

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

**Combs Ford Primary School**

**Combs Ford, Stowmarket**

**LEA area: Suffolk**

**Unique reference number: 124576**

**Headteacher: Mr. A. Shoote**

**Lead inspector: Mr. G. Martin, 21563**

**Dates of inspection: 28<sup>th</sup> June – 1<sup>st</sup> July 2004**

**Inspection number: 269862**

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

<b>Type of school:</b>	<b>Primary</b>
<b>School category:</b>	<b>Community</b>
<b>Age range of pupils:</b>	<b>5-9</b>
<b>Gender of pupils:</b>	<b>Mixed</b>
<b>Number on roll;</b>	<b>537</b>
<b>School address:</b>	<b>Glemsford Road Combs Ford Stowmarket Suffolk</b>
<b>Postcode:</b>	<b>IP14 2PN</b>
<b>Telephone number:</b>	<b>01449 613112</b>
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<b>Appropriate authority:</b>	<b>Governing body</b>
<b>Name of chair of governors:</b>	<b>Mrs. M. Warner</b>
<b>Date of previous inspection:</b>	<b>21<sup>st</sup> September 1998</b>

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

Combs Ford Primary School is a much larger than average community first school for pupils aged five to nine. It is situated on the edge of the town of Stowmarket in Suffolk. There are 537 pupils on roll, which is more than at the time of the last inspection, with broadly similar numbers of boys and girls. Some pupils travel to the school from nearby outlying villages. Most pupils attend from homes in the area surrounding the school, comprising owner occupied, privately rented and local authority housing. Children are admitted to the reception class from a larger than average number of pre-school settings, including privately run and community nurseries and playgroups. Attainment at entry to the reception class is below the average expected nationally. About 11 per cent of pupils receive free school meals. This is similar to the average found nationally. Only one per cent of pupils has a first language other than English, which is low. Just over 14 per cent of pupils are identified as having some form of special educational needs, which is broadly in line with the national average. Their needs include moderate and specific learning difficulties, speech, communication, emotional and behavioural problems and physical disabilities. Six pupils have formal statements of special educational need. This is broadly average. The popularity of the school in the area has meant that the number of pupils entering the school other than at normal admission times has increased in recent years. In 2003 the school was awarded a Department for Education and Skills achievement award. In 2004 it received a bronze standard 'ECO Schools' award for raising pupils' awareness of environmental issues and it is currently working towards the silver standard for this award.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21563	Mr. G. Martin	Lead inspector	Science, physical education, personal and social education and citizenship.
13450	Mrs. J. Madden	Lay inspector	
15474	Mr. J. Fairclough	Team inspector	Mathematics, information and communication technology, geography.
32165	Mrs. C. Barsby	Team inspector	English, history, special educational needs.
29263	Mrs. F. Clarke	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage of Education, design and technology, religious education.
23196	Mrs. S. Chesters	Team inspector	Art and design, music, English as an additional language.

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is a very good school with many significant strengths.** It is very popular with parents because it cares for their children very well and is very successful in helping children to become good learners. It promotes very positive attitudes among pupils and they behave very well. Pupils are happy because there are very good relationships in the school. They like the school because their views are respected and they have good opportunities to learn. Standards are high in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 2, where pupils attain well above average results in national tests and assessments. The headteacher leads the school very well. There is very good day-to-day and financial management. The school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards are very good because teaching is good overall and often very good. Very good work to promote positive attitudes results in good learning and achievement.
- The headteacher has a very clear educational vision for the school. By aspiring to high standards of teaching and learning, he establishes a strong role model for other leaders.
- The day-to-day organisation and management of the school are very efficient. Governors have a good, clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- The curriculum is enriched with good opportunities for pupils to extend their learning. The school provides very good opportunities for pupils to make suggestions about how their school could be improved.
- Although there are good procedures for using assessment statistics to improve teaching, the use of day-to-day assessment to improve learning is inconsistent across the school.
- Pupils behave very well and they have very good attitudes to learning. There is very good provision for the care of pupils, for their personal and social development and for their health education.
- The very good links with parents make a good contribution to their children's learning.
- Further development is needed in the use of information and communication technology as a teaching and learning tool across the curriculum.

The school has worked well to maintain its high standard of effectiveness since it was last inspected. Teachers' planning is better so that there are now no unsatisfactory elements in teaching, thereby increasing the proportion of good and very good teaching from that seen at the time of the last inspection. The children in the Foundation Stage have been provided with a good quality area of their own for outdoor play and learning which is used very well.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

#### Year 2 results

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

*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.*

**Pupils achieve well overall.** Very good achievement in the Foundation Stage leads to the children in the reception class reaching and, for a few, exceeding the goals they are expected to reach by the end of the reception year. Year 1 and 2 pupils achieve very well in reading, writing and mathematics.

They attain very good results in the national tests and assessments at the end of Year 2. Good achievement in Years 3 and 4 means that, by the end of Year 4, standards are good, with test results in reading and mathematics showing that the school compares well with other schools in the county. Achievement could be better in Years 3 and 4 if day-to-day assessment is used consistently well. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are average, which is similar to that found at the last inspection. Very good provision for pupils with special educational needs means that they achieve very well. By the end of their time in the school pupils are academically and socially very well prepared for their continuing education.

Pupils behave very well. They have very good attitudes. Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are **good** overall, with very good provision for their personal, social and moral development. As a result, pupils are polite and considerate of the needs of others. Pupils work hard, they are very conscientious and they respond well to the opportunities the school provides. They show mature attitudes to issues that concern them.

Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy coming to school to learn and they arrive punctually.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The quality of education is **good**. **Good teaching overall**, with very good teaching in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2, helps pupils to become effective learners and attain high standards at the end of Years 2 and 4. Very good partnerships with parents and a curriculum rich with enjoyable activities help pupils to value learning and have very good attitudes. Pupils achieve well because they enjoy learning and have very good relationships with the adults in their school.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**This is a very well-led and managed school.** The very good educational leadership of the school by the headteacher, and the good leadership of other key staff, help the school to achieve its aspirations. The school is very well managed so that very effective teamwork among the staff enhances the quality of education. The governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This helps them to give good support and realistic levels of challenge to those responsible for the school and its improvement. Statutory requirements are met.

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

Parents have very good views of the school. They know that the school works hard to provide the best it can for their children. They speak highly of the school's work to involve them in their children's learning. As a result, parents have a very effective working partnership with the school.

The pupils like their school. They know that the teachers care for them very well and will help them to do their best, so they try very hard with their work. Pupils value the very good opportunities they have to discuss their school and to make suggestions about how it could be improved.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The school has set itself clear targets for improvement. The inspection team agrees with the school's own evaluation that the most important things it needs to do to improve are:

- Make better use of day-to-day assessment to improve learning, particularly in Years 3 and 4.
- Continue with the work to improve resources and staff skills to promote better use of information and communication technology as a teaching and learning tool.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

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

**Pupils achieve very well by Year 2 and well overall.** Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well. By the age of seven standards are well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. By the age of nine pupils have standards that are above average in English, mathematics, science and art and design. Standards throughout the school are in line with the average in information and communication technology, religious education and history.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good achievement in the Foundation Stage and very good achievement in Years 1 and 2 result in standards well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2.
- Results in the national tests and assessments for pupils at the end of Year 2 are well above the national average.
- At the end of Year 4, standards in English, mathematics and science are above those expected for pupils of their age. Locally used standardised test results show that pupils attain standards in reading and mathematics that are above the average for the Local Education Authority.
- Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are in line with national expectations by the end of Years 2 and 4, but there is insufficient use of ICT across the curriculum.

#### Commentary

1. Because of their good achievement, resulting from very good teaching, the majority of children in the Foundation Stage meet, and a few exceed, the learning goals in all six of the areas of learning for children of their age. By the end of the reception year, good achievement in personal and social development and in communication and mathematical understanding leads to good preparation for learning in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy by the start of Year 1. The children's personal and social skills develop well in the Foundation Stage so that they are very keen to learn. This is a direct result of the good encouragement they receive from adults in the school and from the very strong links that the school has with parents as partners in education. The effect this partnership has on the pupils' achievement is good.
2. The strong emphasis on ensuring that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, receive good support for their learning results in very good achievement in Years 1 and 2, leading to high standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Recent improvements on how teachers check standards in science show that pupils are doing equally as well as they do in English and mathematics. The table below shows how the school's very high results in reading, writing and mathematics compared with the average found nationally in 2002 and 2003.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	17.6 (17.9)	15.7 (15.8)
Writing	16.9 (16.8)	14.6 (14.4)
Mathematics	18.1 (18.8)	16.3 (16.5)

*There were 92 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

3. Good teaching and learning in Years 3 and 4 enable pupils to continue to achieve well. Standards by the end of Year 4 are above average in English, mathematics and science and in line with the

average in ICT. There has been good improvement in standards overall by the end of Year 4 since the last inspection. Standardised tests given to Year 4 pupils as part of a local authority programme to monitor school performance show that pupils attain standards that are above the average for their age group across the county.

4. The very good and clearly focused support provided for pupils with special educational needs ensures that they achieve very well. This is because their needs are well planned for, they are given good guidance, and the very good support provided by teachers and teaching assistants meets their particular learning needs.

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

Pupils behave **very well** and they have **very good** attitudes to learning. The pupils' personal, social and moral development is **very good**. Their spiritual and cultural development is **good**. Attendance is **satisfactory** and pupils are punctual.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Throughout the school pupils behave very well in response to their teachers' high expectations and the very good relationships that prevail.
- Very positive attitudes, resulting from very good links between home and school, make a good contribution to pupils' interest in learning and in their determination to achieve as well as they can.
- The way the school develops the pupils' self-knowledge and awareness of the spiritual dimensions of life is good.

### **Commentary**

5. A strong feature of lessons and the very positive relationships that prevail around the school is the explicit and implicit expectations of high standards of behaviour. This results in pupils behaving very well in lessons, when moving around the school and when playing together outside at break and lunch times. Consequently, pupils are courteous and polite, they consider the needs of others and they learn and play happily together. Incidents of bullying are rare but when they do occur they are dealt with firmly and appropriately in line with the school's policy.
6. The pupils' very good attitudes to learning and their recognition of the school's values reflect the very caring ethos of the school and its aspirations of high achievement for all pupils. Pupils work hard within a happy atmosphere and they are enthusiastic learners. They enjoy lessons, work conscientiously and persevere and concentrate well.
7. The very good social and moral education provided, including lessons on personal, social, and health education (PSHE), has a clear and positive effect on the very good behaviour. Pupils have good opportunities to develop their citizenship role well through the class and school councils and the schemes such as the opportunity for some of them to model good playtime attitudes for younger pupils. Pupils show good initiative and personal responsibility by organising fund-raising events for charitable causes and in their work to help the school to achieve the silver standard 'ECO' schools award for environmental responsibility. Relationships between pupils, and between pupils and adults, are very good.
8. The development of the pupils' self-knowledge and spiritual awareness, and their appreciation of their own and other cultures, is good overall. The school's links with its local community are good and make a recognisable contribution to pupils' social development. Parents are very happy with the work that the school does to develop very good attitudes, values and personal qualities among their children. The level of attendance is in line with the national average. Pupils are keen to attend because they like the school and the opportunities it provides for them to learn. This is clear from their responses to the questions asked of them during the inspection.

## Attendance

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

Authorised absence	
School data:	5.3%
National data:	5.4%

Unauthorised absence	
School data:	0.1%
National data:	0.4%

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

## Exclusions

### Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British

### Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll
520

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1	0

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

9. Exclusion is used only as a last resort. This is indicative of the very good attitudes of the pupils, which result from the way that the school works very effectively in partnership with parents to establish very good standards of behaviour.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **good**. **Good** teaching and learning results in good achievement overall. Pupils learn and achieve **well** because the school is effective in teaching the pupils to have very positive attitudes. The school's curriculum is **good** overall with good opportunities for enrichment. **Very good** partnerships with parents and **good** links with the community make a positive contribution to learning. The school cares **very well** for its pupils and provides them with **good** support and guidance.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning is **very good** in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2, and **good** in Years 3 and 4. The overall quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Assessment is **good** overall, although it is not used consistently well to set learning targets for pupils in Years 3 and 4.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning is good overall. Very good relationships between pupils and adults enable teachers to teach well. Lessons are well ordered and teachers manage their pupils well.
- In very good lessons, pupils discuss their learning with the teachers and agree targets for extending their learning.
- Assessment in mathematics is a strength. However, practice in using assessment and marking of pupils' work, and setting new targets for learning, is not consistently applied by all teachers in all subjects.
- There are not enough opportunities to use and apply ICT skills in lessons.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well.
- Some lessons, particularly in Years 3 and 4, are too long to sustain pupils' interest throughout.

## Commentary

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 51 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (2%)	18 (35%)	18 (35%)	14 (28%)	0	0	0

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons, ranging from excellent (grade 1) to very poor (grade 7).*

10. Teachers' planning for lessons is detailed. It clearly states the lesson aims and objectives, which are shared with pupils, so that they understand what they need to learn. Planning often includes key questions to be asked, key vocabulary to be learned, and activities at different levels. As a result, all abilities of pupils are challenged with work at a level that matches their learning needs. Pupils behave very well in lessons because teachers manage lesson time very well. Relationships among the pupils themselves, and adults and pupils are very good, making a very good contribution to learning. Teaching assistants support pupils' learning very well. In Years 3 and 4, pupils are taught literacy and numeracy in groups, according to ability, which supports learning well. All this contributes very positively to the quality of teaching and learning, which is good in the school as a whole, and very good in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2.
11. In mathematics in Years 1 to 4, assessment supports teaching and learning very well. Pupils have a very good understanding of how they performed particular tasks, and what they need to do in order to improve. Teachers use pupils' performance to inform the next steps in planning and ensure that pupils are given the opportunity to correct errors and practise techniques as soon as possible after feedback is given. This conveys high expectations of learning, resulting in the high standards seen.
12. Teaching in information and communication technology (ICT) lessons is satisfactory, but there are not enough opportunities in other lessons for pupils to use ICT to support their learning in other subjects. Some teachers provide these opportunities effectively because they are confident in their own skills and knowledge in ICT, although this is hampered by some deficiencies in the availability of resources. Other teachers are less confident in their use of the new technology. The school has identified this as an area for improvement, and plans are in place to address this.
13. The teaching and learning of pupils with special educational needs is very good. There is a clear policy, with clearly defined procedures for the identification of, and provision for, pupils needing specific support. The pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) are very good, with very clearly defined, measurable targets, which are well matched to pupils' needs. Teachers and teaching assistants make effective use of IEPs during the lessons, so that they are clear about what pupils need to achieve. Support staff are well organised and well informed and make a very good contribution to pupils' learning. Some pupils with specific learning difficulties benefit greatly from being withdrawn from their classes for part of the day, to be taught in a much smaller group by specialist teachers. As a result, achievement for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
14. Some lessons in some subjects taught in Years 3 and 4 during the afternoons are over long. These lessons often begin well, but the pace of learning decreases somewhat as the lesson goes on. Pupils sometimes find it difficult to concentrate during lessons that last longer than the average found for pupils of their age. Teachers plan lessons, such as practical science, to sustain good levels of pupils' interest throughout the lesson. Occasionally, though, pupils work on low level activities in the latter part of longer lessons. These activities do not contribute positively to the good learning that has gone on at the beginning of the lesson.
15. Assessment is good overall. Senior managers hold at least fortnightly year-group meetings, to plan work together and discuss assessments. Pupils' performance and rates of progress are regularly checked so that teachers can set targets for pupils, assign them to ability groups to

maximise learning opportunities, identify specific needs and keep parents informed. However, the overall co-ordination of assessment does not give other year leaders and teachers clear direction, especially in the effective use of day-to-day assessment. The written policy for assessment does not give up to date guidance, so that, while there is a lot of good practice in assessment for learning in some classes, this is not consistently applied by all.

## The curriculum

The school's curriculum meets pupils' needs **well**, with **good opportunities** for enrichment. The curriculum fully meets statutory requirements. Good opportunities for the enrichment of learning make it more interesting, so that pupils enjoy their work and achieve well. The accommodation is **satisfactory** and used well. Resources for learning are **satisfactory**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is very good.
- Very good provision for pupils' personal development permeates all the school's activities.
- Systems to check the effectiveness of the curriculum in Years 3 and 4 are not fully developed.
- The school takes effective account of new developments in the curriculum, especially in personal, social, health and citizenship education.
- The school grounds are very good and enhance learning by providing good opportunities for social development.
- Extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors make good enhancements to the curriculum.

## Commentary

16. Children in the reception classes experience a very good range of activities. These are specifically planned to meet their needs and to encourage independent learning, so that children achieve well in every area. The curriculum for the rest of the school enables pupils to achieve well in acquiring basic skills. There are good monitoring procedures to ensure appropriate coverage in all subject areas. At present, however, evaluation of the use of lesson time is not sufficiently rigorous to ensure consistently effective use of such time. For example, afternoon lessons are very occasionally a little too long for pupils to sustain their interest in a subject to the end. The school however, plans to implement the new Primary Strategy "Excellence and Enjoyment" during the next school year, which should help staff to build successfully on their effective work in literacy and numeracy. This strategy encourages further creative and innovative activities in teaching and in running the school's curriculum.
17. Teachers are aware of the benefits of making links between subjects. For example, very good quality artwork is a feature in most subject areas. Subject activity weeks, which take place each term, such as a recent science week, provide good opportunities to link learning across curriculum areas. However, at other times links between subjects are not always systematically planned. For instance there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to practice computer skills outside designated lessons.
18. The very positive ethos of the school, with its emphasis on co-operation and respect, together with the excellent role models set by the staff in how to deal with people, provide extremely well for pupils' personal development. The carefully structured programme is taught well through designated sessions and other lessons such as science and religious education. This programme, combined with the high expectations of adults, enables pupils to develop well and underpins their very good attitudes and behaviour. Issues relating to the misuse of drugs and personal relationships are taught sensitively and at the pupils' level of understanding and maturity. There are good opportunities for pupils to acquire the knowledge and skills for making informed decisions about healthy living. Work done in connection with the Eco-schools project, for which the school has been awarded a bronze certificate and is working towards the silver standard, makes a very good contribution to the curriculum. The scheme particularly helps to

develop pupils' awareness and understanding of the importance of the environment, their self-esteem and their concept of responsible citizenship.

19. The school has a good range of extra-curricular provision, which is well organised by the staff. Pupils enjoy a variety of sporting activities and have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument and join the school choir. Pupils' interest and enjoyment in learning is also stimulated by worthwhile visits made to places such as the coastline at Aldeburgh and Duxfield Airfield Science Museum. The Year 4 residential visit to Whitwell supports learning in many areas of the curriculum and makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. The school also makes effective use of the specialist skills, knowledge and expertise of visitors such as grandparents and a local farmer.
20. The school works hard to overcome some of the limitations of its buildings, such as the outside 'demountable' classrooms and limited space to accommodate the large number of pupils. Some areas such as the school hall, the computer room and the library are too small for the numbers of pupils, which affects some aspects of provision. The school's grounds are attractive and well maintained. They provide a very attractive, engaging learning area that enables all pupils to be involved in purposeful activities. The grounds include an all-weather sports pitch and an area containing benches and tables where pupils can sit and talk and eat their lunch. There is also an adjoining wooded area which provides further good opportunities for outdoor activities and exploration. The outside area is used very well and makes a very good contribution to pupils' social development.

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

Pupils are **very well** cared for, guided and supported. Care, welfare, health and safety are **very well** managed and the provision of support, advice and guidance based on monitoring are **good**. The school involves pupils **very well** in the life of the school through seeking, valuing and acting on their views.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good, trusting and supportive relationships between pupils and staff underpin the provision for pupils' academic and pastoral needs.
- Pupils make a positive contribution to areas of the school's provision through very good opportunities for consultation and discussions with staff.
- The induction procedures for pupils into the reception class and into other years on transfer from other schools are thoughtful and supportive, ensuring they settle very well into their school.
- Health and safety matters are very well monitored through the strong partnership between governors and staff.
- Child protection is very well understood by all staff who work extremely effectively within the locally agreed procedures to ensure that statutory requirements are met.

### **Commentary**

21. All staff are vigilant and well organised in the day-to-day care of pupils. There are regular checks undertaken by staff and the responsible governor to ensure that the school remains a safe environment. Pupils' dietary and health needs are checked when they start school and great care is taken to ensure pupils with allergies and serious health problems are well known to staff. Child protection procedures are very well understood by the staff and the school's named personnel work very hard to ensure pupils receive the support needed from local agencies. The school promotes healthy living well. This is well supported by many parents who provide their children with a piece of fruit for their snacks. The school also makes arrangements with a local supplier to provide fruit for all pupils.

22. Pupils' pastoral needs are very effectively supported in the school. Parents spoken to about this aspect of the school's work were delighted and very aware of the positive effect this has on any difficulties, both for their children and as parents. Very good relationships within the school ensure that pupils are very well known by staff in their year group and pupils are aware of whom they feel able to go to for help and advice. There are systematic assessment procedures in place to measure academic progress but this falls short in some classes of consistently providing individual pupils with sufficiently tight and regularly updated targets to raise achievement even further. Those pupils with special educational needs, however, are more involved in their own learning through regular meetings and target setting.
23. The good induction measures in place in the school ensure that teachers have a good basis of information for each child who has attended pre-school provision. This results from the visits to playgroups by staff and the information provided by each pre-school setting for pupils. Children are able to visit the school before starting and adjustments in procedures are made for those children with particular difficulties. Parents are encouraged to stay for the first half an hour or so whilst children remain in reception so that they can be involved in their child's work. As a result of these and other good arrangements children settle well and are confident and outgoing.
24. Pupils feel very confident that their opinions are valued both in the classroom and about the school in general. The School Council is very active and has achieved significant changes in the school, such as suggesting improvements to the school grounds. There is a clear route for suggestions through each class meeting into the school council. The school also actively involves pupils in environmental matters through their work with the 'ECO Schools' environmental awareness award scheme.

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

The effectiveness of the school links with parents is **very good**. Overall the school works **well** in partnership with other schools and the community..

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents are extremely well involved in the life of the school through the consultation process adopted by the school.
- The school has very effective systems in place to ensure parents' comments, queries and any complaints are dealt with immediately and in a positive way.
- There are very good links with pre-school settings and good links with other schools and colleges, including good mechanisms for the transfer of pupils to middle schools.
- The good relationships with the local community are recognised and much appreciated by parents.

### **Commentary**

25. There is a very effective partnership between parents and the school. Parents' opinions are canvassed through questionnaires and the consultative parents group. Their opinions are respected and their suggestions for further involvement in the school are implemented whenever possible. This has resulted in, for example, more information for parents to enable them to help their children with schoolwork at home. They are kept regularly up to date through the newsletters and other information sent out by the school. Parents feel very welcome in the school. This has its foundation in the very good welcome provided for them in the reception classes.
26. The headteacher and staff are always available in the playground before and after school so that parents can talk to them informally about any matter concerning their children or the school in general. The atmosphere is friendly and casual and very welcoming. More formal appointments and parents' information evenings supplement these opportunities.

27. The school takes every opportunity to build on relationships with other schools in order to increase pupils' opportunities. There are close relationships between staff with responsibilities for special needs in the school and the local middle schools so that pupils with concerns about transfer have extra visits to their new schools. Staff have detailed discussions about their needs so that transfer is as stress-free for pupils as possible. In service training is a feature of the relationship with other schools in the local group or 'pyramid' of schools.
28. The school takes children from fourteen local pre-school settings and playgroups and there is good co-operation to ensure children move into the school with all the relevant information.
29. Parents feel that the school is an integral part of the local community and fund raising and social events are well supported. The school is able to draw on a wealth of local experience and expertise to support the work of its governors. There are very good relationships with a local business which provides sponsorship and support for the school. The curriculum is well supported by the local environment and the wide range of historical and geographical sites available within the region. These strengths of the school's provision are publicised in the school's Community Newsletter so that local people can see how much the school engages with its community.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are **very good** overall. The headteacher provides **very good** leadership for the school. Management systems are **very good** and play a significant part in the smooth working of a very large organisation for pupils of this age. The governance of the school is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good leadership of the headteacher ensures that the whole school works as a very effective unit in developing and improving the education of its pupils.
- The headteacher is skilful in securing a balance of experience among staff with the commitment to reflect the school's aims of providing a well-organised and secure learning experience for the pupils.
- The structure and organisation of the year group management team contributes greatly to the very effective management of the school.
- The inclusiveness of the school is very good and provision for pupils with specific special educational needs ensures their full inclusion in all learning opportunities.
- The school enables new staff to develop their leadership skills well through a structured programme of induction that quickly secures their full effectiveness.
- Governors of the school fulfil their role well in ensuring the continued wellbeing of the school. They are forward thinking in ensuring its financial security.

### Commentary

30. The very good leadership of the headteacher projects his strong commitment to the wellbeing of the pupils in his care. He has a very clear vision for the school as a community that cares for and nurtures the educational development of its pupils. High standards in the basic skills of the core subjects are consistently attained. He communicates this vision well to all staff of the school. There are well planned training opportunities for welfare and teaching assistants and this contributes much to the very good inclusion of pupils with special educational needs. For example, pupils with severe physical needs are fully involved in lessons as a result of interactive support and guidance from their support assistants. The appointment of new staff is very well managed. A very well structured induction programme secures their commitment to the work of the school and supports their development as teachers very well. They are included into the large school community very well and have a very good network of support from mentors and fellow teaching colleagues.

31. The headteacher has organised the school into strong year group units in order to provide the young pupils with a secure sense of identity and belonging that enables them to make good progress in their education. The teamwork within this organisation is very well structured to ensure that high standards are consistently achieved in the core subjects of English and mathematics. This teamwork also provides a good structure for the improvement of the school. For example, core subject co-ordinators are included in the school management team along with year group co-ordinators.
32. Performance data from annual national and standardised tests is used well to follow the progress of individual pupils and to monitor the consistent high standards of attainment. However, the consistent use of assessment to set learning targets in Years 3 and 4 is not as well developed.
33. Professional development opportunities for all staff are good overall, responding to identified curriculum and organisational needs as well as individual requests. Very good financial management ensures the smooth running of the school and good provision of day to day resources. Significant funding for the development of information and communication technology provision has been allocated. A good programme of improvement to both hardware and software is in place, with a developing long-term view of how future needs can be met.
34. Governors inform themselves well about the work of the school. They use a variety of contact points including links with parents as well as weekly meetings with the headteacher and reports from subject co-ordinators to gather this information. They monitor the progress of developments well and challenge the potential effectiveness of initiatives proposed by the school. Very careful financial management ensures the security of long term funding and monitors the progress of expenditure patterns regularly. Balances are strong, with a view to maintaining a stable teaching staff. There is appropriate medium-term funding for the development of ICT but funding streams for the longer term development of the subject are not as clearly identified.

**Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004**

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	£1,144,204	Balance from previous year	£101939
Total expenditure	£1,163,984	Balance carried forward to the next	£82159
Expenditure per pupil	£2167		

**The effects of any particular aids or barriers to raising achievement**

35. The school has very effective teams within and across year groups. This is a very strong feature of the school's management and helps the school to function effectively and efficiently. The result is that teamwork is strong. Liaison between teachers makes a very good contribution to the ethos of the school and its work to achieve the headteacher's high aspirations.
36. Limits to the school's accommodation are well managed through good use of the available space and the creative use of teaching and learning areas. As a result, pupils' achievement is good in spite of the effect of the pressures on the school's accommodation.
37. The leadership of the school has maintained its focus on good achievement for all pupils by taking a pragmatic approach to the change in the nature of its catchment area by ensuring that it is an inclusive school that develops positive attitudes to learning among all pupils.

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

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

The school's provision for children in the Reception classes is **very good** and a strength of the school. Children start school in the September before they are five but until the start of the term in which they become five they attend part-time. This means that only the children whose birthdays are in the autumn term are in school full-time for a whole year before they enter Year 1. Most children have some pre-school education in playgroups and other settings and they enter the school with a broad range of abilities and experiences, though overall their attainment on entry is below that expected of this age group. All staff working in the reception classes have a very secure understanding of how young children learn and of the importance of educational play and first-hand experiences. The well-planned curriculum provides a rich range of stimulating activities that promote very good learning because they interest the children and are well matched to their learning needs. There is a very good balance of adult-directed activities and child-initiated ones which foster independence. Children achieve well and by the time they leave the reception year most reach, and some exceed, the standards expected in all six areas of learning. Assessment procedures are very good and are used well to keep a close track of each child's learning. Provision for children with special educational needs is very good and all children have access to the full curriculum. The overall good provision reported in the previous inspection is now very good and the provision of a designated outside area has improved the accommodation.

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

- Very good provision in the reception class enables the children to make a good start to their education.
- Teaching and learning are very good and, as a result, the children achieve very well in all aspects of their work and particularly well in their personal and social development.
- The children quickly develop independence and become able to work on their own.
- The children are provided with a rich curriculum, with lots of exciting and stimulating activities to encourage their enjoyment of learning.

#### **Commentary**

38. The good provision for the children in the reception class enables them to make a good start to their education. The staff use the space and resources available to them creatively to give the children many opportunities to learn through play and practical activity. The outdoor environment is used well to promote learning throughout a wide variety of areas.
39. Teaching and learning are very good. The teachers and teaching assistants work very effectively together and provide focused, supportive learning for the children. They give very good encouragement, enabling the children to form very good relationships. A good balance of direct teaching and small group work means the children are guided and directed throughout their work. This results in very good levels of interest and, as a result, the children want to learn. Consequently they achieve well.
40. The children quickly become independent in their learning and able to work on their own. The adults encourage the children to choose what they want to do and carry out their chosen tasks. The children quickly become active and busy learners, who persevere with the activities they have chosen. The children who have only recently started school and have quickly become familiar with the class routines. They work with adults and each other in a happy and relaxed manner.
41. The children have lots of exciting and stimulating activities to do. A rich variety of well-planned practical tasks, which stimulate the children's thinking across all six areas of learning, are

provided for the children. The teachers and teaching assistants use the classrooms, activity area and the outdoor learning areas creatively to provide space for the children to select and complete their chosen tasks.

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

Provision in this area of learning is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There are very good relationships between staff and children, and among the children themselves, who learn to help and care for each other.
- Staff support children well and help them to develop self-confidence and independence

### **Commentary**

42. Teaching and learning are very good and most children achieve the early learning goals by the end of the reception year. The rules and routines of school life are explained well, and as a result children are confident in knowing what is expected of them in a safe and secure environment. Staff use praise and encouragement to reward effort and promote self-esteem. Very good opportunities, such as getting them to respond to stories, are provided for children to develop a sensitivity and awareness of others. There is appropriate emphasis on health and safety such as eating a healthy diet and washing hands carefully after touching animals.
43. The provision of well-planned, exciting first-hand experiences motivates the children and they develop very positive attitudes towards learning. Their behaviour is very good and they eagerly participate in the wide range of activities provided for them and maintain a good concentration span. Children willingly help to tidy up at the end of sessions and confidently carry out tasks such as returning the register to the school office.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is a wide range of stimulating experiences and activities to develop and extend children's skills in this area.
- Staff consistently encourage children to share conversations and articulate their ideas, which develops good speaking and listening skills.
- Good book provision, attractively labelled displays and readily available writing materials help children to develop early reading and writing skills.

### **Commentary**

44. Children achieve well and most children reach the early learning goals in this area. Teaching is very effective with a good balance between lively, focussed direct teaching in whole class sessions and rich opportunities for children to practise the skills taught while they play and engage in follow-up activities.
45. Children are encouraged to share conversations and articulate ideas. As children engage in role play and other activities staff regularly intervene to develop children's thinking and negotiating skills. In numeracy sessions pupils confidently describe the attributes of three dimensional shapes and engage in conversations with adults at the pet show using questioning skills well to gain information. The children are attentive listeners, able to follow instructions about their tasks and to enjoy interesting stories and rhymes.

46. Children are surrounded by written words to support their activities. The relevance of reading and writing is constantly emphasised. In the Vet's Surgery they are invited to "Please take a look" at pamphlets about pets or fill in a record about their pet's health. In the cafe they read the menu and fill in the "Today's Special" board. Most children recognise a good number of basic words, know the sounds and names of letters and read simple sentences in their reading books. Higher attaining children use initial letter sounds and picture clues to identify new words. A significant number sound out and build simple three letter words securely. Writing skills are developing well and most children form letters well and make up simple sentences to be written by the teacher with higher attaining children writing their own words. Books are taken home regularly to share with parents, which has a very positive effect on children's progress in learning to read.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children engage in a wide range of activities that promote mathematical knowledge and understanding.
- Teachers put a strong emphasis on developing mathematical language through practical activities.
- Children are presented with interesting and challenging tasks.

### **Commentary**

47. Children achieve well and most achieve the early learning goals in this area. They participate in a wide range of well-planned activities that develop their confidence in mathematics. Lively whole class teaching and regular counting activities are enhanced with rhymes, games and stories such as "The Hungry Caterpillar", which add interest and enjoyment. Teachers are very good at extending children's understanding by strategies such as asking a variety of questions and getting the children to describe what they are doing.
48. Opportunities for developing mathematical understanding and skills are incorporated into many of the routines, activities and experiences engaged in every day by the children. For instance, placing their name card on a number line each day to record the order of their arrival in the classroom, or taking note of the number of children permitted to play in different role-play areas at any one time.
49. Children's knowledge and use of correct mathematical vocabulary when dealing with shapes is impressive. They confidently refer to features such as faces, points and edges. Whole class sessions on this topic are followed with a range of activities that successfully consolidate learning.

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

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- A good range of interesting activities, based on quality first-hand experiences, enables children to explore, observe and discuss their findings.

## Commentary

50. Achievement is good and children attain the early learning goals. The indoor and outdoor areas are used well for children to engage in a wide range of stimulating activities. Resources are of a high quality and very good teaching and planning ensure that children enjoy a wealth of first-hand experiences. They grow flowers, vegetables and herbs. Knowledge of, and care for, living creatures are developed by keeping goldfish and enhanced through visiting a local farm, having a pet show and through very imaginative role-play provision. Keeping tadpoles introduces them in a practical way to life cycles, while producing a "Frog dictionary" makes them aware of another method of accessing information.
51. Computer skills are well taught and children are confident in using different programs to support their learning in mathematics and language and literacy. They use the mouse and cursor to access different tools and word processing and graphics programs to produce writing and simple pictures.

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

52. It was not possible to make an overall judgement about provision in this area because very little direct teaching was observed. However, observations of children engaging in various activities indoors and out indicates that they are provided with many opportunities to develop skills and are reaching the expected learning goals in this curriculum area. Children develop their manipulative skills as they use scissors, tools, moulding materials, brushes and pencils in a variety of activities. An improvement since the last inspection is the provision of a good quality enclosed outside play area where they have access to a variety of balancing apparatus which they use confidently. They join other pupils in the school for playtimes and there is space available in the playground for them to use large wheeled toys which they control well as they manoeuvre around the 'road traffic area'. In addition they have structured physical education lessons in the school hall.

## CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good opportunities are provided to develop children's creativity.
- Materials are well organised and easily accessible for the children.
- High quality role-play gives children good opportunities to develop their imagination.
- Children produce some very high quality work.

## Commentary

53. Children achieve well and in some of the work they produce they are reaching standards above those expected. They enjoy a very good range of experiences in art, music, story and imaginative play. Plentiful resources give children good opportunities to experiment with different tools and materials and they create their own designs, patterns, pictures, collages and three-dimensional models.
54. Experiences such as the visit to the farm and the pet show provide unlimited opportunities for children to engage in creative activities. They produced vibrant, imaginative representations of the animals that they had seen. Their project on mini-beasts included making observational drawings with careful attention to detail.
55. Children enjoy the many imaginative play areas, which are actively supported and extended by staff involvement. Children have opportunities for singing and making music with a wide range of

percussion instruments. An example of this was seen when children played instruments well to the beat of a song responding to the teacher's signals to make the sound loud or quiet.

## **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2**

### **English**

Provision in English is **good overall**. It is very good in Years 1 and 2 and good in Years 3 and 4.

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

- Standards in English are high.
- Teaching in English is good.
- Reading is a strength of pupils in Years 1 to 4.
- There is very good achievement in writing for all pupils in Years 1 and 2.
- Procedures for the assessment and marking of pupils' work are not consistently applied by all teachers.

#### **Commentary**

56. There has been very good improvement in English since the last inspection. Standards in English for pupils in Years 1 to 2 are well above the national average, and pupils' achievement is very good. Standards for pupils in Year 4 are above what is expected nationally for pupils of the same age and their achievement is good.
57. Teaching and learning in English in Years 1 and 2 are very good. In Years 3 and 4 it is good overall, with some very good teaching, and one excellent lesson was observed. In this lesson, the teacher had planned work, which challenged the pupils throughout the lesson. It was firmly based upon what they already knew, and built very effectively on this. The lesson moved smoothly from one related idea to the next, so that the pupils were involved with the learning at all times and they were well motivated and stimulated. The pace and timing of the lesson exactly matched the pupils' rate of learning. As a result, their achievement was very high. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well. They are given very good support from teaching assistants in classes, some of whom have had training in speech and language work. Those pupils with special educational needs are withdrawn from classes for part of the week and taught by specialist teachers, who make high quality provision for their learning.
58. There are some good opportunities for pupils to improve their speaking and listening skills in lessons. Teachers expect pupils to give clear, whole-sentence answers when responding to questions, and pupils are often asked to explain and justify their thinking. Teachers introduce correct vocabulary in English lessons, and lessons in other subjects, so that pupils can discuss their work using correct and precise terms. In some lessons, teachers use techniques to help pupils plan what they want to say in response to teachers' questions: for example, discussing what they think with a pupil sitting next to them first. This results in better and more response, and more involvement in the learning. As a result, there is good achievement in speaking and listening and standards are high.
59. Reading is taught very well throughout the school. Pupils achieve results that are well above national averages by the end of Year 2. At the end of Year 4, a significant number of pupils have reached the standard normally found at the end of Year 6. There are ample opportunities for pupils to practise and improve their reading in all lessons. Reading is regularly assessed and pupils' progress is closely monitored. Appropriate action is taken to identify pupils' needs and ensure very good progress.
60. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve very well in writing. By the end of Year 2 boys' attainment is very high when compared with the national average for boys. Girls' attainment is well above the

national average for girls. In the work seen, standards in the writing of Year 3 and 4 pupils are good, and they achieve well, but presentation of work by some pupils needs improvement.

61. In Years 1 and 2 assessment procedures are rigorous. Teachers ensure that pupils understand the intended learning for each lesson. Teachers' written feedback about pupils' work indicates very clearly how they have performed in relation to the learning objectives of the lesson, and what they need to do next to improve and make progress. This is also mainly the case in Years 3 and 4, although some teachers' feedback to pupils does not always match with the lesson's aims. For example, in one lesson the objective was concerned with reading, but the teachers' feedback commented only on the pupils' handwriting and punctuation, and gave no indication as to how the pupil had performed in the reading task.
62. The leadership and management of English are good. The subject leader has a good grasp on standards throughout the school. Her effective monitoring has enabled her to analyse why things are as they are, so that she knows what areas need development and improvement, and what needs to be done to bring this about.

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

63. There are mainly good opportunities for pupils to use their language and literacy skills in other lessons. There are good chances for pupils to develop their writing and drama skills in history lessons. Pupils' work shows writing in the role of historical characters, for instance, fighter pilots on bombing raids, or evacuees, travelling to and arriving at temporary homes during the Second World War. There are some good examples of this in Year 4. They also practise different styles of writing, for instance, when writing up an experiment in a science lesson, or recording the results of research into a geography topic. Pupils sometimes have opportunities to use ICT in English lessons. In one very good Year 1 lesson, the teacher modelled the use of word processing skills, such as correcting mistakes and editing work, when working with the class to write a poem. In this lesson, two pupils used computers independently to help them practise their spellings. They used the computers competently. The activity supported their learning very well and represented a good example of the use of computers across the curriculum.

## **MATHEMATICS**

The provision for mathematics is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils attain very high standards by the end of Year 2. Standards are high because teaching and learning are consistently good and sometimes very good.
- Very good teaching at both key stages, with high levels of challenge and expectation, secures good achievement overall, with very good achievement for pupils in Years 1 and 2.
- Very good use of assessment information to record progress of pupils and to identify teaching and learning needs.
- The full curriculum is taught at a challenging level, with a particular focus on the use and application of mathematical ideas.
- Very good, enthusiastic leadership and management of the subject ensure a clear focus on the quality of learning and the raising of standards.

### **Commentary**

64. The school has consistently achieved very good and sometimes excellent standards in national tests over recent years for pupils at the end of Year 2. Good monitoring of pupils' progress by the school ensures that this level of performance is maintained against county averages in nationally standardised tests for pupils at the end of Year 4. Inspection evidence finds comparable

performance with standards well above expectations at the end of Year 2 and above expectations at the end of Year 4.

65. Lesson observations found a range of performance in Year 2 from class groups that included special needs and summer born pupils. Analysis of pupils' work over the school year gave a picture of very good standards across the whole range of the mathematics programme of study. By the end of Year 2, higher attaining pupils add and subtract three-digit numbers and measure and accurately draw lines to the nearest centimetre. They organise and check calculations well when solving problems and use multiplication facts in this work. Information is collected, represented and interpreted in graphical form. Average attaining pupils identify 2D shapes from descriptions of their properties. They find half of thirty six and know the value of the individual digits in numbers such as 245. Scales of measure are used to record quantities such as 400ml and calculations such as  $\pounds 1.48 + 36p$  are completed accurately. Lower attaining pupils can round numbers such as 27 to the nearest ten. They know about odd and even numbers and multiplication facts for 2 and 3 times tables. Matching halves of shapes are drawn in reflective symmetry work and estimates are made and checked for lengths to the nearest cm. Pupils with special educational needs know number facts to 20 and understand the inverse relationships involved in calculations such as  $8 + 9 = 17$  and  $17 - 9 = 8$ .
66. The good standards of work by Year 4 pupils do not show quite the same level of performance, which reflects the lack of test-driven preparation to meet the demands of end of key stage testing. Higher attaining Year 4 pupils work at high levels of challenge that are close to those normally expected of Year 6 pupils. They know their multiplication facts and can add and subtract three figure numbers. Angle measures, as an amount of turn with compass points to 45 degrees, and co-ordinates in the first quadrant are used. Positive and negative numbers are linked to measures of temperature and area and perimeter are calculated for rectangular shapes. Average attaining pupils work above the expected level for their age as they compare fractions such as  $\frac{1}{2}$  and  $\frac{3}{4}$  and know that four tenths of a metre is 40 centimetres. They can rearrange calculations so that  $2 \times 8 \times 5 = 2 \times 5 \times 8 = 80$ . Shopping lists of seven items are calculated. Lower attaining pupils use simple co-ordinates such as A,3 to locate points on a grid and they use millimetres and centimetres accurately when measuring length. They use the four operations of number in simple calculations.
67. Teaching is very good. The full range of the curriculum is taught at a very good level of challenge and expectations of pupils' performance are very high. Achievement is very good for pupils in Years 1 and 2 and good for pupils in Years 3 and 4, a direct result of the quality of teaching. The higher level of achievement in Years 1 and 2 is linked to the additional focus that is given to teaching towards the expectations of end of Year 2 testing. Lesson planning is very good with clear objectives. Structured direct teaching and activities that challenge the pupils very well lead to very good learning by the pupils. Lessons are brisk and purposeful and high standards of behaviour are expected, so that pupils work with a clear sense of purpose and enjoy their work. Pupils with special needs are supported very well and achieve very well in their learning groups. They work with enthusiasm and enjoy their lessons as a result of the skilful teaching and very good support from classroom assistants.
68. Two co-ordinators for Years 1 and 2 and Years 3 and 4 respectively work well together to manage the subject very well. They are enthusiastic and very effective in their role. Good leadership is given and the performance of the subject is monitored very well. Information from assessments is used to monitor the progress of pupils, identify areas for development in teaching and learning and to set clear learning targets. These are not yet individually set, nor evaluated and reviewed, at short intervals of time. The co-ordinator for Years 1 and 2 is a leading mathematics teacher for the Foundation Stage. Both co-ordinators set good role models for the teaching of mathematics. They are developing the subject well. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. Higher standards are attained, the quality of teaching has improved significantly and a broader curriculum is taught. An attractive series of booklets for parents has been produced that explain calculation methods and the vocabulary used in teaching. This is improving parental support with homework.

## Mathematics across the curriculum

Although there is some use of mathematics in other subject areas such as history and science, its use to give practical meaning to the skills of mathematics in other subject areas is still developing. Similarly, the use of ICT as a teaching and learning tool for the development of mathematical skills is still at an early stage of development.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well and attain standards well above the national average in the nationally required assessments at the end of Year 2.
- Standards at the end of Year 4 are good.
- There are good opportunities for learning through investigation.
- Older pupils need more opportunities to learn how to conduct fair tests in experimentation and investigation.
- The subject is very well led. The co-ordinator monitors teaching, learning and standards well, and she has set clear, achievable targets in the subject improvement action plan.

### Commentary

69. Achievement is good overall so that, by the end of Year 2, standards are very high compared with the national average, as seen in the national assessments for pupils at the end of Year 2. The evidence from the work of pupils in Year 4 shows that standards are above the expected level for pupils of their age.
70. By encouraging children to be inquisitive and interested in the world around them in the Foundation Stage, the school prepares the reception children well for discovery learning through investigation. This philosophy is carried through the school so that pupils in Years 1 to 4 show a high level of interest in learning from, and about, science. Their work in books and displayed around the school shows that they have a good knowledge of scientific facts and principles.
71. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to learn from direct experience through investigations and experiments. Pupils' investigations and experiments in lessons show that they make deductions and hypothesise thoughtfully. They then test their ideas but there are not always sufficient opportunities for them to consider any factors that may influence the outcome of their tests. So, opportunities are sometimes missed to practice the important scientific principle of testing fairly in order to make findings accurate and compare outcomes.
72. Pupils' work shows that they develop good, varied skills of presenting their findings, for example using diagrams, tables and flow charts. So, their work is presented logically, clearly and neatly. They learn, therefore, the important disciplines of being scientific in the method of their enquiries and systematic in their presentation of the conclusions they reach.
73. Very good leadership of the subject means that it is carefully monitored. For example, moderation and checking of pupils' work among teachers has helped to achieve more consistently accurate assessments between classes in the assessment of work at the end of Year 2. When new staff join the school, they have good support and guidance from the subject co-ordinator to enable them to teach science effectively. This makes a good contribution to the regularity of pupils' learning. Systems for regularly assessing the standards achieved are well established. All staff know that they are expected to assess units of work as they are taught. This provides up-to-date information about how well pupils are doing against the levels expected

for their age. The data collected confirms the very high standards seen. There has been good improvement in standards and the quality of teaching since the last inspection.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

**Provision in ICT is satisfactory, with good features in the developing strength of leadership.**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The good quality of the current audit of the ICT and the effective steps taken by the co-ordinator to develop the subject are moving provision for the subject forward well.
- There is still work to be done to ensure that resources and staff skills are developed to improve the use of ICT across other subjects.
- When seen, very good teaching provided pupils with the opportunity to use their skills in the development of knowledge and understanding in other subject areas.

### **Commentary**

74. Standards of attainment in ICT are in line with expectations at the end of Year 2 and Year 4. Year 2 pupils like their lessons in the subject and particularly enjoy the occasions when they get to use the computer individually. They have experience of the full range of the curriculum and can speak enthusiastically of their work. They write text, draw pictures and combine images with text as well as solve problems in adventure situations. However, access to computers is currently organised in a way that gives pupils limited time to use their skills across the curriculum. The co-ordinator is actively addressing this concern by focusing on improving resources and developing staff skills.
75. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are very enthusiastic about ICT. They speak of a wide range of experience in the various strands of the subject. A sample of pupils was very confident when talking about the subject. In some aspects of ICT use, standards are good and sometimes very good, such as in word processing and the use of internet and e-mail for research and communication. Pupils maintain their own folders of work in the system and have experienced challenging activities. For example they know about the 'repeat' and 'procedure' instructions in control technology and have used these to create complex images. They show good knowledge of editing skills in word processing. However, they seldom use these skills in English lessons except for display purposes.
76. ICT is taught in small groups and most lessons are short in duration. Teaching for class groups is based on a cycle of access, sometimes over a period of weeks. Opportunities for pupils to use ICT skills in other subjects during class-based lessons are inconsistent. From the teaching seen, there is evidence of a developing understanding of the need to give pupils opportunities to use their skills in support of learning in other subject areas. For example, very good teaching of a Year 1 class explained the working of the graphics software with a visual demonstration of what is possible. Pupils were then challenged to create their own image of a crab from a selection of pictures on display. Very good achievement followed as they worked with intense concentration, changing colours and brush size independently as well as erasing unwanted parts of the picture. They then showed confidence in using the keyboard to add simple text to their pictures.
77. A group of gifted and talented Year 3 pupils showed very good independence as they made decisions, solved organisational problems, evaluated their own work and improved their PowerPoint presentations to introduce visitors to the school. Achievement was again very good and this was due to very good teaching that set a high level of challenge and a clear purpose to the project. This required pupils to call upon skills of manipulation of images, placing and sizing

of layout and the use of the digital camera to select the subject, take photographs and insert them electronically in their work.

78. The co-ordinator for ICT is recently in post. Her leadership in the subject is good and her skills provide the school with very good potential for improving the subject. She has sought advice from local education authority advisors and is a member of a working party on curriculum development. She has conducted a good quality audit of the subject and identified the necessary steps required to move the subject forward. The action plan for the subject is appropriately focused on links with other subject areas, a necessary development to help to extend the use of ICT across the curriculum. The action plan has good, clear long term objectives for the purchase of resources and the professional training of teachers. The current provision of resources is based mainly on a small suite of computers and class based units. This creates organisational challenges for the development and use of skills, particularly in other subject areas.
79. A number of teachers do not see the opportunities of using ICT skills as part of lessons in other subjects. This is evidenced by the frequent use of word processing for 'best copy' work in English, rather than using software programs for other opportunities for learning. Computer linked projectors are now in place in resource areas to support the demonstration of software and also for the delivery of lessons in other curriculum areas. One good Year 3 mathematics lesson was observed with effective use of number software on the projector. Plans to purchase an interactive whiteboard are in place but there are also plans to replace older units in class bases.
80. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. The curriculum is developing well, teaching has improved and standards have been maintained against an increasing level of expectation.

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

81. Overall, there is satisfactory use of ICT in other curriculum areas, although the current level of resources and staff skill means that use is inconsistent across the school. ICT is particularly well used in literacy to give pupils a practical use for their word processing and presentational skills. Subjects such as science use Internet research to study food chains and geography uses ICT skills for graphical illustration of information. Research skills are used in history and geography to extend pupils awareness of the wide range of information about topics studied. Some links between mathematics, geography and ICT help pupils to analyse information gathered from surveys.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**

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

- Pupils are given good opportunities to voice their own ideas and opinions.
- The spiritual element of religious education is not always sufficiently developed.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to visit places of worship, or to meet followers of world faiths other than Christianity.

#### **Commentary**

82. Pupils' attainment by the end of Years 2 and 4 is in line with what is expected by the locally agreed syllabus. This is similar to the previous inspection. Analysis of work shows that pupils develop a sound understanding of world religions, their festivals, places of worship and customs.

Opportunities are provided for pupils to link what they learn about religious belief to everyday life. For example, after listening to a story from the Islamic faith Year 2 pupils come to conclusions such as "Money is not important. Friends are."

83. Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers' questioning skills are good and pupils' interest is maintained. Pupils respond willingly, so enhancing their listening, thinking and speaking skills. They understand that their ideas are valued, which increases their confidence. Year 1 pupils listened intently to a story about Jesus from the Bible which they realised is an important book for Christians. The teacher sensitively linked the Bible and the message carried by the story to her own experiences which successfully contributed a spiritual element to the lesson. However in lessons observed in other year groups the spiritual element was underdeveloped. For example in lessons concerning the effects of climatic change in the environment teachers concentrated on the geographical aspects without developing other aspects appropriate to a religious education lesson. Pupils' understanding of Christianity is enhanced by visits to a local church but there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to visit places of worship or listen to representatives of other faiths.
84. The subject is led and managed well. The subject leader interviews a selection of pupils from each Year 2 and Year 4 class and examines their work to ensure topics are covered in sufficient depth. She supports colleagues well and has a well thought out plan for future development.

## HISTORY

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy history lessons.
- Visits, and learning in other subjects, support learning in history.
- Resources for historical enquiry, such as artefacts, are satisfactory. The co-ordinator and teachers work hard to ensure good opportunities for handling artefacts and learning from items of historical interest ensue from visits.

### Commentary

85. Pupils achieve well and standards are satisfactory. Pupils talk about learning in history enthusiastically. Younger pupils can describe features of life in the past, observing simple similarities and differences with the present day. They name and talk about notable men and women in history. Older pupils realise the value of historical sources other than textbooks, such as the old school registers and gravestones in the churchyard. This helps them to understand what it was like in the past. They talked animatedly about their local history projects, and can put the major time periods about which they have learned in order. However, they are very tentative in suggesting consequences of main events and changes.
86. Little teaching was seen during the inspection. The small amount of teaching that was seen provided evidence of good opportunities for learning based on lively historical enquiry. Pupils enjoyed the lessons because there are clear links with their own local knowledge, making the lessons relevant and meaningful.
87. There is a wealth of places to visit in the area, such as historical sites and museums, which support learning in history. These are used well and enrich pupils learning about, for instance World War 2. The school has also made use of local residents' own oral histories. There are opportunities to learn about history in other subjects, and from primary sources. One person came to talk to the pupils about what school was like when she was a child, and how it was different from the present day. This took place during a literacy lesson. Older pupils were given

the opportunity to research the lives of famous historical figures, for example Neil Armstrong and Amy Johnson during science week, when they studied flight and space travel.

88. Whilst there are limited historical artefacts in school for pupils to study closely, the subject leader realises the value of artefacts and encourages strong links with The Museum of East Anglian Life in order to gain more access to these. Pupils also have good opportunities to study items of historical interest when they make their enriching visits, such as to the local museum and to West Stowe Anglo Saxon village.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

89. Because geography was not a focus subject for the inspection, insufficient evidence of teaching or pupils' work was gathered to make judgements about provision, standards or teaching. However, it is possible to recognise satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection in the work that the co-ordinator has done to develop the subject and in the development of pupils' skills in Years 1 and 2.
90. Discussion with the new co-ordinator points to an improving situation. The co-ordinator has taken advice from a local authority advisor and attended professional training in the subject. A careful audit of the school's provision has resulted in a comprehensive set of improvement ideas built into the action plan. Resources, long term planning, links with ICT and very good monitoring of pupils' work ensure that the development of geographical skills links with the practical application of these skills in the subject.
91. There is a curriculum map for the planning of geography. It is based on a cycle of three terms, with one geography topic and one joint topic with history. The majority of pupils' involvement is in discussion and so there is insufficient pupils' work to make an evaluation of standards. This indicates that the subject is not receiving sufficient emphasis in Years 3 and 4. The influence of the newly appointed co-ordinator is evident in pupils' work from Years 1 and 2 and the school would benefit from extending this level of checking into Years 3 and 4. There is evidence in Years 1 and 2 of basic mapping skills, interpretation of aerial photographs and identification of human and physical features of the landscape. The pupils' work shows evidence that the skills of geography are being given a purpose and used in other subject areas such as art and English.

## **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

### **ART AND DESIGN**

Provision in art and design is **very good**.

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

- Standards are above average throughout the school and pupils achieve very well.
- Art and design is used well to support learning in other subjects.
- Displays of pupils' work greatly enrich the environment.
- The subject is very well led and managed.

#### **Commentary**

92. Standards are good and above average by the end of Years 2 and 4. Pupils achieve very well. They do this because they:
- are taught very well
  - learn the skills needed to succeed
  - build on these skills step by step as they move through the school
  - are very enthusiastic and enjoy learning.

As a consequence, their work is above average overall. Some aspects of work seen are well above average. This is particularly the case in the way that pupils develop their ideas and evaluate the outcomes. Standards have improved well since the last inspection.

93. Pupils use art well to express their ideas and record their thoughts in a range of subjects. Examples of pupils putting their artistic skills to good effect were seen in geography, when they sketched maps of routes for journeys that they had made. In history, pupils designed patterns and pictures to decorate 2D shapes of Greek jars and pots. There are good links with English and science. For example, pupils design, write and illustrate posters to promote a healthy eating campaign.
94. The very good quality displays greatly enrich the environment. Staff ensure that pupils' work is tastefully and carefully displayed. This results in vibrant and stimulating displays. Beautiful batik work achieved with a resident artist makes stunning wall panels to decorate a corridor. Work carried out by the textile club, and also the quilting club, add to the quality of the environment. These displays, together with pupils' rainbow fish work, art in the style of Miro and O'Keeffe, collages of Indian buildings produced after studying photographs of Indian cities and many other displays provide eye-catching stimulation to enhance learning. Work produced after educational visits, such as pictures recording the visit to Aldeburgh, add excitement to learning and also remind pupils of the event.
95. The subject is very well led and managed by the enthusiastic and knowledgeable co-ordinator. Together with a team of specialist teachers from the local authority, he very successfully enthuses, guides and advises staff. The school firmly believes that all pupils can succeed through art. The subject is made so exciting that pupils are happy to 'have a go' and to try their best. Resources are good and used very well. All National Curriculum requirements are met. There is a good policy and scheme of work, which successfully covers all aspects of the art and design curriculum.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

96. Standards in design and technology are average at the end of Year 2 and Year 4. Pupils cover the full breadth of the curriculum and complete a good range of 'design and make' tasks. They achieve well and make good progress in generating ideas for their designs, planning what they will use and how they will go about the task. Year 2 pupils have made castle drawbridges after exploring different winding mechanisms and evaluating their effectiveness. Their hand puppets demonstrate stitching and attaching skills. By the time they are in Year 4 pupils are achieving well and their work shows that they have a good understanding of the design process. In making bags they have used a variety of stitches for different purposes and have examined various methods of attaching materials. They have made attractive books suitable for Year 1 children to enjoy with moving pictures using a variety of mechanisms. One pupil included in his evaluation of his book the comment, "It amused the reader". Teaching in the one lesson observed was very good. The teacher introduced the pupils to the task of designing and making a light source with a particular user in mind in a well-planned, well-resourced lesson which demonstrated her excellent knowledge of the subject.

## **MUSIC**

97. Pupils achieve well and standards are average. Not enough music was seen to make judgements on teaching and learning. However, music does play an important part in the life of the school. For example, it is used to set the mood for assemblies. The one lesson seen, in Year 2, was good and pupils achieved well. They enjoyed the lesson and composed good sound effects to describe different weather conditions. All National Curriculum requirements are met. A strength of the subject is that teachers encourage pupils to evaluate and appraise their own and other pupils' work and to suggest how they could make improvements. The quality of pupils' singing is very good, as seen in singing practices for pupils in all year groups. There are good

opportunities for pupils to develop individual musical talents through small group instrumental tuition.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

98. Physical education was not a focus subject in this inspection. Judgements are based on discussions with the subject co-ordinator and brief observations of a small sample of lessons. Pupils have good opportunities to develop their skills in the disciplines of gymnastics, movement and competitive games.
99. The subject co-ordinator leads the development of the subject very well. By making very good use of in-service training opportunities she has identified a clear pathway for improving her own leadership skills and for improving the subject. She has made significant improvements by responding reflectively to the subject report in the previous inspection. For example, throwing and catching skills have been improved and teachers' plans now show clearly what skills are to be taught. This is because the co-ordinator has checked and evaluated planning, then given clear guidance to other teachers on how lessons should provide for a distinct progression of skills.
100. There are good links with the community to enrich the pupils' opportunities for physical education. For example, Stowmarket Tennis Club has provided workshops for pupils in years 2, 3 and 4 and there are after-school tennis lessons for pupils in these year groups. Further good opportunities for pupils to experience sport beyond the normal school day are provided through, for example, country dancing, hockey, rugby, football (in conjunction with Ipswich Town F.C.), gymnastics and running clubs. It is a credit to the school that these well-supported clubs provide a rich variety of additional experiences for pupils' enjoyment and benefit.

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

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- All staff positively reinforce very good attitudes. Parents welcome and value the school's very positive approach to supporting their children's personal and social development.
- Work for awards such as the ECO-Schools environmental awareness and responsibility award raises pupils' awareness of the need to be responsible members of society.
- The pupils' social awareness is developed very well through their involvement in class councils and the School Council, and through community activities such as fund-raising for local, national and international charities.

### **Commentary**

101. The school has very clear strategies for working in partnership with parents to help pupils to develop very good social and personal skills. The very good role models provided by adults in the school, the high quality of concern and care shown to the pupils and the effective encouragement for pupils to see their school as one big family create a very positive ethos in which all pupils can see their value within society.
102. Pupils develop mature attitudes as they progress through the school. They learn to be active and responsible members of their school family, to watch out for the needs of others and to seek ways to help those who need it. Discussions with older pupils show that they have a very real sense of their responsibilities as individuals within a larger group of people. It is clear that they are learning to have a wider sense of moral and social responsibility, as well as beginning to take responsibility for their personal needs and development. The school makes very good provision

for the development of these important attributes by involving pupils in the School Council and in initiatives such as the 'ECO Schools' award.

103. Pupils have good opportunities for involvement in the work of their school through the School Council. This work helps pupils to have a better appreciation of the ways in which the school can develop and what they can do to help the staff to overcome any barriers to improvement. For example, the pupils' work to help their teachers to improve the school grounds has improved lunchtime behaviour, with additional benefits from a calm start to afternoon lessons. Pupils show a developing sense of social and moral responsibility by taking an active part in fund raising for their school and for local, national and international charities.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

