

INSPECTION REPORT

MERYFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Borehamwood

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117184

Headteacher: Mrs M Kirby

Lead inspector: Ms V Bagilhole

Dates of inspection: 15-17 March 2004

Inspection number: 256901

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Type of school: | Primary |
| School category: | Community |
| Age range of pupils: | 3-11 |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed |
| Number on roll: | 290 |
| School address: | Theobald Street Borehamwood Hertfordshire |
| Postcode: | WD6 4PA |
| Telephone number: | 020 8953 2106 |
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| Appropriate authority: | Governing Body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Mr Derek Bumby |
| Date of previous inspection: | 11 March 2002 |

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Meryfield Primary School has 12 classes, two of which contain mixed age groups. In addition there is one class for Nursery and Reception children. Nursery children attend for either the morning or afternoon session. Children enter the Nursery in the term in which they are four and they spend three terms in the Nursery. The children enter the Reception class in September or January. Their attainment when they start school is below average. Pupils' home circumstances are broadly below average. Most of the pupils are of white-UK heritage but about a tenth of pupils are from a wide range of other ethnic groups, the largest of which is African British. There is also a very small group of travellers and refugees from Somalia. There are nineteen pupils who are at an early stage of speaking English and amongst the languages spoken are Shona, Yoruba and Portuguese. The number of pupils leaving and joining the school other than at the usual times is average. Twenty-seven per cent of pupils have special educational needs; this is above average, and three pupils have a statement of special educational need which is below average. Most of the pupils who are receiving extra support have moderate learning or social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Eight children, who are from Reception age to Year 2, work in a nurture group, which aims to support younger children who find learning in large groups difficult. The school provides a daily breakfast and after-school club which are well attended and there is also a parent and toddler group.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team | | | Subject responsibilities |
|--------------------------------|----------------|----------------|---|
| 17417 | Ms V Bagilhole | Lead inspector | Mathematics Information and communication technology The Foundation Stage |
| 11414 | Mrs A Bennett | Lay inspector | |
| 19774 | Mrs M Docherty | Team inspector | English Physical education Special educational needs |
| 32608 | Mr A Cook | Team inspector | Science Geography History Music |
| 14732 | Mrs E Korn | Team inspector | Religious education Art and design Design and technology Personal, social and health education |

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school is providing an acceptable standard of education. Pupils in Year 6 are achieving well and better than those in similar schools. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory overall and pupils show real interest in their lessons where teaching is good. However, there are too few good or better lessons. Standards in Year 2 show early signs of improvement but a significant number of pupils are still underachieving. The provision for children in the Nursery and Reception class is unsatisfactory. Therefore, the school provides unsatisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- The leadership and the governing body know the school's weaknesses and have started to take appropriate action to improve.
- The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage and the teaching and learning experiences for Nursery and Reception children are unsatisfactory, with insufficient adult intervention available to support the children and to extend their learning.
- Teaching in Year 6 is good and pupils are achieving well.
- The achievement of pupils in Year 2 is better than it was but it is still not good enough because teachers' expectations are not sufficiently high.
- The quality of teaching and learning is too inconsistent across the school.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- Attendance is unsatisfactory but starting to improve.

The school has serious weaknesses in the provision for children in the Foundation Stage. Standards and achievement in Year 2 are still not good enough. There is too little teaching that is good or better in quality.

The school was last inspected in March 2002 and found to have serious weaknesses. Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) conducted a monitoring visit in March 2003 and found the school was making reasonable progress. In most respects improvement has been satisfactory though serious weaknesses remain. There has been a good improvement in developing the headteacher's, governors' and coordinators' skills in leadership and management and clearer priorities for improving standards have been established. Standards in Year 6 have improved in English, mathematics and science. Standards in Year 2 are improving but are still not good enough. Standards have also improved in information and communication technology and religious education. The quality of teaching is now satisfactory in Years 1 to 6, which represents a good improvement. The last inspection found there was scope for significant development throughout the Foundation Stage. This is still very much the case and improvement has been unsatisfactory. Attendance and punctuality have improved recently, but attendance rates are still below those of other schools nationally.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

| Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with: | all schools | | | similar schools |
|---|-------------|------|------|-----------------|
| | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2003 |
| English | n/a | D | D | B |
| mathematics | n/a | D | D | B |
| science | n/a | E | D | B |

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

Achievement is satisfactory. Pupils in Year 6 are achieving well and have made a good improvement from the standards they obtained in Year 2. Inspection evidence finds that currently

standards in Year 6 are now close to the national average in English, mathematics and science. In the 2003 national tests, pupils in Year 2 attained standards that were well below average in reading, writing and mathematics and teachers' assessment in science. This year standards in Year 2 are showing signs of improvement and more pupils are on track to achieve the nationally expected level than was the case in the 2003 tests, but a significant number are still underachieving and the number of pupils achieving the nationally expected and higher standard is still too small. Standards in information and communication technology and religious education are typical of those found nationally. The children enter the Nursery and Reception class with below average attainment. They make unsatisfactory progress and many do not achieve the standards expected for this age group by the time they leave Reception.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are satisfactory. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory. However, assemblies make a limited contribution to pupils' personal development. Attendance is still below average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **satisfactory** in Years 1 to 6 but unsatisfactory in the Foundation Stage. Teaching is **satisfactory** overall; it is good in Year 6 but unsatisfactory in the Foundation Stage. Assessment is satisfactory. The school provides a satisfactory curriculum and care and support for its pupils. New initiatives are effectively being used to extend and enrich the curriculum. The provision for pupils who are learning English is good where there are specialist staff working alongside class teachers, and satisfactory at other times. The nurture group is not effective enough in helping pupils' learning and their integration into the school. Links with parents, other schools and the community are satisfactory.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership, management and governance are **satisfactory**. The leadership and management of the school have improved and governors now know the strengths and weaknesses well. The deputy head is a good role model for staff and pupils. The school improvement plan has a strong focus on raising standards. Subject coordinators now have clearly defined roles and are beginning to influence improvement in their subjects. School self-evaluation has been good in Years 1 to 6 but has not picked up the weakness in the Foundation Stage sufficiently well. All statutory requirements are met but governors need to challenge health and safety practice more effectively.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Most parents support the school. The majority feel that their child is making good progress and that the school expects their child to work hard and do their best. However, a significant minority have concerns about many aspects of the school's work, particularly bullying, behaviour and management, and do not feel well informed about how their child is getting on. The majority of pupils who answered the inspection questionnaire are happy that there is an adult to go to if they are worried in school and feel that teachers are fair, but a significant minority do not share these views. Inspectors spoke to a group of boys and girls in Year 4 and Year 6 who all seemed happy to be in the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- improve provision in the Foundation Stage;
- raise teachers' expectations further of the standards that pupils can achieve so that all pupils make better progress and attain higher levels;
- improve the quality of teaching so that most lessons are good.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- implement and monitor health and safety procedures more rigorously.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

By the time they leave the school the standards pupils attain are **below average** but showing clear signs of improvement and are currently close to the national expected levels. Overall achievement is **satisfactory** although not all pupils are achieving as well as they could. Standards by the end of the Foundation Stage are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory. Standards and achievement in Years 1 and 2 are still not good enough. These are serious weaknesses for the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The children's achievement in the Foundation Stage is unsatisfactory because the curriculum is not delivered effectively.
- Consistently good teaching of the older pupils enables them to achieve well.
- Standards and achievement in Year 2 are better than they were but are still not good enough, especially in reading and mathematics.
- Pupils present their work well.

Commentary

1. The attainment of the children on entry to the Nursery is below average. Children do not achieve the standards expected by the end of the Reception year. Their achievement is unsatisfactory because the curriculum is not delivered effectively, although there was some satisfactory achievement in writing observed during the inspection and the more able children are achieving the early learning goals in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. The outside area needs better resourcing, management and organisation for physical activity for the children to be able to make the progress expected.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2003

| Standards in: | School results | National results |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| English | 25.7 (26.3) | 27 (27.2) |
| mathematics | 25.9 (25.8) | 26.8 (27) |
| science | 27.7 (26.9) | 28.8 (28.6) |

There were 54 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. Achievement is good in Year 6. In the national tests for 2003, pupils in Year 6 attained standards that were below average in English, mathematics and science compared to all schools nationally but above those of similar schools. This represents good achievement from their Year 2 results. Pupils of all abilities and groups in Year 6 are achieving well and making more than typical progress over the year. Standards in English, mathematics and science are currently close to the national average. However, there are still a significant number of pupils in other year groups who are not making typical progress over the year.
3. In the national tests for 2003, pupils in Year 2 attained standards that were well below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics and teachers' assessments in science. These results were well below the average for similar schools in reading and mathematics and below average in writing. Achievement in Year 2 was satisfactory in the lessons seen in English and mathematics during the inspection, but is unsatisfactory overall. This is mainly because not all teachers are planning carefully enough for all abilities, particularly for the more

able pupils, and their expectations of what the pupils can do are still not high enough. Currently standards remain well below average in reading and mathematics but are below average in writing.

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

| Standards in: | School results | National results |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| reading | 13.7 (13.3) | 15.8 (15.7) |
| writing | 12.9 (12.1) | 14.5 (14.4) |
| mathematics | 14 (15.1) | 16.3 (16.5) |

There were 39 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

4. Currently pupils in Years 1 to 6 are achieving better than they were at the time of the last inspection. This is because of more effective school self-evaluation, monitoring of pupils' progress and improvements in the standard of teaching. A particular strength noted by the inspectors is the care that many pupils show in presenting their work, which is neat and pleasing to look at.
5. The school has set challenging targets to improve the numbers of pupils attaining the expected level and higher level for seven and eleven year olds in English, mathematics and science. This year more pupils in Year 2 are on course to attain Level 2 than last year but there are still not enough likely to achieve those levels securely. In reading and mathematics, the number on course to attain the higher level is not good enough. As last year, the expected standards in writing are better with sufficient pupils attaining the higher level. Inspectors agree that more pupils will achieve expected levels but not at the fast rate of improvement in Year 2 that the school is forecasting.
6. Currently achievement in English is satisfactory. It is good in Year 6. An appropriate emphasis is placed on speaking and listening, and standards are improving but are still below average. Strategies such as 'guided reading' and 'guided writing' approaches have already had an impact on pupils' achievement, though inconsistencies in teaching reduce their overall effect. Standards achieved in reading in Year 6 are improving and currently are above average. Year 6 pupils write using detailed description and imaginative vocabulary and pupils of all abilities are doing well. However, in other classes and sets, higher attaining pupils are not given enough opportunity to achieve all they are capable of because work is planned at the level of the average pupil in the set. In Year 2 many pupils are using capital letters correctly and the higher attaining pupils are beginning to use complex sentences to add interest to their writing. However, many pupils are still struggling to read the texts that they are given, some of which are too difficult for them. They do not always receive the support they need. Their speaking and listening skills are underdeveloped.
7. Pupils are achieving satisfactorily in mathematics. Achievement in mathematics in Year 6 is good and the pupils are making more than typical progress, although the number attaining the higher level is too small. Standards in mathematics are beginning to improve in Years 1 and 2 and more pupils are on track to achieve the nationally expected level. This is because teachers are monitoring pupils' progress more carefully and are following the guidelines for the National Numeracy Strategy well. However, there are still too many inconsistencies and not all teachers are planning sufficiently challenging or appropriate activities for the breadth of abilities within each set. Some pupils, especially the more able, are not doing as well as they could and only a few from the top set in Year 2 are expected to reach the higher level in the tests this year.
8. Although improving, standards in science also suffer from inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and planning. Achievement in science is satisfactory overall in Years 1 to 5, with good achievement in Year 6. The last inspection identified little investigative or practical work. This is now being appropriately planned and pupils in Year 6 are making good progress in

investigational skills and using scientific vocabulary. In other year groups not enough pupils are attaining the higher level because teachers' expectations are not sufficiently high and pupils do not make fast enough progress.

9. Standards are typical of those expected in information and communication technology and religious education and achievement is satisfactory. The pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of world religions and major religious traditions. In information and communication technology pupils are making satisfactory progress and generally work together well in the computer room. Information and communication technology is beginning to be well used to support and extend work in other subjects. This is a good improvement since the last inspection. It was not possible to form an overall judgement on standards in other subjects, as they were not a focus for the inspection.
10. The majority of pupils with special educational needs are making good progress and achieve the targets in their individual education plans. However, many of them are coming from a low starting point and will still struggle to achieve the nationally expected level. Some do reach and even exceed this level. The progress of the more able pupils is inconsistent and is unsatisfactory overall. Progress in the nurture group is not good because pupils' poor behaviour impedes their learning. However, pupils' achievement was satisfactory in a mathematics lesson because the behaviour was managed well and the pupils made good progress in learning to participate as part of a group. Pupils from minority ethnic groups attain a similar range of standards to white British pupils. Pupils from a traveller background or who are refugees are supported appropriately and take a full part in the life of the school. Pupils in the early stages of learning English make good progress, particularly where they are involved in the more practical and visual activities in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2. For example, Reception children talked together as they made a birthday cake in the sand-tray. They demonstrated good discussion skills, negotiating what kind of cake and for whom. Bi-lingual pupils were highly involved in the activity and learned the appropriate language in working alongside their friends.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance has improved recently, but is still **below** that of other schools nationally. Most pupils arrive punctually in the mornings. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are **satisfactory**. Overall there is **satisfactory** provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attendance is unsatisfactory and the rate of unauthorised absence very high.
- Recent action by governors has led to parental support and improved attendance.
- When teachers have established good relationships within their class, pupils respond with good attitudes and behaviour and are challenged to work well.
- Pupils in the nurture group can be uncooperative and disruptive.
- The provision within assemblies has declined since the previous inspection and they no longer contribute satisfactorily to the school's ethos and pupils' personal development.

Commentary

11. The school has suffered from poor attendance for many years, and unauthorised absence levels are high because local headteachers have agreed that holidays should not be authorised. During this school year attendance details have been held on computer, and this enabled identification of those pupils with particularly good or poor records. Governors wrote in December to parents of these groups, and this has resulted in an improvement in attendance. The school has been monitoring individual attendance with some care, although not using the full capability of the system, and it is now much clearer on what more can be done.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year

| Authorised absence | |
|--------------------|-----|
| School data | 7.0 |
| National data | 5.4 |

| Unauthorised absence | |
|----------------------|-----|
| School data | 1.4 |
| National data | 0.4 |

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

12. Pupils show satisfactory attitudes to their work, and this is unchanged since the last inspection. They show a real interest in their lessons where teaching is good. All feel they have to work hard, and most feel that teachers are fair to them. In class they cooperate well, for example working together as response partners and sharing their ideas. The oldest pupils are particularly well motivated: they take pride in their work, present it neatly and are keen to talk about it. Because their teachers are able to motivate them by giving them a challenge, boys remain interested. Teachers' strategies, such as getting pupils to show they can answer questions by body language rather than putting up their hands, encourage their social development. Breakfast and after-school clubs also make good contributions socially. Pupils are confident in conversation, and older ones know they have targets but some are unsure what they are. They are positive about school and their teachers, enjoy their clubs and are sure that action is taken against bullying, bad behaviour and racist comments. This indicates satisfactory awareness of right and wrong.
13. Pupils and parents expressed concern about behaviour. There were six fixed term exclusions in the last school year, more than at the last inspection. All were boys and parents' support was a key to their successful reintegration. Behaviour is more consistent than at the last inspection because the behaviour management strategy is in place. However, incidents of unsatisfactory behaviour do occur, often when teachers lack the strategies to manage them.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

| Categories used in the Annual School Census |
|---|
| White – British |

| No of pupils on roll |
|----------------------|
| 246 |

| Number of fixed period exclusions | Number of permanent exclusions |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 6 | 0 |

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

14. Pupils who speak English as an additional language were fully involved in most classes, behaved well and were keen to contribute to the general feedback at the end of each lesson. The attitudes of pupils with special educational needs are generally good when working on set tasks, particularly where teaching assistants are helping them achieve the learning objectives of the lesson or their personal targets. Some pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties display low levels of self-control, particularly where teaching was unsatisfactory. This was also the case in the nurture group, where some pupils were uncooperative and disruptive and had few models of better behaviour because of the small numbers in the group.
15. Inspectors were impressed with the oldest pupils' maturity. They are given some responsibility, for example within the school council, but are capable of more. Overall, provision for pupils' personal development is satisfactory, as it was in the last report, but it is inconsistent and depends on the quality of teaching. Some good examples were seen within lessons, for example cultural awareness was promoted through dance linked with history. Older pupils can talk about moral issues such as civil rights and Martin Luther King, and issues of modern life such as relationships and conflict. In lessons, the school places an emphasis upon pupils' social skills and in most lessons pupils are asked to work with each other. Assemblies do not make a significant contribution to pupils' personal development because they do not challenge

pupils or give them something to think about on a personal level, nor do they build up the school as a community. Similarly, personal, social and health education does not contribute enough to building pupils' self-esteem.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **satisfactory**. It is unsatisfactory in the Foundation Stage. Teaching is satisfactory overall. New initiatives are effectively being used to extend and enrich the curriculum. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning are **satisfactory** overall with **good** teaching in Year 6. Assessment is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching in Year 6 is good enabling pupils to achieve well.
- Teaching in the Foundation Stage is unsatisfactory.
- There is too little teaching that is good or better in quality because the teachers do not plan sufficiently well for pupils of all abilities, particularly the more able, and they do not make their expectations on behaviour clear enough.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 37 lessons

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|---------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 0 | 5 (14%) | 10(27%) | 17 (46%) | 5 (14%) | 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.

16. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the previous inspection but it is still too inconsistent. Most teaching assistants support learning well, particularly for pupils with special educational needs. However, there are other times when they need to be better briefed such as in information and communication technology lessons and in the nurture group.
17. Teaching overall in the Foundation Stage is unsatisfactory although lessons given by the Reception teacher are satisfactory. The teachers identify clear learning objectives but it is in the delivery of these in the classroom that the main weaknesses occur.
18. Teaching in English and mathematics has improved from the previous inspection. In English very good teaching was observed in a Year 6 and a Year 3/4 class with good teaching also in Years 1/2 and 5. However, half of the teaching observed in English was either unsatisfactory or satisfactory. In the unsatisfactory lessons there were weakness in behaviour management of the class and teachers' explanations of the work were not clear and confused the pupils. Teaching in mathematics was mainly good. Teaching in science, information and communication technology and religious education was satisfactory. Good or better teaching was also observed in art and design in Year 6. No teaching was observed in music, history, geography or physical education.
19. In the very good lessons there are high expectations of what the pupils can do and skills are being developed well. Work is carefully planned to challenge all abilities. Good use is made of opportunities to extend speaking and listening skills and understanding of key subject

vocabulary during the lessons. The pupils work well together as a result, cooperating with each other and supporting each other well. However, the satisfactory teaching does not always take account of the abilities of different groups of pupils well enough. Teaching in these lessons does not always ensure that all pupils are challenged and motivated to do as well as they can and the levels of challenge for the more able pupils are sometimes not good enough. Some teachers do not make their expectations for good behaviour clear enough and some pupils lose interest and their behaviour slips. Teachers' expectations of what the pupils can achieve and how they should behave need to be raised.

20. Teaching of pupils with special educational need is good and teaching assistants support learning well. However, in some lessons, such as information and communication technology, more support is needed to help pupils with their reading. In the nurture group, there is little evidence of significant impact on pupils' learning that such special arrangements should achieve. In classrooms, teachers are aware of the personal targets of pupils with special educational needs and use them to give appropriate support in lessons. Planning indicates clearly how teaching assistants will support pupils to help them achieve the learning objective. In a small percentage of lessons this support was not deployed well enough to help pupils make the progress they are capable of. This was the case in the nurture group where classroom support was ineffective. Teaching of pupils who are learning English as an additional language is satisfactory overall. Where pupils are supported by the specialist staff, however, teaching is good. Some teachers in older classes were unaware of their pupils' early stage of English language acquisition and were not taking account of the language needs of these pupils when presenting new ideas. For example, too few visual prompts or questions to check pupils' understanding were evident in some lessons. In one assembly, a story was told with no visual clues to its meaning to help those pupils in the process of acquiring English. Such support would also have helped other pupils, including those with special educational needs. A good example of this was in a Year 1/2 class when pupils re-enacted the story they had heard with cut-out figures. This allowed them to understand the detail of the story and the language needed to describe the sequence of events as it unfolded.
21. At the previous inspection the school was at an early stage of developing appropriate assessment procedures to track pupils' progress. These are now well established and in regular use in English, mathematics and science. Assessment is due to be developed in information and communication technology and religious education. There is a good system for recording the children's attainment in the Nursery but this is not used well enough to deliver relevant, interesting or creative activities. The school is working to ensure that teachers assess pupils' work more accurately and has identified this in its school improvement plan. However, assessment is not always used effectively to plan appropriate work that matches the ability of all pupils and to respond to weaknesses that have been observed in lessons. There was a good example of day-to-day assessment observed during the inspection of a teacher using evaluation from the previous lesson to review and change her teaching so it could challenge the pupils more. This was good practice. Marking is satisfactory. Some teachers use marking well to help the pupils improve their work but this is not consistent across the school.

The curriculum

The planned curriculum provided by the school is **satisfactory**. It is sufficiently broad and balanced to meet the learning needs of the pupils. The **good** range of activities provided outside lessons enriches the curriculum and pupils' learning. The accommodation and resources **satisfactorily** support the education provided.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Some good recent innovations in the way the subjects of the curriculum are linked are adding additional depth to the pupils' learning.
- The provision in the Foundation Stage is unsatisfactory.

- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- The school is not fully implementing its inclusion¹ policy.
- The nurture group is not effective enough in helping pupils' learning and their integration into the school.

Commentary

22. The current curriculum satisfactorily incorporates all the subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education and personal, social and health education. Sex education and drugs awareness education are included. However, the provision in the Foundation Stage is unsatisfactory and has not improved sufficiently to overcome weaknesses identified in the last inspection.
23. Monitoring of the curriculum, although satisfactory, is not undertaken with sufficient rigour to ensure that all pupils have equality of opportunity and that all ethnic groups and ability groups are achieving as well as they can. The school follows national guidance when planning subjects. Planning does not consistently take into account the needs of the different ability groups within the class. Due to decreasing numbers of pupils, the school has changed the structure of its classes and this has necessitated a change in curriculum planning to a two-year rolling programme for Years 1 and 2 and Years 3 and 4 respectively. The long-term curriculum planning for this new structure has been successfully completed. This has not yet been fully customised to the differing needs of the two year groups. In some subjects, such as science, pupils are being taught work planned at the same level, even though they are in different year groups. This restricts the attainment of those in the older year group, particularly the more able pupils.
24. Whilst reconstructing the curriculum, the school has started to innovatively link subjects in order to make the curriculum more interesting and exciting. Some aspects of this curriculum linking are already effective, such as teaching 1960s jive or Tudor dances to link with the historical period being studied. A range of media for learning, including film and drama, is incorporated. These links are enriching and extend the learning experience of the pupils. The new planning process is not yet completed and consideration of linking the skills common to several subjects is still to be undertaken.
25. The good provision for pupils with special educational needs is an improvement from the last inspection. The school meets the requirements of the new Code of Practice and pupils have access to all areas of the curriculum and range of learning opportunities. Teachers are aware of the personal targets of pupils with special educational needs and use them to give appropriate support in lessons. Planning indicates how teaching assistants will support pupils to help them achieve the learning objective. The school has identified a number of gifted and talented pupils and a register has been drawn up to make sure that the needs of these higher attaining pupils are met in curriculum planning. This support is more evident at the top of the school.
26. Pupils' progress in the nurture group is monitored carefully but the work planned includes similar activities to those of their classmates, which they could undertake in their mainstream class with support. Curriculum planning draws on the early learning goals and National Curriculum for most of the week. Pupils return to their class for physical education, religious education and whole-school assemblies. They do not experience the full learning programme planned for their specific age group because of their lower than expected attainment. Their slower progress is due to the difficulty they experience in working in a whole-class setting. They do not, therefore, have the opportunity to model their behaviour or work in collaboration with the rest of their class. The poor behaviour observed in the nurture group during the inspection often distracted everyone's attention from the ongoing tasks. When pupils from the

¹ Inclusion refers to the arrangements made to meet the learning needs of all pupils, whatever their gender, ability or background.

nurture group joined a religious education lesson in Year 2, they became fully involved and, with the support of staff, behaved well.

27. The provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language is good where there are specialist members of staff working alongside class teachers, but only satisfactory where class teachers are not building in enough support, particularly for those who are in the early stage of learning English in older classes. Pupils' levels of English fluency are well assessed and recorded. However, the curriculum does not draw on the linguistic and cultural experience of the pupils sufficiently to enrich the learning for all or to acknowledge pupils' family heritage. Such contributions from parents and pupils would help pupils learn about the multi-cultural community in which they live. In Year 6 pupils did have the opportunity to explore the history of this country's immigration by studying the arrival of families, starting with the first arrivals in the SS Windrush in 1947.
28. Assemblies are planned to meet legal requirements and incorporate an element of reflection and an act of collective worship. The themes link well to religious education but do not satisfactorily promote the pupils' personal and social development. Assemblies lack lustre and do not provide an uplifting, spiritual and joyous experience that unites the school with a guiding message. Opportunities to sing hymns or songs with a social message are too infrequent.
29. Enrichment opportunities such as visits to art galleries are good and the school offers three residential experiences to pupils during their time at the school. This year, two of these visits will not take place due to lack of support. There is a satisfactory emphasis on the arts and on sport and the school is proud that it won the local six-a-side football competition. Many clubs offering a range of activities are provided. These clubs cater for both the older and younger pupils and they contribute well to the pupils' overall learning experience. Pupils are excited and keen to participate. Clubs take place on different days and at different times to provide equal opportunity to all. The daily breakfast and after-school clubs are particularly well attended and provide good opportunities for social development.
30. The accommodation is spacious but it is not used as well as it might be. The library is in a corridor with no tables or computers for personal study, and there is no music room yet there are unused large rooms and spaces in the school. Some classrooms lead off others, which can be disrupting for pupils and staff. There are few adult toilets and none suitable for disabled persons. The outside grounds are a very good facility for sports and clubs. Resources are satisfactory overall. There are a good quantity of resources for English and for religious education. A few computers in the computer suite are old and break down. Most teachers and support staff have the appropriate skills to do the tasks allocated to them but some support staff do not have a clear enough idea of their responsibilities and more training is needed. More support could add to the quality of education in the Foundation Stage.

Care, guidance and support

The school makes **satisfactory** provision for pupils' care and welfare, but needs to tighten up everyday health and safety practice. The school provides **satisfactory** support, advice and guidance and is **satisfactorily** developing the involvement of the pupils in its work.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has begun to seek the views of pupils.
- Pupils are not involved enough with implementing their own targets.
- Health and safety monitoring needs improvement.

Commentary

31. This area is not as strong as at the last inspection. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are satisfactory, and the headteacher has a good and caring overview of pupils'

welfare. She ensures that good behaviour is logged as well as unsatisfactory behaviour, and makes sure that reported incidents are investigated and recorded. The established behaviour policy is having a good effect, and external agencies are increasingly used for behavioural support. Parents confirm that they are content with the arrangements made when their children start at the school.

32. Child protection matters are dealt with satisfactorily, and new members of staff are briefed each year. Everyday awareness of health and safety needs to be improved, because practice in some areas has become sloppy. Governors are actively involved in monitoring health and safety, but need to challenge more effectively. Those pupils who are injured or unwell receive satisfactory care. The school has plans to train more teaching assistants in first aid. The breakfast and after-school clubs provide a safe place for pupils.
33. The school is satisfactorily using its assessment information to provide support and guidance for the pupils. Information is being used to provide support where it is needed to pupils such as refugees and travellers, some of whom have been placed on the register for special educational needs. Pupils are given targets in English and mathematics so that they know what they have to do to achieve better standards; although some staff make this clear to pupils and others do not. The school is in the early stages of seeking, valuing and acting on its pupils' views. It has begun to use questionnaires to find out pupils' opinions, and there is a school council, although inspectors were told it hadn't met for some months. The majority of pupils who answered the inspection questionnaire are happy that there is an adult to go to if they are worried in school and feel that teachers are fair but a significant minority do not share these views.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has made good efforts to improve relationships with parents and these are now **satisfactory**. Reports on pupils' progress are good. There are **satisfactory** links with the community and other local schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good information is now provided for parents.
- Parents are encouraged to get involved in improving attendance and behaviour.
- The parents' forum gives them a voice.
- Many parents are passive and do not bring their concerns to the headteacher.
- Before and after-school clubs are useful for working parents.
- The school cooperates with other local schools on common initiatives like improving attendance.

Commentary

34. Communications with parents was an issue at the time of the last inspection. Parents now receive better information. Newsletters are issued regularly, are easy to read and have relevant content. End-of-year reports are now good, and clearly tell parents what their child knows, understands and can do, with National Curriculum levels for English and mathematics. This allows parents to see how their child is getting on compared with others of their age, alongside clear targets for improvement. The school makes strong links with parents of pupils in the nurture group and keeps them informed of their progress until they are re-integrated into the mainstream classroom.
35. This time, only ten parents attended the pre-inspection meeting and only 19 per cent of parents returned the questionnaire. The concerns raised may therefore not be truly representative. Three areas of concern are the same, relating to behaviour, bullying and management. Other issues raised last time (clubs and homework) appear to have been resolved. Behaviour overall is judged to be satisfactory, but there are concerns in some classes where it is not well

enough managed. Behaviour management is now satisfactory, and the headteacher makes herself available to parents in the playground and during the school day. The parents' forum, comprising a representative from each class, is a useful initiative to give parents a voice and allow them to raise issues with the headteacher.

36. There are opportunities for dialogue with class teachers through the pupils' reading record book. Not all parents are taking opportunities to communicate their concerns with the school.
37. The school allows its premises to be used by groups within its local community. The parent and toddler club meets on site. The breakfast and after-school clubs are a useful provision for working parents. Pupils from other schools also attend the latter. There is evidence of successful cooperation between schools in the town, for example to improve attendance. Parents have responded well by supporting the school in improving attendance. The local secondary school is now the school of choice for most parents, and transfer arrangements are satisfactory.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership, management and governance are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- School self-evaluation has been good in Years 1 to 6 but has not picked up the weakness in the Foundation Stage sufficiently well.
- The deputy headteacher is a good role model for staff and pupils.
- The leadership and management of the foundation class are unsatisfactory.
- Subject coordinators have clearly defined roles and are beginning to influence improvement in their subjects.
- Governors know the strengths and weaknesses well but need to challenge health and safety practice more effectively.

Commentary

38. Since the last inspection there has been a good improvement in the role of those involved in leading and managing the school. The headteacher and deputy are working together well in analysing and monitoring all aspects of the school's performance and have made sure that all staff know the educational direction the school must take in order to raise standards. The deputy head is a leading skills teacher; the headteacher has delegated management responsibilities to her well and she carries these out effectively. Subject coordinators have a clear understanding of what improvements are necessary. Governors also carry out their role much more effectively and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school has been well supported by the local authority.
39. Performance management systems are now being implemented appropriately and monitoring of teaching and learning in the classroom is well established. The school improvement plan has identified clear priorities aimed at driving up standards and covers many areas of school development. Priorities such as attendance, assessment and special educational needs are well identified and all have clear targets for improvement. Of particular note are the priorities set for the governors' personnel, finance and curriculum committees, which are all targeted at enhancing teaching and learning in the school. Information from performance data is being analysed well and used to inform school improvement planning. This information has enabled the school to monitor the progress of pupils with special educational needs and ethnic minority pupils, and to make the decision to introduce sets in English and mathematics and also focus groups. However, the school has not picked up the weakness in the Foundation Stage. Also the school has not monitored the impact of the nurture group on pupils' equality of opportunity through checking the quality of teaching and learning and the progress made during particular

lessons.

40. The governors have improved their understanding of their role and are now beginning to influence the work of the school. They have undertaken training and are developing their role as 'critical friends'. They are setting performance management targets for the headteacher and tackling the challenges such as staff recruitment. All curriculum areas including PSHE and special educational needs have a named governor, and governors keep a good monitoring file of their involvement. They share a common goal of improving the school and raising standards and the quality of teaching and learning, and seek to ensure that the school gets best value when making major spending decisions. Governors are actively involved in monitoring health and safety but there were several health and safety practices identified by the inspection that have become sloppy and need to be challenged more effectively.
41. Coordination of English as an additional language is satisfactory. The school has a part-time coordinator for ethnic minority achievement who, because of limits on time, focuses particularly on the newcomers to English in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2. Coordination of the provision for special educational needs is good and has improved since the last inspection. The leadership and management of the foundation class are unsatisfactory. There is a relevant curriculum but there are weaknesses in ensuring that all the children have consistently rich and stimulating experiences. The induction² procedures for the new Reception class teacher have not helped her settle in well enough. The school has identified that it needs to improve its induction and recruitment arrangements.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

| Income and expenditure (£) | | Balances (£) | |
|----------------------------|---------|-------------------------------------|--------|
| Total income | 987,216 | Balance from previous year | 28,037 |
| Total expenditure | 980,879 | Balance carried forward to the next | 34,374 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 2,500 | | |

² Induction here refers to the arrangements for new teachers to be welcomed into the school, briefed on routines, and helped to settle.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

42. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is **unsatisfactory**. There has been a lack of any real improvement since the last inspection. The last inspection found that teaching was unsatisfactory and there was scope for significant development throughout the Foundation Stage. This is still very much the case and activities planned are not sufficiently stimulating or purposeful for all the children. HMI found good progress in planning during their visit. Since the previous inspection the children are now taught in one Foundation Stage class with separate registration bays for Nursery and Reception children. The children enter the Nursery in the term in which they are four and stay for three terms. They stay for the afternoon session at first and when they are older they join the longer morning session. They enter the Reception class in the September or January of the year in which they are five. There are two teachers, one of whom teaches the Nursery group and also has a daily group of Reception aged children and the other teaches a group of Reception children. During the main activity sessions the Foundation class is split into three groups with a teaching assistant taking the third group. This organisation is not providing the best learning experiences possible for the children. Also the ratio of children to adults in the Foundation class is fourteen to one and there are too few adults to enable appropriate adult intervention when it is needed, whether to support the children or to extend their learning.
43. The curriculum appropriately covers the recommended areas of learning for the Foundation Stage. The environment in the Reception class is satisfactory with some good displays and areas where the children can feel safe and also explore learning opportunities. There has been some improvement in the Nursery, such as new toilets, decoration and more display, but inspectors found the area to be dull and uninviting. There are a significant number of children who are at the early stages of learning English and three children who have special educational needs. These children are well identified in teachers' planning but their progress overall is inconsistent because of the unsatisfactory provision. The teacher in the Nursery has developed a good system of assessing the children's attainment. The Reception teacher also keeps appropriate records. Both are making assessments against learning objectives and the teaching assistant is well involved in this. Assessments are used to plan the next stage of learning and clear learning objectives are identified, but it is in the delivery of these that the main weaknesses occur.
44. The attainment of the children on entry to the Nursery is below average. Not enough children achieve the early learning goals by the end of the Reception year and their achievement overall is unsatisfactory. The majority of parents who answered the questionnaire are pleased with the induction³ arrangements when their child starts school but there is a significant minority that are not. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are unsatisfactory, as classroom practice is not based sufficiently on the principles of effective early years practice.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in personal, social and emotional development is **unsatisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is unsatisfactory.
- The children need a clearer direction on how to work and play with others and to follow clear

³ Induction here refers to the arrangements to welcome new children into school and help them settle and make friends.

and consistent routines.

- The children are given opportunities to work alone and in small and large groups and can make choices to plan their own activities.
- There is a satisfactory range of opportunities in the Reception class to encourage individual and cooperative play through role play.
- Adults are not always available to give the children the support they need with the result that the children can only concentrate for short periods of time and some lose interest altogether.

Commentary

45. Progress is unsatisfactory. By the end of the Reception year most children will not achieve the expected goals because there are weaknesses in the provision. The management and environment in the Nursery does not provide a sufficiently supportive and purposeful learning environment that enhances children's learning and supports their emotional needs. This was identified in the previous inspection and improvement has not been good enough. Teaching is unsatisfactory in the Nursery and satisfactory in the Reception class. The children are given opportunities to work alone and in small and large groups and can make choices to plan their own activities such as writing or playing in the role play area. They enjoy playing in 'The Giant's Castle'. Some routines are well established, such as lining up before going out to play and joining in registration, but there are too many times during lessons when some children are not working purposefully because they are not sure what to do and there is a lack of adult intervention to extend and develop their play. The space is very large for the number of children in it and provides too many opportunities for some children to find a space or corner and withdraw from the rest of their group without adults always noticing. Because of the way in which the foundation class is organised, there are insufficient adults available to interact with the children in the different groups to provide the support necessary to help them develop socially and emotionally. The teaching assistant is available to support both groups during the start and end of the sessions.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The children are not achieving as well as they could.
- There are some good opportunities in the Reception class to practise writing skills and to talk in front of their class.

Commentary

46. The children make unsatisfactory progress during their time in the Nursery and Reception years. Over a quarter of the Reception children who transferred into Year 1 this year did not achieve the early learning goals in reading and nearly a half did not achieve them in writing. Teaching is unsatisfactory in the Nursery and satisfactory in Reception. The teachers plan a satisfactory range of opportunities for the children to develop skills in literacy but these are not taught or organised well enough and insufficiently capture the children's interest. Because of the way in which the Foundation class is organised, there are insufficient adults available to interact with the children to help extend their vocabulary, language and experiences. The best lesson observed during the inspection was in a literacy lesson in Reception. The teacher introduced Harry the Hedgehog who has woken up after the winter and wants some porridge. The children remembered yesterday's lesson well and told Harry how to make the porridge. The teachers have targeted writing skills after analysing pupils' progress last year and currently standards in writing show signs of improving. The Reception teacher plans some good opportunities for the children to write independently, such as writing an invitation to the giant's party or a shopping list for party food. Some children in the Reception class are confident in writing their name, and most can write some identifiable letters and are achieving satisfactorily.

Children in the Nursery also have appropriate opportunities to make marks on paper. The children enjoy listening to stories but the teachers do not always make these come alive for them or let them follow large print to encourage reading. There is too little discussion about the characters or the main points of the story.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a lack of purposeful activity.
- Teachers miss the opportunity to extend the children's mathematical language and understanding.

Commentary

47. The children make unsatisfactory progress and standards are below those normally expected. The highest attainers are achieving the early learning goal. They count past 40 and can write numbers to 15. They can order in size and identify common shapes. However, less than half the children are securely attaining the standards expected. The Reception teacher provides appropriate activities and makes it clear what she expects the children to do, but the Nursery teacher does not always provide relevant activities and carries on with her teaching even when it is clear that many children are not taking part or understanding what she expects them to do. Teachers do not always make it clear to the children what the lesson is about. In a lesson on size in the Nursery, the teacher did not use language well or encourage enough discussion for the children to make progress and there was a lack of focus on what the children should be learning. As a result the children are slow to respond and some pay very little attention. In the activities that followed the children lacked any clear purpose and just played with bricks.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

48. It was not possible to make judgements about this area of learning as too little teaching or activities were observed. Provision in the Reception class appears satisfactory. The Reception children were observed making satisfactory progress in using the computer and do have sessions in the computer suite. They dragged and dropped pictures to show the growth of a bean and could click on 'File' and print their work. They also used the computers in class to read books. However, a weakness in the organisation showed when only four Reception children went into the computer suite when more could have taken this opportunity. The Reception teacher paid good attention to safety when the children were hammering nails onto wood. Reception children were thrilled to discover and talk about how their hands had turned blue after playing in the blue water tray. Work and photographs show that activities are appropriately planned. The children in Nursery and Reception have observed the growth of animals, humans and plants and build with large and small construction blocks.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **unsatisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The outside play area is not set up or resourced well enough to offer relevant activities that offer physical challenges.

Commentary

49. Progress is unsatisfactory. In the Reception class, most children are not on course to attain the expected goals because there are weaknesses in the provision, particularly outdoors. The children have physical education lessons in the hall and make satisfactory progress and a satisfactory lesson was observed in the Reception year. All the children enjoy daily outdoor sessions but the lack of structure in these sessions means that the development of physical skills and control over their bodies is not as well advanced as it should be. The outside play area is of a good size to set up relevant activities that offer physical challenges using a range of equipment but the layout does not enable this to happen effectively. For example, the thin tracks for riding wheeled toys limit safety and do not allow the children to play well together and refine movements such as changing direction or avoiding obstacles. There is no equipment on which the children can have a quality experience in climbing and balancing. Teachers do plan learning objectives for these sessions but in the three sessions observed the boys tended to take over the equipment, there was quite a bit of pushing and bumping and no real teaching took place. Other physical skills such as holding pencils correctly and using a variety of tools and equipment are developed satisfactorily. The teachers provide appropriate opportunities for the children to write using a variety of implements and the children can use hammers and other tools, although there were serious concerns over safety when these tools are left in the Nursery without being put away.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

50. It was not possible to make judgements about this area of learning as too little teaching or activities were observed. Work shows that the children have appropriate opportunities to draw and paint. Reception children experimented well with hand prints. The children have made hats and decorated them with different materials. No musical activities were observed but the children do take part in action songs regularly. There are some adequate opportunities for role play such as setting up the three bears' café outside or playing in the giant's castle.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory** overall. The quality of teaching is inconsistent but satisfactory overall and very good in Year 6. Standards are showing signs of improvement and pupils' achievement against their prior attainment is good by the time they are in Year 6.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- In Year 6 pupils' achievement in reading is good and current standards are above average.
- Not enough pupils are attaining the higher levels.
- The quality of teaching varies too much between classes.
- There are some good curriculum innovations to raise standards.

Commentary

51. Standards in the 2003 tests in Year 2 were well below the national average in reading and writing. They were also below average in writing and well below in reading when compared to schools with a similar intake of pupils. Not enough pupils achieved the nationally expected standards for seven year olds. The proportion of Year 2 pupils achieving the higher level in writing was similar to the national picture while the proportion in reading was below. In the Year 6 tests standards were below the national average but above the average for similar schools. This is a good achievement. It represents good progress in the standards achieved by these same pupils since they were in Year 2 and reflects the very good teaching found during the

inspection in Year 6.

52. The school has a strong focus on raising standards in the subject and has adopted a range of strategies to support it in this key task. It has introduced 'guided reading' and 'guided writing' approaches, which help pupils build up skills in understanding meaning as they read and structure sentences and fuller pieces of writing to meet the conventions of particular writing tasks. Such work has already had an impact on pupils' achievement, though inconsistencies in teaching reduce its overall effect. The school has also grouped some pupils according to attainment to help teachers focus work at an appropriate level of challenge. Variations in teaching again affect the overall impact of this innovation. In Year 6 all pupils are taught by the same leading skills teacher and the impact on achievement is very evident. This imaginative time-tabling is raising standards and pupils are now achieving levels close to average in writing and above in reading by the end of Year 6. In Years 5 and 6 there has been a good 'reading challenge', which allowed pupils to study their current book in depth, both in school and for homework.
53. Current standards in Year 2 indicate an improving picture from last year and the previous inspection, with a higher percentage of pupils likely to achieve the expected levels in reading and writing this year. However, standards in Year 2 are well below average in reading and below average in writing. A significant number of pupils are still underachieving in literacy because teachers do not consistently plan well enough or provide sufficient challenge for the wide needs of pupils in their sets. In the current Year 6, standards in English are higher than last year and are now close to average, though there are still too few pupils set to achieve higher standards, particularly in writing. Pupils in Year 6 are achieving well in reading and currently standards are above average. The reason for the improved standards, particularly in reading, is the careful assessment of pupils' performance in the end-of-year tests, from which individual targets are set and additional support provided for those pupils who need it. Teachers are now planning better and drawing on guidance from the National Literacy Strategy. Pupils are set in Years 1 and 2 and Years 3 and 4 according to current attainment, which is generally having a positive impact especially when teachers show high expectations of all ability groups within them. This is not always the case.
54. An appropriate emphasis is placed on speaking and listening, and standards are improving but are still below average throughout the school. This is a good improvement from the weaknesses found at the previous inspection. In many lessons pupils are encouraged to talk together before feeding back to the whole class, and generally appear confident when talking about what they are learning. Teachers also question well, with questions open enough for pupils to demonstrate what they know and draw on evidence from the texts they are reading. Pupils are expected to talk together in many of the lessons observed, which gives most pupils the opportunity to be fully involved in the planned learning. This emphasis on talking with 'response partners' is particularly supportive for pupils learning with English as an additional language and pupils with special educational needs. These pupils were able to rehearse what they needed to say before feeding back to the whole class or beginning to write up their tasks. However, many pupils in Years 1 and 2 still do not listen or communicate well enough and there are too few opportunities for the pupils to develop speaking skills in whole-school events such as assemblies.
55. Reading standards continue to make a reasonable improvement and more pupils are expected to attain nationally expected levels than last year. Pupils are achieving well in Year 6 and standards are currently above average but standards are well below average in Year 2 and achievement is unsatisfactory. Most teachers exploit approaches which help pupils develop the skills they need in order to understand what they are reading, tackle unfamiliar words and infer what the author means beyond the simple sentence level. For example, intelligent reading in Year 5 helped pupils understand that a character's law-breaking was motivated by hunger, even though the author did not say so directly. Younger pupils in Year 2 demonstrated similar skills by using story illustrations to help them interpret meaning. For example, in a Year 1/2 class pupils recognised that a fox licking his lips implied that it had eaten 'The Runaway

Chapatti'. However, in the middle set in Year 1/2 the pupils had great difficulty finding facts about the rain forest because the text was too hard and the teaching assistant was not available to help them because she was already busy with another group.

56. In writing, pupils in Year 6 are able to organise their writing well using detailed description and imaginative vocabulary and pupils of all abilities are doing well. In some teaching groups, the more able are well challenged such as in a Year 3/4 group when they wrote acrostic poems and were working well in pairs. The teacher showed high expectations of the pupils and the session at the end of lesson introduced further challenge. Pupils evaluated each other's poems well, which provided good opportunities to extend speaking and listening skills. However, in other groups, higher attaining pupils are not given enough opportunity to achieve all they are capable of because work is planned at the level of the average pupil in the class and more experienced pupils are not given the opportunity to work beyond the limits of the lesson. In some classes pupils are not being given enough support to structure their writing nor to edit a first draft to improve the overall impression. For example, in one mixed Year 3/4 lesson pupils wrote about the 'mist people' stories derived from their reading, with little expectation to plan, review, and edit before presenting it as a finished piece of work. Spelling and grammatical structure were weak and finished work was not good enough. A strength is teachers' high expectations for presentation and handwriting, and pupils work hard to meet them. Pupils in Year 2 are achieving satisfactorily in writing and most can write a clear sentence showing attention to correct punctuation. Higher attaining pupils are progressing well in sequencing events and building up interest in a story.
57. The teaching observed in Year 6 and in one lesson in Year 3/4 was very good. Two unsatisfactory lessons were observed where there were weaknesses in the behaviour management of the class and the teacher's explanations of the work were not clear and confused the pupils. This is similar to the weaknesses found by HMI last year. Very effective teaching in Year 6 is helping pupils to achieve close to average standards, which may well be boosted through additional support by the time they complete the national tests in May. In some classes, even where pupils are grouped according to their ability, teachers do not always plan for the wide needs of the pupils they teach.
58. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Assessment is good but marking is inconsistent. The school places a strong and appropriate focus on raising achievement. Analysis of pupils' performance in national tests and end-of-year assessments is used in target-setting to ensure pupils make good progress year on year. In mixed-age classes, planning for the wide range of needs is less effective. The checking of teaching and learning in these classes has not identified this shortcoming and therefore remedial action is not planned.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

59. Good links with literacy are built into curriculum planning across the school and pupils can use their literacy skills in other subjects, for example writing reports, letters and accounts of historical facts or recording scientific investigations. Year 2 pupils, for example, wrote about the life of Mary Seacole, a Jamaican nurse who worked in the field hospitals of the Crimea. Following the advice of the nationally approved 'Excellence and Enjoyment' strategy the school has planned work around a particular literary theme, for example the legend of Pocahontas, and exploited writing and reading activities to link other subjects. In this way good opportunities are being provided across the curriculum to reinforce what pupils have learned in English. However, library and information and communication technology resources are not made available to allow pupils to research a topic or to pursue a personal line of enquiry independently. Such opportunities would help more pupils develop a scholarly approach to their learning and attain higher levels.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and beginning to have a positive impact on the pupils' attainment.
- Pupils are becoming good at explaining how they work out a calculation or problem.
- Not enough more able pupils are attaining higher standards.
- Pupils' work shows a good level of care in presentation.

Commentary

60. In the 2003 national tests, standards in Year 6 were below the national average but pupils did well in relation to similar schools. Currently about 80 per cent of Year 6 pupils are on course to attain the nationally expected level by the end of the school year including about 13 per cent who are likely to exceed national expectations. This year, standards are closer to the national average but not enough pupils are attaining the higher level. In the tests for Year 2, standards were well below the national average and those of similar schools. Currently, more pupils are on course to attain the nationally expected level but the number of pupils attaining the higher level is not good enough and not all pupils are achieving as well as they could; standards remain well below average but are improving. The teaching of those for whom English is an additional language means they generally do as well as other pupils but teachers do not always plan specifically with their needs in mind. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and those who are more able depends on the level of challenge and support, which can range from satisfactory to good. Standards in 2003 were similar to those found at the last inspection. HMI found signs that standards were beginning to rise last year. Inspectors agree with this but the rate of progress is not rapid.
61. Teaching has improved and was good in most lessons observed but there is still evidence that teachers' expectations are not high enough to ensure that all pupils are making the progress they are capable of. Assessment and tracking of pupils' progress now take place, which is an improvement from the last inspection. The school now has a much clearer picture of standards in the school and conducts a detailed analysis of test papers. Members of staff are following the recommended guidance for teaching numeracy well. This year pupils are grouped by ability in Years 1 and 2 and in Years 3 and 4. Although lessons can be good, the school needs to monitor and review the effectiveness of this arrangement as not all teachers are planning sufficiently challenging or appropriate activities for the breadth of abilities within the groups they teach. A scrutiny of work shows that too often pupils of differing ability are doing similar work. There were written targets for individual pupils, who did not appear to know them, but after a review the school has plans to change these to group targets.
62. One aspect which is working well is the ability of the pupils to explain how they work out a calculation or problem. They did this well in Year 6 and in the top group in Year 2 because the teachers challenged them well and set clear expectations. The school has identified a weakness in data handling and some good teaching was observed to develop skills of presenting and interrogating information, using information and communication technology well. More able pupils in the higher ability group in Year 2 were well challenged by this activity and said it was 'hard but not too hard'. The teacher of the middle group in Year 1 and 2 made good use of assessment after evaluating a previous lesson and as a consequence the pupils made good progress in their understanding of counting forwards and backwards in fives. In all the lessons observed the pupils displayed good attitudes to their learning and concentrated well. They take good care over the presentation of their work. Teachers used discussion and time targets effectively and the pace was brisk enough. Pupils worked effectively in groups and in Year 6, they checked each other's work. A satisfactory lesson was observed in the nurture group. Pupils in Year 1 were achieving satisfactorily in their understanding of ordering size and Year 2 pupils were introduced to comparing the weight of three objects.

63. Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is overseeing the subject this year while the coordinator is on maternity leave. There is a good action plan which aims at making sure that all teachers have a good understanding of pupils' attainment and progress and that assessment is used effectively. It could be seen working during the inspection. All the initiatives that have taken place will need careful monitoring, evaluation and refinement if standards are to rise further by any significant degree, but the first steps have been taken and have already improved the provision in the subject.

Mathematics across the curriculum

64. There is some good use of mathematics in information and communication technology. Pupils were entering data and answering questions. In Year 6 pupils made good progress in using a spreadsheet. They worked out the formulae by which they could calculate the amount of pocket money they would receive after a number of weeks. Pupils are developing a good sense of chronology in history.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Test and teacher assessments for national tests in 2003 show standards are well below average by the end of Year 2 and below average by the end of Year 6.
- Science investigational skills are developing.
- The leadership and management of the subject are good.

Commentary

65. Achievement is satisfactory overall; it is good in Year 6 but in other year groups it is not good enough. The below average test results for Year 6 pupils in 2003 were mainly due to not enough pupils working at above average levels. However, these results were an improvement on the previous year. Observations indicate that the achievement of pupils in Year 6 is now good and that the standards in this year group are close to the national average.
66. Teacher assessments in 2003 also showed that the number of Year 2 pupils achieving above average levels was low. Observations suggest that the standards for the present Year 2 pupils have improved to some extent but are still below average and not enough pupils are attaining the higher level. Pupils are given more opportunities to develop investigational skills, which is an improvement from the previous inspection.
67. During the time of the inspection, teaching was not observed in Years 1 and 2 but a detailed analysis of work was undertaken. This showed that there have been improvements in teaching investigational skills. For example, in Year 2 the pupils have investigated what would be the best paper to wrap up a teddy bear. With investigations like these, pupils have carried out simple tests, made predictions and thought about how to make their test fair. The presentation of work in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory and teachers' marking helps pupils to make sense of what they have done. In most topics covered there is appropriate challenge provided for lower and middle ability groups but not for higher ability groups and therefore teaching does not help all pupils to make fast enough progress. This means that higher attainers sometimes do work that is below average, for example when they produced work on the sources of light. The work scrutiny indicates that pupils have not yet covered the full science programme of work in sufficient depth; for example, there was no work seen on skeletons and muscles and the role of the heart. The school has organised topics for each year group and these should overcome this deficiency.

68. Teaching in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory overall and in Year 6 it is good. This is an improvement since the last inspection. In Year 6, science topics are covered in depth and pupils are making good progress in investigational skills and using scientific vocabulary. In one Year 6 lesson, when teaching was very good, the teacher used questioning to help pupils discuss the process of evaporation and condensation. The lesson had good pace and the consistent challenge led to pupils being engrossed in their work. Presentation in Year 6 is good and teachers' marking uses questions effectively to help the pupils understand how they can improve. In other year groups, teaching is satisfactory. In a well-organised Year 4 lesson, in which pupils investigated sinking different shapes, the pupils were able to think about making their test fair. In this lesson one group of pupils with special educational needs had help from a classroom assistant, which helped them draw conclusions from their investigation. In Year 3 the lack of independent work does not give the higher attaining pupils enough opportunities to make good achievement. Presentation in Years 3, 4 and 5 ranges from unsatisfactory to satisfactory. The teachers' marking is brief and does not always help pupils understand what to do to improve.
69. Assessment is satisfactory. Teachers assess pupils' progress at the end of each unit of work, and this helps them to set targets. Through the assessment and target process, teachers are able to track the progress pupils are making year on year. The coordinator is also collecting samples of work to assess and this work is being kept as a portfolio of evidence.
70. The leadership and management provided by the coordinator is good. At the time of the inspection there was a temporary coordinator covering for a member of staff on maternity leave who was continuing to support the subject well. The subject leader has a clear grasp of the strengths and weaknesses, which has been gained by test analysis, work scrutiny and observations of teaching. There has been training provided for all staff and this has led to a development of teaching science investigational skills which has improved standards in this area. One area identified for further improvement is the use of information and communication technology to support learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Improvement has been good since the previous inspection and all classes receive an appropriate amount of time on the computer.
- Support is not always available when needed, causing some pupils to lose interest.
- Although adequate computers are available, there are too many that break down and are not used which can cause unnecessary problems in lessons.

Commentary

71. Standards are typical of those expected nationally in Year 2 and Year 6 and achievement is satisfactory. The use of information and communication technology was found to be too infrequent at the last inspection and this is no longer the case as all classes have timetabled weekly lessons. All pupils now have their own files stored on the computer and complete an adequate range of work.
72. Most pupils work together well in the computer room. They work quickly and at a good pace and show a real interest in their work. Pupils in Year 2 entered information about their favourite party food and produced a table within a short space of time. In a lesson in Year 4, the pupils were good at discussing with their partner about which type of graph would be best to display their data. However, some pupils have problems reading or spelling words and begin to lose interest and misbehave. This would not happen if effective support was available. Also, some lessons are not as good as they could be because some of the computers have broken down

and are not available for pupils to work on. Because of these points, the achievement of individual pupils needs careful monitoring to ensure that they are making sufficient progress.

73. The quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory and a very good lesson was observed in Year 6. This lesson was characterised by the high expectations of the teacher who conducted the lesson at a good pace and issued constant challenges to the pupils, which enabled them to work out formulae on a spreadsheet and apply their existing knowledge, such as widening columns and using the fill handle. In all lessons observed the teachers used the smartboard well to give clear instruction on key points of the lesson and remind pupils to remember skills such as how to enter a decimal point. More able pupils were challenged appropriately. In one lesson when a pupil had finished his work the teacher asked him to make up his own questions, which he did well. Satisfactory lessons could have been improved by the more effective use of support when pupils needed help.
74. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The subject was being led by a temporary coordinator who showed a good knowledge of the practices in the school. The school has adopted a local authority scheme and all staff have received training on how to implement it. The school has conducted work sampling for every year group and there is good guidance on levelling work but with the coordinator away no monitoring has taken place this year. The subject is well identified in school improvement planning, with the further improvement of resources being prioritised and also the development of assessment.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

75. The school is developing the use of information and communication technology in most subjects such as mathematics, literacy, art and design, geography, history and religious education. Good use of data handling in mathematics was observed during the inspection. The Internet is used well for research on topics such as mountains in geography and other faiths in religious education. Email is presently underdeveloped and more use could be made of information and communication technology to support work in science.

HUMANITIES

76. Insufficient work was seen to form overall judgements about provision in **geography** and **history** and no lessons were observed. The school follows national schemes of work in both subjects. In **history** pupils are being taught a range of topics and through these topics historical skills are being developed. The display of history work around the school is good. In the Year 3/4 class, a display on the Tudors includes pictures and text from a visit to Hatfield House. In Year 6, pupils writing on immigration in the 1960s showed thoughtful and sensitive work where they explained the effect on people's lives of that feature of that time. Pupils' history work in Year 6 shows that pupils are developing a number of history skills. Pupils look at differences and similarities and the cause and effect of significant events. Recently the school has been linking work in other subjects to historical themes. For example, the pupils in Year 6 were very enthusiastic to talk about the work they have done in dance lessons on 'hand jives' and dances from 'Grease'. These good links are motivational for the pupils and help them to explore history in different ways. In Years 1 and 2, the work on Grace Darling and Mary Seacole shows that pupils are gaining knowledge and understanding of people and events from the past.
77. Analysis of **geography** work shows that standards are now in line with the national expectations and this is an improvement from the last inspection when they were found to be well below. Pupils in Year 6 demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of places and recognise and describe how people impact on the environment. The presentation of work in Year 6 is good. In Years 1 and 2, pupils have studied a topic on journeys and weather. They have made links to history through the topic on Mary Seacole, for example plotting the places she visited on a world map. Pupils in Year 2 have also used information and communication technology to produce a graph on different forms of travel to school. This range of work

enables pupils to make progress. Achievement overall is satisfactory; however, work is often not differentiated and therefore higher attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are using imaginative teaching methods and this effectively helps the pupils retain their learning.
- There are close links with the personal, social and health education programme that increases pupils' understanding well.

Commentary

78. Standards are broadly in line with those identified in the local Agreed Syllabus at Years 2 and 6. Work in pupils' books shows that the subject is taught thoroughly in these year groups, but it is less consistently recorded in Years 3 and 4. Pupils are achieving satisfactorily. Their knowledge of the various faiths being studied is better than their understanding of how learning from religion can help them in their own lives.
79. Pupils in Year 6 have an appropriate knowledge of Christianity and a good knowledge of Buddhism. In the lesson seen, they found interpreting the biblical metaphors describing Jesus to be difficult. Although all accomplished their task, many found working productively as a group difficult and only a group of five boys who concentrated and worked cooperatively achieved well. Pupils' work on Buddhism includes historical facts and theoretical teachings such as the 'eight noble truths', and they have tried meditation and a mantra for themselves. They have reflected and identified their own 'three jewels'. These pupils' books are very well presented, their literacy skills are used well and they obviously take considerable care and pride in their work. Year 5 pupils, in their study of Judaism, are developing a satisfactory knowledge of the historical aspects of the Passover story and how these events are reflected in the seder meal celebrated today. They are not gaining a wider understanding of how this festival is a message of freedom and human rights that is relevant to their own lives. Pupils in Year 2 have a satisfactory knowledge of the signs related to Christianity and of the Christmas story. They have composed their own prayer, in the Christian style. In the lesson seen, their understanding of the importance of events such as those remembered in Palm Sunday were not of a sufficiently high level for their age.
80. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. During the inspection, the teaching by the coordinator and in one Year 1 lesson was good, and elsewhere in the school it was satisfactory. Pupils' books indicate that they receive good teaching in Year 6. When the teaching is good, the skills and knowledge of the pupils who practise the faith being studied are sensitively incorporated and at times a spiritual dimension is created. Most teachers use resources well to make the subject interesting and relevant. Dressing in biblical clothes, mime and drama and active participation are used. This is particularly effective teaching for special needs pupils and helped one pupil recall his learning of Sikhism well. These methods also enable pupils with English as an additional language to participate fully. Most pupils enjoy this subject. However, only when the teaching is good do pupils show an enthusiasm and excitement in their learning and demonstrate sustained concentration and effort.
81. The subject has improved since the previous inspection and has benefited from good leadership. Standards and teaching have improved and, through effective training, the teachers are more confident. Some monitoring of teaching and of the pupils' books has taken place. The coordinator knows the strengths within the subject and the areas for development. The subject is not yet planned to the new two-year rolling programme for Years 1 and 2 and Years 3 and 4. Assessment is a development priority and the current planning does not have consistently

appropriate learning objectives or assessment statements which teachers can use as a basis for their judgements. There are good curriculum links to the personal, social and health education programme in Years 3 and 4 and these effectively increase the learning. The quantity of teaching resources is good, but there are too few modern books in the library that relate to the lives of children from various faiths. Computer technology is used to simulate visits to some places of worship. A range of visits and visitors enhance the curriculum, but as yet they do not cover all the religions covered.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

82. Insufficient work was seen to form overall judgements about provision in **art and design** and **design and technology** but some teaching was observed. The school follows national schemes of work in both subjects. A scrutiny of pupils' work in **design and technology** shows that designing and evaluation skills are not developed consistently throughout the school. In Year 2, these standards are unsatisfactory. By Year 6 these standards vary considerably. In one class, pupils' designs are detailed with attention to efficient function. Pupils have good opportunities to use their measuring skills and they also evaluate their products well. Other Year 6 pupils do not develop these skills satisfactorily. In Years 3 to 6 no products were in the school and so these pupils' practical skills could not be judged. In Year 2 the products on display show that the pupils are introduced to a range of joining techniques but that the standards are not at the level expected for this age. In Year 1, the only class where a lesson was observed, pupils were supported by satisfactory teaching to satisfactorily design a background for their puppets.
83. In **art and design**, the standard of teaching in Year 6 is good or better. Where the teaching is very good the pupils' designs are more imaginative and adventurous. Both teachers give pupils considerable support as they work in order to increase their skills. In Year 5, where pupils were painting, they struggled to produce fine work with thick brushes. Colour-mixing and skills of shading and pattern-making are taught to a satisfactory standard throughout Years 3 to 6. In Year 2, most pupils do not reach the national expected standards. A good feature of the curriculum is the links to other subjects and this helps to provide a context and a clear focus for the pupils' work and provides greater depth to their learning. Examples include Year 6 pupils designing and creating hats to link with the historical period they were studying. They also study how a range of artists depict Jesus as part of their religious education. Reception children do paintings in the style of Van Gough. Throughout the school, apart from these good examples, there is insufficient study of the work of artists. Visits to a range of art galleries, and the study of folk art such as that of the American Indian and the willow pattern china, make a good contribution to the pupils' cultural development.
84. **Music** was not a focus for the inspection. There is a choir and recorder group. There has been an audit of resources and new resources have been put in place. There were no opportunities planned by the school during the inspection for the pupils to perform and sing in assemblies. This is a lost opportunity for the pupils' personal development.
85. **Physical education** was not a focus of this inspection, but inspection evidence indicates that all aspects are satisfactorily planned throughout the school. The school uses a nationally approved scheme of work which helps the senior management team check that all aspects of the programme of study are covered. The school has produced a physical education policy to guide teaching and learning, though there is no evidence that assessment is completed to help the school report to parents. Discussion with Year 6 pupils indicates that they enjoy physical education, including summer athletics and swimming. They take part in a satisfactory range of sporting activities outside the school day, including dance, football and netball clubs. Good links are made with other subjects of the curriculum, for example pupils in Years 3 and 4 learned a Tudor dance as part of their history topic on court life during the reign of Henry VIII. Pupils are not achieving the expected standards in swimming by the end of Year 6 despite the fact that they have appropriate opportunities to learn.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

86. Not enough lessons were seen to support a judgement on the provision. The school uses a commercially produced curriculum but it is not yet planned across the school. The small quantity of recorded work shows that not all the activities provided are part of the personal, social and health education curriculum. In the two lessons seen, teaching was linked to religious education and this combination extended the pupils' understanding of religious education well. The teaching for this aspect of the curriculum was good during a planned discussion time, 'circle time', but satisfactory at other times. During the circle time, pupils each expressed their views, explored their own feelings and developed their confidence. All pupils were equally well included. These are good opportunities for pupils to learn respect for the concerns and feelings of each other.

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 | 4 |
| How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection | 4 |
| Value for money provided by the school | 5 |
| Overall standards achieved | 5 |
| Pupils' achievement | 4 |
| Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities | 4 |
| Attendance | 5 |
| Attitudes | 4 |
| Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions | 4 |
| Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 4 |
| 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 | 3 |
| 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 | 4 |
| The quality of the school's links with the community | 4 |
| The school's links with other schools and colleges | 4 |
| The leadership and management of the school | 4 |
| The governance of the school | 4 |
| 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).