

INSPECTION REPORT

LAVENHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL

Lavenham

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124540

Headteacher: Mrs J Foster

Lead inspector: Mr P B McAlpine

Dates of inspection: 14 -16 March 2005

Inspection number: 267193

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:	5-9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	55
School address:	Barn Street Lavenham Sudbury Suffolk
Postcode:	CO10 9RB
Telephone number:	01787 247350
Fax number:	01787 249671
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Ms Meggan Curry
Date of previous inspection:	22 February 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is much smaller than most. It has 55 pupils from Reception to Year 4, organised into three classes. The backgrounds of the pupils cover a wide range but are average overall. The number eligible for a free school meal is average. Almost all the pupils are from white British families. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs has risen from seven per cent at the time of the previous inspection to 21 per cent currently and is now consistent with the national average. Two pupils have a statement of special educational needs; this is high for a school of this size. Pupil mobility is high. The attainment of children entering the school varies from year to year but is average overall. The greatest annual variation is in the numbers of children with potential for high attainment. There has been a change of headteachers since the previous inspection. Before the appointment of the current headteacher there was a period of temporary leadership. The school is involved in the Leadership Development Strategy in Primary Schools.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21552	Mr P B McAlpine	Lead inspector	English Science Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology Physical education Special educational needs English as an additional language
9505	Mr D Haynes	Lay inspector	
23453	Mrs C Cressey	Team inspector	Mathematics Religious education History Geography Music The Foundation Stage

The inspection contractor was:

PBM, Brookbridge and Bedford Ltd
13A Market Place
Uttoxeter
Staffordshire
ST14 8HY

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	8
Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	10
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	14
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS	
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	16
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2	17
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	23

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

In most respects this is a good school, with several very good features but a few aspects for improvement. It has improved considerably under the effective stewardship of the headteacher. Standards are good in reading and mathematics and rising elsewhere. Nearly all pupils do as well or better than is predicted by their attainment on entry though progress is slow in the Reception year. Attitudes to learning are positive and behaviour is good. Teaching is satisfactory, with many good features but a few aspects for improvement. Leadership and management are effective. The cost of educating each pupil is higher than other schools but value for money is nevertheless satisfactory.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- standards in reading and mathematics are above average in Year 4 and achievement in these subjects is good;
- in science, good priority is given to learning through experimental and investigative work;
- standards in writing are improving but still below average overall, reflecting weaknesses in basic skills of grammar, spelling and handwriting;
- the provision in the Foundation Stage is not as effective as it should be;
- the pupils like school, relationships with parents are good, and links with the community are very good.

Improvement since the previous inspection has been good, with the pace of improvement quickening considerably in the past two years. The headteacher, since her appointment, has given precedence to improving the provision in Years 2, 3 and 4, where needs were greatest at that time. She has increased the number of classes so that Year 2 pupils can be taught as a single age class. There has been a satisfactory improvement in overall standards. Links with parents and the community have improved significantly. The information for parents is now good. Strategic planning has improved and is now good. Provision in the Foundation Stage has not improved sufficiently and is a current priority.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
reading	B	B	A	A
writing	A	B	D	D
mathematics	A	A	D	C

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

Achievement is satisfactory overall though it varies between subjects and year groups. By Year 4, achievement is good in reading and mathematics and satisfactory in science but it is not as good as it should be in writing, where most pupils could do better. Achievement by Year 4 is satisfactory in all of the other subjects except physical education, where it was not possible to gather enough evidence to make a judgement. Current standards in Year 4 are above average in reading and mathematics but below average in writing. Standards in Year 4 are average in all other subjects where a judgment could be made. Achievement by Year 2 is satisfactory except in writing, where pupils could do better. Standards in Year 2

are above average in reading, broadly average in mathematics, science, and all other subjects except writing, where standards are below average, and physical education, where no judgement was possible. Test results in Year 2 have fallen since 2002, reflecting turbulence in the staffing, but current standards in Year 2 show strong signs of reversing this trend following effective action by senior management.

Achievement in the Reception year is unsatisfactory and most children in this age group could do better; although standards in personal, social and emotional development are satisfactory, those involving literacy and numeracy are below average. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is generally satisfactory in relation to the difficulties that they face. Academically gifted pupils achieve satisfactorily. Over the past three years, the extent of boys' underperformance in writing has been greater than that of girls; current action is remedying this shortcoming. **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities are good**; they like school and behave well. Attendance is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good overall but there are exceptions. Teaching is satisfactory with many good features but a few aspects for improvement. Lessons, in the main, are well planned and relevant to learning needs; pupils are well motivated and learn quickly, especially in Years 2, 3 and 4. The Reception year and Year 1 are exceptions to this finding and learning here is too often slow paced and lacking in challenge. The quality of provision for the National Curriculum is generally good, with learning successfully enriched through good use of resources, educational visits, and extra-curricular activities. The Foundation Stage curriculum is not taught in full; expectations are too low and opportunities to learn through physical activity outdoors are insufficient for the pupils' needs. Relationships between pupils and with teachers are positive throughout and levels of care, guidance and support are good. Links with parents are good. Links with the community are very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the headteacher has united the school and helped it to introduce changes quickly and systematically. Management is effective, including action to raise standards in writing. Strategic planning is good and firmly rooted in self-evaluation. Governance is satisfactory and all relevant statutory requirements are met though there is insufficient regard for the nationally agreed Foundation Stage curriculum.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Pupils like school and have positive attitudes to their work and play. Almost all parents speak highly of the school and welcome the improvements made.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- increase the effectiveness of the provision in the Foundation Stage;
- continue to raise achievement and standards in writing.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, and subjects

The achievement of the pupils is satisfactory overall but there are variations between subjects and year groups. Current standards in reading are above average in Year 2 and Year 4. Standards in mathematics are average in Year 2 and above average by Year 4. Standards in science are average in both year groups. Standards in writing are below average in Year 2 and Year 4, though they are rising quickly.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good in reading and mathematics in Year 4.
- Pupils do well in experimental and investigative work in science throughout the school.
- Achievement is unsatisfactory in writing.
- Progress is too slow for children in the Reception year.

Commentary

1. In reading and mathematics, almost all pupils attain or exceed the standard predicted by their attainment on entry and they are generally working as well as can reasonably be expected. A number of pupils with average attainment on entry exceed the nationally expected level for their age by Year 4. This generally good progress reflects effective provision and good priority given to these subjects. Pupils who experience difficulty in learning are well supported in reading and most of them eventually attain the nationally expected level for their age. Pupils who join the school at other than the usual time of admission are assessed quickly and their needs appropriately met.
2. In science, the substantial majority of pupils attain as well as predicted by their attainment on entry. They have good knowledge of experimental and investigative science, reflecting the good priority given in this subject to learning through practical investigation. Achievement in information and communication technology is satisfactory and throughout the school standards in this subject are average. Good use is made of the local area to extend knowledge and understanding in history and geography; achievement is satisfactory and standards are average in these subjects. Except in physical education, achievement and standards are satisfactory in all other subjects including religious education, with good features in art and design. No lessons were seen in physical education and so no judgement can be made about standards.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	17.0 (16.3)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	14.2 (15.7)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	15.8 (17.7)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 10 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

3. The school has identified the underachievement in writing as a priority for improvement and is acting effectively to remedy this shortcoming. Most pupils, whatever their ability, could do better in writing, especially in the basic skills of grammar, punctuation, spelling and handwriting. Progress in these aspects has been slow over recent years, particularly in the Reception year and in Year 1, where admission arrangements and organisation of the pupils into teaching groups is creating too many competing learning needs and leading to insufficient priority being given to writing. Recent good improvements to provision in Year 2 are leading to a strong focus on writing in this year group. Even so, the pupils in Year 2 are, on average, currently more than a year behind national expectations and most of them have the potential to do much better. The teaching in this year group is effective and the Year 2 pupils are catching up quickly, with every possibility that the standards found during the inspection could be much improved by the end of the school year. The situation is similar in Years 3 and 4, where attainment lags behind the expectations for age and ability but the pupils are learning quickly and catching up. The school initially addressed the problem of the pupils' lack of motivation when writing. Samples of work show that the length and organisation of writing to suit the subject has been transformed for the better over the past nine months. The inspection found pupils well motivated and eager to write. Attention now needs to focus on improving basic skills.
4. The small size of each year group makes the results of national tests statistically unreliable and caution is needed when interpreting them. The tests only apply to Year 2 and not to the oldest pupils at the school. In 2004, the results of national tests in Year 2 were well above average in reading but below average in writing and mathematics. The results in reading have remained consistently high in Year 2 but standards in writing have fallen over the past four years. Standards in mathematics were consistent between 2001 and 2003 but fell in 2004. The 2004 results in reading compare well with similar schools but those in writing and mathematics were not as good. Overall, the five-year trend in results is below the national trend and standards have fallen. This fall coincided with a brief, turbulent period at the school. Current standards in mathematics are higher than those in 2004 and the downward trend of recent years is being reversed.
5. In the tests, boys have underperformed compared to girls. Both boys and girls did better than boys and girls nationally in reading and mathematics but the girls were generally more than a year ahead of girls nationally while the boys were only a few months ahead. The differences in reading and mathematics mostly reflected the greater number of boys with learning difficulties and special educational needs. In the tests in writing, while the girls were more than six months ahead of girls nationally, the boys were several months behind boys nationally. The school recognises this and has successfully worked to improve the motivation of boys, particularly those with typical ability or better.
6. Provision in the Reception year is not as effective as it should be and this is leading to generally slow progress for these pupils. School records and assessments show that most of them enter the school with typical or higher attainment for their age. School records and the pupils' work show that by the time that they enter Year 1 they are behind national expectations and have not fulfilled their earlier potential in communication, language and literacy and in mathematical development. Standards are average in personal, social and emotional development.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes to school and their behaviour are **good**. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good**. Attendance and punctuality are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are keen to learn and join in all activities with enthusiasm.
- Pupils' willingness to show enterprise and take responsibility is good.
- The school promotes good relationships, including racial harmony.
- Pupils' confidence and self-esteem are good.

Commentary

7. Pupils are interested in their lessons; older pupils show good concentration and work hard in response to teachers' high expectation. They take a full and enthusiastic part in activities. Behaviour is good in the classroom and in the playground. Relationships between pupils are good; they play well together and no one is isolated. Pupils develop respect for each other and there is little incidence of bullying, racism or other forms of harassment in school. Pupils and parents maintain that bullying is rare and if any unpleasant incidents do occur they know what to do and are confident that the staff will deal effectively with the problem. Pupils have good levels of self-esteem; they talk confidently with adults and are not afraid to express their views. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory. Attendance has been consistently close to the national average since the previous inspection.
8. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. In assemblies, pupils have opportunities to think about the things that have a profound effect on their lives and that of others around the world. The pupils clearly understand the difference between right and wrong and most follow the school and class rules well. They behave courteously and are friendly and polite to each other, their teachers and visitors. Through their personal, social and health education lessons, pupils learn a range of life skills for dealing with the difficulties they may encounter both in and out of school. Pupils take their responsibilities of living in a community seriously and develop good levels of maturity by the time they transfer to the middle school. Responsibilities range from acting as a school councillor, helping with equipment and assemblies and being librarians. In studies, such as religious education, art and design and music pupils learn about the beliefs and practices of others. They are involved in a wide range of charities and have maintained links with some of the children they have helped in other countries. This effectively promotes mutual respect, tolerance and understanding.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.4	School data	0
National data	5.4	National data	0.5

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good overall. Although there are shortcomings in the Foundation Stage and in writing, there is good teaching and learning and a good curriculum elsewhere; the arrangements for caring for pupils are good; the links with parents are good; links with other schools and with the community are very good.

Teaching and learning

The teaching is satisfactory, with many good features but a few aspects for improvement. Assessment is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The bulk of the teaching in Years 2 to 4 is good.
- Lessons are mostly well prepared and organised and make learning come alive.
- The teaching of writing has improved but more work is needed.
- The pace of learning in the Foundation Stage is too slow.

Commentary

9. In Years 2, 3 and 4, learning is efficient and effective in all subjects. The teaching in these year groups is well organised and well planned. There are no significant variations in learning between pupils of different gender. The learning of different ability groups is consistent with their needs. Pupils with special educational needs are adequately supported and they make satisfactory progress in relation to their learning difficulties. In Year 1, learning is inconsistent, with insufficient challenge for the more able pupils, particularly in writing and mathematics when taught with the Reception pupils.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 12 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	1	8	1	2	0	0

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

10. In the substantial majority of lessons in Years 2, 3 and 4, pupils of different abilities are challenged and provided with work that is matched to their learning needs. The teaching of reading, mathematics, and science is generally effective. The teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to make the learning interesting and engaging in all subjects. Good questioning skills and clear explanations keep the attention of pupils and help their understanding. Most lessons place a strong emphasis on learning through practical investigation and problem solving, particularly in science and mathematics. Good use is made of resources. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively and they help to get the best out of pupils. The school has small classes and this feature is used to good advantage to provide individual support where necessary. Homework is challenging, integrated into learning in lessons and worthwhile.
11. Effective action has been taken to raise achievement in writing. Good efforts are being made to make writing stimulating and exciting through improving lesson introductions and using resources more imaginatively. This has led to increased length of composition and to better organisation of content. However, basic skills of grammar, spelling, and punctuation are not improving quickly enough because shared and guided writing methods are not always as effective as they should be.
12. The full-time and part-time Reception children are taught together with the pupils in Year 1. They form the largest teaching group in the school. Learning in this group is not always well matched to the varying needs arising from the wide age range, different experiences of school, varying ability, and differing curricular requirements. While some pupils get much that is worthwhile from lessons in this age group others do not. During shared work, not enough challenge is built into the questioning and progression of work to meet the needs of the oldest and most able. During practical activities, particularly for the Reception children, not enough emphasis is placed on the acquisition of basic literacy and numeracy skills.

13. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good throughout the school. A strong feature of the combined Reception and Year 1 class is the good level of pastoral care and attention to emotional needs. All teachers are adept at maintaining good behaviour, using praise and rewards effectively.
14. The arrangements for assessment are satisfactory but with a few aspects for improvement. Assessments in reading, writing, and mathematics are consistent with statutory requirements. Good use is being made of individual curricular targets and this is helping pupils to know how well they are doing and what they must learn next. Information from assessment is beginning to be used to measure pupil progress but this aspect is underdeveloped compared to other schools. Not enough is being done to contrast individual attainment with the relevant national expectations or with what individuals might be predicted to achieve by the end of each school year given their attainment on entry. This is recognised by senior management and action is being taken to improve the use of assessment information. In the Foundation Stage, insufficient use is made of assessment to plan what children should learn next.

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory overall. Opportunities for enrichment and extra-curricular provision are good. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Learning experiences are good in Years 2, 3 and 4 but lack sufficient challenge in the Foundation Stage and Year 1.
- A good range of clubs, sporting activities and visits enrich the statutory curriculum and enhance personal and social skills.
- The accommodation has improved since the last inspection.

Commentary

15. All subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are taught but there are weaknesses in the provision for children in Year 1 and in the Foundation Stage. In Years 2, 3 and 4 the planning is good. Members of staff plan a curriculum that provides continuity and progression in pupils' learning as they get older. Different teaching and learning styles, methods, groupings and activities engage interests, ensuring that the needs of both boys and girls and those who learn at different rates are generally met. Most lessons have provision at different levels of difficulty for low, average and high attaining pupils, enabling them to achieve as well as they can. Links with other subjects are evident and add interest and enrichment to learning and there are appropriate opportunities for the application of numeracy and literacy skills in other subjects.
16. The curriculum in Year 1 and the Foundation Stage often lacks sufficient interest and challenge to meet the needs of children and the planning is not sufficiently adapted to meet the particular needs of a mixed age class. Insufficient attention is given to ensuring that work is well matched to the different ages and attainment levels. This lack of guidance has a negative impact on the quality of teaching and learning and as a result too few children attain the standards of which they are capable.

17. Arrangements for pupils' personal, health and sex education are good and are underpinned by the school's caring ethos and values. There are agreed policies for health, sex and drugs education and quality time is made available within lessons to develop these areas in ways which are appropriate for the ages and needs of the pupils.
18. A good range of out of school clubs and educational visits successfully extend knowledge and understanding and promote personal and social development. Clubs are very well attended and the work done is often of a very high standard. The demand for places means that access to them is rotated over the year to enable all pupils to attend a club of their choice. The village's rich history and culture are used effectively as a resource. Well-planned visits play an important part in developing an eagerness to learn.
19. Links with other schools and groups are good. These are used innovatively to make certain that the school's small size does not limit access to a wide and stimulating curriculum. For example, gifted and talented pupils attend workshops with others from small schools providing them with challenging tasks to extend their abilities. Together with other schools, pupils attended a conference to help them work out their own preferred learning styles. The school is now beginning to use these findings in lessons to help maximise learning.
20. The accommodation is satisfactory and much improved since the previous inspection. Considerable changes to the fabric of the building have been made in recent years. The whole building is well maintained to a high standard of cleanliness and is aesthetically pleasing. The building is now very well suited to providing a stimulating teaching and learning environment. Monies have been allocated in the next financial year to improving the outside areas. This will enhance the provision for all pupils, especially those in the Foundation Stage. The teaching and support staff work well together for the benefit of the pupils and teaching assistants are effectively deployed to support pupils who learn at a slower rate. The deployment of staff in the Foundation Stage and Year 1 constrains the pupils learning and they do not achieve as well as they should.

Care, guidance and support

Provision is **good**. The school cares well for its pupils and there is generally a high level of attention to matters of welfare and health and safety.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Members of staff know children and families well and this is helping to create a positive ethos and provide good pastoral care.
- Relationships at all levels are good.
- Arrangements for obtaining and valuing pupils' views are a strong feature of the provision.

Commentary

21. Child protection procedures are satisfactory and all members of staff are aware of their responsibilities. The levels of playground supervision are good. There is a good

range of opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities for the day-to-day running of the school. Pupils' views are obtained through questionnaires and good use is made of circle time. The newly formed school council is beginning to have an influence on school life and decisions on charity support have already been implemented. Pupils on the school council take their role seriously and have benefited from a visit from members of an established school council from another primary school.

22. Standards of maintenance and cleanliness are good and vandalism and graffiti are not a problem. This instils high values in the pupils who show respect for property and resources. Induction arrangements for pupils entering the Reception year are satisfactory and establish a good home-school relationship. Teachers know their pupils and families well and provide a good level of personal support, involving parents where necessary. Pupils are confident in approaching adults at the school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There is a good and effective partnership with parents and very good links with the community and other schools. This is very good improvement since the previous inspection where these aspects were found to be unsatisfactory. The views of parents were very positive in the parents' questionnaire and at the parents' meeting.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are very supportive of the school.
- There are very good links with other schools that benefit pupils.
- There are very good links with the community that enrich learning.
- There is an active friends association.

Commentary

23. The school has worked hard to improve communication and relationships with parents and the community. Parents' responses to the inspection questionnaire, and when meeting with parents, show that they are now very happy about all that the school has to offer. An active parents and friends association supports the school well by providing good social opportunities for parents and their children and by providing good financial support for learning resources.
24. The school has sought parents' views through questionnaires and coffee mornings provide informal access to the headteacher. Information for parents is good and parents particularly like the annual report on children's progress. The use of homework and reading diaries is good and is an effective means of communication. Parents are welcome in school and attend special events and parent evenings and a number of parents regularly help in school. Procedures for pupils entering reception are satisfactory with most children transferring from a preschool that shares the same site. There are good procedures in place to deal with the concerns of parents but they seldom have to be used.
25. The school has very good links with other local schools. Experiences and expertise are shared, a good example being the visit of members of a school council from another school to explain to pupils how they operate. The school maintains very good relationships with local middle schools and this helps pupils to transfer smoothly.

Links with other primary schools allow the small number of pupils who transfer to middle school to get to know other pupils of their own age before transferring.

26. Links with the local community are very good and recently have been very effective in providing funds for the school with an auction of pupils' art. The immediate area is rich in local history and this is used very well to enrich learning opportunities; the school plays a full role in local carnivals and festivals.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good overall. The leadership of the headteacher is good. Governance of the school and the leadership of other key members of staff are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has united the school community and established a clear and appropriate direction for its development.
- Strategic planning is good and effectively leading to improvement.

Commentary

27. The headteacher has brought vigour and vitality to the work of the school. In the two years since her appointment she has successfully developed a culture of self-evaluation and improvement. Her priorities have been to improve the links with parents, the community, and the provision in Years 2, 3 and 4; the needs were greatest in these aspects. She leads well through the example of her teaching and has established good, professional relationships with pupils, teachers, parents and governors. Through careful management of change, she has quickly remedied the shortcomings found at the previous inspection. The support of key members of staff is satisfactory. Leadership in mathematics has been effective and leading to improved achievement among the pupils. Leadership in the Foundation Stage is less effective and the vision of good practice here is underdeveloped.
28. Strategic planning fully reflects the school's ambitions and goals and there has been good improvement in this aspect of the school's work since the previous inspection. The priorities for improvement are relevant. Action taken over the past two years has been effective in raising standards in reading, writing and science. Action to improve links with parents and the community, including the better provision of information for parents, has been particularly effective and improvement here has been very good.
29. Arrangements for school self-evaluation are satisfactory. A programme of lesson observations provides adequate information about teaching and learning while sampling work and analysing assessment data is helping senior management to identify how well the school is doing and what it must do to improve. The arrangements for managing the performance of teachers and other members of staff are appropriate and are providing a good focus on continued professional development. The induction of new teachers is good.
30. Governance is satisfactory and all relevant statutory requirements are met. The management of finances is rigorous and the school is living well within its means. Governors and senior management have appropriate regard to obtaining value for money. A large surplus inherited at the time of her appointment has been appropriately invested in the fabric of the building and new resources for learning. The

balance carried forward in the table below relates to the previous financial year and it has been more than halved in the current year.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	188,441	Balance from previous year	43,348
Total expenditure	200,587	Balance carried forward to the next	31,202
Expenditure per pupil	3,647		

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation Stage is not as effective as it should be. There were only eight children in the Foundation Stage at the time of the inspection and they were taught in the same class as pupils in Year 1. Four children were full-time and the remainder were part-time. Because of the organisation, the work of the Foundation Stage could only be sampled during observations of the combined Reception and Year 1 class.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are not achieving as well as they should and standards are not high enough.
- Teaching is not effective enough.
- Planning is too brief and is not sufficiently focused on the nationally agreed early learning goals.
- Assessment is not used effectively to identify future learning needs.
- Children are happy and secure and behave appropriately.

Commentary

31. Most children enter the Reception class with attainment that is typical for their age. However, the majority of them do not achieve well enough and are unlikely to attain the nationally agreed early learning goals in communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; creative development; and physical development. Provision for personal, social and emotional development is better and most children are on target to achieve the early learning goals in this area of learning.
32. Constraints caused by the school's admission policy and the mixed age class are preventing the nationally agreed curriculum for the Foundation Stage from being taught satisfactorily to all children. Members of staff have an insecure understanding of how the youngest children learn and are unaware of the importance of well-planned, high quality activities to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding. Planning does not sufficiently reflect national guidance and the provision is not organised adequately so that skills and knowledge are developed systematically. As a result, members of staff miss opportunities to extend children's learning and help them to work to the level of which they are capable. Tasks are not well matched to the different attainment levels. For example, children who learn at a slower rate are engaged in similar tasks to those who are more able. Assessments are infrequent and are not usually linked to the early learning goals to identify what children know and understand in relation to the national stepping-stones and the early learning goals. Records are poor and lack sufficient information to track effectively children's progress, identify individual needs and provide suitably challenging activities for children and to move learning on.
33. **Personal, social and emotional development** is satisfactory. Children develop a satisfactory understanding of appropriate behaviour and of what is right and wrong. They share resources and work together in a variety of situations, such as role-play and model making.

34. **Communication, language and literacy** are not taught effectively. Children do not attain standards commensurate with their potential. Insufficient attention is given to the promotion of reading and writing skills; resources and activities lack challenge. Progress is slow because the provision places too little emphasis on early literacy skills and opportunities are regularly missed to develop vocabulary, letter recognition and early writing skills. During the course of a week there are insufficient opportunities to develop and extend reading and writing skills in interesting well-planned ways.
35. **Mathematical development** is not taught effectively, limits progress and results in underachievement. A lack of effective assessments is leading to work that is not well matched to learning needs. Members of staff do not plan for children to extend their knowledge and understanding of number, space and measurement through the use of stimulating resources and focused practical activities that children choose for themselves.
36. The teachers' planning shows that there are insufficient opportunities for **creative development, knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development**. There are plans to create a separate outdoor area for the Reception children in the immediate future. This is urgently necessary to enhance the quality of the provision.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is satisfactory. Achievement by Year 4 is good in reading but unsatisfactory in writing. The quality of learning varies between reading and writing, and between year groups, but is satisfactory overall. Teaching is satisfactory with good features in Years 2, 3 and 4. Management of the subject is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in reading are above average in Year 2 and in Year 4 and the pupils invariably do as well or better than predicted by their attainment on entry.
- Although the school has successfully increased the pace of learning in writing to satisfactory, the pupils could do better and standards are below average in Year 2 and Year 4.
- Although standards are good in reading, and pupils well motivated in the main, the choice of fiction books, including those in the reading scheme, is limited and some pupils, particularly boys, find this uninspiring.

Commentary

37. In reading, assessments of the pupils on entry show that more than 80 per cent of them have the potential to attain or exceed national expectations in reading, including about 25 per cent who are predicted to exceed the expectations. In tests over the past four years, about 90 per cent of the pupils have attained or exceeded national expectations and around half have exceeded them, which is considerably better than predicted. Test results in reading in Year 2 are generally in the top 25 per cent of schools nationally. These high standards are sustained in Years 3 and 4 and current standards in reading in Year 4 are above average.

38. In writing, the pupils generally attain standards in Year 2 and Year 4 that are lower than predicted by their attainment on entry. School records show that the pupils' progress in previous years has been less than expected and less than they have achieved over the same period in reading and mathematics. The pupils' work shows that many of them have entered their current classes attaining standards that are below those expected for their age and below their potential, particularly in basic skills of grammar, punctuation, spelling, and handwriting. These shortcomings are recognised by senior management and action is being taken to remedy them. In Years 2, 3 and 4, the pupils are catching up with the expectations for their age. The current teaching in these year groups is broadly satisfactory in writing and managing to improve motivation, so that pupils are eager to write. However, the teaching methods used are not sufficiently developing word, sentence, or text level skills or using effective shared and guided writing techniques. Because of this, there are still gaps in pupils' basic skills. Progress in Year 1 is relatively slow; pupils tend to be passive rather than active learners and expectations are too low.
39. Standards in speaking and listening are at least average. Pupils are generally confident speakers, often with good vocabularies and a willingness to explain details that help the listeners' understanding. In most lessons, pupils listen attentively and show by their responses that they follow the main points.
40. Teaching is satisfactory overall; it is good in Years 3 and 4 and satisfactory in Years 1 and 2, with variations between classes. Most pupils make worthwhile gains in lessons. The planning is effective in Years 2, 3 and 4, with suitable provision in mixed age classes for pupils of different abilities. In Year 1, too much time is spent on low-level tasks and there are missed opportunities to extend basic literacy skills.
41. Subject leadership and management are satisfactory. The most important issues for improvement have emerged from monitoring and from analysis of performance. Action is being taken to raise standards, with early signs of success. Resources are satisfactory in quality, with some good use of information and communication technology in some classes. The range of fiction material, including the structured reading scheme, is narrow and does not appeal to every taste, particularly among boys. Investments have been made to improve the book stock and this policy should be continued after the preferences of pupils have been determined. Resources such as individual whiteboards and big books are not always used effectively to promote active and efficient learning of basic skills and this should be remedied quickly.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

42. The development of language and literacy skills across the curriculum is satisfactory but with aspects for improvement. Teachers perceive a necessity to develop language and literacy skills and are making efforts to improve the provision. At present, the efforts are not entirely consistent through the school and there is room for greater rigour in planning. Good examples were found of skills being developed through information and communication technology and of reasons for writing emerging in science and other subjects; these examples are not consistent in every class.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is satisfactory. The achievement of the pupils is good by Year 4 and satisfactory by Year 2. Teaching is mostly good. Leadership and management are effective.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in Year 4.
- Teaching is consistently good in Years 2, 3 and 4 but weaker in Year 1.
- There is a good emphasis on mental mathematics and problem solving.
- Assessment of pupils' progress is not used effectively.

Commentary

43. Standards across the school vary from below average in Year 1 to above average in Year 4. In Year 3 and 4, the majority of pupils are working to their full potential and as a result over 90 per cent of Year 4 pupils are on target to attain or exceed the nationally expected level by the end of the school year. In Year 1 standards are not high enough and are well below those expected nationally. Pupils are not sufficiently challenged and as a result do not achieve as well as they could. In Year 2, expectations are much higher and pupils respond well. They work hard and are on target to attain the nationally expected level by the end of the school year.
44. Teaching is consistently good in Years 2, 3 and 4. This good teaching is pivotal to the success pupils have in these year groups. However, the weaker teaching in Year 1 is hindering progress and few pupils reach the standard of which they are capable.
45. Most pupils with special educational needs have clear targets. They are given good support, enabling them to participate fully in lessons and achieve the targets set for them. Where teaching is weaker, work is not planned sufficiently well to enable pupils to achieve as well as expected. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls.
46. Where teaching is good or better, members of staff plan carefully for the different ages in the class. They have high expectations of pupils and work is challenging and interesting. Lessons begin briskly and include regular opportunities for mental arithmetic. Teachers are skilful in asking challenging questions and explaining new ideas and skills. They provide pupils with opportunities to practise these skills in groups and pairs using a range of activities, such as the interactive whiteboards and games. Independent tasks reinforce learning well and are carefully planned to meet the needs of pupils who learn at different speeds. As a result, pupils respond enthusiastically, are confident mathematicians and make significant gains in their learning.
47. Where teaching is weaker, lessons are not sufficiently challenging and tasks are not well matched to attainment levels or to the different ages within the class. Discussions with Year 1 pupils showed that the work they were given was far too easy and below their level of ability. As a result, pupils do not make the progress they should and enter Year 2 with low standards of attainment.
48. In a good lesson in Year 2, the pupils played games to help them to learn about tens and units and simple fractions involving halves and quarters. Higher attaining pupils learnt quickly and soon moved on to more complex work with higher numbers and fractions of thirds and sixths. In a good lesson in Year 4, the pupils learnt to work out perimeters and areas. The teacher's confident use of the interactive whiteboard helped the pupils understanding and accelerated their learning and progress. By the

end of the lesson, lower attaining pupils were secure in their understanding of perimeter while higher attaining pupils realised they could use their knowledge of multiplication to work out the areas of more complex shapes.

49. Management of the subject is effective. Standards have improved since the last inspection and pupils have regular opportunities to apply their mathematics knowledge to solve problems in practical situations. However, assessment is not used effectively to track pupils' attainment and progress and to identify weaknesses in teaching. This is resulting in inconsistencies in the teaching and in learning which impacts on the standards pupils are attaining.

Mathematics across the curriculum

50. Pupils have satisfactory opportunities to use, consolidate and extend their mathematical skills in other subjects.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is satisfactory. Standards are average, with good features, and the pupils are achieving as well as predicted by their attainment on entry. Teaching is good. Leadership is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a strong emphasis on learning through practical investigation and experimentation.
- Resources are used effectively to make the subject interesting.

Commentary

51. Pupils are motivated by the teaching and they learn quickly in lessons. Currently, the pupils in Year 4 are acquiring appropriate knowledge of electricity and have a good understanding of materials that are conductors or insulators of electricity. They know how to make an electrical circuit and that the circuit must be complete for the bulb to light. Their knowledge of experimental and investigative science is consistent with expectations and some pupils show good ability for their age. They could devise an appropriate test to find materials that conduct electricity and could record their findings clearly. They made predictions, tested, and learnt quickly from their findings. Previous work from the beginning of the year shows that they have consistently acquired knowledge of materials and their properties as well as knowledge of light and dark.
52. The pupils in Year 2 learn effectively through practical activity. In a good lesson they learnt that sound travels along string and that they could make string telephones. In this lesson, they showed good planning skills and developed their investigations purposefully, with several of them attaining standards ahead of national expectations. Their recorded work and other records show that they have covered a satisfactory curriculum during the course of the school year.
53. The teaching is good. Lessons are well organised and purposeful. Children are enthusiastic and apply themselves for long periods until successful. The subject leader sets a good example through the quality of her work. Management is satisfactory though assessment and progress tracking systems are underdeveloped. The curriculum is satisfactory. Resources are generally good quality and sufficient for the curriculum to be taught in full. Good use is made of information and communication technology.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is satisfactory. Achievement is satisfactory and standards are average throughout the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are well motivated and enthusiastic about using computers.

Commentary

54. Throughout the school, almost all pupils are doing as well as predicted by their attainment on entry. The vast majority are attaining the nationally expected level for their age, with a proportion typical of most schools exceeding the nationally expected level. In a good lesson in Year 2, the pupils were able to enter instructions into a programmable toy to make it travel or turn as directed. They had the confidence to experiment with the controls and to refine their instructions as they learnt more about the toy's capability; this is consistent with the expectation for their age. In Year 4, the pupils have good knowledge of word processing. They can enter text quickly and make changes to their compositions using the various editing features built into the program. They have a broad and appropriate knowledge of a range of programs relevant to their learning needs and to the National Curriculum programme of study, including control equipment and simple databases.

55. The teaching is effective and pupils are learning at a satisfactory pace. Teachers have good subject knowledge and make learning fun. The range and quality of the resources are satisfactory but the quantity is less than is typically found, reflecting insufficient investment in previous years.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

56. The subject is being used satisfactorily across the curriculum. Good use is made in science of application programs to consolidate knowledge and understanding; for example, when work on electrical circuits was enhanced by a program that allowed pupils to draw circuits and insert devices such as a resistor, switches, batteries, buzzers, and bulbs. The pupils have regular opportunity to use word processing and other programs in English and to use programs in mathematics, particularly databases.

HUMANITIES

57. Work was sampled in **history** and **geography**. There is every indication from pupils' work that overall the school provides a stimulating range of learning experiences to promote pupils' interests in people, places, events and happenings through the ages and across the world. Achievement is satisfactory and standards are broadly average.
58. The rich history of the area is used effectively and through the use of well-planned activities, tasks and visits teachers bring the subjects alive for pupils. As a result pupils think of themselves as historians and geographers. During the inspection, Year 4 pupils were learning the importance of primary sources as they conducted their own 'Archaeological dig' and gleaned information about the living conditions of people in a past age.
59. Because of timetabling constraints only one lesson was seen in **religious education** and it is not possible to form an overall judgement about the provision. Pupils' work and teachers' planning show that all aspects of the locally agreed syllabus are taught. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the Christian tradition and of other major world faiths are extended and deepened as pupils get older. Achievement is satisfactory and standards are average.
60. Pupils learn about the customs, symbols, festivals, holy books and buildings of major religions. This helps pupils to develop a respect and deeper understanding of the many ways people express their faith. Difficult religious ideas are put in the context of pupils' own experiences. In Year 2, a very good lesson helped pupils to understand the significance of Jesus' parable about the wise man and the foolish man.
61. Imaginative resources together with clear, patient explanations and challenging discussions help pupils grapple with religious ideas arising from Bible stories such as the meaning of 'having a good foundation' to one's life. To make the meaning clearer, they built their own miniature houses, first on sand and then on rocks and were fascinated to observe what happened when the 'floods' came crashing down on their village. Standards in this lesson were above those typically seen. By Year 4 pupils know about the significance of ritual, symbolism and sacraments in major world religions. Their work on Christianity shows thoughtful responses as they record the nativity from the point of view of one of the animals present at the birth of Jesus. In Years 3 and 4 work is well matched to the mixed age group and it is very obvious that the older pupils are being challenged to extend their understanding of religious ideas.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

62. None of the creative, aesthetic, practical and physical subjects was a focus of the inspection. They were all sampled except physical education, where no lessons were

seen and no judgements can be made. Achievement is satisfactory and standards are average in **art and design**; **design and technology**; and **music**. The programme of study in **art and design** is imaginatively taught. The pupils are provided with a wide range of media to work with and this is resulting in good quality, skilled work for pupils of this age.

63. Only one lesson was seen in **music** and it is not possible to form an overall judgement about provision. A scrutiny of planning shows that all aspects of the National Curriculum are taught. A skilled and enthusiastic specialist is deployed successfully to develop a full range of musical activities and to promote effective learning of music. Teaching is well planned to build systematically on pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. Music lessons are well structured and tasks are challenging, maintaining pupils' interests and enthusiasm for the subject. Pupils are given very clear strategies to improve their skills. They are encouraged to think as musicians and to use correct musical terminology. Pupils with special educational needs receive extra help to enable them to take a full part in the music lesson and achieve standards similar to their peers. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 use musical vocabulary accurately when talking about their work and in answering questions posed by their teachers. They make good progress in playing instruments and in developing their skills of composition using the pentatonic scale. Music makes a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, personal and cultural development as they learn about the music of countries such as Thailand and take part in local festivals and concerts. In assemblies, pupils sing with enthusiasm and clarity and are able to sustain a steady pulse.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

64. The provision is good and helping pupils to develop an awareness of themselves and others and to acquire the skills that are necessary to deal with life's challenges. The provision is an acceptable mix of planned lessons, systematic development of relevant themes through other subjects and assemblies, and the more informal provision through the general ethos of the school. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to have responsibilities and to make a contribution to the school community. These opportunities include membership of the school council as well as carrying out delegated duties such as being librarians.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	4
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	4
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	4
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	3

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