

INSPECTION REPORT

BIRKWOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Cudworth, Barnsley

LEA area: Barnsley

Unique reference number: 106620

Acting Headteacher: Mrs J Shaw

Lead inspector: Mr P M Allen

Dates of inspection: 31st January - 2nd February 2005

Inspection number: 266431

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Primary
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 3 - 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 250
School address: Darfield Road
Cudworth
Barnsley
South Yorkshire
Postcode: S72 8HG
Telephone number: (01226) 710 447
Fax number: (01226) 712 341
Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of Mrs E Rogers
governors:
Date of previous 24th February 2003
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This is an average sized community primary school located in an area of significant social and economic disadvantage. It draws the vast majority of its pupils from the immediate vicinity, which consists largely of rental and local authority housing with a minority of owner occupied houses. There are 250 pupils on roll with slightly more girls than boys. There have been a number of staffing changes since the previous inspection. The previous deputy headteacher has been acting headteacher for the two years which have elapsed since the previous inspection. One of the teachers, appointed since the previous inspection, was designated as acting deputy headteacher in September 2004. Currently, excluding the Nursery there are seven classes, one for each year group from Reception to Year 6. The great majority of pupils are of white British heritage background, with a small number of pupils from mixed heritage backgrounds. Seventy pupils are identified as having special educational needs, this proportion being above the national average; most of them have moderate learning difficulties. There are three pupils who have statements of special educational need, this proportion being in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above the national average. Virtually all pupils have experienced pre-school education in the school's own Nursery. Attainment on entry to the Reception class varies from year to year, but overall it is well below what could be expected, most notably in language and communication skills. During the current year the school is receiving additional funding from the Excellence in Cities initiative. At the time of the inspection a major building project was underway which should be completed by the end of the current school year. This will provide a library and resource area, administrative areas and meeting rooms and accommodation for the Nursery and Reception classes. The current nursery building will be altered to provide local provision for children aged nought to three, including 'wrap around' care before and after school.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
17531	Mr P M Allen	Lead inspector	Foundation Stage Mathematics Music Physical education
9798	Mrs V Ashworth	Lay inspector	
29686	Mr J S Lord	Team inspector	English Information and communication technology Art and design Geography Special educational needs
17310	Mrs A McAskie	Team inspector	Science Design and technology History Religious education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **satisfactory school** which has steadily improved, most notably over the past 12 months. Standards are mainly low, but they are gradually rising. Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are in line with the national average in mathematics, but below average in reading, writing and science. The quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory, although girls perform better than boys in reading and writing. Overall leadership and management and the value for money provided by the school are satisfactory.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school needs to continue to raise standards, most notably in speaking, reading and writing, by improving the quality of teaching so that it is more consistently good across the school.
- The school's partnership with the parents is insufficiently well developed.
- Overall, girls achieve consistently better than boys in reading and writing because boys are less well motivated.
- Pupils in Year 6 achieve well because of the very good quality of teaching they receive.
- The acting headteacher and the acting deputy headteacher are working well together to bring about school improvement.
- Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in their learning.
- Pupils' enthusiasm for school is reflected in their good attitudes, behaviour and relationships.

The school was last inspected in February 2003 when it was judged as having serious weaknesses, mainly because a history of underachievement had led to standards in English, mathematics and science being too low, with the school's results comparing badly with similar schools. Satisfactory and, in some respects, good progress has been made in addressing the issues for improvement and the school is moving along the right lines to establish a good quality of education for its pupils. This confirms the views expressed in the most recent monitoring by Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI). Improvements have taken place, most notably in the last year, but much still remains to be done. There is still a need to further raise standards and improve the school's partnership with parents. There have been good improvements in the quality of teaching and learning and in the quality of leadership and management. Overall, the school has made a good improvement since its last inspection and no longer has serious weaknesses.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
English	E	E*	E	E
mathematics	E*	E	C	A
science	E*	E*	C	A

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

Children start school with very low levels of attainment, especially in language and communication skills. In the Nursery and Reception classes, their achievement is satisfactory and sometimes good. Most, although not all, are likely to achieve the goals children are expected to reach by the end of their time in Reception and a minority are likely to exceed them. Overall, across the school **pupils' achievement is satisfactory**. Overall standards in Year 2 and Year 6 are adversely affected by the high number of pupils in those year groups who have special educational needs. Standards in most subjects are adversely affected by low standards in literacy skills. Standards at the end of Year 2 and the end of Year 6 are in line with the national average in mathematics and below in reading, writing and science. Pupils achieve best in Year 6 because of the very good quality of the teaching they receive. In writing and especially in reading, girls consistently perform better than boys. Standards in information and communication technology are below those expected nationally at the end of Year 2, but in line at the end of Year 6. Standards in religious education are broadly in line with the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as their classmates because of the good quality of the support they receive. Pupils' **personal development is good**. Their **spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall**. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Attendance has improved and is now satisfactory across the school. However, attendance in the Nursery class is unsatisfactory for a significant minority of the children. Punctuality is good for the vast majority of pupils who arrive at school eager to learn.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is satisfactory and improving. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, sometimes being good and very good. The most effective teaching observed was in Year 6. Good use is being made of technology to enhance teaching and learning through the extensive use of the computer suite and the effective use of the interactive whiteboards. Teachers are conscientious, caring and committed to the school and its pupils. Teaching assistants and nursery nurses provide good support. The school has made a good improvement in monitoring pupils' attainments, tracking their progress and setting targets, especially in literacy and numeracy, but more remains to be done. The breadth of the curriculum is satisfactory. The appropriate recent focus on English and mathematics means that some other subjects are in need of further development. The provision for care, welfare, support and guidance is satisfactory. The school has a caring, community ethos. The school needs to renew its efforts to strengthen its partnership with parents so that parents are more involved in the life of the school and better able to support the school's high aspirations for their children. Links with the community are satisfactory.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall leadership and management are satisfactory. The acting headteacher is providing satisfactory leadership and management; her commitment to the school has a positive impact on the life and ethos of the school. She is well supported by the acting deputy headteacher and they are working effectively together to bring about improvement. The role of the subject co-ordinators is gradually being developed. School self-evaluation is satisfactory but needs to focus more sharply on raising standards. Governance is satisfactory. It meets statutory requirements, although the governing body could benefit from further developing its monitoring role so that it becomes more effective in helping to shape the future direction of the school. Overall, satisfactory use is made of time although some lessons taught in the morning are overly long.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The small number of parents who responded to the questionnaire and came to the parents' meeting were supportive of the school. No major concerns were raised although a small number of parents expressed concerns about perceived bullying. The inspection team found no evidence of bullying; there are clear strategies to deal with bullying should it occur. Pupils are very enthusiastic about their school. They talked about how happy they were to come to school, about the friendliness of everyone and about their confidence in their teachers.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise pupils' achievement and attainment, especially in speaking, reading and writing by improving the quality of teaching so that it is more consistently good across the school.
- Rigorously address the relative underperformance of boys in writing and especially in reading.
- Significantly develop its partnership with parents.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure that appropriate training is undertaken as soon as possible in child protection.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Overall, standards at the end of Year 2 and at the end of Year 6 are in line with the national average in mathematics but below in reading, writing and science. Children's achievement is satisfactory overall in the Foundation Stage. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory across the school, except in Year 6 where it is good. In writing and especially in reading, girls perform better than boys.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school needs to continue to raise standards across the school, most notably in speaking, reading and writing.
- Standards in most subjects are adversely affected by low standards in literacy skills.
- Pupils achieve best in mathematics.
- Pupils in Year 6 achieve well because of the very good quality of the teaching they receive.

Commentary

1. At the time of the previous inspection two years ago, a history of pupil underachievement was cited as the reason for standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 being well below the national average and those of similar schools. This brought about the main issue of the report which was to raise the attainment of all pupils in all subjects, but especially that of the higher attainers in English, mathematics and science. This issue has been positively addressed since that inspection; some improvements have come about, as a consequence of which standards have risen, but more remains to be done.
2. Judgements on current standards are based on work seen in lessons, on an extensive review of the pupils' work and on discussions with pupils. Judgements also take into account the school's own data, which include the tracking of pupils' attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science and predictions of future performance at the end of Year 2 and Year 6.
3. Overall, children are given a satisfactory start to their school lives in the Nursery and Reception classes. Attainment on entry to the Nursery is very low. Many children have limited communication and language skills and a relatively poor understanding of the world around them. The satisfactory and sometimes good teaching and a thoughtful and well-structured curriculum ensure that most children make at least satisfactory progress in the Nursery class. Poor attendance records in the Nursery adversely affect achievement for a small number of children. Overall, when children start in Reception, their standards are still well below what could be expected for children of that age.
4. At the time of the inspection, staffing instability in the Reception class meant that achievement was inconsistent. Nevertheless, most, although not all, are likely to meet the national Early Learning Goals which children are expected to reach by the end of their time in Reception. A significant number will not reach the higher level competencies in the communication, language and literacy and in the mathematical areas of learning. A minority of the children are likely to exceed the goals. Overall children attain best in the personal, social and emotional

area of learning which is less dependent on language skills than most of the other areas of learning.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	12.4 (10.9)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	12.1 (10.9)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	15.4 (14.9)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 28 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. Across the school, pupils' achievements are satisfactory. The overall evaluation for standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are adversely affected by the high number of pupils currently in those year groups who are identified as having special educational needs. Standards at the end of Year 2 are now higher than those at the time of the previous inspection, most notably in mathematics. Pupils are achieving better than previously; higher attainers now generally receive work which is more suited to their needs. Standards are gradually rising, although they are still below the national average in reading, writing and science. This represents a significant improvement on the 2004 results in reading which were in the lowest five per cent nationally when compared with all and similar schools. This represents an improvement on the 2004 results in science and in writing which were well below the national average for all and similar schools. Standards in mathematics are now in line with the national average at the end of Year 2, whereas in 2004 they were below the national average, but in line with those of similar schools. This has come about because of the successful strategies to improve the teaching and learning in mathematics. Standards are still insufficiently high in writing and most notably in reading.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	23.8 (21.9)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	26.8 (25.1)	27.0 (26.8)
science	29.0 (24.8)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 25 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

6. Standards are higher than they were at the time of the previous inspection. Achievement in Years 3, 4 and 5 is satisfactory. Pupils' progress accelerates in Year 6, where achievement is good because of the very effective teaching they receive. All the indications are that standards over time are gradually improving.
7. Standards at the end of Year 6 in 2004 were higher than in previous years. Currently, with a lower attaining year group, standards at the end of Year 6 are below the national average in English and in science. In the 2004 national tests the results in English were well below the national average for all and similar schools; in science the results were in line with the national average and well above those for similar schools. Standards in mathematics are in line with the national average; these standards are reflected in the 2004 results which were in line with the national average and well above those of similar schools. Standards still need to be higher in reading, writing and science.

8. Standards in information and communication technology are below those expected nationally at the end of Year 2 and in line at the end of Year 6. Standards in religious education are broadly in line with the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. Given the time constraints of the inspection, it was not possible to make secure judgements about standards in the other subjects of the curriculum.
9. Good support is provided for the significant number of pupils identified as having special educational needs, enabling them to achieve as well as their classmates. They make satisfactory and sometimes good progress in their learning, working towards the targets identified in their helpful individual education plans. The school is only just beginning to identify a small number of pupils who are gifted and talented and this is an area for significant development. Teachers are becoming more skilled in providing challenging work for higher attaining pupils to better enable them to work towards the higher levels in English, mathematics and science. This works best in mathematics where teachers are effective overall in providing appropriate work to meet the learning needs of the various ability groups, including the higher attainers. Pupils identified with specific talents in the arts and sport receive a good level of encouragement and support such as a group of pupils who have benefited from specialist teaching in gymnastics and dance.
10. Standards in reading are below average and need to improve. In literacy, a significant number of pupils have poor speaking skills. A significant proportion of pupils start school with very low language and communication skills. Many pupils make simple errors in their 'everyday' speech and this impacts on their written work. Pupils need more structured opportunities to promote their speaking skills. In writing, many pupils require help to develop the language skills needed to put their thoughts into words. Below average reading and writing ability has a negative impact on pupils' attainment in most areas of the curriculum and in their use of literacy across the curriculum. The school is beginning to develop focused strategies to address the weaknesses in literacy and numeracy, but more remains to be done.
11. There are differences in achievement and attainment between boys and girls. In writing and especially in reading, girls consistently perform better than boys. This is borne out in national performance data for the end of Year 2 tests in writing and reading. By the end of Year 6, girls have consistently outperformed boys in the national English tests. On the evidence available there is no significant difference in attainment on entry to the school between boys and girls. The proportion of boys identified with special educational needs is broadly similar to the proportion of girls. The indications are that over recent years, boys have been less enthusiastic about writing and especially reading than girls. Strategies are being put into place, partly through a well-considered action plan and improvements are beginning to be apparent. At the time of the inspection, boys in Year 6 were broadly achieving as well as girls and reaching similar standards. A start has been made but much remains to be done.
12. The school has recently begun to collect data to monitor how pupils achieve compared with their prior attainment and ability on entry to school. The school has a clear aspiration to raise achievement and standards and is beginning to set challenging targets for improvement. The school looks set to exceed its statutory targets for English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 in 2005. The leadership of the school is building a strong commitment amongst the staff to raise standards and improve the quality of education provided.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Provision for their moral and social development is good and for their spiritual and cultural development it is satisfactory. Attendance is satisfactory overall and punctuality is good.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Pupils show a good awareness of right and wrong and of the responsibilities of living in a community.
- Relationships throughout the school are good.
- The school is successful in building the confidence and self-esteem of many pupils to a good level.
- Pupils could benefit from more opportunities to explore the beliefs, festivals and customs of a range of faiths.

COMMENTARY

13. Attitudes to learning are good overall. Pupils' behaviour is good and they show respect for their teachers. In some lessons attitudes and behaviour were very good, particularly when teaching was good. Staff are consistent in the implementation of the behaviour policy and have high expectations. Inappropriate behaviour is soon acted upon. Pupils are generally very open, polite and friendly with visitors and many show good levels of confidence and self-esteem. They are considerate towards each other and play co-operatively. The majority display an enthusiasm for school and are keen to take advantage of the opportunities it offers, particularly through the extra-curricular activities which the school is hoping to expand. There is very little conflict in school and pupils are confident that any reported incidents are dealt with effectively. A useful anti-bullying policy has been developed since the previous inspection. All aspects of personal, social and emotional development are well promoted in the Foundation Stage classes and overall the children respond well.
14. Relationships and personal development are good. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions. The school council works well and the members are becoming well engaged in its business. At the end of Year 5, pupils are trained as 'befrienders' to take responsibility when in Year 6, for any younger pupils who are anxious in the playground.
15. The caring ethos of the school plays a major role in nurturing the spiritual, moral and social development of pupils. Pupils celebrate their personal and collective achievements with great pleasure. The limited provision for multicultural development was identified in the previous report; there is still a need to further develop pupils' understanding of the multicultural society in which they are growing up.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	4.8
National data	5.1

Unauthorised absence	
School data	1.0
National data	0.4

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

16. Most pupils arrive promptly ready for the start of the school day. Attendance has continued to improve over the last year, apart from a short period when sickness across the school resulted in significant absence; it is now satisfactory. The school has worked hard to achieve this improvement. A small minority of parents are not supportive of the school's promotion of good attendance. Attendance in the Nursery class is unsatisfactory for a significant minority of children. A lack of parental support in this matter, means that some children are missing out on much of what the Nursery has to offer.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory. The school provides a satisfactory level of pastoral care and the support, advice and guidance given to the pupils are satisfactory. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. The school's partnership with parents is unsatisfactory. Its links with the local community are satisfactory.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning observed was satisfactory overall. The school's recent focus on making the teaching more effective is leading to better pupil achievement. The assessing of pupils' attainment and progress is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching in Year 6 has a very positive impact on pupils' achievement.
- Good use is made of technology to support teaching and learning.
- Teaching assistants and nursery nurses provide valuable help in teaching and learning, especially for pupils who have special educational needs.
- The pupils' good attitudes, behaviour and relationships have a significant impact on their learning.

Commentary

17. The table below shows the quality of teaching seen throughout the school during the inspection, with around a third of lessons being good or better.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 26 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	4	5	16	1	0	0

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

18. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is better than it was at the time of the previous inspection, which is why pupils are achieving better and standards are gradually rising. The quality of teaching and learning provided by the teacher and the nursery nurse in the Nursery class is satisfactory and sometimes good. During the inspection it was better than that seen in the Reception class where it was satisfactory overall. Where Reception teaching is effective, children are well managed and productive; where it is less effective, children are not well managed and prone to become noisy and off task as they were in one of the lessons observed. Recent

staffing difficulties in Reception have not made for consistency. Overall the work is well planned with a good range of experiences provided. There are satisfactory systems in place to track the progress of individual children through the 'stepping stones' which lead to the Early Learning Goals in the six areas of learning.

19. Although standards are gradually rising, the school needs to continue to raise standards by improving the quality of teaching and learning so that it is a more consistently high standard across the school. There is some inconsistency in the quality of teaching across the school. Some good teaching was observed in Years 1 and 2 but the most effective teaching was seen in Year 6. Where teaching is effective, teachers interest and engage pupils, who are usually well behaved, show positive attitudes and co-operate well together. In such lessons the pupils are expected to work hard and they respond well to these high expectations. This was exemplified in a Year 6 literacy lesson based on the story of Perseus. The lesson was well planned, showing very good subject knowledge. Very good use was made of time and time-targets in teaching that had pace and flair. All pupils were fully included in the activities and all of them worked hard, achieving very well and giving of their best. In the less effective lessons, expectations were not as high and so the pupils were not as productive and so did not make the same level of progress. Some classrooms are tidy, well organised and well managed with an attractive classroom environment whilst others are less so.
20. Teachers usually plan thoroughly for lessons, ensuring that they are well resourced. They have clear learning objectives which are usually shared and reviewed with the pupils. The development of pupils' speaking skills is inconsistent throughout the school. In Year 2 much emphasis is given to developing pupils' confidence in speaking through role-play and in Year 5 the use of 'talking partners' effectively allows pupils to discuss ideas before sharing them with the class which develops confidence in speaking. In some lessons pupils are given too few opportunities to talk together and boys' oral contributions are not sufficiently encouraged and this hinders their progress in becoming confident speakers. Information and communication technology is well used to support teaching and learning; for example, interactive whiteboards are used very effectively and, in some cases their use is excellent. Good use is made of the school's computer suite.
21. An important feature of the teaching and learning is the good quality of support provided by the good number of teaching assistants and nursery nurses. As a consequence, pupils with special educational needs are usually supported well and teachers plan effectively to meet their needs. The school has made a start on identifying pupils who are gifted and talented. Most of the teaching observed during the inspection was of English, mathematics and science lessons and, in many, challenging work was set for higher attainers.
22. Assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory and improving. New assessment practices have been established in English, mathematics and science. Regular assessments enable the staff to track progress and set targets, through making use of computer software. Teachers make good use of assessments to inform their planning. Regular assessments are now also being made in information and communication technology and simple assessments have now been introduced in other subjects such as history and geography. Pupils are now becoming increasingly aware of their targets; the pupils are well aware of their weekly group targets in literacy and numeracy which are displayed on their desks. Some Year 6 pupils are benefiting from learning exactly what it is they have to do in their writing for it to reach Level 5. Teachers make good

use of assessment information to extend and review their planning for the lessons. Overall, the quality of marking is satisfactory but there are times when pupils need clearer guidance on what they must do to improve.

23. Homework is generally used effectively to support learning in English and mathematics; the arrangements work well in Year 6. However, not all parents are sufficiently supportive of the homework provision. Teachers need to continue to build partnerships with parents so that they can share their high aspirations with them.
24. The school is now developing an increasingly clear agenda for improving pupils' achievements and raising standards and this is one of the reasons why standards are beginning to rise. The leadership of the school is very committed to the improvement of teaching and learning.
25. The recent programme of structured monitoring of teaching and learning with its consequent targets for improvement has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning; this requires continued development as can the modelling of the very effective teaching observed during the inspection.

The curriculum

The quality of the curriculum and opportunities for enrichment are satisfactory. Resources are good and the accommodation is satisfactory and both support the effective delivery of the curriculum.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The use of literacy across the curriculum is underdeveloped.
- Participation in sport is good.
- The curriculum is inclusive for all pupils, including those with special educational needs.
- Information and communication and technology resources are used well across the curriculum.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.

Commentary

26. In the Foundation Stage there is a satisfactory range of learning opportunities that develops children's knowledge and understanding across all the appropriate areas of learning. They take part in a range of planned and structured activities and experiences, which gives them a positive start to their education.
27. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, including those for the provision for religious education and collective worship. The school provides effective personal, social, health and citizenship education, including sex and relationship education and attention to alcohol and drugs misuse. Teachers make good use of structured schemes of work to plan their work to ensure knowledge and skills are taught systematically. In their planning for literacy and numeracy, teachers recognise the range of attainment within their classes including that of pupils with special educational needs. In all year groups the development of writing skills is a priority, but there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to write extensively across a range of curriculum subjects. For example, there is too much reliance on pupils completing worksheets in history and geography and this limits pupils' opportunities to make individual responses.

28. The time allocated to some morning literacy and numeracy lessons is overlong and is not effective in raising standards or improving pupils' achievement because some pupils find it hard to sustain concentration. The school is aware of this and has plans to review the time given to these subjects. The school has firm plans to exploit links between some subjects to make learning more inspiring and challenging and to give pupils a real purpose and a wider context for their work.
29. The school provides sound opportunities for enrichment through focus weeks and extra-curricular provision. For example, in 'Creative Arts Week' the pupils experienced a range of activities and welcomed visitors into school. The week incorporated dance, music and art and effectively developed pupils' multicultural awareness of the community and the world in which they live. The school makes good use of a range of visitors and arranges educational visits to enrich the curriculum. Opportunities for participation in sport are very good and this, along with a good range of other after school clubs, adds to the pupils' personal development. There are valuable residential visits for pupils in Years 5 and 6 with one planned for pupils in Years 3 and 4. These contribute to the development of social and personal skills.
30. The school ensures that all pupils have equal access to learning opportunities. Provision for the significant number of pupils with special educational needs is good. The good leadership by the special educational needs co-ordinator, the good support given by committed teaching assistants who work effectively with teachers and the good use of resources ensure that pupils are provided with learning opportunities that are consistently of good quality, helping them to meet the targets in their individual learning plans.
31. There are sufficient teachers to meet the needs of the curriculum. The current accommodation and the overall good level of resources are used effectively to aid pupils' learning across the curriculum. The staff are committed to making full use of all the opportunities that will be provided when the current building programme has been completed. The effective use of the information and communication technology suite has ensured that pupils' information and communication technology skills have improved and teachers' use of the interactive whiteboard in the suite has made learning visual and effective. Pupils are adequately prepared for secondary education.

Care, guidance and support

The school has satisfactory procedures for the care, welfare, health and safety of the pupils; it provides satisfactory support and guidance. There are satisfactory and improving procedures for the involvement of pupils in school affairs through seeking, valuing and acting upon their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils feel well cared for by the adults in school.
- Training in child protection procedures have not been undertaken.
- The school council provides valuable opportunities for pupils to make their views known.

Commentary

32. The pastoral care of the pupils underpins the school's caring, community ethos. Pupils are able to form good and trusting relationships with adults in the school and

receive assistance and comfort whenever there is a difficulty. The school has made a positive start in the tracking of academic and personal development in order to provide a satisfactory level of support and guidance for the pupils as they progress through school. Induction procedures are satisfactory. The parents who responded to the questionnaire and those who were consulted were satisfied with the arrangements and felt their children settled well.

33. Routines for dealing with accidents, safety in the building and safety on outside visits are appropriate, although there needs to be more systematic recording of these routine procedures. There is good number of staff qualified to administer first aid. The designated person in charge of child protection has a very caring attitude towards the children and has established positive working relationships with outside agencies but has not received training in child protection. This is unsatisfactory and the school needs to ensure that appropriate training is undertaken as soon as possible.
34. The school seeks, values and acts upon pupils' views effectively. The school council provides pupils with an effective voice in the running of the school. There are regular meetings where the members demonstrate increasing skill and confidence in speaking and expressing their opinions. Pupils are able to submit their views to the council which are valued and acted upon whenever possible by the school. The pupils feel well supported, guided and cared for and have pride in their school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's partnership with parents is unsatisfactory. Links with the community and other schools are satisfactory.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- All parents consulted were happy overall with what the school provides.
- The school needs to significantly develop its links with parents because a significant number of parents show little interest in what is going on.

COMMENTARY

35. The very small number of parents who responded to the questionnaire and who attended the parents' meeting were supportive of the school. No major concerns were raised although a small number of parents expressed concerns about perceived bullying. The inspection team found no evidence of bullying. This was endorsed by all the pupils spoken to, who all agreed that the school is quick to respond if they have difficulties or concerns.
36. The quality of information provided for parents is generally satisfactory. The school prospectus and governors' annual report to parents meet statutory requirements and contain clear and useful information. Parents receive curriculum information at the first of three parents' meetings each year. There are letters about particular events, together with regular newsletters. The pupil reports are satisfactory, although the language is not always as understandable as it could be. More information on their child's progress and areas for development would be helpful to parents.
37. The school tries to involve parents with their children's learning both at home and at school. Not all parents are supportive of homework and a significant minority do not

attend the termly consultation meetings to discuss progress. The prospectus offers clear encouragement for parents to come into school. Some parents do volunteer to help in school and this assistance is valued. Despite the 'open door' policy and warmth of welcome, a number of parents are reluctant to become involved in their children's education and the school is keen to develop better communication and links. The Friends of Birkwood is a small but active association run by the chair of the governing body, which brings parents into the school for various fund-raising events. The school is very appreciative of the work done and the money raised for the benefit of the pupils.

38. There are satisfactory links with the local secondary schools and local college. The transfer arrangements to the secondary school are appreciated by both parents and pupils. The school is also involved with other local schools in sharing good practice and sporting events. There are developing links with the local church where the pupils visit to participate in mock ceremonies and study the fabric of the building. There are good links with the local professional football club, the local police, the fire service and local sports clubs.
39. The school has firm plans to develop its relationship with parents through making effective use of the new building. This will not only better facilitate meetings with staff but will be a place for parents to meet together with opportunities for support groups. There is a commitment to renewing attempts to encourage all parents to become more involved in the life of the school and be fully supportive of their children's education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall the leadership and the management of the school are satisfactory. Leadership, including that of the acting headteacher, is satisfactory and management is also satisfactory. The governance of the school is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher are working well together to bring about school improvement.
- The staff are committed to providing a caring, community ethos.
- School self-evaluation needs to focus more sharply on raising standards.
- The role of the subject leaders has improved but needs further development.
- Governors need to be more involved in monitoring the work of the school.

Commentary

40. The acting headteacher is providing satisfactory leadership and management; her commitment to the school has a positive impact on the ethos and life of the school. She is well supported by the acting deputy headteacher and they are working effectively together to bring about improvement. However, both of them are employed in an 'acting' capacity and this situation will need resolving soon. Most progress in addressing the issues related to leadership and management at the previous inspection has been made over the past 12 months. Monitoring by Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) in May 2004, concluded that reasonable progress had been made. The headteacher is becoming well aware of the school's strengths and areas for development and, with help from the Primary Leadership Programme and Intensifying Support Programme, is beginning to create an effective senior management team with a shared vision for school improvement. She is building good partnerships with her

committed staff who are increasingly becoming involved in planning and decision making and this is leading to a shared sense of purpose. Together the staff provide an inclusive environment, with a caring ethos, where all pupils are valued.

41. The school has an agenda for continuing improvement but there needs to be a sharper focus on developments aimed at moving the school forward by improving the quality of teaching and learning and by raising standards. The school improvement plan is a useful starting point with appropriate developments for the current year. There are brief details of the vision for the next three years, but this does not constitute a strategic plan for the future. Careful consideration needs to be given as to how this vision can be realised in order to set long-term ambitious goals which are understood by all and are aimed at improving the quality of education.
42. Governance is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements. The governing body is very supportive and has undergone significant training to address the issues raised by the previous inspection. Reasonable progress has been made in governors' awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Their monitoring role needs further development so that they become more effective in helping to shape the future direction of the school.
43. Management is satisfactory. Systems and procedures are being developed which underpin the work of the school, along with good application of the principles of best value. Day-to-day running of the school is efficient. Governing body sub-committees now meet regularly to discuss improvements and developments. Subject co-ordination is satisfactory; it has improved significantly since the previous inspection when it was judged to be unsatisfactory. Deployment of responsibilities is now more equitable. Co-ordinators have undergone significant training and are now more confident. Whole school systems for monitoring subjects are being introduced but these need more rigour and sharper focus in order to give leaders a clearer idea of how pupils are performing throughout the school. Priority so far has been given to English and mathematics where teaching has been monitored and work reviewed. Progress in other subjects is variable.
44. The monitoring of teaching and learning needs further development. There is a need to share good practice in order to raise teachers' expectations. Performance data are now being analysed, with the information being used to track pupils' progress through the school and to set targets for learning. Performance management strategies and professional development are now being used effectively to acknowledge strengths and address weaknesses.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	639,965
Total expenditure	661,423
Expenditure per pupil	2,667

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	60,387
Balance carried forward to the next year	38,929

45. Financial management is satisfactory and has improved since the previous inspection. The headteacher has a good grasp of financial management and the governing body finance committee is fully involved in allocating finance to agreed priorities, monitoring spending patterns and evaluating spending decisions for cost-effectiveness.

46. The unsatisfactory attendance of a significant minority of nursery children is affecting the school's efforts in raising achievement. Some parents are insufficiently supportive of their children's education and the school recognises the need to work more closely with parents to help them to better understand and support the school's high aspirations for their children.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

47. Children spend two or three terms in the Nursery, initially attending afternoon sessions (with the 'younger group') before progressing to the morning session (the 'older group'). They start full time in the Reception class in the September or January of the year in which they become five years old, depending on the timing of their birthdays.
48. The work in the Foundation Stage is better resourced than it was at the time of the previous inspection. The provision is similar to that identified in the previous report, except that where Reception was identified as being more effective than Nursery, the opposite is currently the case. This is because of recent instability in the staffing of the Reception class. In the Nursery, the staff work well together to deliver a well organised curriculum in a consistent way. A number of staffing changes over recent times, including just prior to the inspection, have had an adverse effect on stability in the Reception class, which is taught by two different teachers over the course of the week.
49. A teacher who is on maternity leave was replaced by a new teacher who left a few weeks prior to the inspection, to be replaced by an inexperienced supply teacher. This meant that during the inspection the teaching was shared by the new teacher with a very experienced teacher who has become established in the school. As a consequence, the management of the children lacked a consistent approach.
50. The overall provision is satisfactory with some good features. The work is carefully planned, most of it based on joint half-termly topics which take good account of the six areas of learning. Across the Foundation Stage there are satisfactory systems for assessing and monitoring children's progress through the 'stepping stones' which lead to the national goals for the six areas of learning. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall with some good teaching. During the inspection, the quality of teaching in the Nursery was more consistent than that in the Reception class. The nursery classroom is tidy, well organised and managed; the reception classroom is less so. In both classes the nursery nurses support the teachers well.

51. Across the Foundation Stage children's achievement is satisfactory and sometimes good. In the Nursery, the attendance of a significant minority of children is unsatisfactory and, as a consequence, they do not make sufficient progress. Most children respond well and become well engaged in their learning, although there are some children, mainly boys, in the Reception class who can sometimes find it difficult to settle, becoming noisy and occasionally argumentative. This has an adverse effect on their achievement.
52. Attainment on entry to Reception varies from year to year but, in spite of the satisfactory and sometimes good progress in the Nursery, for most it is still well below what could be expected in social, language and communication skills and in knowledge and understanding of the world.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in personal, social and emotional development is **satisfactory, with some good features**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall most children make best progress in this area of learning.
- Most are learning to be independent, selecting activities and resources for themselves.
- A minority have difficulty in maintaining attention and concentration.

Commentary

53. Most, although not all, of the children are likely to meet the goals expected in this area with around a third likely to exceed them. Teaching is satisfactory and sometimes good and most children achieve well. The staff work hard to encourage and praise the children, but a minority of children lack self-esteem and self-confidence and this has a negative impact on their progress. Staff work hard to promote an understanding of what is right and what is wrong and most children respond well. Most children form good relationships with the adults and their classmates and are kind to one another. They are learning to be independent, to take turns and share fairly and to co-operate well when working as part of a group.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Many children speak unclearly with limited vocabulary.
- Good opportunities are given for children to use language in role-play.
- Standards are very low in the development of early reading and writing skills.
- Focused teaching helps to ensure that children are proficient at learning letter sounds.

Commentary

54. Less than three quarters of the children are likely to reach the expected goals and a number of them will be struggling to reach the higher-level competencies in reading and writing. A small number of children are likely to exceed the goals. Children's

achievement is satisfactory overall. Achievement is more consistent in the Nursery class.

55. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and sometimes good. It is less effective on the occasions when the time that children are expected to sit on the carpet at the start of the session is overlong. They enjoy listening to favourite stories such as 'Mrs Smith's Crocodile' and 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears'. Most enjoy exploring language through role-play in 'the garden centre' and 'the café'.
56. In the nursery, children begin to develop confidence in speaking out; they learn to write their own names. In Reception, in 'literacy times' they learn letter sounds in words; they develop their writing skills, with the higher attainers writing simple sentences. Children make satisfactory progress in the development of their early reading and writing skills.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well in naming numbers and putting them in order because of the many opportunities they are given to practise.
- Good use is made of songs to practise counting or other skills.
- Most children find it difficult to manipulate numbers to support understanding of addition and subtraction.

Commentary

57. As in communication, language and literacy, most children are likely to meet the expected goals and a small number are likely to exceed them. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and sometimes it is good. Achievement is satisfactory and when teaching is good, achievement is good. Children benefit from a good range of activities to practise their number skills.
58. In the Nursery every opportunity is taken to provide counting experiences; in the Reception class there are good opportunities to use the computer to practise number and shape recognition. In the Nursery, children learn to count up to ten and some beyond that; the higher attainers recognise the numerals from one to nine. In Reception, children build on their early learning, recognising and matching numbers to 20 and beyond. The higher attainers can find one more and one less than a number from one to ten. Understanding in number is developed through counting songs, number games and imaginative play.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

59. During the inspection very little teaching was seen in this aspect. As a consequence it was not possible to make a judgement about provision in this area of learning. The school's record keeping and assessment procedures indicate that most children are likely to achieve the appropriate goals and that a small number are likely to exceed them.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Reception children could benefit from better opportunities for outdoor play.
- Children achieve better in using larger equipment than they do in handling tools and small equipment.
- In Nursery, outdoor play is being well developed to support work in all the areas of learning.

Commentary

60. The vast majority of children are likely to meet the goals expected in this area of learning and around a third are likely to exceed them. Achievement is satisfactory and, in some areas, such as controlling wheeled toys in outdoor play, it is good. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Children are able to make effective use of a good range of small and large equipment. Increasingly they handle tools, objects and construction materials safely. In the Nursery, staff are valuably providing a wide range of experiences for outdoor play to support learning across all the areas of learning. Through their weekly physical education lessons in the hall, reception children learn to move with confidence, imagination and safety; they could benefit from better opportunities in the outdoor play area.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children enjoy working in this area of learning, such as when they are cutting, sticking, drawing and painting.
- Children's imagination is developed well through role-play activities.

Commentary

61. The majority of children are likely to meet the expected goals in this area of learning with around a third likely to exceed them. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall and sometimes good. Children paint and experiment with a good range of resources. In Nursery, they enjoy 'free choice' in their paintings; in Reception they enjoy observational painting such as the paintings they did of the class hyacinths. Over time, their creative skills are being developed so that they are able to use their imagination in art, dance and role-play. Children sing simple songs from memory and match movements to music. They sing a good range of number rhymes, nursery rhymes and action songs.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in speaking, reading and writing are below those expected nationally.
- Boys do not perform as well as girls in reading and writing.
- Very good teaching in Year 6 ensures that these pupils achieve well.
- Good support is provided by the teaching assistants, especially for pupils with learning difficulties.
- The use of literacy skills in other subjects is underdeveloped.

Commentary

62. Over recent years, standards in English have been consistently low. However improvements have been made and, as a consequence, overall standards are now below rather than well below the national averages. The high number of pupils who have special educational needs adversely affects the overall evaluation of standards in Year 2 and Year 6. Nevertheless, standards are better than those seen at the last inspection, when they were well below average. Standards at the end of Year 2 are below the national average in reading and writing. This shows an improvement on the test results of 2004 which were well below the national average for all and similar schools. Overall standards at the end of Year 6 are below the national average. These standards are reflected in the test results of 2004 which were below the national average, but in line with those of similar schools.
63. Improvements are particularly evident in Year 6 as a result of very good teaching which is focusing on pupils' learning which in turn is raising the achievement of pupils. Achievement across the school is satisfactory overall in speaking and listening and in writing but less so in reading. Boys achieve less well than girls in writing and especially in reading. The school is aware of this and has put plans in place to tackle the issue but there is a need to apply these more consistently and with more rigour to drive up the performance of boys at a faster rate.
64. A significant proportion of pupils start school with very low language and communication skills. Many pupils make simple errors in their 'everyday' speech and this impacts on their written work. The development of pupils' speaking skills is inconsistent throughout the school. In Year 2 much emphasis is given to developing pupils' confidence in speaking through role-play and similarly in Year 5 the use of a 'talking partner' effectively allows pupils to discuss ideas before sharing them with the class which develops confidence in speaking. However, in some lessons pupils are given too few opportunities to talk together and boys' oral contributions are not sufficiently encouraged and this hinders their progress in becoming confident speakers and therefore competent writers.
65. In their writing, higher attaining Year 2 pupils successfully link ideas together so that their writing follows a clear sequence. However many pupils frequently mix up tenses and spell common words incorrectly. Pupils use a range of adjectives but they tend to lack creativity. In Year 6, pupils successfully write a well-sequenced story but work generally lacks adventure, which is mainly due to their inability to use a wide and varied vocabulary. The higher attaining Year 6 pupils use paragraphs and use correct punctuation to show dialogue, for example. However, most pupils do not write at length, especially boys and this is an area for development.
66. Teachers in Years 1 and 2 help pupils develop reading strategies that enable them to tackle unknown words. Many pupils in Year 6 lack the degree of fluency and expression to fully engage the listener when reading aloud. The school is aware of the need to raise standards in reading and is addressing the issue through a variety of initiatives; for example, the Year 1 Parent Reading Club, Year 3 and 4 'Catch Up' programmes and guided reading sessions across the school. In discussion with older pupils they did not show a strong inclination to read at home, nor did they have many opportunities to use the school library for the purpose of research, although they make very good use of the Internet for research. When taking account of the limited pre-reading skills possessed by many children when they first start school, the

development of reading skills and a love of books are not sufficiently promoted to help all pupils, especially boys, achieve well enough.

67. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, with very good teaching in Year 6. Teachers have good subject knowledge, make good use of the interactive whiteboard, manage pupils' behaviour well and plan for tasks to be done in different ways to meet the differing needs of pupils. The school is, therefore, dealing successfully with the issue raised in the last inspection that pupils of higher ability were not being sufficiently challenged. The very good teaching in Year 6 sets high expectations of all pupils, develops very clear learning steps and links throughout the lesson which are delivered at a fast pace, involves all pupils from the outset through skilful questioning and enjoyable activities and makes effective use of support staff. This makes learning interesting and fun, motivates the boys and as well as the girls and results in all pupils achieving well, including those with learning difficulties and special educational needs. Where teaching is less effective, pupils do not always work as hard as they can and achieve less; for example, boys are allowed to take a more passive part in the lesson and this contributes to their underperformance. The way the timetable is organised means that some of the literacy lessons are overlong to fully engage the pupils. Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to the overall quality of teaching. They are well informed by the teachers and so they are able to work effectively with pupils of all abilities, providing a good level of support that is well matched to individual need.
68. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The co-ordinator is at an early stage of developing the role but has the knowledge and enthusiasm to make further improvements to the subject, which overall is well resourced. The marking of pupils' work is satisfactory and sometimes good. The assessing of pupils' work has been significantly developed recently. Regular assessments, including the use of reading tests and the half-termly assessment of written tasks, are helping the staff to monitor pupils' progress and give good insights into the National Curriculum levels being reached. Target setting, such as the weekly ones for each group, are becoming established, but more needs to be done on an individual basis. Satisfactory use is made of homework. Some parents support their children in this respect, others less so. The school recognises the need to better share the staff's high aspirations with parents and acting upon this can have a positive impact on pupils' future achievements.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

69. This is an area for development. There are too few opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills across a range of subjects to ensure that they develop the ability to adapt their writing to a wider audience and for a greater range of purposes.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in mathematics have shown the best improvement of all subjects since the previous inspection.
- Pupils achieve best in Year 6 because of the very good teaching they receive.
- Overall pupils achieve less well in Years 3, 4 and 5.
- Very good leadership and management in mathematics are having a significant impact on the quality of the work.

Commentary

70. Standards in mathematics across the school are significantly better than those at the time of the previous inspection which were judged to be well below the national average. This improvement has been brought about through an overall improvement in the quality of teaching and learning, involving higher teacher expectations. Standards at the end of Year 2 are now in line with the national average. This reflects a good improvement on the 2004 results which were below the national average and in line with the average for similar schools. National performance data show a gradual rise in pupils' performance at the end of Year 2 which is being well maintained.
71. Standards at the end of Year 6 are also in line with the national average. This is reflected in the 2004 results which were in line with the national average and well above that for similar schools. A pattern in the past has been that at the end of Year 2 a reasonable number of pupils reached Level 2, the expected level for most seven year olds, but too few reached the higher Level 3. Similarly, at the end of Year 6 a reasonable number of pupils reached Level 4, the expected level for most 11 year olds, but too few reached the higher Level 5. The school has successfully put in place strategies for improvement and, as a consequence, more pupils are reaching the higher levels.
72. In the lessons seen and the work reviewed, pupils were achieving well in Years 1 and 2 and most significantly in Year 6. The school now needs to address the indications that pupils achieve less well in Years 3, 4 and 5. Inspection findings are that there are no significant differences between the achievement of boys and girls in mathematics, unlike the differences in reading and writing. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported, enabling them to achieve as well as their classmates. Overall, teachers are becoming more effective in providing challenging work for the higher attaining pupils which is why more pupils are beginning to reach the higher levels in mathematics.
73. The quality of teaching and learning observed during the inspection was mixed, varying from satisfactory to very good. It was good in Year 2 and very good in Year 6. In most lessons, pupils showed positive attitudes, became engaged in their work and showed good levels of co-operation. Some lessons are overly long, as a consequence of which some pupils lost their concentration towards the end. Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils, including those with special educational needs. The teaching has a strong and effective focus on developing mental skills. Good emphasis is put on investigations and problem solving which promotes pupils' understanding of the need to learn mathematics to help them in everyday life.
74. In a very good Year 6 lesson on angles and the properties of quadrilaterals, the teacher's high expectations were matched by the pupils who became well engaged in their tasks, showing clear understanding of the difference between acute, obtuse and reflex angles. The group tasks were well presented and well differentiated, enabling all pupils to be fully included in the lesson and to achieve well. This included the small number of pupils with specific learning difficulties. In the less effective lessons observed, the pupils were less well managed, as a consequence of which they were less productive, achieving less in the time. Good use is made of technology to support the teaching and learning, through the productive use of the computer suite and through the interactive whiteboards, the use of which is becoming increasingly skilled. 'Booster groups' are helping targeted pupils to raise their levels of attainment.

75. Lessons are generally well planned. Aims for what will be learned are usually clearly outlined at the beginning of the lesson so that pupils are clear what they are going to do and what is expected from them. The quality of marking is inconsistent; at its best, teachers' marking is well used to help pupils understand how they can improve. Some good assessment practices have recently been introduced. Data, including half-termly assessments, enable the staff to track progress and check National Curriculum levels. Pupils are aware of their own group's weekly targets which are now displayed in the middle of their tables. The co-ordinator is aware of the need to further develop target setting. In order to drive up standards, pupils, especially older ones, need to be party to and have a clearer understanding of exactly what they need to do to improve their work.
76. Leadership and management of mathematics are very good. The enthusiastic co-ordinator is leading the school's self-evaluation aimed at improving standards, partly through the monitoring of teaching and learning. The school is becoming increasingly focused on the further raising of achievement and standards and although recent improvements in the quality of teaching are having a positive impact, more remains to be done aimed at making the teaching and learning more consistently high across the school. There is now a clear, shared commitment amongst staff to continue to raise standards in mathematics across the school.

Mathematics across the curriculum

77. Pupils routinely make effective use of mathematics as part of their work in other subjects and this helps them to begin to develop an appreciation of the practical uses for their skills. For example, they use co-ordinates, grid references and scale in geography; they use scale, number and measurement in design and technology. They use computer programs to practise and reinforce mathematical skills. They use time lines in history and religious education. The school plans to continue to make routine use of information and communication technology in mathematics lessons.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at the end of Year 2 need to be higher, especially those of the higher attainers.
- Achievement is high in Year 6 because of the very good quality of teaching.
- Pupils are given good opportunities to carry out investigations.
- Classroom assistants make an important contribution to pupils' learning.
- Information and communication technology is used well to support learning.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning needs improvement.

Commentary

78. Standards are below average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 but are rising. Standards at the end of Year 2, although below average, show improvement on the previous year. In 2004, there was a significant improvement in the attainment of Year 6 pupils when standards were in line with the national average and well above those of similar schools. At the end of the current year standards are likely to be below average overall, because of the significant number of pupils with special educational needs. Low reading and writing skills have a negative impact on standards. Achievement through the school is satisfactory except in Year 6 where it is good.

Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as their classmates because of the good support they receive.

79. Pupils enter school with a well below average understanding of the world around them. This has a negative impact on the standards being reached. The school is mindful of this when planning the curriculum. Teachers place emphasis on developing scientific vocabulary but do not always create enough opportunities for talk in class discussions and when carrying out the variety of interesting investigations provided.
80. Pupils enjoy their science lessons and are usually well behaved. Discussions with Year 2 pupils showed good recall not only of work done in previous lessons on electricity, but also of tests carried out on friction the previous term. They are becoming aware of the use of variables, through investigations such as testing the speed of a car on various surfaces. They are learning to make predictions as seen when increasing the number of bulbs in an electric circuit. The experimental skills of older pupils are becoming well developed; most have a good grasp of the nature of fair testing. However, their oral explanations are adversely affected by poor speaking skills.
81. The limited amount of teaching and learning observed during the inspection ranged from satisfactory to very good. In all lessons instruction was clear and good use was made of interactive whiteboards and suitable software to reinforce concepts and gain the pupils' attention. This was particularly effective in holding the attention of the boys. Where teaching was very good, very high expectations of behaviour and level of industry resulted in pupils covering a lot of work and consequently learning was very good. Where teaching was less effective, some pupils spent too much time off task and written activities had insufficient challenge for the higher attainers. The lessons seen were well organised with sufficient appropriate resources. Good support was given to lower attaining pupils. A review of work showed that there is a whole school approach to methods of recording work but that standards of presentation are variable. Where pupils record their work in books, it is often of a higher quality than that on worksheets. Teachers' marking does not always give sufficient guidance to pupils on how to improve their work. Good use is made of graphs in presenting results and pupils' information and communication technology skills are being increasingly used.
82. The science co-ordinator is leading and managing the subject effectively, although during the past two years science has not had a high profile in the school. Consequently she has had no opportunity to monitor work in the classrooms to enable her to have a clear vision of how pupils are performing throughout the school. She is well informed about standards and has used analysis of test results to highlight the relative performance of boys and girls. Assessment procedures are satisfactory but planning for future needs and improvement needs more rigour. Science is well resourced and a new scheme is helping to improve teacher knowledge. The policy needs updating. Good links are made with mathematics, design and technology and geography. There has recently been a significant increase in the use of information and communication technology because of the introduction of new provision of both hardware and relevant software. Further consideration needs to be given to how work in science can support the development of language and literacy skills.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 2 are below those expected nationally.
- The effective use of the good quality equipment is having a positive impact on raising standards.
- Pupils learn information and communication technology skills systematically.
- Pupils achieve well in Year 6 because the quality of teaching is good.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning is insufficiently rigorous.
- Information and communication technology is used well to support learning in other subjects.

Commentary

83. Standards at the end of Year 2 are below those expected nationally as they were at the time of the previous inspection. Standards at the end of Year 6 are in line with those expected nationally which is an improvement since the previous inspection when they were judged as below. The vast majority of pupils in Year 6 have the appropriate skill levels in information and communication technology and some exceed them. Overall standards have improved because the investment in a computer suite, complete with interactive whiteboard, has ensured that pupils' access to information and communication technology has been consistent, which was an issue in the previous report.
84. Information and communication technology skills are taught systematically. An examination of pupils' work shows that all pupils from Year 1 onwards are able to use paint and drawing programs to make images. Pupils in Year 2 develop keyboard skills to add text to simple pictures. Year 5 pupils are able to collect and enter information onto a database to produce a graph or pie chart. Most pupils in Years 3 to 6 can use word-processing skills and images from a variety of sources, including a digital camera, to enhance their work. Older pupils search the Internet effectively for information; Year 5 pupils for example, found out about life in Victorian times. In Year 6, most pupils are confident in the use of information and communication technology and can prepare a multimedia presentation with interesting visual and sound effects.
85. Pupils enjoy using computers and their achievement is satisfactory overall. In the good teaching in Year 6, the teacher showed good knowledge and expertise, explanations were clear and higher attaining pupils were set more demanding tasks; these qualities have a positive impact on the progress pupils make. Throughout the school pupils, including those with special educational needs, are given appropriate opportunities to consolidate and extend their knowledge and skills in other curricular areas resulting in satisfactory achievement. The information and communication technology suite is efficiently used and provides very good opportunities for pupils. The interactive whiteboard in the suite is used well to help present ideas to pupils and this is helping the learning process. Pupils are enthusiastic and enjoy the visual approach to learning. There is good support for those experiencing difficulties through well-informed and trained teaching assistants.
86. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The co-ordinator has a good knowledge and understanding of the subject which will help to further raise standards across the school. He has put an assessment system in place which effectively informs teachers' planning; this is an improvement on the previous inspection. Parents have been informed about the Internet and e-mail policy which

was an issue raised at the previous inspection. The monitoring of teaching and learning remains underdeveloped lacking the rigour to identify strengths and weaknesses in order to further drive up standards; appropriately the school sees this as an area for development.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

87. Throughout the school, the planning of work in information and communication technology lessons provides good opportunities to use the subject to help pupils learn in other areas of the curriculum; for example, publishing stories in English, learning about time in mathematics and electrical circuits in science or using the Internet to research history and geography topics. This is an area of much improvement from the previous inspection and is helping pupils to maximise learning opportunities. Teachers also use information and communication technology to enhance their teaching; for example, through the use of the interactive whiteboard in the computer suite and in most classrooms.

HUMANITIES, CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

The work in geography and history and in art and design, design and technology, music and physical education meets statutory requirements. These subjects were not specific areas of focus for the inspection and only a limited range of evidence was sampled. As a consequence there is insufficient evidence to make overall judgements on the quality of the provision.

GEOGRAPHY

88. No lessons were seen in geography therefore it is not possible to form overall judgements about the quality of teaching and learning. Evidence from samples of pupils' work, teachers' planning and discussions with pupils and staff indicates that standards in Year 2 and Year 6 are likely to be below those seen in most schools as they were at the time of the previous inspection.
89. A scheme of work is in place based on national guidelines which helps teachers to plan continuity and progression in the teaching and learning of geographical skills. Pupils in Year 2 are developing an awareness of localities beyond their own through the topic based on 'Island Homes'. Year 4 pupils demonstrate an understanding that different places may contain similar and different characteristics to their own area through studying a village in India. Within the Year 6 work, pupils identify the key features of a river. The vast majority of the work across the school is limited in content and completed on worksheets which often do not fully meet the differing needs of pupils, especially the high attainers. Too few opportunities are given for older pupils to respond through extended writing to help them develop and adapt their writing skills for work in geography.
90. The co-ordinator is new to the role but is aware of the developments needed to raise standards in the subject across the school; for example, making stronger links between the teaching and learning of geography and the development of pupils' literacy skills. There has been an improvement in the checking and recording of pupils' progress in their learning of geographical skills and facts.

HISTORY

91. No lessons were seen during the inspection. Evidence from pupils' work, displays and planning documents, indicates that pupils are receiving an appropriate curriculum but that history is not being used sufficiently well to develop writing skills. Assessments are made at the end of each unit of work and these identify specific needs for future lessons.
92. Work in history has improved since the previous inspection and the indications are that pupils are making satisfactory progress. Evidence from a review of work indicates that pupils now have more opportunities to develop research skills although more use could still be made of the local environment.
93. Some cross-curricular links are being made. Young pupils study old and new houses combining local history and geography. Older pupils make comparisons between the ancient and modern Olympic Games. Although pupils have some opportunities to write on various historical topics, for example, letters written by Anne Boleyn pleading for her life and articles written by a Roman general appealing for extra troops, the extensive use of worksheets requiring little response does not promote achievement. This, together with insufficiently high expectations of the quantity and quality of work, means that written work is not contributing sufficiently well to developing writing skills, especially those of higher attaining pupils.
94. The school uses national guidelines to ensure continuity and progression. Increasing use is being made of information and communication technology to research projects, although this needs further development. There is a satisfactory range of resources and the school makes good use of visitors to the school and visits to places of historical interest in order to widen the pupils' experiences. There is currently no co-ordinator for history.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision has improved since the previous inspection and pupils receive a broader, more balanced curriculum.
- The co-ordinator is developing a clear agenda for improvement.
- Pupils' literacy skills are insufficiently developed by the work set.
- Resources need further development.

Commentary

95. Standards have improved since the previous inspection when they were judged to be below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Co-ordination has improved, most notably in the past six months and there is now a relevant curriculum. Some issues still remain.
96. Evidence from the two lessons seen, from a review of pupils' work and from teachers' records indicates that standards are now broadly in line with the requirements of the new locally agreed syllabus. Achievement is satisfactory overall, although written work seen indicates that pupils are given insufficient opportunities to develop their writing skills. Responses are often short and insufficiently challenging for higher attainers. The quality of marking is variable.

97. The quality of teaching and learning seen was good overall and reflected good teacher knowledge delivered in a measured way, ensuring pupils' understanding. Both lessons gave good opportunities for developing speaking and listening skills and dealt sensitively with issues of feelings and beliefs. A Year 6 lesson made very good use of information and communication technology to illustrate the importance of the mosque, not merely as a place of worship, but as the centre of life and community for Muslim people. Effective questioning enabled pupils to extend discussions to examine the nature of a community.
98. Opportunities for spiritual development have improved since the previous inspection. Pupils are given time for reflection in oral lessons and through written work and also helped to appreciate the similarities and differences in the religions studied. The work in religious education is well supported by acts of collective worship. The local vicar takes assembly on a regular basis. There are useful links with the local church, which is used frequently to celebrate festivals and for other purposes. Year 6 pupils visit a mosque.
99. Curriculum leadership is satisfactory. The new co-ordinator has worked hard in a very short time to implement the new guidelines which she feels better highlight the main world faiths. She has produced a new policy which better reflects a multicultural society, is constructing an appropriate action plan for future development and has begun monitoring teaching and learning. Simple assessments are made. There is a good supply of books but more artefacts are needed for other faiths covered in the new syllabus.

Art and design

100. Given the main focus on raising standards in literacy and numeracy, subjects like art and design have been given a low profile in the recent past. No lessons were seen in art and design, although evidence from the limited amount of pupils' work on display and discussions with pupils indicates that standards are likely to be below those seen in most schools as they were at the time of the previous inspection. Artwork is under-represented in the displays of pupils' work in classrooms and around the school.
101. The 'Creative Arts Week' based on the theme of 'Africa' acted as stimulus for a variety of art and design activities across the school. For example, pupils in Year 2 designed and painted brightly coloured patterns onto fabric and etched African scenes onto black scraperboard. Year 6 pupils worked in the style of Andy Warhol using their information and communication technology skills to print African animal images onto transparencies and mount them on a patterned background they had created using different coloured paper.
102. The previous report identified a lack of three-dimensional work and the use of textiles; the situation is very much the same and there is also a need to develop pupils' drawing and painting skills across the school.

Design and technology

103. No teaching was observed during the current inspection, so no secure judgements can be made about standards or the quality of teaching. Evidence from the small amount of pupils' work on display and planning documents, indicate that pupils are now receiving an appropriate curriculum, although assessment needs further development.
104. The school uses national guidelines and there is evidence that these are being used appropriately. Review of the limited amount of work available suggests that there is now sufficient progression of skills through Years 3 to 6. A whole school creative arts week provided the stimulus for a range of useful enjoyable experiences based on African art. There is some evidence of the use of designs and evaluations, but they are generally of insufficiently high quality. Opportunities for developing food technology need a higher profile.
105. The new co-ordinator has some expertise in design and technology. She has created a new policy, made an assessment of teachers' strengths and weaknesses and has written an action plan which takes account of these needs. Resources are adequate but require improvement to reflect current needs, particularly related to cross-curricular links. Like art and design, this subject is in need of significant development.

Music

106. No lessons were seen during the inspection and so no judgements can be made on standards or the quality of teaching and learning. Each class has a timetabled weekly music lesson taken by the class teacher. Guidance on what to teach is provided by the school's scheme of work which makes use of a commercial scheme. This ensures that pupils have access to the appropriate experiences in performance, composition and the appraisal of music. There are plans to introduce peripatetic teaching and to reintroduce the teaching of recorder playing. The pupils enjoy singing in the Christmas concerts, such as recent ones 'Cinderella' and 'Hosanna Rock'.
107. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There are plans to introduce a system of simple assessments. The work in music is well resourced overall, although there is a need for some keyboards and a new sound system. The work has been enhanced recently by the visit of a local performing arts group and a drama workshop developed as part of an African workshop.

Physical education

108. No lessons were observed during the inspection, so there is insufficient evidence to make secure judgements on standards and the quality of teaching and learning. The work is following a scheme of work based on national guidelines which ensures that pupils receive an appropriate curriculum. The provision benefits from a good-sized hall, a good play space and a playing field which was out of commission at the time of the inspection because of the building programme.
109. Good opportunities are provided for swimming with Year 3 pupils having weekly lessons throughout the year at the nearby sports centre. There is a very wide range of seasonal sporting activities provided outside the school day for pupils, including football, dance, karate, indoor athletics, 'tag' rugby, table tennis, cricket and hockey. A very good number of pupils support these clubs. Boys and girls are enthusiastic about these activities as they are about competitive events with other schools in sports such as hockey, table tennis, football and athletics. A 'Wall of Fame' helps to celebrate sporting achievements.

110. The enthusiastic co-ordinator is making a significant contribution to the extra-curricular provision and is providing good leadership and enabling the school to raise the profile of physical education. He is well supported by one of the teaching assistants who provides significant support for physical education, including out of school activities. The co-ordinator's current involvement in a school co-ordination project with a local cluster of schools has developed links with the local secondary school and has involved modelling of teaching by a secondary specialist. The subject is well resourced. There is a recently introduced system of simple assessments. There are firm plans to further develop the monitoring and evaluation of the work in order to raise the quality of teaching and learning.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

111. Although this area is timetabled for most classes on a weekly basis, no lessons were observed during the inspection. It is clear that the school sees this area of its work as very important and there are firm plans to develop a structured scheme of work to guide the teaching and learning. The programme for personal, social and health education includes work on healthy eating, sex and relationships education, drugs and personal safety and is well supported by the health visitor and personnel from the police and fire brigade. Much of the work in Years 1 and 2 is covered through 'circle time'. Pupils' training provided by the NSPCC has enabled Year 6 pupils to provide support for other pupils in the playground as 'befrienders'. The successful school council gives pupils insights into the democratic process, helping them to make their views known. Imminent plans are in hand for council members to raise funds for 'wet playtime' equipment through the sale of cakes. Pupils of all ages show a good awareness of how to behave in a community and they work together very well in a supportive and caring way.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	4
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	4

Overall standards achieved	5
Pupils' achievement	4

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	4
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

The quality of education provided by the school	4
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	4
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	5
The quality of the school's links with the community	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4

The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	4
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	4

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