

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **CASSIOBURY JUNIOR SCHOOL**

Watford

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117167

Headteacher: Mrs Alison Campbell

Lead inspector: Jo Cheadle

Dates of inspection: 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> June 2005

Inspection number: 266571

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Junior  
School category: Community  
Age range of pupils: 7 – 11 years  
Gender of pupils: Mixed  
Number on roll: 243

School address: Bellmount Wood Avenue  
Watford  
Hertfordshire  
Postcode: WD17 3PD

Telephone number: 01923 232411  
Fax number: 01923 236191

Appropriate authority: The governing body  
Name of chair of Mrs Susan Miller  
governors:

Date of previous March 1999  
inspection:

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Cassiobury Junior is an average sized school catering for 243 boys and girls between the ages of 7 and 11. The school is situated in a relatively affluent residential area on the outskirts of Watford. Most children are from white British backgrounds, but a significant number are from a variety of other nationalities. Although a few children speak English as a second language, all children are fluent English speakers. Overall, skills and knowledge of the pupils on entry to the school are above those normally found. The percentage of pupils who need support for a range of learning and behavioural needs is comparable to what is normally found at just over 15 per cent. Three children have statements to support their special educational needs. The number of children eligible to receive free school meals is well below the national average. The school received an Investors in People Award in 2003, an ECO-Schools Silver Award and Healthy Schools Award in 2004 and the NAACE mark in 2005. Since the last inspection, the school has been affected by high staff turnover.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
23233	Jo Cheadle	Lead inspector	Science, Information and Communication Technology, Music, Art and Design, Design and Technology, English as an Additional Language
32675	Margaret Cain	Lay inspector	
23487	Pat Kitley	Team inspector	English, Physical Education, Personal, Social and Health Education, Special Educational Needs
30691	Kathleen Yates	Team inspector	Mathematics, Religious Education, History, Geography

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## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>	<b>8</b>
Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>10</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 2</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>22</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**Cassiobury Junior is a satisfactory school** that provides satisfactory value for money. Pupils' achieve satisfactorily on good starting levels, to reach standards that exceed nationally expected levels by the end of Year 6. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Overall leadership, management and governance are satisfactory. Under the leadership of the new headteacher, the school is well placed to improve in the future.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- Pupils achieve well in mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT)
- The school does not always make effective enough use of the information about how well pupils are doing to plan for future learning and ensure their good achievements overall
- Judgements about how well the school is doing have not always been based on the impact that decisions and actions have on pupils' learning. This means that review and self-evaluation procedures have not always helped the school to move forward successfully
- The school has good links with the local community which benefit pupils' learning
- Many opportunities to participate in sporting and musical activities enrich the curriculum

The school was last inspected in March 1999. **Improvement since this time has been satisfactory overall.** At the time of the current inspection the headteacher had only been in post for two weeks, having carried out the role of acting headteacher for less than a term and the deputy headteacher role for almost two years. It is clear that there has been an immediate refocusing on developments that enhance pupils' opportunities to learn and achieve well. A period of staffing instability has affected the school's progress in the past, and necessary improvements have not always happened in good time. There are now new strategies to deal with weaknesses in teaching and the curriculum. More attention is given to what pupils already know and can do in order to plan suitably for the next steps in their learning. These developments are not yet an embedded part of the overall provision, but good plans have been made to drive improvement at a much faster pace. The provision for ICT has improved significantly since the last inspection and pupils' good achievements are testimony to this.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average*

**Pupils' achievements are satisfactory.** While standards on entry vary within classes and from year to year, the majority of pupils enter school with levels that exceed expectations at the start of Year 3. Most pupils build steadily on these levels to attain standards that exceed expectations by the end of Year 6. Pupils achieve well in mathematics to reach standards that are well above expected levels. In ICT, starting levels are generally in line with nationally expected levels. Pupils achieve well in ICT to reach standards that are higher than national expectations by the end of Year 6. Standards in music also exceed expectations by Year 6. Many pupils learn to play musical instruments to a high standard. Pupils receive good support in preparation for national tests. Results have been consistently above or well above the national averages over the past three years. Averages are high

because a large proportion of pupils attain at Level 5, which is higher than the nationally expected level. English results dipped in 2004 because not as many pupils reached Level 5 as in previous years. While there are fluctuations in the performance of boys and girls in tests, there are no significant differences over time.

The school makes satisfactory provision for the development of pupils' personal skills, and **the development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is good overall**. Most pupils learn the difference between right and wrong, and develop a good understanding of their own and other cultures. They have good attitudes to learning and behaviour is satisfactory. Attendance at the school is above the national average and pupils are very punctual.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The school provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils.**

**Teaching is satisfactory overall.** While there are good aspects of teaching in many lessons, teachers do not make consistently good use of information about how well pupils are doing to plan effectively for new learning. As a result, pupils make satisfactory progress overall. Teaching assistants are used well and make a positive contribution to learning, especially for lower attaining pupils. Overall, the school makes satisfactory provision for pupils with special educational needs. In lessons where pupils work with specialist teachers and support assistants, pupils learn well. In some general class lessons, however, pupils' needs are not as well catered for. The curriculum is satisfactory and is effectively enriched by musical, sporting and arts activities. Pupils are well cared for and procedures for health and safety are satisfactory. The school has good links with the local community and satisfactory, and improving links with other schools.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory.** The headteacher has made an efficient and effective start to tackling areas that need improvement, and is realistic about the quality of the current provision. Key staff are responding well to clear leadership, and areas such as mathematics, ICT and the provision for special educational needs, are led effectively. The delegation of responsibilities within school is now successfully handled, and teachers new to the profession are keen to contribute. Governors are knowledgeable and supportive. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and are now focussing more clearly on areas where improvements must be made to ensure pupils' good achievements overall, as well as success in national tests. Governance of the school is satisfactory.

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

Many parents returned the pre-inspection questionnaire, expressing their views clearly. These views ranged from highly positive comments, to some serious concerns about issues such as homework, equal opportunities and bullying. The school recognises that these concerns are founded and deals effectively with these issue. No bullying was seen during the inspection. It is fair to say that many parents have been worried by the changes in staffing and how these have affected their children. Parents' views are taken seriously, and while some parents had very strong messages to pass on, the general feeling is that they see a positive improvement in the way they are listened to and how their concerns are dealt with. Inspection findings support improved relationships with parents and a developing openness to ways of working together. Most children are happy at school and talk positively about their experiences. The majority think they are learning well and want to please their teachers.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The most important things the school should do to improve are

- Make better use of all sources of information about pupils' standards and progress to plan more effectively for future learning

- Employ more rigorous procedures to evaluate how well the school is doing in all aspects of its work and use the information gained to drive forward improvements

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects**

Pupils' achievements are satisfactory. Standards overall exceed expectations by the end of Year 6. There are no significant differences in the achievements of any particular group of pupils at the school. Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language achieve as well as all other pupils.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve well in mathematics and ICT
- Pupils are articulate and confident speakers, but their listening skills and aspects of writing are not as strong
- Pupils do well in national tests
- Standards in music exceed expectations and pupils achieve well in learning to play musical instruments

#### **Commentary**

1. Generally, pupils start in Year 3 with levels that exceed expectations. Overall, pupils reach standards that are above those found nationally by the end of Year 6. Their achievements are satisfactory. In mathematics, pupils achieve well to reach levels that are well above expectations. The school's highest attaining pupils are adequately challenged to attain standards of which they are capable. In ICT, standards on entry are at expected levels. Pupils achieve well in ICT and standards of work are good. They attain above expected levels at the end of Year 6. ICT skills are well used to aid learning in other subjects.
2. Pupils perform well in national tests and, in comparison with all schools, results have been above and well above the national average since 2002. In 2004, English results dipped when compared with schools in similar circumstances and in relation to the same pupils' results in Year 2 tests. In this cohort, pupils needed to make substantial progress in Year 6 in order to gain good test results. While the majority attained at the expected Level 4, a smaller proportion of pupils attained at Level 5 than in previous years, and this affected overall results. In general, standards in writing are not as good as in other aspects of work in English. This is largely due to too few or inappropriate opportunities to write creatively and imaginatively. Pupils demonstrate particularly good speaking skills. They are very articulate and confident in spoken contributions, expressing their views and ideas clearly. The majority use a wide range of vocabulary in complex and interesting ways. Speech is well structured and carefully executed. Some pupils, however, do not always recognise the role they need to play as a good listener in order to make valid contributions to class discussions. Pupils are well prepared for science tests and results show a significant proportion of pupils attaining Level 5. Class work does not consistently show evidence of this high level of attainment. Standards in science are judged to be in line with expected levels.

#### **Key Stage 2**

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.6 (29.1)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	29.4 (29.9)	27.0 (26.8)
science	30.1 (30.3)	28.6 (28.6)

*There were 60 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

3. Pupils are provided with good opportunities to excel in music and standards exceed expectations. Many pupils learn to play musical instruments and achieve well in performance skills. Through the good teaching of visiting specialist teachers, who provide a range of general and private tuition sessions, pupils learn to play confidently, tunefully and rhythmically. The school orchestra participates in many concerts and performances and incorporates a wide variety of instruments from violins to clarinet and trombone to French horn.

**Pupils’ attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Attendance and punctuality are very good. Pupils’ attitudes are good; their behaviour is satisfactory. Provision for pupils’ moral, social and cultural development is good, while for their spiritual development it is satisfactory.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school works well with parents to maintain high standards of attendance and punctuality
- Inattentive behaviour interrupts some lessons and a few pupils are disrespectful of teachers
- While there is a clear framework of rewards and sanctions, these are not always applied consistently or appropriately
- Diversity is valued and pupils are encouraged to be proud of their individuality and background
- Pupils are keen to take on responsibilities

**Commentary**

4. In 2003/2004, levels of attendance were very high in comparison with other primary schools, and the rates of both authorised and unauthorised absence were below that of most primary schools. The school takes a firm view on term-time absences and parents comply with this policy. Pupils enjoy coming to school and arrive punctually to lessons. There were no exclusions in the last school year.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	3.4%	School data	0.0%
National data	5.1%	National data	0.4%

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

5. Pupils’ attitudes have remained good since the last inspection. On the whole, they want to learn, contribute well in lessons and are keen to participate in the activities provided. The majority of older pupils will be sorry to leave. Pupils are eager to volunteer for additional duties. Behaviour, found to be very good at the last inspection, is now judged to be satisfactory. There are clearly defined systems of rewards for academic and personal achievement, and sanctions to reinforce good behaviour. Behaviour has recently been the focus of staff training. However, the inspection endorses the views of both parents and pupils that behaviour could be better. On the whole, pupils cooperate well with adults and enjoy happy relationships with their classmates. However, in class their attention sometimes wanders, especially during teachers’ lengthy introductions to a topic. Lessons are sometimes interrupted by fidgeting and chatting; less disruptive pupils doodle quietly. A minority of pupils presents a significant challenge to teachers by calling out and exhibiting inappropriate behaviour. While the school has been active in engaging the help of outside agencies in dealing with this difficult behaviour, its strategies are not sufficiently rigorous.

6. Inspection findings support the views of some pupils and parents that at times sanctions can be disproportionate and rather unfairly applied. Persistent offenders become blasé about detentions, while those who try hard to behave consistently well feel the unfairness of receiving a detention for a minor infringement of the rules, such as forgetting to have their personal organisers signed at home. The school is aware of the need to address this issue and give pupils clear messages about acceptable behaviour and the sanctions applied when behaviour is not good enough.
7. The school meets statutory requirements in its arrangements for collective worship and is successful in involving all pupils. While the school encourages pupils to respect and value one another's differences and feelings, pupils report that this is not always the case and there are incidences of bullying. These issues are dealt with seriously and the school is making every effort to assure parents that bullying is not tolerated. In parents' eyes, the specific needs of individual children at times appear to be given higher priority than the needs of the majority, and this concerns them. The school is working hard to overcome difficulties, so that all pupils are included equally, recognising that there is some development work to be done to ensure that this is successfully achieved.
8. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development was judged to be very good at the last inspection. The provision is now good overall. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Generally, pupils know right from wrong, with the 'Cassiobury Keys to Good Behaviour' setting a clear moral framework. Pupils understand the responsibilities of living in a community. They form good friendships, and readily care for younger pupils. They feel that recently introduced systems, such as playground pals and buddies, are helping to improve behaviour and relationships. Pupils are being trained to offer peer mediation when a conflict arises. The Eco-Committee encourages care of the environment, and pupils are enthusiastic fund-raisers for local and international charities. The school is well aware of the importance of educating pupils to live in a multicultural society. Pupils are encouraged to be proud of their heritage and culture. For example, parents have visited the school to explain their faith and pupils share their experiences of visiting their country of origin.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils. Teaching is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well in sessions with specialist teachers, and by support assistants. The curriculum is satisfactory overall, and enhanced by a good range of extra-curricular activities. Suitable arrangements are made for the care and welfare of pupils. Links with parents and other schools are satisfactory. The school has good links with the local community.

### **Teaching and Learning**

Satisfactory teaching results in satisfactory learning throughout the school. Teachers make insufficient use of assessment information to plan for future learning.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Many teachers have a good knowledge of a range of subjects and this aids pupils' learning
- Teaching and support assistants work effectively in many lessons to ensure that pupils concentrate and make progress
- Insufficient attention to what and how pupils need to learn, means that some lessons lack pace and provide insufficient challenge
- Pupil behaviour is not always managed effectively

### **Commentary**

9. Individual teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge across the full range of primary subjects. Their good knowledge of the curriculum enables them to plan work appropriately, ensuring that all aspects of the National Curriculum in most subjects are covered adequately. In good lessons observed during the inspection, good subject knowledge enabled teachers to have clear learning intentions and promote the use of subject specific vocabulary. Moreover, learning intentions are met, because new concepts are explained well by teachers. In a Year 5 mathematics lesson, both the teacher and support assistant demonstrated high levels of understanding of the subject, which supported pupils learning well. They demonstrated and explained work effectively so that pupils gained a clear understanding of reflective symmetry by the end of the session.

**Summary of teaching observed in 23 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	2	9	10	1	1	0

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.*

10. Generally, support assistants are effectively used in lessons. They know when individual children need help, so those with special educational needs or who speak English as an additional language are appropriately supported and make satisfactory progress. In the best lessons, good communications between teachers and other adults in the room mean that there is a balance between support to help pupils understand, and opportunities for them to work independently. For example, teaching assistants often give discrete support so that pupils can rehearse an answer before being called on to contribute by the teacher. This not only encourages pupils' learning, but also raises levels of confidence and self-esteem. Support assistants work well to help pupils remain on task in lessons. In good lessons, the combined efforts of teachers and assistants in maintaining good levels of concentration and application enabled lessons to run without interruption and learning was effective. In a very good Year 4 English lesson, the teaching assistant held the interest of the lower attaining pupils by employing her good subject knowledge to ask challenging questions, extending pupils initial contributions and keeping them on their toes.
11. At the time of the last inspection, teaching was judged to be good. While both good and very good teaching was seen during the current inspection, inconsistencies in the use of assessment information to plan for new learning reduces the effectiveness of teaching overall. While there are suitable procedures in place to collect information about how well pupils are doing, teachers do not generally make good enough use of this information to plan effectively for group and individual needs. The result is, that some lessons provide insufficient challenge for certain pupils, while work is too hard for others. In addition teachers' assessments of past learning do not take full account of the most effective ways to teach so that a range of learning styles are catered for. In too many lessons, teachers chose to use lengthy introductions and explanations, expecting pupils to listen for long periods rather than allowing them to begin work and employ their good reading skills to use written instructions as guidance. Even when pupils behaved well, it was apparent that many were not listening well before the teacher had finished talking.
12. While some pupils demonstrate unacceptable behaviour in lessons due to their individual needs, in a few lessons slow pace and inconsistent challenge had an impact on pupils' responses and how well they learned. The school has clear sanctions and rewards for behaviour, but in lessons observed, these were sometimes applied inconsistently, so that pupils received mixed messages. This occurred to varying degrees, in some satisfactory lessons, but more so in lessons that were less than satisfactory. In these lessons there was no sense of urgency or importance afforded to completing tasks well, and noise levels were

unacceptably high. Limited intervention to deal with many minor interruptions resulted in behaviour deteriorating rapidly and pupils' learning was unsatisfactory.

### **The curriculum**

Overall the school provides a satisfactory curriculum. There are good enrichment opportunities. Staffing, accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is a good range of lunchtime and after school clubs and attendance at these activities is good; the curriculum is effectively enriched
- Significant staff turnover has had an impact on curriculum development
- Although pupils benefit from extensive and very attractive outdoor areas, many parts of the school buildings are in need of refurbishment

### **Commentary**

13. The school makes satisfactory provision for pupils' learning by providing a broad and balanced curriculum in which there is an appropriate emphasis upon the development of literacy and numeracy skills. Monthly enrichment afternoons add to the curriculum through exciting dance, drama, sporting and art activities. Plans to improve the academic benefit gained by pupils through these sessions are a priority for school leaders. Good provision is made for pupils' participation in the arts and sport. Pupils and staff enjoy concerts performed to a high standard by the many Cassiobury musical groups. They are encouraged to take part in regular fitness for fun sessions, led by the physical education subject leader. An extensive range of visits and visitors provides pupils with stimulating and enjoyable creative experiences. The good connection between information learned in the class and the world outside can be seen in Year 4's writing about their visit to Anglo-Saxon village. Satisfactory provision is made for pupils' personal development through the school's programme for personal, social health and citizenship education. Involvement in the ECO-Schools and Healthy Schools Awards has encouraged pupils to take an active role in bringing about change to the school environment.
14. Overall provision for pupils identified as requiring additional help is satisfactory. Extra group work is very well planned to ensure that pupils working with the special educational needs co-ordinator and her assistants cover the same range of work as others in the class. Specific help from specialist teachers and other outside agencies is shared with teachers and support staff in clearly written individual educational plans that have specific targets for literacy, mathematics and behaviour. Teaching assistants work effectively with pupils. The planning of groups for literacy and numeracy takes good account of pupils' differing needs, and setting for these subjects in Year 6 is designed to help teachers to match work to pupils' individual needs. However, provision in lessons is inconsistent. Work set does not always promote independent learning because it is better matched to the needs of average attaining pupils than other groups.
15. Staffing is satisfactory overall. Staff are well qualified and generally display good subject knowledge. However, high turnover of staff in the recent past has meant that provision in some classes and year groups lacks continuity. As a result, the good standard of the curriculum has not been maintained since the last inspection. Resources for ICT have been vastly improved since the last inspection, but the school is well aware that further developments need to be made to the current accommodation and hardware to ensure that standards remain high. The extensive outdoor activity area is well used for sport and play. However, other accommodation does not provide a stimulating learning environment for all pupils. It is clean and well maintained on a daily basis, but the buildings and swimming pool are long overdue for refurbishment and do not reflect the school's vision to stimulate and enthuse learners.

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

The school has satisfactory measures in place for the care, welfare and safety of its pupils. While pupils are supported well, advice and guidance based on assessment information are unsatisfactory. The school takes good steps to involve pupils in its work and development.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school does not always anticipate potential hazards
- Pupils have trusting relationships with adults at the school
- Pupils are not consistently set clear and measurable targets for improvement
- Pupils receive good support as they enter a new stage of their education
- Pupils' opinions are sought and valued on many aspects of school life

**Commentary**

16. Care, welfare, health and safety, previously judged as very good, are now satisfactory as a whole. The school takes satisfactory steps to maintain a healthy and safe environment. As the designated teacher for child protection, the headteacher has received appropriate training, and ensures that all adults working at the school can recognise problems and raise any concerns with her. Day-to-day health and safety procedures are implemented consistently. Governors and caretaking staff work together to audit and rectify hazards. Trained first aid is on hand, and staff understand when and when not to intervene in the event of an accident. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools Award and a lesson on making a nutritious, and tasty sandwich was observed. However, the inspection supports parents' views that the meals provided at the school are unappetising.
17. The extensive school grounds provide ample opportunity for pupils to let off steam safely or sit quietly in the shade. Overall, the area is well patrolled by trained midday supervisors. Walkie-talkie communications ensure continuity of care during break-times. However, the sheer size and complexity of the site mean transit areas such as the walkway are less well supervised. Certain matters of potential risk were pointed out to the school during the inspection and quickly rectified. Lack of investment in the fabric of the school undermines the benefits of having an on-site swimming pool. Pupils wait for the lesson to begin on cold, uneven slab-stones. While the site staff take great care in handling chemicals safely, protective clothing has not yet been provided.

18. The school is positive about meeting the needs of all pupils and makes early identification of those who require additional help. Very few pupils have a statement of educational need, but review of their progress takes full account of the views of parents, pupils and outside agencies. The special educational needs co-ordinator and assistants support this group of pupils well. There are good arrangements in place to ensure continuity of provision when they enter school in Year 3 and move to Year 7. Although there are no children who are at the early stages of learning English, the school is aware that those who experience other languages at home might need additional help from time to time. The special needs co-ordinator and literacy subject leader work closely to ensure that their achievements and personal development are monitored regularly. Many pupils confidently report having good and trusting relationships with adults. The dedicated pastoral support staff are a strong feature of the school's provision. Both pupils and parents value and trust their contribution, particularly in the sensitive handling of confidential information and personal problems. Pupils can log any worries in their 'think books' or 'talk boxes'.
19. Pupils' annual reports to parents meet statutory requirements and teachers clearly know their pupils. However, reports do not consistently state clear, well-focused targets for improvement or offer specific advice to parents on how they can help their children to improve. Targets are often more behavioural than academic, such as recommending that pupils have more confidence. The inconsistent use of target setting to give pupils a clear steer for their learning means that there is little guidance offered to pupils to help them make progress to the next level. As a result, pupils do not challenge themselves or feel ownership of how well they do. The school is currently working on an individual target setting system to rectify this need. In other aspects of school life, the school takes good steps to involve pupils by seeking, valuing and acting on their views. It has begun to poll the views of older pupils with 'exit' questionnaires. Although some pupils feel that members of the elected school council do not always consult fully with the rest of the class, it is a useful mechanism for suggesting improvements to school life. Items on the agenda range from practical issues, such as providing access to water in class and the quality of school meals, to contributing to the job specification for the new headteacher. The headteacher maintains a good dialogue with the school council, taking care to explain the school's decision on its recommendations.
20. Useful communication with the infant school and the good support provided by older pupils ensure pupils settle well on entering a new phase of their education. A late-joiner reported quickly feeling part of the school community due to well-considered induction arrangements and the friendly welcome of her class captain. Pupils are also helped to make a smooth transition as they progress upwards through the school. They and their parents are suitably guided in making decisions about their secondary school.

#### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Some parents feel insufficiently informed of their children's progress
- Homework is not set regularly in some classes and, as parents do not see teachers' feedback, they are unable to support their children's learning fully
- While there is broad support for the school, some parents feel that their concerns have not been adequately addressed
- Links with the community result in a wide range of visits and visitors that enrich pupils' learning opportunities
- Pupils are well supported on their transfer to secondary school

#### **Commentary**

21. Partnerships with parents, judged good at the last inspection, are now satisfactory. The headteacher values parents' contribution, believing them to be the child's first educator, and parents themselves welcome the school's readiness to consult with them. Initiatives such as

curriculum workshops are well supported and the Cassiobury Forum is providing a new opportunity for parents to influence the school's provision. Parents actively support the school's work, for example, by helping at enrichment days. Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school. It takes their concerns on relationship difficulties and bullying very seriously, but parents have mixed views on how successfully problems are resolved. Parents want more specific guidance on how to help their children to progress. Satisfactory information is provided for parents. The prospectus conveys a clear introduction to the school's work, but the governors' annual report is a missed opportunity to communicate with them. For example, there is no accompanying 'parent-friendly' explanation of national test results and targets.

22. The school has an outward-looking approach and draws well on the community, locally and further afield, as a resource for learning. Pupils enjoy a good range of educational visits that extend the curriculum and, in the words of a Year 6 girl, "Help us to learn in a fun way." Older pupils vividly recall trips to the local mosque, the theatre, local parks and museums. They also enjoy the new perspective which visitors bring to their studies, for example the history theme days, when 'Romans' and 'Egyptians' visited the school. They are looking forward eagerly to their forthcoming residential trip to the Isle of Wight. Links with local businesses, which could form a valuable resource to help pupils learn, are at an early stage.
23. Links with other schools are satisfactory. Students from secondary schools support enrichment activities and assist the gifted and talented. Contact with pupils at other local primary schools is mainly organised around sporting activities. Good collaboration on transfer arrangements ensures pupils make a smooth transition to local secondary schools; current Year 6 pupils face the change ahead of them with confidence.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The previous inspection report judged the quality of governance, leadership and management to be excellent. Current inspection findings are that the leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. No overall judgment can be made about the leadership of the headteacher due to the fact that she had only been appointed to the role two weeks prior to the inspection. Key staff make a satisfactory contribution to school leadership. Governance is satisfactory. The overall effectiveness of management is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The new head teacher has a clear vision to improve the provision for all pupils
- Subject leaders in English, mathematics, ICT and special educational needs have a clear vision for developing their subject, however, monitoring of other subjects lacks rigour
- Procedures for induction and support of teachers new to the school are very good
- While the governing body has the best interests of the school at heart, it does not have a firm grasp of pupils' levels of achievement
- In the past, finances have not been wisely used to maintain the school building and resource in good repair; this is now a high priority in school development planning

### **Commentary**

24. The new headteacher has a clear vision of where the school needs to be and how to move forward, but has not had sufficient time to turn this vision into reality in order to improve the school's effectiveness. She has, however, already demonstrated the ability to motivate and enthuse staff, governors and pupils by establishing good and productive working relationships. Parents have already commented on the positive relationship she is forging with them. Effective teams are developing and better links with the nearby infant school have already been put in place.

25. Although many parents and pupils feel that the school is providing a good standard of education, there are also a considerable number who have concerns, as expressed in other areas of this report. The developments needed call for effective strategic planning and a clear understanding of why change is needed. Past instability in staffing has resulted in an inconsistent pattern of development and improvement since the last inspection. In order to recruit good quality staff, the school has had to resort to some part-time appointments to fill vacancies. Most of the staff have joined the school in the last two years, and currently there are three newly qualified teachers. All new members of staff are well supported by very good induction arrangements that help them to settle quickly. At present the headteacher has effective support within the senior management team, but imminent staff changes mean that this may no longer be the case in September. The school is seeking to alleviate possible problems in the future by appointing a seconded deputy headteacher for start of the new academic year. This is a wise interim move.
26. The leadership of mathematics, ICT and special educational needs is good. In ICT, this has resulted in good improvements in the use of skills across other subjects. In other areas of the curriculum, many leaders have been appointed fairly recently. Although keen to develop their roles, they have yet to gain the expertise to effectively support improvement. In particular, the use of assessment and steps to improve teaching and learning are areas that are in need of priority development. The school is already following the new guidelines for teachers to be provided with time for planning and preparation, and this is working successfully. Staff training is now well focused on improving teaching and learning so as to raise attainment. Performance management for teachers and support staff is in place and includes support programmes to raise the quality of teaching. However, procedures to deal with past and current weaknesses in teaching have not always resulted in sufficient improvement being made. The school is now gaining courage in reviewing and evaluating its work more realistically, and this is generating appropriate and useful development plans for the future.
27. The governing body ensures that statutory requirements are met, although there is still some way to go before full access for the disabled is completed. A number of governors support the school well by their links to subject leaders and monitoring curriculum areas. Governors share the head teacher's vision and are keen to be more involved in planning for future changes. While they have a good understanding of the school's strengths, their understanding of the school's strategies to raise achievement, and the need for rigorous review and regular self-evaluation, are at an early stage of development. Some members of the governing body are attending training and are learning to become more adept at challenging the school and interpreting data analysis. The governing body is appropriately involved in drawing up the school development plan, which is a useful working document aimed at tackling the most urgent priorities.
28. The bursar and office administrators ensure the school finances are managed satisfactorily. The school has fallen into a state where it needs considerable refurbishment to provide a stimulating learning environment for pupils. The headteacher, staff and governors are therefore working towards ensuring that future spending decisions are made in accordance with best value principles.

***Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005***

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	£681,597
Total expenditure	£ 682,528
Expenditure per pupil	£2,809

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	£65,302
Balance carried forward to the next	£64,371

29. The principal aid to the school's future development is the willingness of the new headteacher, her staff and the governing body to work together to make changes to help the school to improve in its effectiveness. The principal barriers include the constraints imposed by the high turnover of staff, and the state of the accommodation.

## **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 2**

### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Results in national tests are above average, but have declined over the last two years
- Standards in writing are not as good as those in reading and speaking
- Technical features of English are taught well and younger pupils have good opportunities to use them in their own writing
- Leadership and management are focused on raising standards

#### **Commentary**

30. Results of the 2004 Year 6 national tests were well above the national average when compared with all schools. However, in comparison with schools in similar circumstances and the same pupils' results in Year 2 tests, results were below average. Recent staff disruption has led to an overdependence on very structured planning and worksheets to ensure that the requirements of national tests are met at the end of Year 6. Pupils do not do as well in English as they do in mathematics and science, because not as many pupils attain at the higher Level 5. Overall, pupils' achievement in English is satisfactory.
31. Pupils have good spoken language skills. Role-play and other drama activities are used well to help pupils understand characters and events in a wide range of high quality literature. Higher attaining pupils use their reading skills very well to develop a clear understanding of characters and recount events as if they were part of a story. They use well-researched information persuasively to promote a healthy life style. Average attainers organise information clearly, but find it more difficult to sustain a viewpoint. Their best writing is linked to a personal experience or visit. Lower attaining pupils include dialogue in their narrative writing but some find it difficult to write at length on their own. Pupils listening skills are satisfactory overall. A significant proportion of pupils do not recognise that in order to contribute fully and effectively to a discussion or debate, listening skills are just as important as speaking.
32. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Technical features of English are taught well, but the time pupils spend on learning their spelling lists is not always evident in the independent writing of average and low attaining pupils. The best lessons use speaking and reading to create an experience from which pupils can write with confidence and independence. For example, Year 4 pupils developed a strong sense of drama and used dialogue effectively in stories about Mr Majeika. The most able pupils are challenged by very good questioning. In less successful lessons, pupils lose interest when teachers talk for too long and this leads to low level disruption. The overuse of worksheets and commercial writing frames, especially in Years 5 and 6, limits opportunities for pupils to develop confidence and fluency in their own writing. Too often, all groups are given the same task, so lower attaining pupils need adult support and higher attainers are not extended. Pupils with special educational needs receive very focused adult support that enables them to progress at a rate that matches that of others.
33. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The subject leader has a clear vision based on her detailed analysis of assessment data and this impacts effectively on the overall provision. For example, additional support was given to pupils for whom English might not be the main language at home to help them understand idioms. This helped them to perform well in tests. She has identified the need for greater consistency in teaching, sharing of expertise and good practice, and to eliminate practices that do not provide worthwhile learning activities for individuals and groups of pupils. However, significant staff turnover has delayed until September the implementation of a range of strategies designed to raise standards in writing. Marking of pupils' work is regular but inconsistent. Some comments aimed at helping lower attaining pupils are not clear enough. The use of targets is superficial and does not show pupils what they need to do to achieve a higher level.
34. Although limited, library provision supports pupils' wider reading choices well. Pupils enjoy reading their own and others' work in class books. ICT is well integrated into the curriculum. Pupils use and apply skills well in research and presentation. Weekly spelling tests based on the most frequently

used words are not always adapted to include key words linked to work in other subjects. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Standards have been maintained at above expected levels, but test results may have fallen as a result of high staff turnover.

### **Literacy across the curriculum**

35. In some classes, language and literacy are used well across the curriculum. Pupils are given opportunities to label drawings and diagrams in science, design and technology and geography. Year 3 pupils write clear, short sentences from their own research notes in a 'Dictionary of Ancient Egypt'. Year 4's chapter books in the style of 'Mallory Cox' are based on their Year 3 study of the Egyptians. There are also good opportunities for pupils to make notes and write their own interview questions in religious education. Computers are used well to research and word process work, for example Year 6's pamphlets for the RSPCA. However, this good practice is not consistent across classes and year groups.

### **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is good.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve well
- Teaching is good overall, though there are inconsistencies
- Extension classes have a good impact on learning for the highest attaining pupils
- Leadership of the subject is good
- Pupils' understanding of how they may improve their work is unsatisfactory

#### **Commentary**

36. By Year 6, test results and work seen in scrutiny during the inspection show that pupils attain standards that are well above the expected levels. This means that all pupils are achieving well on good starting levels. In the past, there have been some differences in the levels achieved by boys and girls. Very high standards in mathematics have been maintained since the last inspection.
37. Overall, teaching and learning are good. Throughout the school there is a commitment to learning good strategies to solve mathematical problems using mental and written methods. In all classes there is a high emphasis on pupils developing very rapid recall of times tables, which they do very well. This is because they are taught specific strategies and teachers provide them with many opportunities to practise and apply them in a wide range of practical situations. In two lessons, unsatisfactory teaching and learning were observed. In one case, this was due to the teacher's lack of understanding as to how to deliver new learning concepts and this resulted in confusion for the pupils, most of whom made insufficient progress. In the second lesson, poor classroom management slowed the pace of learning so much that pupils' achievement was unsatisfactory. In a very good lesson in Year 4, pupils of higher ability achieved very well because the lesson was sharply focused. Pupils were fired by the teacher's enthusiasm, the pace of the lesson was very brisk, and all pupils were confident to tackle new learning and to generate rules and explanations for their findings. Learning was exciting. In a Year 5 class where pupils achieved well this was because both the teacher and the teaching assistant had good subject knowledge. Detailed planning for the lesson had been shared, so that pupils were very clear about the learning intentions and used a high degree of care and accuracy in their recognition of where a shape would be after reflection. Assessment is not always used well to respond to individual needs. This often occurs when teachers new to classes have not gained sufficient understanding of pupils' levels and work set is sometimes inappropriate, resulting in higher achievers repeating known work and lower achievers being set work that is too difficult for them. The recent introduction of individual targets is not having sufficient impact on pupils' learning, as pupils do not have a clear knowledge of what they need to do to reach higher levels.

38. Leadership is good and the subject is managed satisfactorily. The subject leader has good subject knowledge and a clear vision for developments. Setting and small group arrangements are helping to maintain the high standards achieved. While teaching and learning are regularly monitored, strategies to improve individual teachers' skills are not yet managed effectively enough.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

39. Pupils use their number skills and mathematical thinking well to solve problems in other subjects. For example, they employ their mathematical presentation skills to add information in tables and charts in science and geography.

### **SCIENCE**

The provision for science is satisfactory.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good attention has been given to the application of scientific knowledge and skills in independent research and practical testing
- Pupils do well in national tests
- Analysis of data and assessment information is not used effectively enough to set targets for pupils and plan for future learning

#### **Commentary**

40. Standards in science are in line with expectations and pupils' achievements are satisfactory. This differs from the previous inspection, when standards were found to be good. Effective support for pupils helps them to prepare well for national tests, and, since 2002, results have been well above national averages, because a large proportion of pupils attain at the higher Level 5. In 2004, pupils' results in relation to their performance in Year 2 tests were average; they gained satisfactorily based on their prior attainment. This supports inspection findings that achievement overall is satisfactory. A positive aspect of work in science is the good attention given to the development of scientific skills in practical testing situations. Pupils develop good inquiry skills and organise tests and experiments confidently. They present their findings suitably (although not always neatly) and draw conclusions to negate or support initial predictions. Many pupils used a wide range of specialist subject vocabulary to talk about their work.
41. Parts of science lessons were observed during the inspection, but it was not possible to observe full science lessons, due to timetabling priorities and special projects taking place in Year 6. Therefore, no overall judgements can be made about teaching and learning. Many samples of work were scrutinised and pupils talked about their science work at length. Through discussions it is apparent that most teachers are confident with the subject and some have been supported to develop better teaching skills. Pupils are very enthusiastic about science work and enjoy devising and carrying out experiments. They talk with good recall about science topics covered and draw conclusions confidently from the things they find out from testing situations.
42. Leadership and management of science are satisfactory. The co-ordinator has good knowledge of the curriculum and is very enthusiastic about the subject. He has supported other teachers in lessons and provided demonstration lessons for others to observe. Resources are of good quality and well organised. However, there is not a clear enough understanding of the levels that pupils attain on entry to the school and little use of target setting to ensure that these levels are built upon consistently and effectively. Pupils do not understand what they must learn and be able to do to progress to higher levels of attainment. This is why achievement is satisfactory rather than good.

### **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in information and communication technology is good.

### **Main strengths**

- Pupils have good ICT skills, knowledge and understanding and they achieve well
- ICT is well used in other subjects to aid learning
- Effective leadership of the subject has brought about good improvement

### **Commentary**

43. Pupils achieve well in ICT and standards exceed expectations by the end of Year 6. Good emphasis has been placed on elements of control technology since the last inspection and Year 6 pupils showed great enthusiasm and aptitude in project work based on control skills during the current inspection. In multi-media presentations, pupils blend sound and pictures, effectively linked by graphics and text. Pupils evaluate their own work to good effect and critically edit their presentations. All pupils work confidently at levels beyond those that are expected for their age. Improvement in ICT has been good since the previous inspection.
44. Teaching and learning in ICT are good overall. Teachers have responded positively to opportunities to develop their own skills since the last inspection. They have high expectations of pupils and give them opportunities to make choices and develop their individual styles of presentation. Pupils show high levels of confidence and make improvements to their own work. Tasks are challenging and interesting and promote positive attitudes and good behaviour. Lessons are well planned and explanations are very clear and precise, allowing pupils ample time to practise and develop their skills. Teachers and teaching assistants only intervene when necessary, enabling pupils to work and learn independently. The pace of learning is good, with teachers skilfully ensuring that pupils have the opportunity to explore, develop and use their routine computer skills. The curriculum is well designed so that knowledge and understanding are developed systematically from year to year.
45. Good leadership and management of the subject have been effective in raising the confidence of teachers and pupils alike. Standards and achievement have improved as a result. The co-ordinator has good skills and knowledge and has effectively monitored improvements and developments to ensure consistency. Good work has been carried out to establish entry levels in ICT for pupils joining the school. This is enabling staff to more effectively measure achievement over time. All teachers have been supported in developing their own skills. Resources for the subject are satisfactory and the school has plans in place to improve the accommodation and hardware to ensure that standards are maintained. The current computer suite is cramped and there is not an effective focal point in the room for teachers to demonstrate and highlight good work.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

46. The use of ICT to support work in other subjects is good. There are frequent opportunities in many lessons to ensure effective consolidation of ICT skills and improved learning in other subjects. There are also good examples of cross-curricular links built into planning. ICT supports, for example, the development of science skills and makes work in literacy interesting and meaningful. Pupils use Internet research skills for work in science, history and geography.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **History and Geography**

47. Two lessons were seen in geography and only one in history. Further evidence was gained from talking to children and looking at samples of work. However, there was not enough evidence to make judgements about overall provision in either of these subjects. In both **geography** lessons, teaching and learning were satisfactory. Pupils in Year 4 gained a

satisfactory understanding of how to use fieldwork data to create a map of the local area, while pupils in Year 6 investigated the course of the River Thames and the counties it passes through. In this lesson resources were well prepared to make the learning interesting and new geographical vocabulary was introduced in a meaningful way. In the **history** lesson observed, teaching and learning were good and pupils achieved well. Their knowledge of life in Tudor times was deepened as they experienced performing a play in the classroom, which had been set up to resemble a Tudor style theatre. They also gained a good insight into what it would have been like to be part of the audience in those times. Good links were made to literacy and drama as pupils scanned for information and developed confidence in taking the parts of the principal players on stage.

### **Religious education**

Provision for religious education is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths**

- Teachers and pupils share experiences of their faiths and this helps them to learn effectively
- A good variety of resources is used to support teaching and learning

## Commentary

48. The previous inspection found standards in religious education to be in line with the agreed syllabus by Year 6. This remains the case. Achievement is satisfactory for all pupils. In a Year 4 lesson where teaching and learning were good, pupils gained a clear understanding of a 'Gurdwara', - a Sikh place of worship. This lesson was made all the more interesting as a Sikh pupil shared his knowledge of his faith with his peers and thus made learning more meaningful. The use of further information gleaned from a video, books and pictures prepared pupils well for their forthcoming visit to the local Gurdwara. By Year 6, pupils have a satisfactory understanding of bible stories, festivals and the main faiths. They use ICT well to research facts about Hinduism and to make a tour of the local Buddhist monastery.
49. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers have a sound understanding of the curriculum and use religious education topics to promote pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Members of the community from a variety of faiths regularly visit the school and make a significant contribution to pupils' understanding of other faiths. Resources overall are satisfactory.

## CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

50. No lessons were seen in art and design and only one class music lesson was observed. In physical education, short sessions were seen where pupils' practised their swimming. The curriculum for all three subjects meets statutory requirements. In **art and design**, work on display in classrooms and corridors, indicates that standards are in line with expectations. Pupils use a suitable range of techniques and media in their work and demonstrate positive attitudes when talking about the activities in which they have been involved. Standards in the class **music** lesson observed were in line with expectations, but generally standards are better than expectations throughout the school. This is largely due to the good provision made for musical activities through extra-curricular and extension activities. Very good specialist teaching by a teacher from the local grammar school and other instrumental teachers enables many pupils to reach high standards in performance skills. The school orchestra includes a very wide range of musical instruments not generally found in a primary school. Renditions of jazz, blues, classical and military pieces are given with gusto and confidence. **Physical education** is effectively supplemented by extra-curricular activities for football, rugby, hockey and netball. The teams meet with considerable success in competitions organised with other schools in the area. Pupils are entered for awards in athletics. Staff and pupils enjoy early morning fitness for fun sessions led by the subject co-ordinator. Parent volunteers help professional teachers who lead swimming and other activities. All pupils meet the minimum requirements to swim at least 25m in the school's swimming pool before they leave, and many progress further.

## Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is satisfactory.

## Main strength and weakness

- Useful links are made with other subjects to give relevance to design and technology activities
- Teachers talk for too long in some lessons and pupils have limited time to complete practical work

## Commentary

51. Standards in design and technology are in line with expectations and pupils' achievements are satisfactory. During the inspection pupils were involved in a range of activities including the design and making of an attractive and healthy sandwich, investigation of original products to generate new product ideas and the evaluation of a range of children's toys. In most situations they demonstrated suitable skills in evaluating products in relation to a set of success criteria. Pupils worked hard to consider the aesthetic qualities needed to encourage

people to eat a sandwich, alongside the need for good nutritional qualities. Design and technology activities support work in science and the development of pupils' personal and social skills. For example, they work in pairs and groups to make decisions about the characteristics that make products attractive and sellable. Standards in the subject have been maintained since the last inspection.

52. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In the best lessons observed, teachers used specialist subject vocabulary effectively to encourage pupils to talk appropriately about their work. In a good Year 4 lesson, the teacher demonstrated good subject knowledge and very good questioning skills that encouraged pupils to make connections between their understanding of reflection and its use for a specific purpose, for example in the head of a flashlight. In three of the four sessions seen, teachers spent too long talking at points during the session and pupils began to fidget and lose concentration because they were anxious to get on with practical tasks. In these situations, noise levels rose and behaviour deteriorated. Teachers managed to draw pupils back to the task in hand, but valuable time was wasted in doing so. This is generally the reason why achievement in lessons is satisfactory rather than good. The subject is suitably led and managed and resources are ample to support curriculum needs.

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

53. No lessons were seen in this subject, and there was no past work completed by the pupils that could be used to evaluate the standards achieved. The curriculum section of this report evaluates provision for pupils as satisfactory. Personal, social and health education and citizenship are taught in all the subjects of the curriculum, assemblies and circle time. The school ethos contributes positively to pupils' development as effective citizens and also to their personal and social education.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgment</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>4</b>
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	4
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>4</b>
Pupils' achievement	4
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)</b>	<b>3</b>
Attendance	2
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	4
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>4</b>
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	5
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	5
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>4</b>
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	0
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	4

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