

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **LINKS PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Merton, London

LEA area: Merton

Unique reference number: 102635

Headteacher: Mr D Marris

Lead inspector: Miss C Thompson

Dates of inspection: 12 – 15 January 2004

Inspection number: 256746

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



© Crown copyright 2004

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll;	377
School address:	Frinton Road London
Postcode:	SW17 9EH
Telephone number:	020 8769 4587
Fax number:	020 8677 7860
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Justyn Herbert
Date of previous inspection:	28 September 1998

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

Links Primary is a larger than average, multi-ethnic primary school serving the immediate locality of owner occupied and rented accommodation. Since the last inspection the school has changed from a 'first' school to a full primary school and this is the first year there has been a Year 6. There are 377 pupils on roll including 48 children attending the two part time nursery classes. Around a third of the school has an Asian heritage. Almost half the school's population has English as an additional language with around three quarters of these pupils at early stages of learning and using English. Just under a third of pupils are from refugee or asylum seeking families with Tamils as the largest group. For many of these pupils, English is their third language. There is an above average proportion of pupils with special educational needs. With the main area of difficulty identified as moderate learning. There is a high turnover of pupils, with many joining the school in the older year groups with little English, as in Year 6 where a quarter are relatively new to the school. Attainment on entry to the nursery class is generally below average. Attainment of those joining the school in the older classes is very often constrained by lack of English. Within the school population, there are at least 29 different languages spoken other than English.

The school has been awarded a Schools Achievement award in 2001 and 2003, a Healthy Schools Award in 2003 and the FA Charter for Schools in 2003.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
22822	Cheryl Thompson	Lead inspector	Special educational needs English Design and technology Physical education
9958	Tim Page	Lay inspector	
18360	Cecelia Davies	Team inspector	Mathematics Geography History Music
15138	Theresa Mullane	Team inspector	Art Information and communication technology Religious education
18524	Ann Shaw	Team inspector	English as an additional language Foundation stage Science

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Associates

Demeter House  
Station Road  
Cambridge  
CB1 2RS

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>	<b>8</b>
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>10</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE</b>	
<b>SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>31</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**Links is a satisfactory school with good features.** Pupils of all abilities and stages of learning English do well in this caring school. Good teaching and leadership make sure that all pupils are valued and fully included in the life and work of the school. The school provides sound value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Children get a good start to school in the nursery and reception classes
- Good teaching and good provision for their personal development help pupils achieve well
- There are not enough adult-helpers in classes
- School management is sound but not rigorous enough in checking to see if the quality of education could be even better
- Very good community links have a good impact on the school's provision for families and pupils' achievement
- Standards in writing have improved but pupils are not doing enough writing
- Attendance is well below average

Since the previous inspection in October 1998, the school has made reasonable improvement as well as sound progress in managing the change from a 'first' to a 'primary' school. There has been a decline in standards of attainment due to the high and increasing proportion of pupils starting at Links with little or no English. Assessment has improved but the overall quality and quantity of resources has not.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
Reading	E	D	E	D
Writing	D	C	D	C
Mathematics	D	B	D	C

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average. Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals.*

There is no Year 6 test data available as this is the first year the school has had Year 6 pupils. Inspection evidence shows standards in Year 6 are below average in English and science but around average in mathematics. **Achievement is good.** Data provided by the school show that pupils who have always attended Links generally achieve very well from a below average starting point. Pupils who join at other times achieve well but have much to make up. Almost half the school population has English as an additional language. Three quarters of these pupils, predominantly Tamil speaking, are at an early stage of learning English, with many arriving in various Year groups with no English. Although they make significant progress in acquiring and using English, pupils' levels of fluency and comprehension are not always sufficiently developed to help them do well in national tests. In the present Year 2, pupils achieve well; standards are average in science but below in mathematics, reading and writing. In Years 2 and 6, more able pupils achieve particularly well in English due to very good teaching in the 'set' ability groups. Consequently, the proportion of pupils attaining the higher Levels 3 and 5 in English is, currently, average. In all other subjects pupils' knowledge and understanding are around average but this is not often reflected in their written work, as pupils do not write enough. Standards in singing are very high. Targets set for Year 6 attainment in 2004 national tests are unlikely to be met due to the high number of pupils joining the year group with little or no English.

On entry to the nursery, standards are below those normally seen but children achieve well from a wide range of starting points. Those who have English as an additional language make good

progress in learning and using English because teachers and knowledgeable assistants are well aware of how to teach and encourage its use. By the end of their time in reception classes, for the present group of children, standards are likely to be average except in communication, language and literacy where they will be below.

**Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.** The school is very successful in developing pupils' respect and understanding of the many different beliefs, cultures and traditions reflected in the school community. Overall, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good, although the behaviour of a small number of pupils is unacceptable at times.

The well below average attendance rate is mainly because of holidays taken in term time and parents who do not attach a high enough priority to their child's education not sending them to school regularly.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**Links provides a good education for its pupils. Overall, teaching is good,** although there are inconsistencies. Very good levels of care and good teaching help nursery and reception children learn well because they feel happy and secure; activities and support are carefully matched to their needs to ensure good achievement. Very good teaching in literacy for more able Years 2 and 6 promotes very good achievement in writing. In other year groups, when pupils are grouped according to ability for English and mathematics, pupils' achievement is highly dependent on the number of adults in the lesson. In less able groups, especially, there are extreme ranges of ability and stages of acquiring English. In spite of teachers' good planning and preparation, if there is no extra adult help, the great majority make sound progress but pupils requiring a great deal of support do not achieve as well as they could. Where teaching is unsatisfactory it is when behaviour is not managed well enough and pupils' learning is hindered.

Very good partnerships with the community and links with Merton College and Kingston University are very profitable in areas such as helping parents learn English and how to support their child at school, providing after-school care for pupils and recruiting high quality newly qualified teachers.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory.** The head and deputy headteacher provide good leadership with a keen sense of purpose for the school and a very strong commitment to making sure all pupils are valued. Management is satisfactory, but the present senior management structure is not reflecting the large school that Links has become and is therefore not robust enough to move the school forward at a good rate. Currently, there are satisfactory ways for checking on the work of the school. However, there is not enough rigour in these checks; consequently, improvement planning is not precise and lacks a clear focus on raising standards and there are inconsistencies in teaching. Governance is satisfactory with good use made of individual governors' expertise. Governors are very proud of the school and its reputation in the community but are not yet challenging the school to think how it can do even better.

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

Parents have good views of the school, feel welcome and appreciate the approachability of teachers. Pupils like coming to school and particularly like being involved in the music and drama productions. In their responses to the questionnaires, parents and pupils raised concerns about bullying. In discussions with inspectors, parents and pupils said that that bullying issues were always dealt with swiftly. It is only a very small number of pupils who cause the problem and it does not detract from pupils feeling safe and happy in school.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Put more rigour into checking the school's work and question if things could be done better
- Provide more adult helpers in classes
- Provide more opportunities to write at length and in subjects other than English
- Improve attendance

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure the prospectus and governors' annual report contain all the necessary information

# PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

## STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

### Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Throughout the school, pupils of all abilities and stages of English acquisition achieve well.

Year 6 standards as measured by National Curriculum criteria are average in mathematics and below average in English and science. Year 2 standards in science are average but below in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in religious education are around the levels expected for Years 2 and 6. In information and communication technology (ICT), standards are average for Year 2 and below for Year 6.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- As they move through the school, pupils make good progress; in most lessons they achieve at least well
- Standards attained in Year 2 national tests have declined since the previous inspection
- Standards have improved in religious education, ICT, design and technology and art and design
- Standards of singing are very high and pupils take pride in their accomplishments

### Commentary

1. All pupils achieve well at Links, not only in developing their knowledge and understanding but in their personal development. Children start in the nursery with below average levels of attainment but with good and very good teaching they make good progress and by the end of their time in reception, the current group of children are likely to attain the levels expected for their age except in communication, language and literacy. Pupils remaining at Links for all their education generally make very good progress from very wide ranging starting points. The good provision for pupils' personal development helps them develop a good understanding of respect for others' feelings and beliefs. Those new to the school at various points in their education are welcomed and helped to feel secure in school so that they learn confidently. Inspection findings show that overall, pupils achieve well but in some lessons, where there is no extra adult help, pupils achieve satisfactorily.
2. The school population has changed considerably since the last inspection. There has been a significant and continuing increase in the number of pupils arriving at the school in various year groups with little or no English; some arriving in Years 1 or 2 have not previously attended school. Whilst all these pupils achieve well in acquiring and using English, their levels of fluency and comprehension are not sufficiently developed to help them do well in national tests. Standards in science are around average, although pupils' recorded work does not always reflect this. However, discussions with pupils show they have a reasonable grasp of the scientific knowledge expected for their age.

### *Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2003*

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	14.5 (15.5)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	13.6 (14.6)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	15.6 (17.0)	16.3 (16.5)

*There were 58 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

3. Please note, there is no table for standards attained by Year 6; 2004 will be the first year the school will have Year 6 pupils taking national tests.
4. In Year 6, pupils who started in reception at Links, in the main, attain expected standards and an average proportion are set to exceed these. However, almost a quarter of Year 6 are relatively new to the school and, although they are achieving well, are not likely to attain expected levels in English and science, thus depressing overall standards. In mathematics, however, standards are around average.
5. The last inspection found standards in ICT, religious education, art, design and technology and geography to be below those expected. Since then the school has implemented national guidelines, improved ICT resources and teaching has improved considerably. The findings of this inspection show standards in religious education are now in line with those expected for Years 2 and 6 by the locally agreed syllabus. Work seen and discussions with pupils show standards in art and design, geography and design and technology to be average. Standards in ICT have improved considerably and are now average at Year 2 and just below at Year 6.
6. Music is a strength of the school and it is clear pupils take pride in their accomplishments in singing, where standards are very high. Talented and enthusiastic teachers lead the school choir which, in turn, has a good impact on promoting high standards of singing in assemblies and school gatherings. Very good links with the community and school performances help pupils develop self-confidence and their understanding of being involved in a performance.

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

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Good improvement in the school's provision for pupils' personal development means that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is now good. Attendance is poor.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils show good attitudes to learning in lessons and work hard
- Behaviour is good
- Relationships are good
- The school promotes the pupils' spiritual, moral and social development effectively
- Extended holidays during school time are the school's main cause of poor attendance rates

### **Commentary**

7. Pupils enjoy coming to school and in most lessons they find the work interesting and they work to do their best. The youngest pupils in the nursery and reception classes have settled into school well and have developed good attitudes to learning, responding positively to the range of interesting and challenging activities provided. By the end of their time in reception, children are likely to attain the expected standards in their personal, social and emotional development. Older pupils listen to instructions carefully, contribute well to discussions and concentrate on the tasks they are given. They work well independently, and in pairs or small groups where they share ideas and resources. Pupils enjoy the range of outside visits to museums and places of interest and opportunities to meet visitors to the school including artists, musicians and local clergy. These events contribute well to the pupils' personal development.
8. The majority of pupils are very well behaved in classrooms and settle quickly to their lessons. Whilst behaviour in the nursery and reception classes is very good, a small number of older pupils do not behave as well as they should. Pupils sensibly and willingly carry out a range of jobs within their own classrooms and across the school. Relationships between pupils of all ethnic groups are good. However, a significant minority of pupils and parents express concern about bullying. Whilst the school deals promptly and well with incidents when they occur, strategies to discourage bullying, or the fear of it, do not appear to have been developed sufficiently or checked on for their effectiveness. Staff know pupils well and are happy to talk to

them if they have concerns or problems. In lessons where there is not enough adult help in classes pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language may not always receive the level of support they need, which limits the overall contribution they make to lessons and other activities.

9. Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural education is thoughtfully interlinked and promotes mutual respect very successfully. This respect is promoted through assemblies and many areas of the curriculum but religious education and personal, social and health education make a particularly strong contribution. Spiritual development is promoted very effectively in religious education lessons. Older pupils discuss issues such as friendship, partnership, teamwork and forgiveness that promote reflective and thoughtful contributions. The school as a community benefits from the richness of pupils' and staff's many different religions and cultures. All major faith celebrations are respected and celebrated in school. There are very good opportunities for pupils to become aware of their own and others' cultural heritage.
10. Attendance is well below average overall, and has fallen since the last inspection. Analysis of pupils' absence shows that it is higher amongst younger pupils and that the attendance of pupils in Year 6 is close to the national average. The school states that cultural issues lead to some parents' adopting a lower priority towards the attendance of younger children and taking them on extended holidays. Inspection of school records indicates many children who have poor attendance also have difficult personal circumstances. The school works well with social services and the educational welfare officer to monitor and support good attendance. In exceptional circumstances the school has taken court proceedings against parents who fail to send their children to school. Certificates are awarded to pupils for good attendance but this has little impact on those pupils needing most support.

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

Authorised absence	
School data:	6.2
National data:	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data :	0.5
National data:	0.4

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

**Exclusions**

There have been no exclusions.

**QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The quality of education is good. Teaching and learning are effective overall. Pupils work from a good curriculum with a very good range of extra activities including sport.

**Teaching and learning**

Teaching and learning are good. Assessment is satisfactory overall although good in English, mathematics and science.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good teaching for children in the nursery and reception classes gives them a good start to school
- Very good teaching for more able pupils in Years 2 and 6 promotes good standards
- There is not enough adult support in some classes to ensure all pupils achieve as well as possible

- Assessment in English and mathematics is good and used well for grouping pupils for teaching
- Inconsistency in the quality of teaching across the school
- Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills

### Commentary

11. At the time of the last inspection, teaching was satisfactory with many weaknesses identified. Since then there has been good improvement in spite of many staff changes and the change from a first to a primary school. Planning is much improved, with good use made of ICT and good teamwork to retain quality but reduce teachers' work-load.

#### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 50 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	12 (24%)	20 (40%)	15 (30%)	3 (6%)	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. Teaching and learning for the youngest children in the school were very nearly always good and often very good. The best features of teaching are the good use of assessment in guiding planning for the next steps in learning and the importance placed on involving and valuing parents in the education of their children. More can be found about teaching in the foundation stage in paragraphs 40 to 55.
13. In Years 2 and 6, pupils are grouped according to ability in English and mathematics. In Year 6, more able pupils are also taught separately for science. In both year groups an additional teaching group is formed, taken by the headteacher, deputy or special needs co-ordinator; as a result, teaching groups are smaller, especially for the less able group, which means they get more individual help. In these sessions, they achieve very well. In the more able groups observed, teaching and learning were very good and promoted very good achievement. Teachers plan interesting tasks and set high expectations for pupils to think hard and work at a good rate. In Year 2 for example, enthused pupils worked at a very good rate to write their letters home explaining how they felt as a soldier or nurse in the Crimean war, making very good use of adjectives to enliven their work. In mathematics, Year 6 pupils are expected to develop and apply problem-solving strategies and check out their hypotheses; they do this well, making good use of calculators when appropriate.
14. In Years 3 to 5, pupils are also grouped according to ability for English and mathematics. When this happens there are two groups – below average to average and average to above. In lessons observed in the average to below average groups, good achievement for all pupils was heavily reliant on the amount of extra adult support. When the teacher supporting pupils at an early stage of English acquisition was in class, pupils did well because they had a proficient person to explain the task clearly and give help and reassurance. The class teacher also had more time to give good support to pupils with identified special needs. When there was no extra adult, support was spread too thinly. In spite of the teachers' best efforts, pupils with more complex needs and those at an early stage of English acquisition could not get on and achieve as well as they could because they needed extra help.
15. In English and mathematics, the use of assessment is good and especially profitable for more able pupils. Pupils' progress is tracked as they move through the school and targets set for end of year attainment. Termly assessments are undertaken to check on progress. As a result, teachers have a clear picture of pupils' abilities, and if enough progress is being made. In Years 2 and 6, where there are three ability groups and good support for less able pupils, good assessment leads to lessons pitched at the right level and achievement that is nearly always good or better.

16. During inspection, the quality of teaching in lessons seen ranged from very good to unsatisfactory. Although teaching has improved immensely since the last inspection the headteacher recognises that more needs to be done to make sure all teaching provides the best learning opportunities for pupils to achieve well. Where teaching is very good, teachers set very high expectations for behaviour, plan interesting ideas to challenge and involve pupils and move their lessons along at a brisk pace. In such lessons, pupils of all abilities and stages of acquiring English achieve at least well and complete a good amount of work. In the few lessons where teaching was unsatisfactory, it was mainly because teachers did not manage pupils' behaviour competently enough to make sure pupils covered the planned work. In many of the lessons when teaching and learning were satisfactory, it was because there was not enough help to make sure pupils could learn at a good rate.
17. A notable feature in many lessons observed is teachers' expectations for pupils to explain their answers or ideas and for others to listen carefully. This provision is particularly beneficial in two ways; it helps all pupils develop self-confidence and it provides many opportunities for learning and using new vocabulary for pupils for whom English is an additional language. During inspection nine new pupils arrived at Links with at least four having little or no English. The care and concern shown by staff and pupils for these new pupils was impressive and helped them make friends and understand the everyday school routines. All helped pupils to learn new vocabulary by showing or demonstrating what is meant, for example, 'walking' when lining up. At playtimes, pupils who speak the same language act as interpreters, make them feel welcome and involve new pupils in their games.

## **The curriculum**

The school provides a good quality curriculum. A very good range of extra activities provides many opportunities for pupils to develop sporting, musical and artistic talents. Accommodation and resources are adequate.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The enrichment of the curriculum is very good
- The provision for personal, social and health education is good
- The numbers of support staff are insufficient to ensure that all pupils have equal access to the curriculum
- Limited arrangements are in place for preparing pupils for the transfer to secondary schools

## **Commentary**

18. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that meets the needs of its pupils and complies with statutory requirements. Religious education is taught according to the locally agreed syllabus, which is an improvement since the last inspection. The change from a first to a primary school has necessitated changes and additions to the curriculum and resources; these the school has managed well. However, though adequate, resources for learning are quite basic. The school is well aware of the need to supplement resources.
19. The school finds many ways to enrich and develop the curriculum. Sport is a high priority for the school and there is a high level of participation in all local sporting activities, where school teams are very successful. Artists and musicians from a range of cultural traditions work with the pupils to develop their skills and to encourage creativity. The school makes good use of visitors to extend pupils' learning. Local ministers contribute to the religious education curriculum and the school nurse, the police, fire brigade and staff from London Transport develop pupils' understanding of personal, social and health education issues. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to undertake school visits so that they learn about different parts of the country. Productions at Christmas and the end of the school year are another way in which pupils' skills in music and drama are developed. A good number of

extra-curricular activities are offered that extend learning outside the school day. There is a breakfast club and an after school club that provides opportunities for pupils to complete their homework in a supportive environment.

20. All pupils have satisfactory access to the curriculum. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and those with statements of educational need is good. Individual education plans are appropriate, with good targets for pupils to meet. Staff are mindful of individuals and of groups of pupils who may be at risk of not having appropriate learning opportunities, such as those with English as an additional language. Whilst the available in-class support is carefully planned and organised, it is limited. In some sessions where pupils are grouped according to ability there is not enough support for the lower and middle ability groups. In these groups there is an extremely wide range of ability and stage of acquiring English. In spite of teachers' keen awareness of pupils' needs and good planning, the lack of an extra adult in these classes limits pupils' achievement because many need a little extra help and reassurance to make sure they understand what is expected of them.
21. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is good. Sex education and drugs awareness are addressed through the personal, health and social education and science curriculum and taught in the context of a healthy lifestyle. Parents are made aware of the materials being used for sex education and know when lessons are due to take place. The school has also received the Healthy Schools' Award.
22. The school does a great deal to prepare children and their parents for starting school. Home visits and visits to the school are all aimed at assisting young children to settle into school quickly. However, pupils have little preparation for transferring to the next stage of their education and this is unsatisfactory. This is because the age of transfer has changed in the local education authority and the arrangements for liaison between primary and secondary schools have not yet been established fully.
23. The accommodation of the school is satisfactory. The school has rightly identified the need to improve the aesthetic quality of the building and attractive displays are used to make the school cheerful. The area designated for nursery and reception classes supports the curriculum satisfactorily. Resources are adequate for all subjects except information and communication technology where they are good. The library is under-resourced and much of the stock is old as it was found to be at the last inspection. The match of support staff to the needs of the curriculum is currently unsatisfactory.

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

Overall, the school makes satisfactory provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. Advice and guidance are satisfactory overall. Involving pupils through seeking, valuing, and acting on their views is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' progress is carefully tracked
- Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language are generally well supported, although scarcity of adult helpers constrains progress in some lessons
- Very good arrangements help children and parents get a good start to school and staff and pupils extend a warm, caring welcome to pupils starting in other year groups
- The school is inexperienced in supporting pupils moving on to secondary education

## Commentary

24. The school has satisfactory procedures for the safety, welfare and care of the pupils. Child protection procedures are satisfactory. The local education authority oversees risk assessment and recently reported that the school adopted a very positive attitude towards health and safety. Minor safety issues observed during the inspection have been notified to the school.
25. Pupils' progress in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology is carefully tracked and the information is used effectively to set targets for improvement. The reporting system, termly assessments and regular staff meetings provide further, sound means to monitor pupils' academic and personal development. In Year 2, there are very good examples of pupils knowing and working towards their individual targets for improvement both in work and in personal development. This practice is not yet in evidence across the whole school.
26. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported. Their needs are identified early and external agencies are notified and involved if appropriate although, for some, there is a long wait before specific needs are identified, addressed and resources provided. Consequently, a small number of pupils do not make the progress they could if they had appropriate help. Class teachers write clear individual education plans and monitor pupils' progress towards meeting the targets. Pupils with a specific statement of need are fully included in all areas of the school's work through the proficient help of their teaching assistants.
27. Provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language is good overall and very good in the school's efforts to involve and inform parents. Proficient support teachers give expert help in lessons, making good use of a pupil's home language if necessary. The homework club for pupils and their parents gives good support for all involved. When pupils start at Links, specialist staff undertake assessments that help to identify the level of support needed. Whilst this ensures that pupils at the early stages of learning English receive good levels of support, resources are not available to ensure that adequate provision is made for those who are at intermediate levels. Consequently this may mean that pupils initially make good progress but this can slow down as they move on to more intermediate levels.
28. The school has very good induction arrangements for children entering the nursery and reception classes. These ensure children and their parents are confident in their approach to starting school. There is also a sensitive induction programme for older pupils when they join the school and good procedures to assess their needs. Staff and pupils provide a very supportive environment, ensuring pupils new to the school settle in quickly. Peer group buddies are appointed to befriend new arrivals in their first weeks at the school. Pupils new to the school told inspectors that they liked the school and that 'the other children are nice and kind'. Staff warmly respond to pupils' personal needs and this includes those who speak little or no English or who have special educational needs. Relationships in the school are good and pupils say they are confident that they can approach a number of adults if they need help. The school has a well established mentoring system which encourages pupils who are experiencing difficulties to choose a mentor from a member the staff who they feel will be able to help them. There is no formal way for seeking pupils' views on a regular basis but teachers listen to their confident pupils and on some matters, such as the playground features, pupils are consulted.
29. There are weaknesses in supporting pupils transferring to secondary education; the school is inexperienced in supporting secondary transfer because this is the first year in which it has occurred. The weaknesses are mainly due to the schools' system in the area changing but the result is that parents and pupils and, to some extent, the school, are unsure of what the change to secondary school entails.

## Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents hold positive views about the school
- Pupils' annual reports lack information on attainment, and advice for improvement is inconsistent. Religious Education is not reported on separately
- The school prospectus omits information about provision made for disabled pupils
- Links with local secondary schools are unsatisfactory
- Links with local colleges are very good
- The parent and teachers' association raises large amounts of money for the benefit of pupils

### Commentary

30. The school has established good links with parents and this is confirmed in their pre-inspection questionnaires. None disagreed that that the school expects pupils to do their best, most think teaching is good (98 per cent), children are making good progress (95 per cent), and that the school has good arrangements for settling children in when they start school (95 per cent). The only material concern involves bullying or harassment (25 per cent) but just six parents (4 per cent) disagreed that their children liked school. Inspection corroborates these views; the school is prompt and effective in reacting to oppressive behaviour, and pupils confirm that they feel safe and happy in the school.
31. The school is open in its dealings with parents, and staff are accessible. There are regular consultation meetings with parents, and a good flow of information about general school news. Pupils' annual reports are inconsistent in providing advice or targets for improvement and do not contain attainment levels apart from the results of statutory assessment tests, (SATs), in Year 2. Reporting of foundation subjects is very brief and there is no separate reporting of religious education. Information on how the school provides for disabled pupils has been missed out of the governors' annual report.
32. Links with the community are very good and serve to enrich the life and learning of pupils and adults. The local community centre works very well in partnership with the school to provide an after-school club and holiday scheme. The school choir and steel band entertain the elderly at the community centre. An important and successful initiative is the homework club started by the co-ordinator for provision for pupils with English as an additional language. Parents are encouraged to come in to school to work alongside their children which serves the dual purpose of helping the children and helping parents with little English understand what goes on in school and how they can help their child.
33. Links with other schools and colleges are good, overall. The school has a pivotal position within the borough for organising primary school sports and country dancing events, but links with secondary schools, which could support the transfer of pupils to the next stage of their education, are underdeveloped. There are very productive links with Merton College who provide a family literacy programme that is enabling parents to gain skills necessary to support their children's education at home. The school offers teaching practice opportunities for students of Kingston College, and this has a very beneficial impact on teacher recruitment.
34. The parents and teacher association, (PTA), raises over three thousand pounds annually; these funds are used effectively to enhance pupils' learning and welfare. Some is spent on improving the learning environment, such as the purchase of carpeting, whilst other money is earmarked for subsidising the cost of swimming and school trips so that all pupils get the chance to participate. A major fund raising project is currently underway to improve playground facilities.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leadership is good especially for promoting the school within the community. Management and governance are satisfactory.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The head and deputy headteacher provide a strong lead in providing a caring school with very strong links with the community
- School development planning lacks clarity and is, therefore, not as helpful in moving the school forward as it should be
- School self-evaluation is adequate but lacks rigour and challenge to bring about improvement at a good rate
- Leadership for main subjects and areas of the school's work is good but few of these leaders are represented on the senior management team

### Commentary

35. The head and deputy headteacher are a very well established team and share their successful aim to provide a welcoming, caring school where all pupils and their families are valued; the school is very well thought of in the community. They have succeeded in maintaining the school's good ethos as pupil numbers have increased and it has changed to a primary school. Their strong commitment to making sure all pupils are included in the life and work of the school is shared by all staff. Indeed, pupils also play their part by going out of their way to welcome new pupils into the school community. The support teacher for pupils for whom English is an additional language leads well by ensuring 'new' families who may be refugees or asylum seeking families, are enabled to communicate with the school and that they are helped to understand how to help their child at school. The very good links forged with the local community are beneficial in many areas; for example, in providing an after school club, providing tutors for the weekly session for parents to develop their English and, importantly, providing a means where trainee teachers who have placements in the school may be encouraged to stay once qualified.
36. School improvement planning lacks clarity. It is comprehensive and corporate but not as useful as it could be in taking the school forward and raising standards. The school is not making the most profitable use of all the information it gathers to devise clear, measurable targets for attainment and improvement with dates for achievement and named persons to check on progress. The present school planning is for one year only and as such is limited, as was noted in the last inspection report. Subject leaders devise their own action plans, but in most cases these, too, lack clearly defined success criteria and their plans are not distilled into the whole school plan. Consequently, there is a lack of focus on raising standards.
37. Performance management is organised appropriately with a strong focus on teachers' professional development. However, the monitoring by the head and deputy headteacher lacks rigour in checking on the work of the school and using the information gained to bring about improvement. For example, there is inconsistency in the quality of teaching and it has been noted that there are classes where behaviour is not managed as well as it should be. The school feels it has taken steps to improve these situations. However, it is not checking rigorously, to see if the action taken is successful.
38. Subject leaders for English, mathematics and science provide good leadership for their subject areas. The present senior management team is well established but not fully representative of the enlarged school that Links has become. Currently, the core subject leaders are not members of the senior team and thus their knowledge and expertise are not used to maximum effect in raising standards across the school. Similarly, although the special educational needs co-ordinator is a member of the team, the co-ordinator for the

provision for pupils with English as an additional language is not. Given that almost half the school's population has English as an additional language, this is a crucial area of the school's work which does not have representation at senior level.

39. Governors are very supportive of the headteacher and the school's work and proud of its standing in the community. They keep a very close eye on finances and question the headteacher's spending if necessary. Funds allocated to the school for increasing numbers have been used judiciously. Currently, governors are not questioning and challenging the school to think if there are better ways of doing things and if it can do even better and secure better value for money.

## Financial information

### *Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003*

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	963,383	Balance from previous year	7,858
Total expenditure	945,317	Balance carried forward to the next	18,066
Expenditure per pupil	2,351		

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

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

The provision in the nursery and reception classes is good, as it was at the last inspection. Children start in the nursery after their third birthday and attend in the morning or the afternoon sessions. Children move to the reception classes in September or January when they are four. Children in the foundation stage enjoy coming to school.

Attainment on entry is below average especially in personal and social development and communication and language. At least two thirds of the children have English as an additional language and for some it is their third language. All the children achieve well due to the good teaching and assessment procedures that are used to plan activities suited to their needs.

A key factor in the success of the foundation stage is the teamwork of the staff, their high expectations and the very good care and concern shown to the children and their parents. The very good induction arrangements that include home visits enable all the families, but especially those for whom English is an additional language, to join the school confident that their language and culture are valued highly.

At the time of the inspection the organisation of the foundation stage accommodation was disrupted due to the building of the nursery extension. The older reception class was moved away from the shared areas. Although overall this did not interrupt the teaching and learning of the children, it did mean that children in this reception class did not benefit from full time learning support assistance, a desirable and necessary resource when two thirds of the children have limited English.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The very good relationships and team work provide a safe and secure environment
- Knowledgeable and supportive staff for children with English as an additional language enable them to make very good progress in language acquisition
- Good teaching ensures that the majority of the children reach the standard expected for their age

### **Commentary**

40. The nursery children make very good progress in their social skills as they participate in the many carefully structured class, group and independent activities. All adults plan together and this teamwork is reflected in the many opportunities that are taken to develop the language and social skills of the children, especially those for whom English is an additional language. For example, in response to their teacher's searching questions children are eager to offer suggestions for helping new children to settle happily.
41. Children in the younger of the two reception classes enjoy serving drinks to each other and understand the health benefits of water 'it makes our brains work'. The trusting and caring atmosphere that prevails throughout the foundation stage and the adults' knowledge of the children's needs and abilities allow them to move about the school independently and confidently. For example, reception children take the register to the office and nursery children play together moving in and out of the classrooms to work and play happily. Teachers' high expectations of behaviour and attitudes to work both in the nursery and the reception classes result in the children's good behaviour, their ability to concentrate and to take turns as in the case of the 'roamer' (a programmable toy) used during a very good lesson in the reception

class. The majority of the children at the end of the reception year will reach the expected learning goals in their personal and social development.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The children make good progress in speaking and listening due to the many stimulating activities
- Teaching and learning in nursery and reception are good and often very good
- Teachers use the good assessment procedures to match work to the children's abilities and needs

### **Commentary**

42. The majority of the children achieve well due to the consistently good teaching in the reception and nursery classes. All the adults focus on extending children's experiences and vocabulary through talk, play and planned activities, such as stories that involve learning letter sounds. A good lesson in a reception class taught children letter sounds as they acted out the story of 'The Glerp'. More able children had the opportunity to write about the characters and sounds in the story whilst those with English as an additional language were given extra good help and reinforcement by the specialist teacher.
43. Reading books are sent home daily from the first day in the nursery. Parents are encouraged to share books initially and, as their children make progress, to hear them read regularly, so developing the reading skills of children and adults who have English as an additional language. Very good support is given to non-English speaking families by the teachers and learning support assistants and by other parents, so creating an atmosphere of learning and encouragement.
44. Suitable resources for reading and writing are displayed prominently, teaching children in the nursery initially to make marks on paper, progressing to writing their names. Letter formation is taught well and in the reception classes many children are developing a fluent and legible style as they write simple sentences, captions and stories.
45. From the wide range of starting points children achieve well making good progress in this area of learning. However, standards in this area of learning are below average. With around half attaining the expected standard. The main reason that standards are below average is that for two thirds of the children, their starting point with little or no English is much lower than average. Although they make good progress, there is much for them to learn, practise and consolidate.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers know the subject well and understand the needs of the children
- Good assessment procedures inform the planning so that activities are matched to what children need to learn next
- The number and deployment of learning support assistants and nursery nurses limits progress in some lessons

## **Commentary**

46. Overall teaching is good. One very good lesson in the younger of the two reception classes built on the knowledge of counting gained in the nursery; children counted reliably and accurately to ten, recognising numerals and matching them to objects. Teachers use mathematical language that enables children to understand comparison, direction and estimation as they build number towers or program the 'roamer'. Effective questions challenge their thinking and observational skills.
47. Comprehensive records of children's knowledge, understanding and skills in all the areas of the foundation stage curriculum are kept. These are used productively to structure learning activities to suit individuals and groups to make sure they build on previous learning and make good progress.
48. The number and deployment of the learning support assistants and nursery nurses is not always effective, as was demonstrated in a satisfactory lesson in the older reception class. The achievement of some of the more able children in this lesson was limited by the lack of another adult to assist them.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers plan exciting experiences and activities to encourage children to think and discover facts
- Photographic reminders of school events provide stimulating language and learning opportunities
- Information and communication technology is used well to support learning

## **Commentary**

49. Teaching is always good with a very good awareness of the needs, abilities and cultural background of all pupils. Events are planned that stimulate the questions 'how', 'when', 'where.' For instance the hatching of chicks in the nursery, the building of snowmen in the reception class and watching them melt over a period of days, the Toddle Waddle day to raise funds for the Meningitis Trust and the 'Quince jam making day' provide opportunities for enriching language and learning experiences. Children love to recall these events by looking at the albums and talking about their involvement in them. Visitors to the school from the London Mission and the local church groups encourage children to appreciate the faiths and cultures of others.
50. Information and communication technology is used well in the classrooms and by the end of the reception year children can use the mouse to draw and to write. They program and manipulate the 'roamer' understanding the use of technology.
51. All children achieve well in knowledge and understanding of the world, especially those with English as an additional language, who acquire a wide range of vocabulary with which to describe their homes and environment. The majority of the children will attain the standard expected at the end of the reception year.

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The environment, although restricted, allows children to experience challenging physical tasks

#### Commentary

52. No formal physical education lesson was observed during the inspection. Children in the nursery make good progress in the development of their manipulative skills as they use paints and pencils, scissors and glue. In the outside area the climbing apparatus and tunnel allow them to enjoy moving and climbing whilst the play house and bikes develop good co-ordination skills. The development of physical skills is further enhanced by the garden and maze enjoyed by children in the nursery and reception. As a result of the good progressive planning and organisation of challenging activities by the nursery and reception teachers, the majority of children achieve well and will attain the expected standard for their age.

## CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The environment provides very good opportunities for creativity
- Music is used well to support language and communication

#### Commentary

53. Children enjoy singing and dancing. They learn many songs and rhymes that enrich vocabulary and further mathematical and linguistic understanding especially for those for whom English is an additional language. They use percussion instruments enthusiastically and are aware of musical notation.
54. In the nursery, a group of children explained what to do and the decorations they would use in transforming a sock into a puppet. They worked hard and were delighted with their results. Another child made good progress in controlling a brush as she painted a pattern with care and precision. The house corner is used well to develop dramatic and imaginative play.
55. Children in the reception class print painted patterns with their fingers and thumbs and discovered how finger-prints vary. Every opportunity is taken by the foundation staff to use the immediate environment to further creativity, especially in the statue garden where children are free to explore and think. The majority of children at the end of the reception year will reach the expected standard for this area of learning.

## SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

### English

Provision in English is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership with good progress in promoting literacy skills through other subjects
- Grouping by ability and very good teaching for more able pupils promote their very good achievement in lessons
- In Year 1 and the 'set' Years 3 to 5 groups, when there is a very wide range of ability and not enough adult help, pupils requiring a lot of help do not always achieve as well as they could
- Not enough time is provided for pupils to write at length and in some subjects, not enough writing is expected
- Pupils at the early stages of learning to read do not get enough guidance on their choice of reading material and this slows progress
- Resources for reading are limited; many are outdated and not in good condition. Non-fiction material remains inadequate

#### Commentary

56. In 2003 national tests for Year 2, standards in reading were well below average and in writing below average. Compared to schools with a similar number of pupils eligible for free school meals, standards in reading were below and in writing average. Standards have declined since the last inspection. This is due to the increasing and high number of pupils starting the school with little or no English. Indeed, during the inspection, nine pupils joined the school in various year groups, four of whom had very little or no spoken English. Inspection evidence shows standards to be below those expected in reading and writing but from their extremely wide-ranging starting points, pupils of all abilities achieve well. For example, those starting school with little or no English are helped and encouraged to join in discussions. Very good teaching, with explanations in the home language, helps pupils to enjoy stories and make a very good start developing their reading skills. This is the first academic year that the school has had Year 6 pupils. Standards in this year group are again, wide ranging, but overall below average. Importantly, however, all pupils in Year 6 are achieving well due to good and very good teaching which presents a good level of challenge for more able and good support for the less able.
57. The co-ordinator provides good, knowledgeable leadership for her colleagues. Through her comprehensive checks on pupils' work and through observing lessons, she has gained a good overview of standards and the strengths and areas for improvement in the subject. There is a good understanding that more time needs to be provided for pupils to write at length and a good start has been made on developing writing skills in history. However, in other subjects, pupils are not writing enough to develop their writing skills further. In science, for example, too many work sheets are used that do not require pupils to think through and record in their own words what they have been doing.
58. Good use is made of the school's tracking system to group pupils by ability from Year 2 onwards. In Years 2 and 6, the special needs co-ordinator and deputy headteacher take a group so that group numbers and teaching are best suited to ability. As a result, pupils of all abilities are well supported. Very good, challenging teaching for more able pupils promotes very good achievement and their standards are above average. Less able pupils also have good, carefully structured teaching and support in much smaller groups, which helps them make very good progress in these sessions.

59. In Year 1, the school has seen the need for extra help and one teaching assistant is now shared between the classes. However, when there is no support in class, the spread of ability and stage of English acquisition is so great that, in spite of good planning, some pupils do not achieve as well as they could. Many pupils need more than one careful explanation and many reassurances before they are happy to start work. In Years 3 to 5, there is a similar picture, especially as the classes are grouped according to ability but in two rather than three groups. In the lower group, particularly, when there is no help, pupils cannot always get on without support so that, in spite of good planning and very careful consideration of resources, some pupils do not achieve as well as they might.
60. The school has a colour-coded system for its reading books. Each colour signifies a reading ability level and pupils choose from their allocated colour. This system serves more able pupils well. However, for those at an early stage and those struggling with reading, there is not enough structure to ensure that they have many opportunities to practise reading newly-learned words. Teachers are not keeping a close enough eye on what is being read. As a result some pupils flounder and do not make the progress they should in developing their skills.
61. Resources for reading are adequate but many books are outdated and not in good condition and, as such, are not appealing. The range of non-fiction books in the library remains unsatisfactory as it was at the time of the last inspection.

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

62. A good start has been made on developing writing skills through history and in Year 4, pupils write well in many subjects. However, writing is limited in many subjects, such as religious education, and in science, where there is an over-use of worksheets. The school has recognised this as an area to improve and has plans to do so.

## **MATHEMATICS**

There is **good** provision in mathematics and pupils achieve well.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good provision for pupils with special educational needs
- Assessments are used effectively to set future targets for pupils
- Enthusiastic leadership by co-ordinator
- Good improvement since the last inspection
- There is scope for more opportunities to use ICT to support and extend learning and to use mathematics across the curriculum

### **Commentary**

63. The standards attained in the 2003 tests taken by Year 2 were below the national average, but in line with those found in similar schools. Pupils currently in Year 2 are working at levels below those found nationally. They achieve well in relation to their capabilities and make good progress. Pupils develop a sound understanding of number and place value. Many confidently count to a hundred and most have a sound understanding of addition. By Year 2, pupils recognise 2D and 3D shapes and most are gaining a reasonable understanding of money and measures. There was little evidence of opportunities for pupils to conduct surveys and collect data. Year 6 are likely to attain average standards in comparison to all schools in the end of year national tests. Achievement is good. Improved planning, assessment, target setting and working in small ability groups are proving effective in helping all pupils realise their full potential. As pupils move through the school the speed and range of mental calculations increase. More able Year 6 are developing their own strategies for problem solving and check their answers to see if their calculations are accurate. The strong and appropriate focus on

numeracy skills has improved pupils' knowledge and capabilities. By the time pupils are in Year 6, the majority of pupils record written calculations accurately, showing good understanding of addition, multiplication, subtraction and division. However, from the scrutiny of work and lesson observations, there is little evidence of ICT being used systematically to support teaching and learning.

64. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported throughout the school. Often they work in small groups and they achieve well because of this. Pupils from minority ethnic groups also do well; they have very good support, often with explanations of difficult mathematical concepts given in their home language. The introduction of setting in Years 3 to 6 provides for different abilities and extends more able pupils.
65. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall with some very good teaching for Year 6. Teaching and learning were unsatisfactory in a Year 1 lesson when pupils' behaviour was not managed effectively. A strong feature of the best lessons seen was the way that pupils were encouraged to explain their strategies, with teachers asking individuals how they reached their answers. Teachers use assessments effectively to check pupils' understanding. They set targets to indicate which level a pupil is expected to reach by the end of each year and these are regularly reviewed. Older pupils have their own specific small targets that they can refer to in lessons and often teachers make comments or indications in pupils' books to help them improve their work.
66. The leadership and management of the subject are good. Since taking up the role, the co-ordinator has provided good support and advice for colleagues. The co-ordinator has no regular time for monitoring work in the subject so opportunities for classroom observations are infrequent. He recognises the need for more use of information communication technology to support teaching and learning.
67. There has been a good improvement in the provision since the last inspection. Regular opportunities are provided for pupils to solve problems. Teachers follow the guidance of the National Numeracy Strategy and planning is consistent. Assessment procedures are firmly established and used profitably.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

68. A good range of opportunities is provided for pupils to practise numeracy skills in other subjects. For example, pupils collect data and make line graphs to show results of experiments linked to scientific investigations about forces. Pupils use their knowledge of spirals to make pleasing collages in art. Timelines are used in history and help pupils to consolidate the concept of time passing, Information communication technology resources are rarely used to support learning in mathematics.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Consistent emphasis upon scientific vocabulary has a good impact on pupil's understanding and knowledge
- There is not enough support assistance given to pupils with English as an additional language and special needs in Years 3 to 6
- Over-use of worksheets limits development of pupils' writing skills and presentation of work is not consistent

## Commentary

69. National teacher assessment in 2003 showed standards attained by pupils in Year 2 to be well below the national average although an average proportion attained the higher Level 3. The number of pupils attaining the higher level has increased steadily over the past five years due in part to the extra language support given to those pupils with English as an additional language in the foundation stage and Years 2 and 3. This is the first year that there is a Year 6 and work seen shows that standards are currently below the national average and below average at the higher Level 5. Work seen in Year 2 and discussions with pupils shows standards to be around average.
70. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement in the way in which scientific language is used to describe investigations. For example, pupils in Year 2 use terms such as 'transparent', 'opaque' and 'translucent' with understanding, as they classify and sort materials. In Year 6, more able pupils understand the link between gravitational attraction, air resistance and surface area, as they investigate the speed at which a piece of paper falls. Pupils in Year 3 use scientific vocabulary competently, for example, 'attract' 'repel,' 'predict' to describe the effects of magnets on materials, demonstrating a sound understanding of the principles of a fair test.
71. Teaching and learning are good in Years 1 and 2 and satisfactory overall in Years 3 to 6 although examples of very good teaching were seen in Year 3 and good teaching for more able Year 6. Overall, achievement is good but dependent on the amount of adult help in class. The consistent focus on scientific vocabulary throughout the school serves the needs of pupils with English as an additional language well and as a result they achieve well in lessons. Work is well matched to pupils' abilities. Pupils with special needs generally achieve well but the use of assistants to provide additional learning support is limited as it is with pupils with English as an additional language who are on levels 2 and 3 of the Merton assessment criteria. In lessons where support is not available or limited, pupils' achievement is satisfactory rather than good. More able pupils are challenged well by the setting system in Year 5 and 6 but this does not apply in other Year groups so that more able pupils in Year 3 and 4 achieve less well when there is no additional support.
72. Work sheets are used throughout the school to record results but over-use inhibits writing and lowers the standard of presentation, especially in Year 3, 5 and 6. However, good examples of pupils' writing were seen in Year 4, as pupils describe accurately how materials change. Marking is inconsistent. Where marking is good, comments are supportive and constructive, giving questions and clear guidelines for improvement. Computers are used purposefully to tabulate, analyse and graphically represent data from investigations increasing the accuracy and clarity of results.
73. The co-ordinator provides good leadership, having improved assessment procedures and performance tracking. Assessment provides evidence about individual pupils' progress enabling teachers to plan according to ability. A folder has been collated to assist teachers to level work according to National Curriculum criteria more accurately and identify learning needs. Resources are satisfactory and are now used more effectively throughout the school. However, there are not enough science-related books in the library.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have improved across the school
- Teaching is good
- Pupils have good attitudes to ICT and behave well

- Resources for the subject are good
- Older pupils need to be more critical of how they use their ICT skills
- Some cross-curricular tasks are not well structured

### Commentary

74. Standards in Year 2 have improved since the last inspection. The quality of teaching is better and the resources for teaching the subject have improved considerably. The school has a computer suite equipped with an interactive white board and a projector. There is another shared area where pupils have access to computers and programmable toys known as floor turtles or 'roamers'. Classes are timetabled to use these dynamic resources and they are having a good measure of success in raising standards across the school. By Year 2, pupils attain average standards and are achieving well. They have a reasonably good grasp of the basic functions of a computer and enter, save and retrieve their work. They give instructions to the floor turtle and explain how it works. By Year 6, pupils' standards are close to average. Pupils develop a good range of skills and they are knowledgeable about the internet and send and receive e-mails. They also design presentations using a range of graphics. However, they are not always critical of how they use their ICT skills. An example of this was the presentations that pupils developed prior to the inspection. Whilst the presentations demonstrated a good level of skill, discussions with pupils showed that they had given little consideration to the needs of their intended audience when selecting content and graphics.
75. Overall, teaching and learning are good in ICT. Lessons are carefully planned and teachers are confident teaching the subject. They use the interactive whiteboard most effectively to demonstrate and explain work to the pupils. In turn, pupils are keen to work and demonstrate good attitudes to the tasks they are given.
76. Leadership is sound. The subject leader shares the co-ordination of the subject with the headteacher. There is a detailed scheme of work based on national guidance that supports teachers effectively. Assessment procedures are in place and good practice is developing in this area. Resources for the subject are good and are used effectively.

### Information and communication technology across the curriculum

77. Integrating information and communication technology into other areas of the curriculum to enhance learning is a priority for the school. Teachers' planning shows that a good range of opportunities have been identified for linking ICT to other curriculum areas. Mostly the links are very effective, although some literacy tasks were not well structured; for example, writing a complete story on a computer can be problematic for pupils with limited keyboard skills. However, there were many examples of very effective cross-curricular work such as the dictionary work that Year 2 pupils completed and the mathematics investigation on pocket money undertaken by Year 6 pupils. Year 4 pupils are involved profitably in 'Webplay' which links drama, playwriting and ICT skills.

### HUMANITIES

78. In humanities, work was sampled in **geography** therefore it is not possible to give an overall judgement on provision in this subject.
79. One lesson was observed in geography during the inspection. Pupils' work on display, a sample of work from each year group and discussions with pupils indicate that standards are average and an appropriately broad curriculum is being taught. There has been good improvement since the last inspection; the subject is now taught regularly with sufficient time allocated so that pupils have good opportunities to develop their skills.

80. A range of residential visits and day trips enhances the learning experiences for pupils. Pupils in Year 6 talk enthusiastically about their work on rivers and valleys that culminated in a visit to the Thames Barrier. They enjoyed their residential visit that gave them experiences of living in a different location so developing their geographical understanding. Good use is made of pupils' experiences from visits to families in other countries and the Festival of Culture contributed significantly to pupils' enjoyment of the subject as well as improving their understanding of life in other countries.
81. The subject is soundly led by an enthusiastic co-ordinator who recognises that assessment is an area for development. Recently, she has had the opportunity to share her expertise by working alongside teachers who are teaching the Year 6 curriculum for the first time.

## History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good achievement
- A range of visits plays an important part in making the work interesting and relevant
- A well planned curriculum
- Inconsistency in teaching
- Assessment procedures are underdeveloped

### Commentary

82. Standards are average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. The match of work for pupils at the early stages of learning English and those with special educational needs is good and they achieve well. For example, in a Year 2 class, different tasks were given to pupils enabling all to be successful in recording information about the life of Florence Nightingale. By the end of Year 6, pupils have a sound understanding of chronology. The display of time-lines in classrooms and the very attractive visual timeline on the staircase walls has helped pupils to develop this understanding. Older pupils understand the importance of collecting evidence from different sources; for example, using information communication technology and books to research life in the Indus Valley.
83. Since the last inspection, a national scheme of work has been adopted and all aspects of the National Curriculum are covered. History is now regularly taught. The subject is made more enjoyable and relevant for pupils because whenever possible, visits are made to museums and other places of interest. Pupils in Year 4 visit the Imperial War museum and as part of their study of the Victorians, Year 5 pupils visit a Ragged School. Year 6 pupils recalled their experiences of learning about different periods, talking enthusiastically about their experiences of role-play and dressing up in Victorian costume.
84. Teaching and learning are generally satisfactory and there are examples of some stimulating lessons. For example, travelling in a time machine to go back in time to Ancient Greece enabled pupils to re-visit and consolidate learning about different historical periods. In the best lessons, teachers plan their lessons well and use their knowledge and enthusiasm to make the work interesting. Good opportunities are made to link literacy and history, as when Year 2 pupils write a letter home from the Crimean war. In the one unsatisfactory lesson in Year 1, there was insufficient focus on developing historical skills and knowledge.
85. The co-ordinator has recently had some opportunities to look at history teaching and buy some new resources. There is a clear action plan for the development of the subject, with the co-ordinator recognising the need to improve assessment opportunities. The quality of teachers' marking is variable, and this limits pupils' understanding of what they have learnt

and if they can improve their work. There is no regular allocation of money to the subject, so the co-ordinator does not manage a budget. Little evaluation takes place of the effects that spending has had on improving the quality of learning.

## Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory** and has improved substantially since the school's previous inspection.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Religious education contributes very positively to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- pupils develop their oral skills well in religious education lessons
- pupils at Key Stage 2 have few opportunities to express their ideas about religious education in writing
- monitoring of the school's provision by the subject leader is at an early stage of development

### Commentary

86. Standards in Year 2 and Year 6 meet the level expected by the Merton Agreed Syllabus for religious education. Achievement is satisfactory. Year 2 pupils know about Christian, Moslem, Sikh, Hindu and Jewish festivals and identify some of the similarities that exist between them such as prayer, celebratory food and people gathering together. Pupils in Year 6 are knowledgeable about the main religions. They talked about sacred books, festivals, prayer and ritual and stories from the Old and New Testament. Year 6 pupils thoughtfully explored ideas about commitment and forgiveness as part of a series of lessons on friendship, partnership and marriage. Throughout the school, an emphasis is placed on developing the pupils' oral skills in religious education. However, by Year 6 pupils have had little experience of expressing their religious ideas in writing.
87. Teachers base their planning effectively on national guidance and the locally agreed syllabus. This enables pupils to extend their knowledge of different religions as they move through the school. Although the locally agreed syllabus does not include a focus on Sikhism the school does in order to reflect the religious traditions of a significant number of its pupils. Work in religious education contributes very positively to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The work of a local trust organisation and a clergyman from a nearby church also contribute significantly to the work undertaken in religious education.
88. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which is conveyed sensitively to pupils. They keep pupils involved throughout lessons by asking questions that encourage them to put forward their ideas. Where teaching was satisfactory, there were some weaknesses in the organisation of the lesson or the management of the pupils. Pupils are knowledgeable about religious education and have a positive attitude to the subject. They are keen to discuss their ideas and show respect for one another's ideas.
89. The leadership and management of religious education are satisfactory. The subject leader promotes religious education effectively across the school. Monitoring procedures are being developed but at present these are not sufficiently well established to enable the subject leader to have a secure overview of the strengths and weaknesses in provision across the school. Currently, assessment procedures are underdeveloped. The resources for religious education are satisfactory. Displays around the school are used very effectively to teach pupils about aspects of the different faiths that they study as they move through the school.

## CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

90. No lessons were seen in physical education, design and technology and art and design. Therefore no overall judgement can be made on provision in these subjects. Evidence was gathered by looking at planning, displays of pupils' work and discussions were held with pupils and teachers.
91. In **art and design** evidence shows that all aspects of the subject are taught throughout the school. Long term planning is in line with national guidance, which is a good improvement since the last inspection. Displays of pupils work indicate that standards are in line with those expected. Discussions with pupils about their work show that they enjoy the opportunities presented to use different media and that their teachers are enthusiastic about the subject. The subject leader is an able practitioner who provides sound leadership and motivates and supports colleagues well.
92. Planning shows that all aspects of **design and technology** with a strong focus on food technology, are taught throughout the school. Long term planning follows national guidance and is much improved since the last inspection. Displays of pupils' work and discussions show they have very positive attitudes and thoroughly enjoy designing and making things. Many could discuss at length how they could make their finished articles better. Not enough work was available to make a judgement of standards overall, but work seen in Year 2 indicates that in that year group, they are in line with those expected.

### Music

Provision in music is **good** and as at the time of the last inspection, it is a strength of the school.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- A subject leader with great expertise, providing a very good role model for pupils and other staff
- Very high standard of singing and the very good quality of school productions
- The contribution to pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development
- Insufficient opportunities for formally assessing pupils' progress

### Commentary

93. Two music lessons were seen, both at Key Stage 2. It is not therefore possible to make a firm judgement about standards and teaching for pupils in Key Stage 1.
94. By Year 6 attainment is average, except in singing where standards are very high. Pupils sing in harmony very well and are very adept at singing two and three part songs. Achievement is good. Pupils have very positive attitudes, which is related to the good teaching and the role model of the subject leader. The school is fortunate to have several musicians on the staff; they work very well together and support pupils in producing school concerts of a very high standard. Parents comment very favourably about the high standards of school productions and the good opportunities given for their children to participate. Pupils say they love being part of the musical performances.
95. Teaching and learning are good. Pupils develop good musical vocabulary and older pupils enjoy composing a rap based on work done in science about forces. They show good understanding of keeping four beats to a bar as they clap different rhythms. They work well in small groups to compose, practise and improve their composition and enjoy performing for others in the class.
96. During the inspection, the very good singing supported spiritual development when the school met together. Pupils learn a variety of songs from different cultures and are proficient in

singing in other languages such as Welsh. Each week, a small group of pupils meet to play steel drums. The choir benefits from having three members of staff working with them. They go to sing for people at the Mitcham Community Centre and Merton Council. Pupils are very enthusiastic about their singing and are looking forward to making a recording of their work in the near future.

97. The subject is well led with an appropriate action plan for its future development. The co-ordinator recognises the need to keep more evidence of pupils' written compositions and to develop a system for more formal assessment of pupils' progress. Resources are generally adequate but some un-tuned percussion instruments are not in good condition. There are insufficient tuned percussion instruments. Pupils benefit from having space for lessons in the music room, but older pupils sitting on the floor results in some silly behaviour on occasions, especially when there is no other adult support for pupils who have difficulty managing their own behaviour.
98. School planning shows that all classes cover the required areas of the **physical education** curriculum, including swimming. There is a strong emphasis on sports activities and many pupils take part in competitive sports competitions. The subject is well led by an enthusiastic co-ordinator.

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

Provision in personal, social and health education (PHSE) is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is a comprehensive programme of work
- PHSE is taught well
- This area of the school's work is led and managed and very effectively

### **Commentary**

99. The provision of PHSE is a high priority for the school. This has led to a comprehensive programme of work being developed which supports teaching in all classes. The programme of work also involves professionals such as the school nurse, a dietician and staff from London Transport working with pupils to raise their awareness of personal and health issues. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools' Award.
100. Pupils enjoy PHSE lessons because their teachers present them with interesting, stimulating and thought-provoking activities. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers manage sensitive issues such as incidents that had occurred in the playground or being let down by a friend with a high degree of skill.
101. Personal social and health education is very effectively led and managed. The two co-ordinators who share responsibility for this area of the curriculum ensure that staff are well supported and able to teach this area confidently. They also look for opportunities to involve outside agencies who can promote understanding of some aspect of this work. The Quest Group for Year 2 pupils helped them to work in groups and to take turns. The Annual walk to school is supported and promoted by Deborah the Zebra and pupils enjoy taking part.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>4</b>
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	4
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>3</b>
Pupils' achievement	3
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>3</b>
Attendance	6
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>3</b>
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	2
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	4
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	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>4</b>
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	4

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