, pupils were challenged to formulate relevant questions in order to solve scientific problems. The activities were well selected, which resulted in pupils being interested and engaged in their learning. In an outstanding lesson in Year 6, the visiting science teacher from the local secondary school used very well judged question and answer techniques to draw information from pupils. Their enthusiasm was reflected in the quality of responses. This regular link with the secondary school is helping pupils in Year 6 to develop greater understanding in how to plan investigations, as well as enabling them to follow a scientific topic using the more specialist equipment which the secondary school has to offer. In a very good Year 1 lesson, the presence of a baby and toddler, each with a parent, made the similarities and differences between the two children more relevant to the class. Pupils, having devised their questions, were able to use the answers when drawing conclusions.
76. Across the school, all pupils are achieving well in relation to their abilities. They are enthusiastic and work productively in lessons, especially when collaborating in groups. This was evident during discussion with a group of Year 5 pupils who enthusiastically described what they enjoyed about science. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their prior attainment. The teaching assistants know their pupils well and use this information effectively to offer appropriate adult support and intervention. Pupils who are at the early stages of English language acquisition do equally well, owing to the quality of support offered by the support staff and class teachers. Satisfactory assessment procedures are in place. This provides teachers with sufficient information to plan the next step. However, marking in books is not consistently applied.
77. The science co-ordinator is leading and managing the subject well. Observations of teaching, discussions with staff and monitoring of standards across all year groups have provided the co-ordinator with a clear idea of where improvements are needed in the future. The development of enquiry skills, as part of the Network Learning initiative, is underpinning the improvements so that pupils gain greater confidence when solving scientific problems.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in ICT are satisfactory.
- The subject co-ordinator leads and manages well.
- Teachers have better subject knowledge than at the last inspection.
- The arrangements for finding out how well pupils learn are not yet implemented effectively.
- Computers are used well in other subjects.

Commentary

78. The school has made good progress towards the targets it set itself of ensuring that 75 per cent of pupils should attain the expected National Curriculum level for their age group. Inspection evidence indicates that standards are similar to those normally found in Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve at least satisfactorily in relation to their potential.

79. The subject co-ordinator's good leadership and management have contributed well to the significant improvements since the last inspection. The provision of hardware and software is better, although some gaps still exist in the programs available for teachers to use, for example, in mathematics. The ratio of computers to pupils is now in line with national recommendations, enabling pupils to have good opportunities to practise.
80. An equally important success story is the much greater confidence of teachers in using the equipment at their disposal. This is due to the hard work of the co-ordinator in advising staff collectively and individually on how to get the best out of it. The model lessons she has taught to improve teachers' skills have also contributed strongly. The enthusiasm with which everyone is trying out the new interactive whiteboard, linked to a computer, is further evidence of her effectiveness.
81. The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory. In the best lessons, the enthusiasm of the teacher rubs off onto the pupils who are excited by their learning. The teacher's good interventions are judged well in terms of giving pupils responsibility for making decisions about how to proceed. However, teachers do not always check that pupils sharing a computer are positioned well to see the screen and use the mouse. Pupils' very good attitudes to working with computers give learning a considerable boost.
82. The school is aware of the need to implement as soon as possible arrangements for assessing the progress made by pupils. The co-ordinator recognises the need to review the effectiveness of the procedures in due course.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

83. Opportunities to develop computer skills in other subjects are good. Very good consolidation of Year 2 pupils' understanding of life cycles was observed when their teacher made good use of the interactive whiteboard for this purpose. Similarly good use was made of the whiteboard to present information about the water supply to pupils in Year 5. The subject co-ordinator wisely monitors the frequency and effectiveness of the chances that pupils get to work with computers across the curriculum.

HUMANITIES

84. Only one lesson was seen in **history**, therefore it is not possible to form overall judgements about provision in the subject. The evidence available indicates that the subject planning for the teaching of history throughout the school is good and takes account of national guidance.
85. In the one lesson observed, pupils in Year 1 learned about Samuel Pepys. The teacher made the lesson exciting and fun by the very good use of role-play to engage pupils' interest and develop their empathy with people in past eras. Photographs on display show drama used to teach other historical topics as well as developing speaking and listening skills. For example, pupils enacting some of the events in the Crimean War reflected enjoyment of the subject. The study of history is enriched in all year groups by educational visits and visitors. A group of Year 5 pupils spoke enthusiastically about their visit to Manchester Museum. As a result of these experiences, history is brought alive and events of the past are more meaningful.
86. The subject co-ordinator is effective, providing very good examples of how to make history exciting and relevant to the pupils. He monitors pupils' understanding and enjoyment of the subject by the use of questionnaires for each year group. The supportive work between teachers, as part of Network Learning, is an important element in the development of history. It is improving teachers' confidence to teach history as well as raising the profile of the subject. It is also helping teachers to make greater links between history and other areas of the curriculum.
87. Little work and no lessons in **geography** were seen during the inspection and so no judgements are possible on standards achieved or on teaching and learning. There is

evidence, however, from teachers' planning, from displays around the school and from the pupils' books that the subject is covered appropriately. Very good use is made of the local environment and all groups have good opportunities for educational visits.

88. Geography has, understandably, not been a high priority but is now a focus for further development. The co-ordinator is very enthusiastic about the school being included in the 'Globe' programme. She has been fully trained to manage the project which involves pupils collecting data which will contribute towards greater understanding of global issues. The subject is already being developed across the curriculum.

Religious education

Provision for religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of provision for religious education has improved well since the last inspection.
- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils have good opportunities to learn about world faiths.

Commentary

89. Standards seen during the inspection are in line with the expectations of the Locally Agreed syllabus. Throughout the school, pupils, including those with special educational needs, attain at the levels expected for their age and overall, they achieve well. There have been good improvements in the quality of provision since the last inspection. Pupils now understand what they have learned and the subject is carefully timetabled so that an appropriate amount of time is allocated.
90. During the inspection, three lessons were observed and overall, the quality of teaching and learning was good. In a very good Year 6 lesson, pupils listened to a Major in the Salvation Army and learned that Christians apply their beliefs in practical situations. The introduction by the teacher gained the full attention of the pupils and this continued throughout the lesson. The whole lesson made a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
91. Pupils have good opportunities to learn about world faiths. From the work seen and from talking to pupils, it is clear that a sound understanding of a range of religious beliefs is developing. A group of Year 5 pupils were able to name the holy books and buildings of Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Judaism. They were keen to discuss the similarities and differences between the different faiths referring to the belief in one God. The subject draws positively on pupils' backgrounds and teaches them to respect differences.
92. The subject is effectively led and managed and the co-ordinator has plans to improve assessment procedures so that the progression in pupils' learning can be more effectively supported. The range and quality of resources is adequate, well organised and provides good support for teachers.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

93. **Art and design** was not a focus for the inspection. Too few lessons were seen to make a reliable judgement of provision. The scrutiny of pupils' sketchbooks, completed work and displays indicates that standards are above those normally found in Year 2 and similar to those normally found in Year 6. Limited evidence suggests that pupils in Year 1 attain standards well above average, thanks to very good teaching, based on high expectations.

94. Teaching in the single lesson observed was satisfactory. Generally, the good links that teachers make between art and design and other subjects make learning more interesting and relevant. Too little use is made of sketchbooks to enable pupils to collect visual information to assist them in developing work. The dearth of three-dimensional work is due in part to the lack of storage space.
95. Although the school makes proper provision for teaching **design and technology**, it was not possible to observe any teaching. Consequently no judgement is made of provision. Not enough products made by pupils were available to judge standards reliably. Discussions with pupils indicate that they experience a suitable range of learning opportunities.
96. There was no opportunity to see **music** taught, other than in Years 1 and 2 and it is not possible, in consequence, to make a judgement on overall, standards, teaching or provision. However, the absence of live music in assemblies and the limited instrumental skills of staff suggest that the musical culture of the school is not particularly strong. Teaching in Years 3 to 6 is provided by a specialist musician who was not due to be in school during the inspection. However, two lessons were observed in Years 1 and 2 and the indications are that standards, on the limited evidence available, are similar to those normally found. Of these lessons, that seen in Year 1 was a particular strength. Based on the commercial scheme which provides a structure for teaching in Years 1 and 2, it was very well taught, with a dynamic approach and high expectations which enabled pupils to achieve very well. Pupils were refining earlier composition activities towards a final performance and were rehearsing their cues, so that the piece had an overall flow and cohesive structure as the groups put together the elements on which they had worked. Pupils were fully engaged throughout and were enthused by the energy of the teacher.
97. A small number of older pupils have the opportunity to take violin in groups. There is no choir, although pupils work towards presentations at Christmas and in the summer, supported by the visiting teacher. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Assessment structures are limited to termly overviews by teachers.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve particularly well in Year 1.
- The provision for swimming is good and standards are above average.
- In the better lessons, there is a positive focus on self-evaluation by pupils.
- Recent development work and staff training are raising the profile of the subject and enhancing teachers' confidence.
- The subject co-ordinator has, until very recently, had few opportunities to monitor colleagues' work.
- Structures for assessing pupils' performance are limited.

Commentary

98. Standards in physical education are above those normally found in the infants and similar to those normally found in the juniors. The school plans for a good breadth of provision, although only games activities were observed in the lower school, with dance and athletics in the juniors. Pupils achieve satisfactorily over time, though achievement in the infants is good, because of the particularly good teaching. There is some additional benefit through extra-curricular activities and the opportunity to play on teams and take part in tournaments. The great majority of pupils achieve the desirable standard in swimming (25 metres unaided) by the end of Year 6, and often considerably earlier.

99. In the games session observed in Year 1, rigorous teaching and high expectations engaged pupils' attention effectively. Attitudes were very good. Pupils worked hard throughout a lengthy session and achieved well. The teacher was particularly effective in challenging pupils to think and to evaluate the quality of their work, so making a positive contribution to the development of pupils' speaking skills. Both expectations and commitment were also high in a Year 3 dance lesson, where pupils were enacting a dance to reflect a traditional Indian story *A Terrifying Lion*. Pupils used space well, and although there was little indication that they had extensive prior experience of the subject, they worked hard, learning to replicate animal movements. The teacher was particularly effective in including all pupils and, for example, targeted pupils with English as an additional language to respond orally, when evaluating the work of others.
100. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Year 1, but satisfactory overall. Overall, teaching in Years 3 and above is not as consistently strong as in the infants. Although teaching in one lesson observed in Year 5 was broadly secure, pupils' learning was affected by the small minority of pupils with behavioural difficulties who, through attention-seeking behaviour, monopolised the attention of the teacher to the detriment of the other pupils. Overall, however, relationships are good. Opportunities for pupils to evaluate their work are being developed effectively in most lessons. There is a good focus on health and safety issues and on the effects of exercise on health. Planning is detailed and provides well for the range of needs in each class. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well where necessary, as are those in the early stages of learning English.
101. The programme of additional sporting activities and clubs enriches the curriculum satisfactorily. There is an improved range of activities available, following recent development work, supported by the local secondary school. The annual residential weekend provides good opportunities for outdoor and adventurous activities in Year 6.
102. Leadership and management are good. The co-ordinator has a very clear overview of the subject. Whilst she supports colleagues and has a good understanding of the strengths of the subject, she had little opportunity for direct monitoring of teaching, prior to the self-evaluation activity leading up to the recent School Sports Co-ordinator input.
103. The school has satisfactory indoor and outdoor facilities for physical education, including an all-weather pitch. Assessment systems are informal and limited in scope. This is a current area for development. Whilst there had been very little management input to physical education until recently, the current development initiative is producing clear benefits and physical education is gaining a stronger profile. Improvement has, therefore, been satisfactory.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

104. This area was not a focus for the inspection and, as a consequence, there is insufficient evidence to make firm judgements about overall provision. Nevertheless, there are positive signs; it is clear that the school sees personal development as an integral part of the curriculum. At the present time, the subject is organised into topics on a two-year rolling programme. They are introduced in assembly and then further developed in lessons.
105. As a result of an effective audit, the co-ordinator has developed a policy and a scheme of work. Some good use is made of 'circle time', especially with younger pupils, to promote self-esteem, co-operation and listening skills. Pupils consider bullying, healthy eating and personal safety. The school is active in the *Healthy Schools* programme. This was evident at break when healthy snacks were available and at lunchtime when there was a good healthy choice of food. School lunches are of good quality.
106. The school council gives pupils insight into the democratic process, helping them to make their views known. Representatives from Reception to Year 6 meet regularly to discuss issues and organise the *buddy* system. The school is effective in helping pupils to develop a good awareness of how to behave in a community and how to work together in a supportive and caring way.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	3

Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	5
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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

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

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