

INSPECTION REPORT

FENS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Hartlepool

LEA area: Hartlepool

Unique reference number: 111600

Headteacher: Mrs M E Bousfield

Lead inspector: Mr A J Dobell

Dates of inspection: 22nd - 25th March 2004

Inspection number: 260058

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:	460
School address:	Mowbray Road Hartlepool
Postcode:	TS25 2LY
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs P Houghton
Date of previous inspection:	11 th November 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This very large primary school serves its local community, which has a mixed pattern of housing. The socio-economic circumstances of the pupils are broadly average. Children's levels of attainment and learning skills are average overall when they enter the Nursery, but cover a wide range. Almost all pupils are from white Western European backgrounds, and the very few who speak English as an additional language are fluent English speakers.

At the time of the inspection, there were 460 pupils on roll. Of these, 43 attend the Nursery part-time and a further 61 are in the Reception classes, making a total of 104 children in the Foundation Stage. There are 40 pupils on the register of special educational needs and they range from pupils having moderate learning difficulties to those who have physical disabilities and visual impairment. Four pupils have statements of special educational needs. A few pupils are in public care. The number of pupils leaving and joining the school other than at the normal times is broadly average and there is evidence that this has an adverse effect on standards. The school has received a number of awards in recent years, including three School Achievement Awards, the Basic Quality Mark, the Healthy Schools' Award and Investors in People status. The school is the only one in the local education authority to achieve the Active Mark Gold Award.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
10373	Mr A J Dobell	Lead inspector	Music Physical education
9189	Mr J Horwood	Lay inspector	
27826	Mr A Parsons	Team inspector	Special educational needs Mathematics Information and communication technology History
4350	Mr C Whittington	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage English as an additional language Science Art and design
28320	Mr R Willey	Team inspector	English Design and technology Geography Religious education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very good school giving very good value for money. Children enter the Nursery with standards that are broadly average but cover a wide range. For example, a significant number have special educational needs. By the time that they leave the school at the end of Year 6, standards are well above average. The quality of teaching is very good overall with strengths in the Foundation Stage and Years 5 and 6. As a result, pupils achieve very well overall. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and is continually seeking to improve standards further. She is given very good support by her deputy and all her colleagues.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher, very ably supported by her deputy and colleagues, is providing excellent leadership.
- Very high standards of attainment by the time that pupils leave the school are the result of challenging and stimulating teaching, particularly in Years 5 and 6.
- Children get a very good start to their education in the Foundation Stage.
- Very good systems of care ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, work in a secure and stimulating learning environment.
- Excellent relationships mean that pupils feel valued, are confident, and have excellent attitudes to learning.
- The school is very inclusive and all pupils have full access to all that the school offers because of the very high levels of support provided by teachers and teaching assistants.
- Excellent links with parents and very good links with the community and other schools support learning very well.
- The school has no significant weaknesses.

Overall, the school has improved very well since it was inspected previously. Standards have risen, particularly in information and communication technology and mathematics, and very good standards have been maintained in English and science. All the key issues from the previous inspection have been addressed successfully and there is now considerably more very good teaching. The value for money given by the school has improved significantly.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	A	B	A	C
mathematics	A*	A	A*	A
science	A	A	A	A

Key: A means that results were in the top five per cent in the country; 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 very good overall, particularly in Years 5 and 6. Standards have been variable at the end of Year 2 over the last five years, but have generally been above average and sometimes well above average. At the end of Year 6, standards have risen well overall over the last five years. Evidence from the inspection is that standards in writing are likely to improve in the national tests at the end of Year 2 in 2004, and that well above average standards are likely to be maintained at the

end of Year 6. Virtually all children in the Foundation Stage are likely to achieve, and many to exceed, the goals that they are expected to reach by the end of the Reception Year.

Pupils' personal qualities are very good overall. Their attitudes and behaviour are very good. **Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good**, as is their attendance.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is very good.

Teaching and learning are **very good** overall. The quality of teaching is very good in the Nursery and Reception classes and in Years 5 and 6, and there are examples of very good teaching in other year groups. Throughout the school, pupils have very mature attitudes to learning, are impressively co-operative and often work with enthusiasm. This is particularly so when imaginative teaching engages their interest so that they put considerable effort into their work. Pupils respond very well to the school's clear expectations for high standards of behaviour and effort.

The curriculum is good throughout the school with an appropriate concentration on English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology. There is excellent provision for pupils' personal, social and health education and citizenship, and for learning outside the school day. There is very good provision for pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, and higher attaining pupils are presented with very good levels of challenge. Pupils are very well cared for and there are very good links with the community and other schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is very good overall. The headteacher is providing excellent leadership. She has a very clear vision for the school and is committed to continual improvement. Other key staff provide very good leadership.

The quality of management is excellent. The school has excellent systems for evaluating its strengths and areas for development and for acting on the information that it derives from this analysis. Finance is managed very efficiently and the principles of best value are applied very well.

The work of the governing body is good. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They play an appropriate role in the school's strategic development and ensure that statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very happy with the work of the school in all areas. A minority expressed concerns about bullying, but inspectors found no evidence to support this. Parents feel that their children are very well cared for and expected to work hard because the school is very well led and managed. They feel that their children become mature and independent and are provided with interesting activities.

Pupils like everything about the school and the inspection team fully agrees with their positive views.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The school has no serious weaknesses. Governors will note the minor areas for development identified in the report.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Achievement is very good overall, regardless of gender, levels of attainment or special educational needs. Standards are well above average in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology by the time that pupils leave the school. Standards in mathematics, information and communication technology and religious education have improved since the previous inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well above average standards in the national tests at the end of Year 6.
- Standards in the Reception Year are largely above average in relation to the goals that children are expected to reach by the end of the Foundation Stage.
- Standards are generally above average by the end of Year 2.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language achieve well in relation to their previous attainment.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.8 (16.5)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	15.1 (15.9)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	16.8 (16.3)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 53 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

1. In the national tests at the end of Year 2 in 2003, standards were above average in reading and mathematics and average in writing. Teachers' assessments in science show standards to be above average. In reading and mathematics, a higher proportion of pupils reached the higher Level 3 than did so nationally. In comparison with similar schools, results were well above average in reading, above average in mathematics, and average in writing. Evidence from the inspection is that results are likely to be above average in each subject in 2004.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.4 (27.8)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	30.6 (29.5)	26.8 (26.7)
science	31.4 (31.1)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 59 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. In the national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2003, standards were well above average in English and science and in the top five per cent of all schools in mathematics. This represents very good achievement. In all subjects, a higher proportion of pupils reached the higher Level 5 than was the case nationally. This was particularly noticeable in mathematics and science. In comparison with similar schools, results were average in English and well above average in mathematics and science.

3. Pupils achieve very well overall. Achievement is good in Years 1 and 2 and very good in Years 3 to 6 because it accelerates markedly in Years 5 and 6. This is because the level of challenge increases and teachers are careful to ensure that pupils at different stages of learning are given levels of challenge which enable them to make significant progress. Teachers prepare interesting lessons and the pace of learning is brisk so that pupils work with sustained interest and concentration. Their enthusiasm means that, in most lessons, they put considerable effort into their work. As a result, pupils attain standards which are well above average in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology by the end of Year 6. Standards in mathematics and information and communication technology have improved markedly since the school's previous inspection.
4. Children get a good start to their education in the Foundation Stage. At the end of the Reception Year, standards are likely to be above average overall in relation to the goals that children are expected to reach. Children enter the Nursery with average levels of knowledge and understanding, so that above average standards at the end of the Reception Year represent good achievement. This is because, throughout the Foundation Stage, teachers, nursery nurses and teaching assistants work very well together as teams and ensure that children are continually encouraged to explore ideas and expand their thinking. All adults have a very clear understanding of how young children learn, and careful managing of learning for each individual results in above average standards being reached.
5. In Years 1 and 2, pupils build successfully on this good start and normally reach standards which are above or well above average by the end of Year 2. There is evidence that pupils in Year 2 in 2002-03 had a higher than average level of socio-economic disadvantage for this school. Even so, effective teaching ensured that standards were above average overall by the time that those pupils reached the end of Year 2. This represented good achievement.
6. Across the school, pupils with special educational needs meet the targets set for them in their annual reviews and individual education plans. The school actively promotes the involvement of these pupils in evaluating those targets and in setting new ones. Teachers and teaching assistants make sure that all these pupils are fully included in learning. In a Year 6 lesson, for example, this ensured that four of the six pupils with special educational needs developed a clear understanding about some quite advanced mathematical concepts. One of these pupils then played a full part in the after-school enrichment class. The very few pupils who speak English as an additional language are given effective support and achieve at the same level as other pupils. The few pupils in public care achieve as well as other pupils. The school is very successful in including these different groups of pupils in all its activities and this has a positive effect on their achievement.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils have very good and often excellent relationships with each other and with adults. Behaviour and attitudes to learning are also very good. Attendance and punctuality are very good. No pupils have been excluded from the school since its previous inspection. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have excellent relationships with teachers, who provide very good role models.
- Attendance and punctuality are very good throughout the school.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning when lessons are well-taught and challenging.
- Pupils with special educational needs have very positive attitudes to learning.
- Excellent moral development ensures that pupils know right from wrong and also respect the feelings of others.
- Consistently very good behaviour underpins pupils' very good personal development and they value opportunities for responsibility.

Commentary

7. Pupils enjoy school and this is illustrated by their very good attendance and punctuality. The school has very good systems in place to maintain this high level of attendance and to make parents aware of the need to ensure that pupils attend regularly and to notify the school if they are absent. The attendance figures for the last full school year, 2002-03, are well above the national average and there is very little unauthorised absence. The school actively tries to discourage parents from taking family holidays during term time and will not authorise absences close to the national tests.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	4.4
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.2
National data	0.4

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

8. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning in lessons and, in those where teaching is stimulating and challenging, their attitudes are often excellent. They listen attentively, work with sustained effort and are keen to respond to questions. They work co-operatively in pairs and small groups. Children in the Reception classes are likely to exceed the standards expected nationally in personal, social and emotional development by the end of the Foundation Stage.
9. The very good promotion of inclusion throughout the school has helped to develop a very positive approach to special educational needs. This enhances the school's overall ethos greatly and it now acts as an exemplar for other schools. The school's whole-hearted celebration of every single pupil's different strengths and successes, both in and out of school, is at the heart of its approach. This embodies the values and attitudes that underpin the excellent relationships which exist between staff and pupils.
10. Standards of behaviour are very good throughout the school both in and out of lessons. All pupils are aware of the class rules, which they have helped to create, and are aware of the high standards expected of them. Although a number of pupils attending the school have been excluded from other schools, the overall ethos of Fens school and the management of behaviour in classes have been successful in fully integrating them into the school community. As a result, they do not interrupt their own learning or that of other pupils. The very caring ethos in the school results in pupils having an excellent understanding of the difference between right and wrong and showing a very high level of consideration for others. Parents and pupils identified that there is occasional bullying in school but most agree that it is dealt with quickly and effectively. The school has very good procedures in place for managing behaviour and no signs of aggressive behaviour were seen during the inspection.
11. Pupils are keen to join in the many activities provided by the school and to take on responsibilities within the classroom or the whole school. The school council has only recently been established but has made a very good start and is rapidly becoming effective. It promotes personal development of a significant number of pupils very effectively and prepares them well for adult life. Other opportunities for responsibility include the roles of head boy and head girl as well as prefects and 'official helpers'. Other aspects of personal development are well supported through visits out of school and by visitors into school. The excellent provision for personal, health and social education and citizenship ensures that pupils' moral and social skills are fully developed and periods of reflection during assemblies and religious education lessons contribute very well to their spiritual development. Cultural development is promoted

very well in the school, in spite of the limited range of other cultures and faiths in the surrounding area.

- Relationships are a strength of the school and are fundamental to the excellent ethos which exists and to the highly effective working of the school. This is evident in the playground, where pupils all play well together, and in lessons, where they work well individually, in pairs and in small groups. Staff give a positive lead in promoting very good relationships, for example, by giving praise and encouragement wherever possible, and by being very good role models themselves. Parents are very appreciative of the school's work in ensuring that their children enjoy learning and develop maturity and independence. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and attendance have improved well since the previous inspection.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides an education of very good quality. Very good teaching enables all pupils to make very good gains in their learning and achieve very well.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall, with particular strengths in the Foundation Stage and in Years 5 and 6. There are very good systems for the assessment of pupils' work.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent expectations for pupils' behaviour and effort and demanding levels of challenge mean that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, achieve very well overall.
- Teaching methods are very effective and learning resources and time are used very productively so that pupils put a good amount of effort into their work.
- There are comprehensive systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress and older pupils have a very clear understanding of how they can improve their work.
- Children in the Foundation Stage get a very good start to their education.
- Teaching assistants support teachers very well and contribute to high standards.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 50 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1 (2%)	23 (46%)	22 (44%)	4 (8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

- Throughout the school, staff have very high expectations for pupils' behaviour and effort. Pupils respond very well to these clear expectations, settle quickly to work and achieve very well overall because they put a good amount of effort into their work. Very high levels of challenge are particularly evident in Years 5 and 6, where exciting and imaginative teaching often engages pupils' interest. As a result, they work with real enthusiasm and are keen to contribute to their own learning. For example, in an excellent English lesson in Year 5, pupils were fully engrossed in their work because of the consistent level of challenge to pupils at different levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs. Excellent resources were available to stimulate pupils' thinking as they planned the writing of their own myths. Stimulating and imaginative teaching and consistent challenge resulted in excellent achievement for pupils at different levels of learning. Similarly, in a very good mathematics lesson in Year 6, a pacy and challenging presentation motivated pupils very effectively. The teacher was very alert to the learning of different groups and was quick to provide extra

challenge for higher attaining pupils. At the same time, pupils needing greater support were catered for so that all achieved very well because of their excellent attitudes and efforts. Where teaching and learning are satisfactory, this is often because teachers have misjudged how long it will take pupils to grasp a new concept so that the pace of learning is too great for secure understanding.

14. Teachers are very successful in selecting learning activities which engage pupils so that they gain a good level of understanding. This was evident in a very good science lesson in Year 5 where pupils accurately recalled the different parts of flowers from the previous week using the correct scientific language. They were then able to identify these parts when dissecting daffodils. In a very good physical education lesson, the use of robots to study movement engaged pupils' interest and many were able to imitate these movements because they had been so effectively demonstrated. There were many examples during the inspection of very good resources contributing to high standards. In the best lessons, time limits are made specific so that pupils waste no time – 'you have five minutes to do this' – 'only one minute left now'. All these strategies are effective in ensuring that pupils put a great deal of effort into their work, and so achieve very well.
15. The setting of clear, precise targets and the well-planned use of support staff ensure that provision matches the identified needs of groups of different pupils very well. There is very good provision for pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language. As a result, they achieve very well. Staff members act promptly on the advice of outside agencies to refine the management of these pupils' work when necessary. All staff members are aware of the targets that different pupils are working towards because they have participated in setting them. Copies of current individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs are well to the fore in all teachers' and teaching assistants' working folders. The learning of the very few pupils who speak English as an additional language is managed sensitively and, as a result, they make very good progress. Extension work is routinely available for higher attaining pupils so that they, too, have very good opportunities to reach their potential.
16. The school has developed very effective systems for assessing pupils' standards and tracking their progress in English, mathematics and science. Pupils are given individual targets and their progress towards these targets is carefully tracked. Support systems can then be put into place if weaknesses are identified in any area. Ongoing assessment is used to help pupils to make progress and, as they get older, pupils build up a very good understanding of how they can improve their work. The school has plans in place to refine its assessment systems further by installing the latest version of a nationally recognised computer program in the near future. Carefully managed assessment and tracking systems are having a positive effect on standards and pupils' achievement.
17. Children get a very good start to their education in the Foundation Stage. They enter the Nursery with average levels of attainment and learning skills. Very effective management of their learning enables them to achieve well and make good progress. Teachers, nursery nurses and teaching assistants work effectively together and have a very clear understanding of how young children learn. They quickly settle into their class routines and co-operate confidently with adults and each other. Very good teaching and support develop language and social skills quickly and successfully. As a result, children are likely to reach the goals that they are expected to achieve by the end of the Reception Year, and, in many cases, to exceed them.
18. Throughout the school, teaching assistants support teachers very effectively. Some work with specific pupils who have particular needs whilst others support more generally. They are accepted as full members of the teaching team, are consulted regularly and feel confident to make suggestions, knowing that they will be valued. They are aware of the learning planned for the week, and a number take small groups out of lessons so that they can support learning in a more focused way. Teaching assistants appreciate the support that they receive from

teacher colleagues and from the special educational needs co-ordinator. They contribute effectively to the high standards that the school achieves.

19. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the school was inspected previously. Teachers are continually looking for ways to improve further and the school is in a good position to continue to improve learning.

The curriculum

The school provides a curriculum of good quality. It is fully inclusive and benefits from both the many challenging opportunities that enrich the curriculum for gifted and talented pupils, as well as the very good provision for pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language. The school facilitates a wide range of extra-curricular activities and has a highly skilled staff team to manage them. The school's accommodation and resources for learning are of good quality.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The breadth of the curriculum is good for pupils of all abilities.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs, for those who speak English as an additional language and for those who are gifted and talented is very good.
- There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are skilled practitioners.
- The school's accommodation and resources support the curriculum well.

Commentary

20. The range of learning opportunities is good and meets all statutory requirements because of what the school itself describes as the 'relentless pursuit of pupils' achievement and high standards'. The school's positive commitment to inclusion ensures that pupils' various special educational needs are very well met by all staff members. Additional training is provided for all staff when new needs arise. The provision for pupils who are particularly gifted and talented is also very good, as is that for the very few pupils who speak English as an additional language. As a result, all these groups achieve very well. Teachers are skilled at developing high level challenges in many lessons which motivate pupils effectively. They adapt the curriculum selectively so that, by Year 6, pupils who need stretching are already covering parts of the secondary curriculum. Master classes, at the main secondary school of choice, add very effectively to this provision. The close working relationship between the two schools ensures not only that pupils do not repeat former learning after transfer, but also that the ongoing discussions about the curriculum benefit both schools.
21. The curriculum is enriched greatly by the large number of visits and visitors who come into the school to talk about their work, the organisations they represent or the faiths and cultures that they come from. This enrichment makes a significant contribution to broadening pupils' awareness of life outside their home town and local community. The school organises, or participates in, a range of focus weeks, competitions and challenge days, and even has themes for its breakfast club. The very wide range of extra-curricular clubs and activities promotes everything from team games and golf to cheerleading and first aid. Parents appreciate the wide ranging opportunities which the school provides for their children, and the way in which these help them to become responsible and independent.
22. The quality of all staff working in the school and their commitment to action research and continuing professional development, more than compensates for the low pupil-teacher ratio and the consequent large numbers of pupils in most classes. A whole-school focus on the detail of monitoring and evaluation also helps to ensure that the curriculum remains appropriate for the pupils in the school. The tracking of progress against colour-coded targets

is particularly clear and efficient for pupils with special educational needs. Induction arrangements ensure that new staff experience at first hand teaching in different age groups in the school and this helps to foster the excellent ethos of the school very effectively.

23. The school is very well maintained and kept very clean. Whilst pupil numbers have grown considerably as a result of the school's reputation, the accommodation has not. The school, however, has made very good use of the spaces within the building to ensure that the curriculum can be delivered effectively – an example being the creation of the information and communication technology suite adjacent to the main hall. Whilst there are some shortcomings in the use of the outdoor play area for the Foundation Stage, the overall accommodation in the school is good. Resources in all areas are good in both quality and quantity.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides very good care for all pupils. They are given very effective guidance to help them to develop both personally and academically. The school involves pupils very well by seeking and acting on their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good provision for health and safety, with child protection systems fully in place.
- The school contacts parents on the first day of absence to ensure the pupil's safety.
- The school is fully committed to inclusion.

Commentary

24. The school has all the necessary health and safety procedures in place and they are regularly reviewed. Risk assessments are carried out as required, including those for school trips. A team, including both staff and governors who have considerable experience and expertise, carry out regular health and safety checks to ensure that the school is safe and secure. The school has good medical facilities and records of accidents and treatments are kept very efficiently. Child protection procedures are very good and there is good liaison with other agencies. There are currently a few children at school who are in public care and the school has the appropriate procedures in place to support them and to manage their care and welfare.
25. The high level of care provided by the school is demonstrated by the very good and popular breakfast club which is held every morning. Parents were in strong agreement that their children are treated fairly within the school and that they are encouraged to become responsible and independent. Pupils, especially the younger ones, agree that they have very good relationships with at least one adult who they trust and would confide in. The school ensures that all its pupils are included in all activities as far as is practical.
26. The school has a clear commitment to supporting every pupil and uses outside agencies very well to clarify needs, refine programmes and provide additional support for pupils with special educational needs. Agencies enjoy working in such a well organised school and speak warmly about its commitment to ensuring that all pupils are fully included in everything that the school does. This has a positive effect on pupils' achievement.
27. The care of pupils was only reported in general terms in the previous report but appears to be much stronger now.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has excellent links with parents, who are extremely supportive of the school. The school has also developed very good links with the community and other schools which support pupils' learning very effectively.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is an excellent partnership between the school and parents.
- The Friends Association makes a significant contribution to the work of the school.
- Very good partnerships with the local community and other schools support the curriculum very well.
- The school works very well with parents of pupils with special educational needs.

Commentary

28. Parents are very well informed about the school through a well-produced prospectus, a comprehensive governors' annual report and regular letters to parents. Parents are invited to attend three open evenings per year to talk to staff and also receive an annual report on pupils' standards and achievement at the end of the year. The school operates an open door policy and parents may contact the school at any time to discuss specific issues. The school provides parents with a booklet about course content to enable them to support their children's learning at home. In addition to pupils' reports, a pilot scheme is being trialed to build up Primary Progress Files, which recognise pupils' achievements both in school and with regard to outside activities.
29. Parents are extremely satisfied with all aspects of the school and raised no areas of serious concern in the questionnaires. A minority identified bullying as an issue. However, discussions with parents confirmed that any bullying is dealt with quickly and effectively. The inspection team confirmed that bullying is rare and school procedures ensure that it is dealt with efficiently.
30. Parents support their children's education by attending parents' meetings and by ensuring that they attend regularly and punctually. Parents also attend various workshops provided by the school and some help in school. Many parents are active members of the Friends' Association, which also includes members of the community, and provides financial support for the school as well as organising events for both pupils and their parents. Parents are very appreciative of the successful work that the school does in keeping them informed about their children's education and involving them in learning.
31. The school has very good links with the community. Pupils visit local churches and shops as part of their studies and community members come into school to support lessons and provide guidance within the personal, social and health education lessons. Local industry and shops support the school by donating equipment and prizes – a local supermarket, for example, provided all the baskets for the fresh fruit that pupils receive every day.
32. Links with local schools are very good at headteacher, staff and pupil levels. Most pupils transfer to the same secondary school. Strong links exist with this school, including curricular links and the provision of specialist teaching in subjects such as information and communication technology. There are also many sports links with the secondary school, including use of its swimming pool and the provision of extra-curricular activities. The headteacher and staff liaise very closely with the other primary schools in the local area, and there are regular meetings between them and the secondary school. This means that, for most pupils, moving to the next stage of their education is trouble free.
33. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are informed about their children's progress towards achieving the targets contained in their individual education plans on a regular basis.

The yearly cycle of different assessments ensures that up-to-date information is available for these meetings. The annual reviews of statements of special educational needs take place according to a clear schedule. The school works hard to ensure that representatives from other agencies attend, and, as a result, almost all parents attend every meeting. The availability of loan resources to support work at home is very good and helps parents to be involved in their children's learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good overall. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and the leadership of senior staff is very good. Management is excellent. Governors are effective.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher is fully committed to continuing improvement: her excellent leadership is enabling subject managers to fulfil their roles very effectively and all adults to contribute very well to learning.
- The professional development of staff and the creation of effective teams are given a very high priority.
- The school is very evaluative: the headteacher and her colleagues identify areas for development and plans to move the school forward are managed very effectively.
- Finances are managed very efficiently and resources are deployed for the benefit of all pupils in the school.
- The governing body has a good appreciation of the school's strengths and areas for development and governors are effectively involved in strategic management.
- The leadership and management of special educational needs are very good.

Commentary

34. The headteacher provides excellent leadership. She is perceptive and caring and shows a strong commitment to raising standards in all areas of the school's work. Her clear-sighted sense of purpose has been a key element in the marked improvements achieved since the school was inspected previously. She has given subject leaders the power to manage their subjects so that the curriculum is now managed effectively. She values all pupils in the school so that all are fully included and have equality of access to all that the school offers. She is a constant reassuring presence around the school and this is a major factor in maintaining the school's excellent ethos because she has an overview of all that the school provides. Pupils feel secure and confident because they know that the headteacher will be aware of what they are achieving and will value their efforts. Similarly, all adults in the school are valued and given opportunities to contribute to learning and the general life of the school.
35. The headteacher recognises that her colleagues are her most valuable resource. Since the school was inspected previously, the key issue to develop the role of the deputy headteacher has been addressed, and she now plays a valuable role in the leadership and management of the school. At the same time, a very effective structure has been developed to lead and manage the different sections of the school. This is divided between key stage co-ordinators and team leaders. The professional development of staff is given a high priority, is managed carefully and is available to all adults in the school. One result of this is that some are able to support developments in education regionally and even nationally. Another is that all adults in the school feel valued and part of the team. For example, teaching assistants feel that they play a significant role in the life of the school and the provision for pupils. They feel able to offer suggestions knowing that they will be treated seriously and value the fortnightly opportunity to meet with a senior teacher. Similarly, the two most recently appointed teachers value the very good support available to them, but equally value that they are trusted to develop their own ideas in areas where they feel confident. This carefully managed development of colleagues means that the headteacher has developed an impressive unity of purpose among her colleagues which is centred on giving pupils every opportunity to reach their potential academically while developing into confident and caring young people.

36. The school is very evaluative. Excellent systems exist for identifying areas for development, taking action and then monitoring and evaluating the effect of these actions. The school improvement plan is a highly effective working document created after wide-ranging discussion and consultation. The achievements of the previous year's plan are evaluated so that new objectives can be determined. The headteacher's excellent grasp of long-term strategy enables her to plan the school's development over time so that a range of initiatives is systematically contributing to a common goal. The result of this has been very good improvement in the school's effectiveness since its previous inspection.
37. One example of this is the management of the school's finances. At the time of the previous inspection, there was a budget deficit. This has been eliminated and prudent financial management means that the school has been able to improve its facilities significantly while remaining within budget. Where necessary, sums have been held over from one year to the next so that major pieces of expenditure can be financed. The principles of best value are applied very effectively and the school's finances are managed efficiently by the school administrator.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,070,198	Balance from previous year	189,592
Total expenditure	852,026	Balance carried forward to the next	218,172
Expenditure per pupil	2,038		

38. Governors are an important part of the team. They are able to play an appropriate part in the school's strategic development and the management of its finances because they have a good appreciation of the school's strengths and potential for development. Governors ensure that the school complies with legal requirements.
39. The co-ordinator and the headteacher oversee the systems for supporting pupils with special educational needs very effectively. New training is undertaken and new resources are acquired as new needs are identified. As a result, all staff, including teaching assistants, are confident about meeting new needs. Parents are grateful that they are fully involved in the management of their children's special educational needs. The education of the few pupils who speak English as an additional language is also managed very effectively and they are fully integrated into the school. As a result of this management, their use and understanding of English is good and they achieve as well as other pupils. The school's management of personal, social and health education is excellent and this area of the school's work makes a major contribution to pupils' very good personal development.
40. Parents are very appreciative of the school's leadership and management. Comments on questionnaires included 'an excellent school – glad we are in the catchment area', and 'an excellent standard of teaching and care – we feel totally involved'. Parents appreciate the school's 'old fashioned values', which mean that their children become mature and independent. Very effective leadership and management enable pupils to achieve standards which are well above average. Given this, the very good quality of the care that pupils receive and the very good teaching that they enjoy, coupled with its low unit costs, the school is giving very good value for money.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

41. The provision for children in the Foundation Stage is very good and all children achieve well. This is because of the very good quality teaching within both the Nursery and Reception classes and because of the strong, positive relationships formed between the highly supportive staff and the children, which make each child feel valued and fully included. The general standards on entry to the Nursery are average, although, within this, there is a wide range of abilities and learning skills. The key issue from the previous inspection – to ‘clearly identify what children under five will be taught in the Nursery and Reception classes and how this will be fed into the National Curriculum’ – has been addressed successfully. That inspection also found that outdoor space ‘is not always used to maximum effect’. This is still the case to some extent, although the play area has been developed well only very recently, and there is clear evidence that plans are in place for it to be fully used.
42. The curriculum is well balanced and planned to provide a wide range of interesting and relevant activities which are carefully matched to the children’s needs. Where assessment is good, it is used effectively to plan the next learning tasks. Some of the child-initiated activities, however, are insufficiently focused for learning, and assessment here is ineffective. All activities provided need to be evaluated in terms of what – specifically – the children using the activity will learn. Assessment systems may then be developed for all the areas of learning that are pertinent to the Foundation Stage curriculum, and not necessarily to the common system for assessment used in the rest of the school. Resources are generally good, and, in the Nursery, many are provided from the special fundraising that takes place there. Good use is made of a digital camera to record and celebrate what the children have done.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The Nursery and Reception classes provide children with a very good start to their school life.
- Children are encouraged to work and play together.
- The children are confident, have positive attitudes, and behave very well.
- Children become confident and know they are valued, ensuring that very good relationships are formed.

Commentary

43. Most children enter the Nursery with average development in personal, social and emotional skills, but lack the confidence to be independent. Skilful teaching by all adults in the Nursery and Reception classes ensures that children begin to develop the necessary skills, and, by the time they reach Year 1, most children work and play together, relating easily to others. Most share and behave in a socially acceptable way, and are happy and confident because they know that they are valued. Resources are used very effectively to promote the children’s personal and social skills. Children are given ample opportunities to choose their own

activities and resources and many are becoming independent and responsible through the tasks provided. Most children are likely to exceed the standards expected nationally in this area of learning by the end of the Reception Year.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well because of the very good quality of teaching.
- Books are taken home regularly and shared with a parent or carer.
- The children have generally positive attitudes and often show great enthusiasm. This is strengthened by the very good relationships formed between the staff, who make each child feel valued.
- The assessment of learning is continuous and thorough. It is used effectively to plan the next stages of learning for all pupils.
- None of the classrooms have specifically designated reading areas which could provide a comfortable, encouraging environment for children to enjoy books.

Commentary

44. Speaking and listening skills on entry to the Nursery are generally above the average for children of this age. Good progress is made as children begin to work and play with others, talking about what they are doing as a result of encouragement from all adults. Children enjoy listening to stories and respond enthusiastically to them. High expectations from all staff ensure that most children begin to show understanding through their questions and comments. These skills are encouraged through all activities. The role-play in the Nursery is currently a 'baby clinic', where children go to dress up and act out various roles. In the Reception classes, there are a dentist's and a doctor's, and both are used with imagination. These areas have, at different times, been a house, a travel agent's, a holiday café and a shop. A good range of activities is provided and visits and visitors, including a mother with her baby during the inspection, are effective in extending opportunities for learning. By the time that children are ready to enter Year 1, good progress has been made, and their speaking and listening skills are above the national average.
45. Many children come to school with some knowledge of books. In school, they improve their knowledge and most understand how books 'work', knowing that print carries meaning. Some want to tell the stories themselves, often with great enjoyment. They join in readily with nursery rhymes. Books are taken home regularly and the Nursery provides helpful hints for parents on how to encourage their children to use books. All classes have book areas, although these are not the warm, comfortable, welcoming environments where children will want to go to read. Letter recognition and sounds are taught and reinforced effectively. A wide range of writing is encouraged in all classes.
46. Elements of the National Literacy framework are used well as children get older, and letter sounds and letter formation are taught effectively. Teachers and assistants have high expectations, and, by the time that children leave the Reception class, most children have exceeded the expectations of the Early Learning Goals for communication, language and literacy, and standards, overall, are above average.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well because of the very good quality of teaching.
- Assessment is continuous and thorough and is used effectively to plan the next learning activities.

Commentary

47. Children begin school with average standards in their mathematical development. By the time they reach the age of five, most count well beyond ten, and number recognition is good. Most attain, and many exceed, the Early Learning Goals for mathematical development. Well-planned activities result in good quality learning. Children count upwards, gaining greater confidence and understanding of numbers. Number rhymes and songs are used very effectively. Children begin to develop an understanding of shape, size and position, using words such as 'smaller'/'larger' and 'more'/'less'. They are aware of simple symmetry. A group of children in one of the Reception classes produced some very sophisticated repeating patterns.
48. Once more, good teaching by all adults and well-focused activities ensure that each child makes good progress. Effective day-to-day assessment helps teachers to plan suitable activities for future learning. These build systematically on what has been learned previously so that children achieve well.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well because of the very good quality of teaching which covers a wide range of carefully planned activities.
- Children's attitudes are very positive and most develop their independence well.
- A good range of visits and visitors is used to extend the curriculum.

Commentary

49. Most children enter the Nursery class with a little knowledge of their local area and the world at large. In the Nursery and Reception classes, a number of activities foster learning in this area. Children select resources on their own, and begin to use them with care. The quality of teaching is very good overall, and the range of activities provided for the children is focused well to ensure effective learning. As a result, children are enthusiastic and curious and develop independent learning skills well as they explore the world around them. They are introduced to a wide variety of experiences to widen their understanding. They explore the environment through visits within the local area, such as to the nearby shops; and by having visitors within the school, including, for example, a mother with her baby. Following a visit from a Hindu lady who told the children about Holi, they made attractive pictures using dry powder paint. During the inspection, they drew a hedgehog found in the outside area. They plant bulbs and talk about what they see. All these activities are effective in enabling children to develop a wider understanding of the world around them. Children use computers very effectively to develop a wide range of skills, such as using the mouse and saving their work. Information and communication technology is used very well to support all areas of learning, and the skills gained here are above those expected nationally. By the time that children are ready to enter Year 1, good progress has been made, and their knowledge and understanding of the world is above the national average.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A good range of activities is provided to develop children's physical skills.
- The very good relationships between adults and children help to develop their self-confidence.
- The lack of planned activities means that the outside area is not yet used fully.
- Assessment in this area is sometimes insufficiently focused on children's needs.

Commentary

50. Children enter the Nursery with above average skills in physical development. Throughout their time in the Nursery and Reception classes, they improve their awareness of the needs of others and their need for their own space. Children climb and balance with confidence. Opportunities are provided for the development of smaller scale skills through the use of writing implements, brushes, scissors and woodwork tools. The rate of overall physical development is good and praise reinforces learning effectively and boosts children's confidence. Standards are still above average and most children attain, and many exceed, the Early Learning Goals. There is a well designed, recently constructed outside area, and the present lack of specific planning for outdoor activities is appropriately high on the school's action plan so that this space can be used more effectively.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well because of the very good quality of the teaching.
- Children have very positive attitudes to learning.
- There is a lack of focus for learning in some of the activities provided, and, here, assessment is less effective.
- Relationships are strong between all adults and children in the Foundation Stage.

Commentary

51. Many children have experienced little to develop their creative skills or imagination prior to starting school. Throughout their time in the Nursery and Reception classes, they make significant progress in their learning. Very good opportunities are provided for children to take part in an extensive range of creative activities. Children sing with great enthusiasm. They develop confidence through numerous opportunities for role-play. They paint, weave, make collages and build using a range of equipment. All adults ensure that the lessons have pace and enthusiasm. As a result, children enjoy their learning. However, some of the child-initiated activities lack a specific focus for learning, and here assessment is less effective in judging what has been learned and in planning the next steps in learning. By the time that children enter Year 1, most have attained, and some have exceeded, the Early Learning Goals for this area.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The experienced subject leader's analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject has contributed very effectively to the maintenance of high standards.
- Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and offer appropriate challenge to all, including higher attaining pupils.
- Opportunities to utilise pupils' literacy skills are incorporated well into all subjects.
- Some pupils are unaware of the targets that have been set for them.

Commentary

52. Through her monitoring of lessons and pupils' work, the subject leader can identify aspects of the subject which need improvement and make them the focus for teaching. Currently, the focus is writing across the curriculum because the national tests in 2003 showed that standards had slipped in Year 2. After five years of almost consistently above average results, pupils in Year 2 attained only average results in writing in 2003. Standards in reading remained high. Attainment at the end of Year 6 was well above average, with more pupils gaining the higher grades than is expected nationally. Speaking and listening skills throughout the school are consistently above average as a result of teachers providing many opportunities for pupils to practise these skills in all subjects. 'Booster classes' are held outside the school day for targeted groups of pupils in Year 6, and the achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is good in Years 1 and 2 and very good in the rest of the school.
53. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make very good progress and achieve very well because teachers focus well on vocabulary, use carefully targeted questioning to ensure that all pupils are fully involved in learning, and conduct lessons at a good pace which maintains pupils' interest. As a result, the inclusion of different groups of pupils is very good. The quality of teaching is good overall and very good in Years 5 and 6. Teachers know their pupils well and plan lessons to take account of their different abilities, offering appropriate challenge to all. They have now addressed the criticism made by the two previous inspections that high attaining pupils were not being challenged appropriately. Whilst all pupils in Year 2 have experienced a good range of writing styles, higher attaining pupils are using exclamation and speech marks and have more spellings to learn each week than others in the class so that their writing is above average. By Year 6, pupils are given numerous opportunities for extended writing and they plan and draft stories to a generally good standard. Higher attaining pupils are now often asked to work independently when middle and lower attaining pupils have the support either of staff or a written framework. Throughout the school, handwriting and presentation are of a high standard because teachers insist that work is presented well.
54. Pupils make good progress in their reading as they move through the school and almost all attain the standards expected for their age, with a significant number attaining at the higher levels. Pupils in Year 2 have well developed phonic skills to enable them to tackle new words and all pupils, no matter what their ability, enjoy reading and do so regularly at home. The love of reading continues throughout the school and pupils in Years 4 and 6 were adamant that they

preferred reading a book before seeing the film version as it allowed you to 'make your own pictures'. By this stage, they were familiar with non-fiction books and such terms as 'index, glossary and contents'. They also knew that fiction is arranged in alphabetical order whilst non-fiction is according to number. By Year 6, standards are well above average and pupils read a high volume of exacting texts, including poetry and non-fiction. Many pupils are members of the local library.

55. There are good, planned opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills, not only in literacy lessons, but also in other subjects. Teachers encourage pupils to give oral feedback on the work that they have been doing. In a history lesson in Year 5, for example, one pupil was preparing to be the pharaoh and to answer questions posed by the rest of the class, and, in Year 6, pupils recorded information to accompany photographs in a 'speaking and listening' book in information and communication technology. In a religious education lesson in Year 2, pupils described what they had seen when they had visited a local church. As a result of this emphasis on speaking and listening, standards are well above average overall.
56. The subject leader has established good procedures for tracking pupils' progress as they move through the school. Targets are set for pupils and marking is used to reflect how well pupils are moving towards achieving these. In discussions with pupils in Year 6, however, it became clear that some were unclear about this procedure and did not know the targets that they were supposedly trying to achieve. Targets were not stuck in the front of their books as a permanent reminder against which they could check their work. This lack of clarity could adversely affect achievement for some pupils.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

57. Teachers create a range of opportunities for extended writing in many subjects. Pupils report experiments in science, write thoughtfully about feelings in religious education and translate the language of the Internet into their own words in many subjects. Similarly, pupils are required to read extensively in most subjects from a variety of formats. Teachers encourage pupils to provide oral feedback on the work that they have been doing. These explanations are often cogent and well-reasoned and are effective in helping pupils to improve their speaking and listening skills.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is very good because teaching is very effective.
- Lessons are taught well and the use of information and communication technology interests pupils.
- The needs of all pupils are met very well.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.

Commentary

58. Pupils' standards are above average by the end of Year 2 and well above average by the end of Year 6. Pupils generally work one year above the levels suggested in the National Numeracy Strategy. They learn well because of their teachers' good subject knowledge and the emphasis throughout the school on developing understanding and using the language of mathematics correctly. Teachers plan their lessons very thoroughly and this contributes to the very high standards of behaviour in lessons as well as to the very effective learning. Teachers teach with pace and energy so that pupils work hard and with sustained interest. Pupils with

special educational needs have clear targets which act as a focus for support and, once they find a method of calculation that works for them, they are encouraged to use it so that their understanding becomes secure. This focus builds up their skills and confidence systematically and reduces the uncertainty that might otherwise hold them back. They are also included fully in a wide range of learning activities and teachers skilfully vary questions and suggest different ways of answering in order to enhance their learning. The enrichment activities, which are part of lesson planning and particularly evident in Years 5 and 6, meet the needs of higher attaining pupils very well. After-school booster classes add even more to the quality of the curriculum on offer. As a result of the very good provision, all groups of pupils achieve well because their needs are very carefully planned for.

59. Teachers make very effective use of computer-driven whiteboards and these not only hold the interest of younger pupils, but make the learning clearer for them, especially when they have the opportunity to manipulate the display themselves. Older pupils are very confident when using computer programs to analyse data and to present their results in different ways. They talk in detail about the steps necessary to do this and are able to do so long after the particular unit of work is completed.
60. Different combinations of staff, under the leadership of the skilled co-ordinator, monitor lesson planning and teaching, as well as completed work, on a regular and comprehensive basis. Working collectively in this way, teachers gain an overview of mathematics throughout the school and ensure that work matches the abilities of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, so that they make good progress. Very good liaison with the main secondary school of choice means that information about standards is passed on properly so that pupils do not have to repeat work there that they have already completed successfully at Fens. Recent work on specific mathematical learning difficulties, which was shared with the special educational needs co-ordinator, has brought interesting additional resources into the school. The use of some of these at home, on a loan basis, is helping to consolidate learning well and is strengthening links with parents further. Action research is incorporated regularly into some performance management targets and this has stimulated a real interest in accelerated learning and learning styles that are starting to enhance further the school's provision in mathematics. These initiatives are improving pupils' learning and the quality of their understanding.

Mathematics across the curriculum

61. Mathematics is used well to support work in other subjects and, in turn, these subjects support learning in mathematics. Data handling in information and communication technology and science makes a good contribution to mathematics whilst making models of pyramids in history and explaining work clearly and accurately make good contributions to pupils' understanding of using mathematics in solving real life problems.

SCIENCE

Provision for science is **very good overall**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are very high throughout the school, with progress accelerating for pupils in Years 5 and 6.
- Pupils' attitudes to the subject are very good.
- Scientific enquiry is developed very well.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good, and often very good, ensuring that all pupils achieve well.
- The subject is managed very effectively

Commentary

62. Standards in science are above average for pupils in Year 2 and well above average in Year 6. Current standards reflect those achieved in the national tests in 2003. All pupils achieve very well throughout the school. A key issue from the previous inspection, which highlighted the insufficient use of information and communication technology in science, has been fully addressed.
63. Standards of attainment are well above average in all areas of the curriculum by the time that pupils leave the school. This represents very good achievement for most pupils and this is because of the generally good, and often very good, teaching. Pupils have very positive attitudes to science and they enjoy the subject. In most classrooms, there are displays which effectively reinforce the science that has been covered. These include, for example, one on dark and light in Year 1, a 'science challenge' on electricity in Year 4, and, from Year 6, there is an interactive display on 'How we see things'. These are evidence of a very wide range of effective scientific investigations.
64. This generally high standard of teaching across the school ensures that pupils' scientific knowledge and understanding are developed very effectively through a wide range of interesting and relevant tasks. Opportunities for investigations and practical tasks make learning more enjoyable and this results in the high level of enthusiasm seen in all lessons. Relationships are invariably strong and pupils are always encouraged to do their best. Behaviour is very good and pupils co-operate very well, helping and supporting each other in their learning.
65. The best teaching occurs in those lessons where pupils have the opportunity to take part in first-hand investigations. During the inspection, most lessons fitted into this category. In all lessons, pupils are invited to discuss what they are doing and share their ideas. They contribute to whole group sessions through very well targeted questions. The pace of lessons is generally brisk and the range of tasks provided maintains pupils' interest very effectively. All pupils are valued and, as a result, they are confident and enthusiastic learners. Lessons and resources are prepared very effectively. In Year 6, the highest standards are expected and all pupils are working at very high levels of attainment. The use of information and communication technology within the subject is developing well and now all statutory requirements are met. The co-ordinator makes a very positive contribution to the subject. The quality and quantity of resources are good and these are used very effectively in lessons.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve high standards.
- The school has a very clear commitment to the use of information and communication technology to support teaching and learning.
- The subject is very well led by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable teacher.
- The school has exemplary procedures for supporting all staff in the use of information and communication technology.

Commentary

66. All through the school, pupils respond enthusiastically to using information and communication technology. Standards are above average by the end of Year 2 and well above average by the end of Year 6. Throughout the school, pupils' achievement is very good. They are very aware of the importance of information and communication technology in their lives both at home and

in school and are excited about the impact that computers have had on lessons since they started in school. By Year 6, they know how to create sequences of instructions to control traffic lights and use sensors to measure the strength of a light source. They use a range of software programs with easy familiarity and use the Internet for high quality independent research. Master classes at the main secondary school of choice extend the skills of higher attaining pupils on projects that link information and communication technology with mathematics, science and design and technology.

67. The school has a rolling programme to support the further development of information and communication technology as well as a clear understanding about the need to update existing equipment. Staff members use computer-driven whiteboards enthusiastically to add an interactive dimension to pupils' learning. They also use computers for lesson planning and to write the individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs, thereby modelling good practice for the pupils. The use of dictating machines, 'talking photographs' and digital cameras helps to ensure that pupils' spontaneous work is recorded. It also facilitates access to the curriculum very effectively for pupils with special educational needs.
68. The development of the subject since the previous inspection has benefited from the leadership of highly committed and enthusiastic co-ordinators as well as the active involvement of the leadership team. All staff members are expected to make use of new technology and the monitoring of planning and lessons ensures that this is happening and that pupils' skills develop appropriately. The school has adapted its scheme of work to ensure that Internet, and, specifically, 'chat room', security is well understood by pupils. In a Year 5 lesson, for example, pupils tested out how to chat without revealing too much personal information and learned at first hand from the experience of one of their peers about the risks that he suddenly became aware of when he was using a computer at home.
69. All members of staff receive very good training in the use of information and communication technology and the procedures for supporting new and temporary staff are exemplary because they maintain pupils' access whilst recognising that not all 'new' staff will be thoroughly familiar with the details of the school's systems. Overall, standards in information and communication technology have risen markedly since the school's previous inspection and the key issue from that inspection has been addressed fully.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

70. There are many very good examples of teachers using information and communication technology well for all pupils in a range of subjects. In addition to well-developed word processing and data handling skills in English, mathematics, science and history, sensing and control technology is very well used in science and in aspects of geography. Independent research skills are developed very well throughout the school. These activities are supported well by an extensive range of CD-Roms, software programs, and by access to the Internet.

HUMANITIES

History and religious education were inspected in full. Geography was sampled.

Geography

71. Geography and history are taught in alternate blocks so that it was not possible to observe geography being taught during the inspection. An analysis of pupils' work shows that standards are good in Years 1 and 2, where pupils gain a good knowledge of the world through following the journeys of a very widely travelled Barnaby Bear. In Years 3 to 6, however, achievement is only satisfactory because an insufficient number of maps in the school results in the associated skills not being taught to sufficient depth. Pupils in Year 6 did not recognise such terms as 'OS map' and 'grid references'. Pupils, including those with special learning needs, make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and at least satisfactory progress in Years 3 to 6.

Information and communication technology is used well throughout the school and pupils in Year 6 commented that one reason for their liking geography was the opportunity it afforded for independent research, including the use of the Internet. They also have e-mail links with a school in Canada. Subject leadership is good. Strengths and weaknesses in the subject have been carefully analysed and the subject leader is reviewing the geography curriculum to address the issues raised.

History

The provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have a good knowledge of facts and learn how to use them to argue the case for the importance of different historical figures. This develops their abilities in speaking and listening well.
- Lessons are challenging and stimulating, but pupils' understanding of the methods and processes of history is relatively underdeveloped.
- The weaknesses in the subject identified by the last inspection have been overcome.

Commentary

72. Throughout the school, standards are in line with national expectations. Pupils in Year 2 are keen to show how much they know about the Great Fire of London and talk with some authority about what happened and why. By Year 4, they use their understanding of everyday life, as well as historical events, satisfactorily, to develop arguments either for or against the execution of Anne Boleyn. In Year 5, they debate the merits of different pharaohs from Ancient Egypt, and, by Year 6, they present their own research about different important figures from history, such as Winston Churchill, in assemblies. These experiences develop their speaking and listening skills very well and support their work in literacy to good effect.
73. Teachers prepare lessons that interest their pupils and they reinforce key vocabulary well. The use of role-play enables pupils to understand how different views of the same events emerge. Work in art offers another way of exploring different events. The use of the Internet by older pupils means that their research skills develop well. However, pupils' success in this area tends to emphasise secondary sources of information. This means that the importance of going back to original documents, artefacts and sites, even with the number of school visits that support different topics, does not register strongly enough in pupils' understanding of what it means to be a historian.
74. The established scheme of work for the subject provides a sound basis for teachers to plan their lessons and to assess pupils' knowledge and understanding about the different topics studied. Teachers use searching, open-ended questions to stretch higher attaining pupils and they use time well in all lessons with all pupils. The subject is managed satisfactorily, but the subject leader accepts that further development is now needed to capture the quality of oral work in writing and to ensure that pupils' written work reflects their full abilities.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The criticisms made in the report from the previous inspection have been addressed well.
- Good teaching has raised standards and pupils are achieving well.
- Pupils in Year 6 have produced less work than is usually seen.

- Good use is made of opportunities to improve pupils' literacy skills.

Commentary

75. The requirements of the locally agreed syllabus are now fully met so the major criticism of the subject from the previous inspection has been addressed well. Standards have improved and are now average by the end of Year 6 as a result of improvements in the quality of teaching in Years 3 to 6. The good teaching in Years 1 and 2 seen at the previous inspection has continued and standards have risen and are now above average. Achievement throughout the school is good.
76. The quality of teaching and learning in all lessons seen during the inspection was good. The interest and enthusiasm of pupils in Year 4, for example, were maintained in a very good lesson by the teacher's ability to link the information that pupils were learning about Jesus' teaching with their own lives. Having discussed the parable of the talents, she asked pupils to work with a partner and discover a talent that each possesses. She then provided every pupil with a 'Special Talent Award' to be completed for their partner. This lesson encouraged pupils to value and respect each other and was a good example of the effective use of the subject for pupils' personal development. All lessons were well planned, fully included all pupils in the class, and used resources well. Music was used to good effect in a Year 5 lesson to induce an atmosphere of calm reflection while pupils wrote about the feelings of Jesus and his disciples when he was facing crucifixion. Many lessons gave pupils the opportunity to develop their understanding of other people's feelings and handled the discussions that ensued with great sensitivity. In discussion, however, pupils in Year 6 showed little enthusiasm for the subject and their work reflects this. It is satisfactory in quality but less in quantity than is usually found.
77. Good opportunities were created in all lessons to develop aspects of pupils' literacy skills. In a Year 4 lesson, for example, pupils took turns to read elements of the parable of the talents aloud to the rest of the class. The paired work that followed developed their speaking and listening skills as did a lesson with pupils in Year 2, who were recalling their visit to a Roman Catholic church and describing what they had seen. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 wrote sensitively about the feelings of people at the time of the Crucifixion.
78. The leadership of the subject has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. The subject is monitored well and the subject leader teaches other classes in addition to her own, allowing her to gain a better overview of the subject. As a result, she has improved resources, ensured that information and communication technology is used well to support the subject, and reviewed curricular provision for Year 2. Her work is raising standards well.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

These subjects were sampled and no overall judgement is made on provision.

Art and design

79. There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement on provision, standards, or teaching and learning. Discussions indicate that the subject is led well and that the co-ordinator offers effective help and support to staff. The curriculum is enriched by a very good range of activities outside class. Pupils speak very enthusiastically about a creative arts week which involved professional artists working in the school. For example, they created the Loch Ness monster, 'Nessie', which is on display in the small hall. Most classrooms have attractive and interesting displays of pupils' work which show that they have had a good range of learning experiences. These include weavings of 'the beach' in Year 1, observational drawings of

buildings in Year 2, and studies of movement in Year 6. There are some good links with other subjects, for example, the Tudors in history, which help pupils to understand that learning is holistic and that subjects do not exist in isolation.

Design and technology

80. Evidence from work on display and discussions with pupils indicate that standards are above average and that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. Good portfolios of pupils' work showed that all aspects of the subject are covered well and that the essentials of 'think, plan, make, evaluate', are taught from Year 1. Pupils do not always find evaluation easy, but the emphasis put on written evaluations from Year 1 builds up to comprehensive, analytical reviews by Year 6. Work on display shows a high quality of finishing skills which develop systematically as pupils get older. Discussions with pupils in Year 6 showed that they were enthusiastic about the subject and they were able to discuss their work on shelters in detail. They appreciate the opportunities that the subject provides for them to work with and to carry out independent research. Good subject leadership and management have resulted in a good improvement in standards since the previous inspection.

Music

81. Whole-school singing is good. Pupils sing enthusiastically and have a good appreciation of rhythm and expression. The subject is led and managed well and effective professional development for staff has improved confidence. A new scheme of work ensures that the National Curriculum is fully covered. Pupils hear live music from different groups, which have included African drums, and have opportunities for instrumental tuition in violin, cello and brass. There is an enthusiastic recorder group and a large choir. A school production is planned to give pupils experience of performance, building on their work combining art, music and dance in the creative arts week.

Physical education

82. Pupils are given a wide range of experiences in physical education. Standards in swimming are above average. Residential visits for Years 5 and 6 provide good opportunities for outdoor and adventurous activities. There is a good range of clubs after school and opportunities are provided in a range of competitive activities. There is some coaching from outside specialists. The school's good provision has been recognised by the achievement of the Active Mark Gold Award. Care is taken to ensure that pupils with physical and other disabilities are fully included in the activities offered in the school. This has a positive effect on their confidence and achievement.
83. Two brief lessons were observed during the inspection. In one lesson, teaching and learning were good and, in the other, they were very good. Pupils achieved well overall.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal, social and health education and citizenship is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Personal, social and health education and citizenship are integral to the work of the school and a major element in maintaining and supporting its ethos.
- The school makes excellent use of a wide range of different programmes within personal, social and health education and citizenship to ensure that high standards are achieved.

Commentary

84. This area is a key part of the school's provision and is very successfully assisting pupils' overall development towards maturity and citizenship. It provides excellent support for their moral and social development. The planning of this aspect of the curriculum is very good and embraces many different topics, including sex education and health related exercise. Younger pupils discuss issues such as the importance of school rules and what makes them happy with some insight. Older pupils talk with increasing confidence about a range of issues and lead assemblies, for example, on drugs awareness. Outside speakers are frequently brought in to lead discussions and the school is involved in a very wide range of community and charity initiatives. These give pupils an early understanding of their wider responsibilities as citizens. A new and innovative project is exploring the idea of employability with pupils from Year 3 onwards. This is a further example of the school developing pupils' understanding of their role in the local, national and worldwide community. The subject leader has national accreditation, leads this area of the curriculum extremely well, and is helping to develop the teaching of personal, social and health education and citizenship regionally and nationally.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	2
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	2
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	1
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	1

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