

INSPECTION REPORT

HEMPNALL SCHOOL

Hempnall, Norwich

LEA area: Norfolk

Unique reference number: 120815

Headteacher: Mrs M Elston

Lead inspector: Mr Paul Canham

Dates of inspection: January 31st – February 2nd 2005

Inspection number: 272940

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 8 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	61
School address:	The Street Hempnall Norwich
Postcode:	NR15 2AD
Telephone number:	01508 499264
Fax number:	01508 499264
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Sue Beare
Date of previous inspection:	November 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- Hempnall School is much smaller than the average for this type of school.
- It caters for 61 boys and girls aged from four to eight years and taught in three classes, two of which are for mixed-aged pupils in Years 1 to 3.
- The school's rebuilding programme, taking place as part of the LEA's reorganisation of primary education in the area, has been postponed twice.
- The school draws its pupils from the village and from the local area.
- Nearly all pupils are White British.
- The school gained the nationally recognised Achievement Award in 2003.
- The first language of all pupils is English.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below average; most of these have moderate learning difficulties. One pupil has a statement of special educational need. A further group of pupils is being carefully monitored for possible inclusion on the special educational needs list. If these pupils are included, the proportion is close to the national average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average, but this percentage does not fully reflect the school's socio-economic context.
- Attainment on entry to Reception is just below average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1353	Paul Canham	<i>Lead inspector</i>	Art and design; Design and technology; Music; Science; Personal, social, health and citizenship education; Physical education.
9388	Anthony Mundy	<i>Lay inspector</i>	
22460	Tricia Davies	<i>Team inspector</i>	English; Geography; History; Information and communication technology; Mathematics; Special educational needs; The Foundation Stage; Religious education.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Hempnall gives its pupils a sound education and it provides satisfactory value for money. Pupils' attitudes are good, as is the school's ethos. Their achievement is satisfactory. Pupils' personal development is good because they receive close support and individual guidance. The headteacher and staff give purposeful leadership and, together, they are committed to promoting equality. Governance is good. The school works in very close partnership with parents, who continue to be very supportive of the school through a period of uncertainty.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards in the most recent national tests and assessments for pupils in Year 2, which were well above national averages in reading and mathematics, and high in science.
- The lack of opportunities to develop pupils' writing.
- Very good links with parents and the community.
- Pupils' good attitudes and good behaviour.
- Good personal and social development.
- Good governance.

IMPROVEMENT SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION

Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Since that time the school has undergone a period of some uncertainty, owing to the planned re-building programme as part of the LEA review. The school has largely addressed the issues for action identified in the previous report.

Standards have improved at a faster rate than that found nationally, though the quality of pupils' writing remains a weakness. Other strengths have been maintained or improved further, although the quality of teaching is not as good as that described in the previous report.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, compared with:	all schools			*similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
Reading	A	A*	A	B
Writing	B	B	C	E
Mathematics	C	B	A	B

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

**Schools with similar proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals.*

The table is based on a very small cohort of pupils and the results should be read with caution. However, the information from national test results shows that, when compared with those of all schools, standards in 2004 were well above average in reading and mathematics, and average in writing. When the results are compared with those of similar schools, standards were above average in reading and mathematics, but well below average in writing. Overall, the quality of pupils' work is improving at a faster rate than that found nationally, though this picture conceals inconsistencies. As there have been varying proportions of boys and girls between year groups over time, it is difficult to judge whether their performance varies. Standards assessed in science are high when compared with those of all schools. Information from nationally recognised assessments and optional tests shows that pupils in Year 3 continue to make steady gains in their learning.

Evidence from the inspection shows that achievement is satisfactory. Attainment on entry is below average and children make a good start in the Reception class. Children achieve well, and most in the current Reception group are on course to reach the expected Early Learning Goals by the time they enter Year 1. Standards of work seen in Year 2 suggest that the majority of pupils are on course to reach nationally expected levels in reading and writing, mathematics, science, and information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils in Year 2 are also on course to reach the objectives of the locally Agreed Syllabus in religious education. Because of the requirements of the inspection, it was not possible to gather sufficient evidence to judge standards in all subjects or curriculum areas, although some work of good quality was seen in history, and art and design, where pupils showed imagination. No apparent differences in achievement were seen between boys and girls. Pupils with learning difficulties achieve as well as other pupils. Pupils in Year 3 are likely to reach levels similar to those expected nationally in science, and in most aspects of English. However, standards in mathematics and reading continue to be a strength.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development, is good. Staff know the pupils well in this small school community. Relationships and behaviour are good, and pupils show much interest in the school's activities. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils have good attitudes to learning; they are confident and develop into mature individuals by the time they leave at the end of Year 3.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a sound quality of education. Teaching is satisfactory, although good teaching was seen in all classes. The teaching of English and mathematics is satisfactory, and it is good for science. It was not possible to gather sufficient evidence to judge teaching in all subjects. The school provides a broad curriculum which successfully promotes pupils' creative development. Pupils benefit from a very good range of additional activities which have been developed to enrich their learning. The school makes the best use it can of its poor accommodation. Provision for special educational needs (SEN) is satisfactory and the good quality of care is highly valued by parents. The school has very good links with parents and the community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are sound. With the help of a committed staff and an effective governing body, the headteacher has maintained purposeful leadership and sound management during a period of some uncertainty. The quality of governance is good, and governors successfully fulfil their statutory duties. Governors are very supportive and have taken a full and active role in monitoring the school and in its development.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very supportive of the school. Parents feel they are well informed, and they are fully supportive of the school's active role in the life of the local community. Pupils feel safe and well cared for, enjoy their lessons and like their teachers.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Extend the opportunities to develop writing in all subjects.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils' achievement is **satisfactory**. Standards in all aspects of English, mathematics and science are likely to reach nationally expected levels by the end of Year 2. In Year 3, standards in writing are unlikely to reach nationally expected levels by the end of the year. However, standards in mathematics and reading are on course to reach levels above those expected nationally.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good achievement by children in the Reception class.
- Good standards in mathematics and reading in Year 3.
- Underdeveloped writing skills.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	17.5 (18.5)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	14.4 (15.5)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	17.8 (17.4)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 16 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

1. When children first enter the school into the Reception group, their attainment is just below that expected of children of a similar age, although it varies year-on-year. Assessment information shows that each small year group includes a wide range of ability, although the range is skewed towards lower attainment. Children are more confident with mathematical knowledge and skills than they are with communication, language and literacy. The weakest area of skill is writing.
2. A curriculum that is imaginatively interwoven within topics and supported by good individual attention stimulates children's interest, and they achieve well. Most of the children in the current Reception group are on course to meet the expected Early Learning Goals by the time they enter Year 1.
3. Standards overall in Year 2 are improving at a more rapid rate than that found nationally, although this judgement hides a mixed picture. Information from national assessment results shows that, when comparisons are drawn with all schools, pupils in Year 2 gained standards in 2004 that were well above average in reading and mathematics, and average in writing. However, no pupil gained the higher level (Level 3) in writing. When the results are compared with those of similar schools, standards were above in reading and mathematics, and well below average in writing. The data is based on very small numbers of pupils, though writing has been a relative weakness over several years. The school's own evaluation had identified weaknesses in its performance in mathematics and writing. It has successfully addressed weaknesses in mathematics, but strategies used to strengthen writing have not been so successful. Standards assessed in science were high when compared with those of all schools.
4. Overall achievement is satisfactory in all subjects. Planning caters well for pupils of all abilities, and for the teaching in mixed-aged classes. Standards of work seen in Year 2 suggest that the majority of pupils are on course to reach, by the end of the year, levels in speaking, listening, reading, writing, mathematics, science, and ICT that are similar to those expected nationally. In reading, however, most pupils are likely to reach the expected level (Level 2), with some reaching

the higher level (Level 3). In writing, most pupils are likely to reach the expected level, with little evidence of pupils being able to reach the higher level. Pupils in Year 3 maintain satisfactory achievement, successfully building on their good standards in mathematics and reading, although weaknesses in writing remain.

5. The teaching promotes speaking and listening. Consequently, pupils usually listen carefully and speak with confidence. Higher attainers express themselves fluently, using a good range of vocabulary. Pupils have a positive approach to reading and make good gains in their learning because of the well-focused support during lessons and the good range of reading opportunities during the school day. In contrast, relative weaknesses in writing have not been addressed because pupils have too few opportunities to write independently and at length. This weakness is most striking in the work seen in other subjects, such as history, geography and religious education, and particularly in science, where not enough attention is given to the development of writing skills when gathering information and when recording the results of scientific investigations. The school places a focus on pupils' knowledge and understanding of number in mathematics, and there are some good opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills in other subjects, as in the collection of data in science. However, there is less evidence in pupils' books of work that allows them to apply their knowledge to solve mathematical problems. In science, pupils enjoy the challenge of finding things out for themselves. Higher attaining pupils delve more into the reasons behind their findings, but all pupils are inquisitive and want to understand. Lower attainers show a sound understanding of the science they study but have difficulty with subject-specific vocabulary and accuracy in recording their work. In religious education, pupils in Year 2 are on course to reach the objectives of the locally Agreed Syllabus. Pupils continue to build systematically upon their learning in Year 3 through, for example, the study of major world religions. Higher attaining pupils in Year 3 have produced sustained written arguments. In ICT, pupils in Years 2 and 3 have a good grasp of word-processing skills and the use of technology in everyday life.

6. Owing to the focus of the inspection, it was not possible to gather enough evidence to judge standards in all subjects, though work of good quality was seen in history, and some imaginative work in art and design. 'Circle time' also encourages pupils to develop confidence. No significant differences in achievement were seen between boys and girls. Pupils who have SEN achieve as well as other pupils. These pupils have access to the whole curriculum because, where appropriate, the school involves other professionals to address pupils' individual needs.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Good attitudes and behaviour contribute significantly to pupils' achievements. Their personal qualities are quickly developed by the school's **good** provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Attendance and punctuality are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are eager to participate in lessons and other activities.
- Relationships are good.

Commentary

7. Pupils in all year groups are lively and inquisitive. They enjoy school and are keen to do their best in all activities. Children settle quickly into the Reception class and make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. Routines and expectations are quickly established, and the children behave well and responsibly. Because activities are fun, they have good levels of interest and concentrate well. Staff are encouraging and, as a result, children are confident with adults and have good relationships with each other. In other classes, pupils are interested and involved in most activities. They respond enthusiastically to their teachers' questions and readily offer ideas and suggestions. However, undercurrents of restlessness affect progress in some lessons, where pupils are slow to respond to teachers' instructions.

8. Adults in the school are good role models, and pupils emulate their courteous and thoughtful manner. Pupils' behaviour is good in classrooms, and very good in the playground and the shared areas of the school. Pupils have no concerns about bullying. They know that occasional reported incidents are quickly investigated and resolved. No pupil has been excluded from school in the past five years.

9. Pupils in all year groups are involved in a variety of everyday duties in their classrooms. In Years 2 and 3, they maintain a number of flowerbeds and a wildlife area of plants and shrubs, where they study insect life and the natural patterns of growth and decay.

10. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are encouraged to consider the welfare of others, and always to do what is right. In 'circle time' discussions, they are confident of peer respect when describing their feelings and their responses. In a good science lesson, pupils in Year 3 were amazed by the structures revealed by microscopic examination of common fabrics. Pupils have a good understanding of Western culture, and some understanding of other cultures. In all year groups, a wide variety of visits and visitors stimulates pupils' cultural awareness. The strengths have been maintained or improved further since the previous inspection.

11. Attendance was slightly below the national average in the school year 2003/4. In the autumn term of the current school year, attendance was significantly above the national average. Most pupils arrive punctually for morning school. Registration periods are brief and efficient, and lessons begin promptly.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	5.6
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.1
National data	0.4

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a **sound** quality of education. Teaching is **satisfactory**, although examples of good teaching were seen in all classes. The curriculum is **satisfactory** and a very good range of after school activities enriches it. The quality of care is **good**, and the school has very effective links with parents and the community.

The quality of teaching and learning is **satisfactory**. Assessment is **sound**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective teaching and learning in Reception.
- The high levels of noise in some parts of lessons.
- Teaching that helps pupils to become fully involved in their work.
- Effective use of assistants and other adults.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 8 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	0	5	3	0	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons. (No percentages given because fewer than 30 lessons were observe.)

12. Teaching is satisfactory. It is not as good as that reported by the previous inspection, although several of the same strengths featured in the current inspection. Children in the Reception group are well taught and make good gains in their learning. Teaching is lively and activities are fun and

interesting, so that children are enthusiastic and keen to take part. Basic language, literacy and mathematical skills are given much attention, though there is less support for encouraging children to write freely as a matter of choice. Examples of good teaching were seen in all classes throughout the school, though the good relationships between adults and pupils were not used consistently to manage the restlessness of small numbers of pupils in some lessons. Teachers plan well for the mixed-aged classes, ensuring that the tasks are usually well matched to pupils' needs, though the high levels of noise distracted some pupils working in different year groups and focusing on different tasks.

13. The teaching of English and mathematics is satisfactory, and it is good in science. Not enough evidence could be gathered to judge teaching in all subjects. Teaching is good in science because the follow-up tasks follow seamlessly from the opening whole-group sessions which capture the pupils' interest. This picture was also seen in history, where pupils in Years 2 and 3 were intrigued by the introduction to the topic on World War II. A good range of artefacts was used very effectively to arouse and sustain the pupils' interest in the follow-up work. In English, the quality of learning was good during the opening whole-group sessions because pupils' interest was captured through well-planned and skilful introductions. However, their interests were not capitalised on during the remainder of the lessons, and good learning opportunities were not developed further.

14. Teaching assistants and other adults are used particularly well in lessons. A common feature of all teaching is the time given to pupils to talk about their work and share ideas. Pupils benefit from praise and encouragement and, as a result, most spoke readily and with confidence. Pupils with particular difficulties are sensitively supported and the school makes every effort to ensure that these children are as fully and successfully involved as possible in all activities.

15. Assessment is satisfactory overall, and procedures are being strengthened in all subjects. Assessment in the Reception class is good. Records of achievements and progress are well maintained and include information gained from careful daily assessments made by both the class teacher and support staff, for all areas of learning. Greater analysis is now taking place of the assessments made when the children first enter the school, so that planning can be adjusted more effectively to take account of areas where attainment is weaker. Assessment of pupils with SEN is satisfactory, with strength in the regular dialogue between all staff. These discussions play a significant part in identifying and checking the progress of pupils with SEN, from the Reception class onwards, and are in addition to the termly formal reviews of those pupils who have individual education plans (IEPs).

The curriculum

The curriculum is **satisfactorily** broad and balanced and is enriched by a **very good** range of after-school clubs and activities. The school's accommodation is **poor**. Staffing and resources for learning are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A stimulating curriculum in Reception.
- The lack of a systematic approach to the development of writing across the curriculum.
- Very good enrichment activities.
- Poor accommodation.

Commentary

16. The curriculum embraces all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. This picture is similar to that reported in the previous inspection. The school places a strong emphasis on reading, listening, speaking and numeracy skills, and it successfully promotes pupils' creative development through music and art and design. Personal development is nurtured through the

programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE); this is enriched by trips to places of interest and by visitors to the school, such as the local minister. Children are given a good start in Reception class, where they benefit from a stimulating range of activities that are well linked across all the areas of learning.

17. Curriculum planning caters well for the different age groups in mixed-age classes. It covers National Curriculum requirements within a two-year rolling programme of work. Throughout the school, pupils have good opportunities to work alone and together on directed and individually selected tasks. The use of ICT to support and enhance learning in subjects is satisfactory, with evidence of its planned use in most curriculum areas. The school recognises that it still does not systematically develop writing opportunities in all subjects.

18. Pupils have very good opportunities to take part in a selection of after-school activities. These include gardening, art, and a French club. There is open access to all the opportunities offered by the school, which provide equally well for all groups of pupils, including those with SEN. Planning caters well for pupils of all abilities. The provision for SEN is satisfactory. Once particular needs have been identified, the school plans strategies for supporting each pupil. Individual education plans (IEPs) have well focused targets and clear guidance on how these will be met and their success measured.

19. The very small staff team is very experienced and well qualified to meet the demands of the curriculum. Teachers make effective use of the available space, although some areas are cramped and the school does not have a hall with sufficient space for the effective teaching of indoor physical education. The school has easy access to an extensive grass area, and pupils make effective use of the environmental area and the large, fixed play equipment in the playground. The school has a satisfactory selection of resources.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides **good** care for all pupils and **satisfactory** guidance to improve their academic work. Pupils have adequate opportunities to express their views and to influence school life.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff and other adults have very good relationships with pupils and their families.
- Teachers and other adults know the pupils well and respond quickly to their needs.

Commentary

20. The school provides pupils with a safe and caring environment. Good policies for health and safety and child protection ensure high standards of welfare, and all teachers and teaching assistants are fully trained in first aid. Governors have identified the need to agree a policy for adults' use of physical intervention and restraint. Strengths highlighted in the previous report have been maintained.

21. Teachers and other adults know the pupils well, and they have a very good awareness of pupils' personal development and a sound knowledge of their achievement in National Curriculum subjects. Each pupil contributes work to an individual *Progress Book*, recording year-on-year achievement. The progress of pupils with SEN is carefully monitored through whole-staff discussions. These informal reviews also allow the school to identify those who are raising early concerns and enable it to keep an eye on whether present initial support needs to be increased to a more formal level. Where necessary, the school seeks the advice and participation of outside agencies.

22. Each day, teachers and midday assistants award stickers for good work, effort or helpfulness. Exceptional achievement is marked by certificates, awarded at a special weekly assembly. The rewards system is effective and the school rules are very clear, although a small number of pupils become restless in lessons.

23. All pupils are involved in the life of the school, and they confidently approach staff with questions and suggestions. During discussion, pupils in Year 3 showed that they were fully aware of the deficiencies in accommodation but could not think of any other aspect of school life that could be improved.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's **very good** relationships with parents and the community contribute significantly to pupils' achievements. The school has **good** links with other schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are very supportive of the life and work of the school, and are fully informed about their children's education.
- The school benefits from its involvement in the village community.

Commentary

24. Parents' views were very positive at the pre-inspection meeting, and they were confirmed by the exceptionally positive responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires. Inspection evidence confirms that parents are very supportive, have excellent relationships with staff, and make valued contributions to their children's learning. Each morning, parents are invited into school for 15 minutes, to read with their children before registration. These informal sessions add an extra dimension to the home/school partnership. The school is responsive to parents' views, and manages sympathetically their concerns about the timing of future development on the Hempnall site.

25. Several parents help regularly in classrooms, and the school makes good use of their special skills and interests. The parents and friends association (FHS) is very active in the village, and supports the school through a significant number of social and fund-raising events. Recent purchases by FHS include computers, books and numerous resources for all classes. The association maintains a very good relationship with the governing body, and some families are active on both committees.

26. Parents receive very good information through their easy access to staff, and through weekly newsletters. The prospectus and governors' annual report to parents meet statutory requirements and include much additional information about the school and its activities. At three consultation meetings each year, parents are invited to discuss their children's progress and they are welcomed informally at other times. Teachers' annual written reports are satisfactory, clearly indicating pupils' standards and achievement, and sometimes giving parents information about how their children's work can be improved. In some cases parents are reluctant to agree to the formal recognition of their children's SEN, and to acknowledge the need for extra support. Where this is the case, the school works sensitively over time to gain their trust and consent.

27. Very good links with the local community make an important contribution to pupils' learning. The school's integral role in the village develops pupils' understanding of citizenship. A good range of visitors extends learning in several curriculum subjects. Recent visitors have included musicians, puppeteers, a local artist, and a minister of religion. Pupils in all year groups visit local places of interest. Hempnall provides good support for secondary school students on work experience programmes and for trainee teachers.

28. This aspect of the school's work has improved since the previous inspection.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership by the headteacher is **satisfactory**. Management is **sound** and the school is beginning to evaluate its work well. There are **very good** systems for financial management. Governance is **good** and successfully fulfils its statutory duties.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher's purposeful leadership.
- The strong commitment of staff and other adults.
- Good governance.
- Very effective financial management.
- The lack of detail in the school development plan.

Commentary

29. The headteacher has maintained purposeful leadership during a period of some uncertainty. Through the commitment of a small team of staff and other adults, standards in the national tests and assessments for pupils in Year 2 in reading and mathematics have continued to rise at a rate that is above the national trend. Achievement is satisfactory overall.

30. Information from national tests and assessments is used to identify strengths and weaknesses and guide teaching. Owing to the size of the school, teachers manage a range of curriculum leadership roles and much of their work is shared successfully without the use of formal procedures. The headteacher has a teaching commitment of four days each week. The school recognises the need to implement a systematic approach to the monitoring of teaching and learning, and to review the development plan, which lacks sufficient success criteria by which to judge progress made by the school. The management of SEN is satisfactory and procedures meet the requirements of the Code of Practice and those relating to annual reviews.

31. The headteacher and school benefit significantly from the effective support of governors. The governors have undertaken a review of their roles and responsibilities, with the help of the LEA, and their knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses is gained through regular and formal visits. Several governors bring a range of expertise to the school and have become closely involved in the school's work. For example, governors have given considerable time and expertise to the planning for the building of a new school and to making financial arrangements for it. All statutory duties, including promoting inclusive policies in relation to race and disability, are fully met.

32. The combined impact of the governing body and the administrative officer has led to the school's very effective approach to financial management and the use of resources in helping it achieve its priorities. Best value principles are considered and governors monitor closely the effectiveness of spending decisions. The costs are above average and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

Financial information for the year 2003 to 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	195,410.00
Total expenditure	205,279.00
Expenditure per pupil	**3,421.00

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	7,816.00
Balance carried forward to the next year	*-4,018.00

* Deficit budget agreed by the governing body and licensed by the LEA.

**The higher than average cost per pupil is not unusual for a school of this size.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for children in the Reception group is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching, with imaginative activities which capture children's interest.
- Effective support which encourages personal and social skills.
- Good daily assessment.
- Underdeveloped provision for promoting 'free' writing opportunities.
- The poor accommodation which inhibits provision for outdoor education.

Commentary

33. Reception-aged children join this class in September, the younger ones attending part-time for the first term. They generally start full-time education at the beginning of the spring term, although the school is flexible in these arrangements to allow for the needs of individuals. There are 13 children in the current Reception group. Baseline information for the last four years shows that each small year group contains a wide range of ability, which varies from year to year. However, the range is largely skewed towards lower attainment, and few enter with attainment above that found of children of a similar age. The school's assessments also indicate that children are more confident with mathematical knowledge and skills than they are with communication, language and literacy, and that the weakest area of skill tends to be writing.

34. The school meets the particular needs of these children well. Staff work closely together and children's progress is carefully monitored through comprehensive daily assessments. The different areas of learning are imaginatively interwoven within broad topics. Consequently, children's interest is stimulated and their good attention maintained, so that all achieve well, including those with SEN. Most of the children in the current Reception group are on course to meet the expected Early Learning Goals by the time they enter Year 1. The quality of teaching and learning is good, particularly the nurturing of language, literacy, personal and social skills, and mathematical development. Not enough information was collected to make judgements about achievement or teaching and learning in other areas of learning. The overall provision for these children is satisfactory, however, because of the limitations placed on opportunities for outdoor education owing to the school's poor accommodation.

35. Inspection findings support the high level of parents' satisfaction with the school's induction programme; this programme is good, and it includes a preliminary visit to each child's home. These arrangements set the tone for the sensitive care and attention given to promoting children's **personal, social and emotional** skills. Children clearly settle into school well. Their willingness and confidence to answer questions and talk to adults, for example, show their sense of security and trust. The good working relationships between adults are reflected in children's friendliness and co-operation when they chat and work together. Routines are carefully established so that children readily gather to sit on the carpet or clear up sensibly and without being prompted.

36. There is good support for developing **communication, language and literacy** skills, most particularly for encouraging in the children an enjoyment of stories and rhymes and for promoting phonic knowledge and letter formation. The development of speaking and listening skills is also given good attention during whole and smaller group discussion, and this support is particularly important because many of the children have limited speaking skills. Writing is regularly 'modelled' by the class teacher, and children's own early writing attempts are given close support. The introduction of nursery rhymes helps to develop the children's enjoyment of a collection of familiar words and phrases, and they readily repeat the well-known refrains of these rhymes. Games help

to reinforce knowledge of letter sounds, as do the many visual prompts to hand for ease of reference. As a result, many children contribute accurately when spelling aloud commonly used words, or writing them during supervised writing activities. Letter formation is also given close attention and, consequently, many children are writing recognisable letters. The school is less successful, however, at encouraging children to write from choice and thus ensure that they are well disposed to and prepared for the greater expectations of written work in older year groups.

37. **Mathematical development** is also well taught. Opportunities are constantly exploited to promote mathematical knowledge and understanding, with imaginative mathematical activities drawn from other learning areas. Nursery rhymes, for instance, are currently providing a rich store of ideas. During the inspection, higher and middle attainers accurately counted each of the remaining jam tarts to work out how many of the original six had been stolen by the Knave of Hearts, and how many remained. Children also counted (and hunted for) items of washing that had disappeared from outside on the maid's washing line. Story time was used as a chance to predict and count the number of gold coins left in the bag. Although many initially found it difficult to take away one each time in their head, most began to relate this activity to their knowledge of counting from one to ten, so that answers became increasingly accurate.

38. Children's **knowledge and understanding of the world** is well promoted by work in other areas of learning. Stories, such as 'Handa's Hen', expand their knowledge of life in other countries. During general discussion, children happily talk about their own lives and significant personal events. Work on nursery rhymes gives opportunities for comparing past and present cleaning activities; a blackbird count is also planned in connection with 'Sing a Song of Sixpence'. With the help of a parent, one child used the computer mouse confidently to place pictures in the correct order to tell a story. The children learn about the body when they make paper skeletons.

39. Opportunities to promote **physical development** are inhibited by the school's poor accommodation, though the best possible use is made of what it has available. Children have opportunities to work outside and use wheeled toys, for example, but cannot use this space easily or frequently. This because it is not easily accessible from the classroom, and activities have therefore to be specially supervised. Indoor space is also limited for large physical activities and furniture has to be moved for it to take place twice a week. However, children handle small tools and equipment competently and safely, when joining different materials to make models, for example, and are showing increasing control when forming letters and number shapes.

40. Displays around the classroom reflect many activities to encourage children's **creative development**. Imaginative use is made of materials to create crowns and to embellish paintings of kings and queens. The role play area allows the children to dress up as royalty and act out some of the stories they have heard. Adults often play an important part, also dressing up, and encouraging children to take part in activities to reinforce mathematical ideas.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Insufficient use of opportunities across the curriculum for encouraging pupils to write independently.
- Good promotion of phonic knowledge and positive attitudes to reading.
- New approaches to the assessment of writing, which are not yet fully developed.
- Successful attention to widening pupils' vocabulary.

Commentary

41. Overall achievement is satisfactory but the picture is a mixed one, because the school is rather more successful in promoting reading than in encouraging writing. Consequently, while pupils achieve well in reading, including those with higher attainment, achievement is broadly satisfactory in writing. Pupils of all abilities view reading positively, and they make good progress because of the focus given to building their phonic knowledge, and the good support for nurturing reading skills in lessons. The school has also maintained its commitment to a daily story time and regular and frequent opportunities for individual pupils to read aloud to an adult. The considerable attention given to raising phonic awareness has also helped to address weaknesses in spelling. The leadership and management of the subject are sound. They have brought about the successes noted above, and writing remains a major school priority. Training has taken place this school year for staff to explore and reflect on what might be the issues underlying weaknesses in writing, and there have been recent improvements to the provision for writing, and its assessment.

42. However, despite the developments to the writing aspect of the English curriculum, not enough progress has been made in tackling this key issue from the last inspection. Where the school is giving pupils the opportunity to write more often, in Year 1 for example, pupils are beginning to make good progress, but there are still too few opportunities for pupils to write independently and at length in other year groups. This weakness is most marked in subjects other than English, such as science, history and geography, which have the potential for generating these opportunities. The effect is to slow the progress of the small number of higher attainers. Consequently, most pupils in Year 2 are likely to reach the expected level (Level 2) in writing, but there is little evidence of attainment at the higher Level 3. Writing standards in Year 3 are below national expectations but with early signs of work at Level 3.

43. Speaking and listening skills broadly meet national expectations. Even when there is an undercurrent of restlessness, most pupils listen carefully. Opportunities to contribute to role play, and to exchange thoughts with a partner, considerably benefit pupils' ideas and the precision of their vocabulary. Almost without exception, pupils speak with confidence, and higher attainers express themselves fluently. Pupils of all abilities talk enthusiastically about the books they are reading in school. Pupils' good knowledge of letter sounds, in particular, helps them read unfamiliar words, though some lower attainers in Year 2 have a much less confident grasp and need a lot of adult support. Reading standards are on course to meet national expectations in the current Year 2, with most of these pupils likely to reach – and some to exceed – the expected level by the end of the year. Standards in Year 3, where higher and middle attaining pupils read fluently and expressively, are likely to be above national expectations by the end of the year.

44. The teaching of English is satisfactory, and progress in lessons is sound. The quality of learning is often good during the opening whole-group sessions in response to an effective range of strategies. These create enjoyment and keep the interest of all, including those few who find it difficult to settle. Pupils benefit from much praise and encouragement and they are equipped well for subsequent writing activities. Follow-up tasks are less effective because teachers do not fully capitalise on the pupils' interest and readiness to write, which have been generated by the skilful preparation. For example, some pupils are diverted into reading activities with a different text, while others have first to spend time cutting out and sticking down pictures before writing, with the result that the momentum is lost. The school reports that the use of individual whiteboards has been a useful strategy for encouraging early drafts, but this tactic is sometimes used too readily and when pupils show themselves more than capable of recording their work directly onto paper. In some cases uncorrected inaccuracies in work on whiteboards are reinforced when they are copied into workbooks. Significantly, the school has yet to review and modify its planning so that pupils' needs in writing are being met fully during English lessons.

45. Pupils' independent writing indicates a good awareness of simple punctuation, and spelling is largely accurate or phonetically credible. Although the content of written work is often mundane, the school's focus on extending vocabulary is very evident in the imaginative descriptions within pupils' poetry. Letters are correctly formed and legible, but rarely joined. Work is regularly marked. Comments are supportive and encouraging but with the exception of Year 1, where there are useful

annotations, remarks do not focus rigorously enough on how work could be improved. The more effective marking strategy in Year 1 reflects the school's new approach to assessing writing which was introduced last term, and which takes a much more detailed look at National Curriculum requirements within each level. However, this approach is at an early stage and the school has yet to feel fully confident with its use so that the way forward for each pupil can be accurately pinpointed.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

46. Pupils' speaking skills are enhanced by plenty of opportunities for discussion in other subjects. Subject-specific vocabulary, in mathematics and science for instance, is also promoted well. Information and communication technology (ICT) is increasingly used to support pupils' literacy skills. However, while there are adequate chances to write in the subject of English, opportunities to write in other subjects are unsatisfactory. Teachers do not, for example, seize the opportunities in science lessons to capture the enthusiasm generated by investigations and practical work and use it in the writing. Too little writing is also expected of pupils in history and geography. Despite improvements to spelling, pupils' increased accuracy is not always well promoted in all subjects.

MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good variation of activities for pupils of different abilities.
- Too much noise in some lessons, which hinders pupils' learning.

Commentary

47. Pupils in Year 2 are achieving satisfactorily, and most are on course to meet national expectations by the end of the academic year; one or two pupils are likely to exceed them. Those in Year 3 are reaching standards above national expectations and are currently making sound progress. Many pupils complete a fairly substantial amount of work, although some lower attainers record only a limited amount. Much emphasis is given to pupils' knowledge and understanding of number and, in this aspect of mathematics, there is evidence of good progress. There is less evidence in pupils' books, however, of work that allows them to apply their knowledge to solve mathematical problems: an area of relative weakness identified by the school. The leadership and management of mathematics are satisfactory. Some strengths have been maintained or developed further since the previous inspection, and overall improvement is satisfactory. The subject leader has analysed test results to identify areas needing improvement; staff meet for the sampling and levelling of work, and the headteacher has monitored mathematics teaching in all classes. However, the subject leader has not observed lessons in other classes, and therefore does not yet have a full picture of the school's performance. All aspects of the subject are covered over the year. Activities in progress are focusing on shape and measurement, and are appropriately building on work from last year.

48. Teaching and learning are also satisfactory. Pupils' progress is well supported by the care with which activities are varied to meet their different needs and abilities, and by the use of practical activities in lessons to reinforce learning. During whole-class discussion, pupils in Years 1 and 2 showed much good recall of their earlier work on two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes. By the end of this lesson, a small number of higher attaining pupils in Year 2 named commonly-found regular three-dimensional shapes and confidently identified their properties. Higher attainers also calculate accurately with numbers up to 1000. Lower attainers in this year group complete simple sums with one or two digit numbers up to 30. Good progress in lessons is sometimes inhibited, however, because the behaviour of a few challenging pupils is not always successfully tackled. In some lessons, high noise levels and immature behaviour go unchecked for too long.

Moreover, teachers do not always use time as productively as possible to confirm that individual pupils understand what they have to do, and that important mathematical concepts have been understood. In the class where Year 2 pupils learn alongside those in Year 3, the small Year 2 group received much individual attention from the teaching assistant and was enabled to make satisfactory progress, despite the noise. These Year 2 pupils counted in fives from the dial on a set of scales to accurately calculate the weight of different objects. Most Year 3 pupils worked confidently with standard units of weight and knew how many grammes equalled a kilogramme. However, some pupils in Year 3 did not have a confident enough grasp of place value to allow them to measure accurately. All work is marked, but comments do not routinely focus on the mathematical content of pupils' work or point out how it can be developed further.

Mathematics across the curriculum

49. There are satisfactory opportunities to use and develop mathematical skills and knowledge in other subjects, such as science, where pupils complete tables and graphs. There were, however, limited opportunities in geography.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching.
- The good attention given to practical investigations and scientific enquiry.

Commentary

50. Pupils achieve well because teaching gives them a good range of learning opportunities during practical work and investigations. Pupils in Years 2 and 3 are on course to reach, by the end of the year, standards which are similar to those expected nationally. This picture is similar to the standards reached by pupils in Year 2 in the national assessments in 2004, where all pupils reached the expected level and a small number gained the higher level (Level 3). No differences in achievement were observed between boys and girls. In keeping with the findings of the last report, the school continues to develop pupils' understanding of science in everyday life with the help of practical investigations.

51. Pupils are encouraged to find out for themselves and talk about their work, although they have too little time in lessons to record and write about their work in any depth. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and are enthusiastic about their work. For example, in Year 2, pupils talked with confidence when reporting on their investigations into the changes brought about by heating several substances, including chocolate, margarine and bread. When probed, pupils knew that some changes could not be reversed. Higher attainers delved more into the reasons behind the changes and wanted to find out more. Lower attainers have difficulty with the terminology specific to the subject. In Year 3, pupils were engrossed by the patterns revealed when different fabrics were placed under a microscope. This information helped them to understand more fully the different properties of the small selection of materials they were investigating.

52. Pupils' good attitudes to the subject reflect the good teaching. Teaching is good because it is engaging and includes a wide range of practical tasks that are closely matched to the pupils' stages of learning. As a result, pupils are motivated and make good gains in their understanding of materials through investigative science. Lower attaining pupils, and those with SEN, showed confidence and achieved as well as others in the classes. They were well supported in their work by the class teacher and other adults, who showed sensitivity and good knowledge of the pupils' stages of learning. In the class where pupils in Years 2 and 3 learn alongside one another, the small group of Year 2 pupils benefited from the close support of the teaching assistant. These

pupils made good gains in their understanding of the effect of heat on different substances. However, pupils become restless when they spend lengthy periods of time on the carpet at the beginning of lessons.

53. The staff as a whole completes much of the planning in this small school. This approach strengthens consistency and continuity, though the school recognises the advantages in developing a systematic approach to monitoring. Effective tracking procedures have helped the school to identify strengths and weaknesses in the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision for ICT is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good improvements to resources.
- Underdeveloped formal assessment.

Commentary

54. Information and communication technology (ICT) has been satisfactorily improved since the previous inspection and its profile continues to grow as a result of its sound leadership and management. ICT skills are taught within the curriculum, resources have been extended, and all aspects of the subject are suitably planned for. Computers are often used during lessons and these activities receive satisfactory support and encouragement. All pupils, therefore, achieve satisfactorily. Standards are likely to meet national expectations for pupils in Year 2, and this is also true for pupils in Year 3, where they are starting to tackle the greater expectations for pupils in Years 3 to 6. Pupils in Year 2, including those with SEN, generally have a good grasp of word-processing skills and the use of technology in everyday life. They change fonts and the colour and size of letters, draft writing with increasing assurance, and confidently use the mouse to navigate the screen and tools. Pupils in Year 3 log on to the internet to find out information in connection with their history topic on World War II, and are just beginning to learn about and use email. Until now there has been informal assessment of standards or pupils' progress, but formal assessment systems are being developed this term.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

55. The use of ICT to support and enhance learning in other subjects is satisfactory, with evidence of the school's commitment to its planned use in other curriculum areas. Computers are used to draft work, for example, to reinforce mathematical ideas, and to create designs. One particularly successful instance of the use of microscope technology, seen during a science lesson for pupils in Year 3, powerfully illustrated the construction of man-made materials and generated considerable interest. Information and communication technology (ICT) plays a valuable role in encouraging personal research.

HUMANITIES

Not enough evidence was gathered to enable firm overall judgements to be made about provision or achievement in geography, history or religious education, or about standards in history and geography. Evidence was taken from photographs, a small sample of teaching, pupils' work, and a discussion with the subject leader for religious education.

Commentary

56. Pupils' **historical** knowledge and understanding are most successfully promoted by the skilful use of stimulating artefacts and video material. This was true of a lesson with pupils in Years 2 and 3, when they were captivated by the content of a sound recording about World War II. The question and answer session was handled confidently and calmly, and resulted in good contributions from all pupils, including those with SEN, who were fully involved in all the practical activities. A wide range of artefacts from the period had been collected, including photographs from pupils' own families. Pupils' interest in this period was extended during the lesson by discussion about ration books and identity cards, and by the opportunity to make model gas masks with the help of a parent. Useful links with English and ICT mean that pupils hear stories about the war and have the chance to research information on the internet. Pupils are sometimes given the chance to write. For example, in the lesson described here, pupils wrote letters to their parents in the role of evacuated children, but these opportunities are too few. Other history work, about Ancient Egypt, for example, contains very little independent written work.

57. **Geography** is also well supported by books about – and artefacts from – different countries, such as Mexico. These studies allow pupils to become familiar with maps of the World and the United Kingdom, and to compare other localities with their own. There are links with other subjects, such as art and design, and pupils in Years 2 and 3 make colourful Mexican masks. Pupils sometimes write about what they have learned, but written evidence of their work is limited.

Religious education

Commentary

58. Standards are on course to meet the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus by the end of the year. Improvement to religious education has been satisfactory. A good range of major world religions is now covered, and the curriculum is enriched by frequent opportunities to discuss moral issues and human emotions, and by visits from outside speakers. The subject therefore plays a valuable role in extending pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural awareness and understanding. The subject leader has sought guidance and support from the LEA to ensure that planning covers the needs of pupils in mixed-age classes, particularly the class containing pupils in Years 2 and 3. All pupils also benefit from the specialist knowledge of the subject leader, because she teaches religious education to all year groups.

59. Pupils are currently studying parables told by Jesus. Independent writing completed by pupils in Year 2 shows the evidence of good earlier discussion about the Parable of the Sower. This discussion enabled them to select key words to illustrate the difference between seed sown on fertile ground and that falling on stony soil. Higher attaining pupils in Year 3 have produced sustained written argument for and against the treatment of the Prodigal Son. Pupils in Year 1 grasped the significance behind the story of the Widow's Mite, which had been effectively illustrated by useful artefacts, such as a big sack of coins to demonstrate the wealth of the rich man. Other work with this year group showed evidence of thoughtful whole-class conversations, with simple ideas expressed about anger, selfishness and forgiveness. Earlier topics have included festivals of light, including Hanukkah and Diwali. On another occasion, a Hindu wedding had been brought to life by a visiting speaker, who had brought clothes and artefacts for pupils to wear and discuss.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Not enough evidence could be gathered for judgements to be made on any subjects in this curriculum area. However, some well-presented displays showed that pupils are given opportunities to work creatively.

60. In **design and technology**, pupils showed good imaginative ideas in their design and making of musical instruments and Christmas decorations. In **art and design**, displays show that pupils use oil pastels and paint when making flower designs in pattern work. Pupils in Years 1

and 2 had produced some imaginative patterns, using primary colours whilst listening to music. The careful and colourful displays of pupils' work around the school are used to enhance the learning environment. Pupils are encouraged to respect each other's work, and such respect makes a substantial contribution to the overall ethos of the school. **In music**, pupils sang enthusiastically during assembly. Planning for **physical education** includes sufficient time for pupils to develop skills in a range of activities, although the school does not have a hall with enough space for indoor practical lessons.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in PSHE is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's supportive ethos.
- Teaching that encourages pupils' shared working.
- Informal and planned learning opportunities which successfully develop pupils' personal and social skills through the curriculum.

Commentary

61. The good relationships fostered by the school give pupils some good opportunities to express their views. Pupils feel valued and are confident to approach their teachers and other adults. Pupils learn from an early age how to work collaboratively and share equipment. During 'circle times' teachers create good opportunities for pupils to develop awareness, strengthen listening skills, and increase their confidence. For example, during the inspection, pupils in Year 1 expressed their views confidently when talking about the essential aspects of good behaviour, which included the need to be considerate.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	4
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	4
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	4
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	4
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	4
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	4

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