

INSPECTION REPORT

TUCKSWOOD FIRST SCHOOL

Allandale Road, Norwich

LEA area: Norfolk

Unique reference number: 120951

Headteacher: Mrs Sue Eagle

Lead inspector: Mrs Margaret Hulme

Dates of inspection: 9th – 12th February 2004

Inspection number: 258243

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 - 8
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	107
School address:	Allandale Road Tuckswood Norwich Norfolk
Postcode:	NR4 6BP
Telephone number:	(01603) 454 479
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs P Scutter
Date of previous inspection:	9 th March 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is small compared with other primary schools. It is situated in an area where socio-economic circumstances are poor and takes pupils mainly from the Tuckswood estate and some from the surrounding area. The proportion registered for free school meals is higher than the national average (36 per cent). The number of pupils moving in and out of the area is low, with none leaving other than at the start and end of the last school year. The school has 107 pupils aged four to eight years. There are eight pupils of ethnic minority origin and four children who speak English as an additional language. There are well above average numbers of pupils with special educational needs, at 39.9 per cent and there is one pupil with a statement of special educational need. There is some childcare provision made under the Children Act 1989 and 12 children have out of school care. The school is currently subject to reorganisation proposals. As a result of its success, the school gained a Basic Skills Quality Mark in 1998, a Healthy Schools Award in 2002, the BECTA Award for a website in 2002, the Bronze Eco Award in 2003 and a Schools Achievement Award in 2003. Distinctive features of this school include, the philosophy for children sessions, the ways children are enabled to take a full part in their learning and in decision making so that partnership is effective, and the inclusion partnership with a local special school.

Attainment on entry is well below that expected for children aged four, with their communication and language skills and personal development being the weaker elements.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3609	Margaret Hulme	Lead inspector	Foundation stage curriculum English English as an additional language Religious education History Music Physical education
13895	Angela Smith	Lay inspector	
29995	Maureen Walker	Team inspector	Mathematics Science Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology Geography Special educational needs

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

This is a very effective school. The leadership has outstanding features and is highly influential beyond the school. It does very well for its children and is particularly successful with those who have special educational needs. People matter at this school and the key to its success is the commitment of staff and governors to provide for all aspects of children's development. This is an exciting place to be and the committed teaching, innovative curriculum and purposeful leadership are the main reasons that children achieve as well as they do. The school provides **very good** value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Children achieve well because teaching is good and assessment procedures are very good.
- Staff and governors support the headteacher's outstanding leadership very well.
- The innovative curriculum makes children's learning relevant and meets needs successfully.
- Provision for children with special educational needs is exemplary so they make good progress.
- The outdoor area for the Foundation Stage lacks development and the range of resources in religious education and mathematics is too narrow.
- Standards are improving and are high in information and communication technology, music and art and design.
- Handwriting and presentation are weaker elements in English and the plans to improve them have not yet been implemented.
- The recent initiative to improve standards in mathematics is working well in lessons but has had insufficient time to show results in national tests.
- There is a wonderfully caring and supportive ethos that provides a firm foundation for pupils' personal development.
- The very effective partnership with parents, other schools and the community makes a positive contribution to children's learning.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS CHANGED SINCE THE PREVIOUS INSPECTION

The school has made **good** progress since the last inspection. The issues in the last report have been tackled successfully. Standards have improved in ICT, music and art and design. Provision for those with special educational needs has improved and is now excellent. The innovative curriculum has developed further and results in successful learning. Attendance and punctuality are improved, so children have more time to take advantage of opportunities for learning. The caring ethos provides a firm foundation for children's attitudes and behaviour and they benefit from purposeful direction.

STANDARDS

Achievement is good overall. Attainment on entry is well below that expected for children aged four but they make a good start and achieve very well. Last year standards in national tests were not as good as in the previous year because there was a high proportion of children with special educational needs. However, when compared with similar schools results in reading were above average, in writing were average but in mathematics were below average.

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
reading	E	D	E	B
writing	E	B	E	C
mathematics	E	C	E	D

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

Achievement is good because of good teaching and the organisation of mathematics lessons has been changed to improve standards. Those children with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well for their capability. There is no distinction between the achievement of boys and girls or between that of children from ethnic minorities with others. Inspection findings show that standards in English, mathematics and science are average overall by Year 2 and Year 3. Standards are better now than at the last inspection and in some subjects such as, ICT, art and design and music, they are higher than expected by Year 2. Action has been taken to improve standards further.

Pupils' personal qualities are very good they have very good attitudes and their behaviour is good. The orderly and harmonious community means that bullying is rare. An atmosphere has been created where values and beliefs are respected and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **excellent**. Attendance and punctuality have improved and are now **good**, which is particularly important because they happen without thought of reward. There have been no exclusions for the last nine years.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **very good**. Teaching is **good** throughout the school. The excellent relationships and expectations that children will work hard and do their best encourage effective learning. The curriculum is very good overall but lacks a secure outdoor play area for the Foundation Stage and a wider range of resources for mathematics and religious education. A very good range of additional learning opportunities enriches the curriculum. Care, welfare and support are very good and contribute to the good achievement. There are **very good** links with parents, other schools and the community who contribute very successfully to children's achievement.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are **very good** stemming from a strong, caring and dynamic headteacher who leads the staff team very successfully and benefits from the very effective leadership of key staff and the good challenge and support from governors. The managers are well informed, observant and perceptive. They deploy staff very effectively. **The school is governed well** and governors keep in close touch with school's work and meet statutory requirements. Staff and resources are used very effectively and decisions are made with improved standards in mind and in consultation with parents and pupils.

WHAT PARENTS AND PUPILS FEEL ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Parents have very positive views of the school and are well satisfied with the quality of education it provides and the standards their children achieve. Pupils enjoy coming to school for the range of learning opportunities offered them. Self-esteem is high because they are listened to and contribute effectively to the school community.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Implementing the plans to improve the presentation of written work.
- Continuing the recent initiative to teach mathematics to children in groups based on capability.
- Improving the outside provision for the Foundation Stage and extending and updating the resources for religious education and mathematics.
- Continuing the emphasis on children learning through questioning and enquiry, the philosophy for children sessions, the use of thinking skills for thinking children and contextual drama.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Children's overall achievement is **good** and standards in English, mathematics and science are average by Year 2 and in Year 3.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All children achieve well because teaching is good.
- In national tests those children capable of reaching the expected standards for their age do so and some do better in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children with special educational needs make good progress because they are very well provided for.
- The school is making good efforts to improve standards. There are high standards in information and communication technology, music and art and design.
- Those children with special educational needs achieve as well as they do because provision is exemplary.
- Handwriting and presentation in all subjects are weak and the school's plans to implement improvement have not yet taken place.
- The recent initiative for teaching mathematics in groups according to age and ability is beginning to improve standards but has had insufficient time to show results in national tests.

Commentary

Foundation Stage

1. When children start school in the Reception class, their knowledge, understanding and skills are wide ranging. The teachers' assessments show that attainment on entry is well below that expected for children aged four and they have particular difficulties in the areas of communication, language and literacy and their personal development. Last year, the Foundation Stage children made good progress and many reached the goals children are expected to reach by the end of the Reception Year. This year the children are now making very good progress because they are well settled into routines and respond very well to the methods teachers use to improve standards. The group is working at expected levels and the children are likely to reach the expected goals in all areas of learning by the end of the year. In some areas children are likely to do better, for example in knowledge and understanding of the world they already have very well developed computer skills.
2. Those with special educational needs and from minority ethnic groups progress at the same rate as others because they have the individual support they need from well trained, experienced learning support assistants. Teachers plan well for them taking into consideration the targets in their individual education plans so that the activities provided meet their specific needs.

The school's results in national tests

3. There is some variation in results year by year, depending on the number with learning difficulties and last year there were 48 per cent who had special educational needs. The average points scores, as seen in the table below, clearly show that results for this year group were not as good as in the previous year, which is mainly attributable to the reason given. However, standards are better now than they were at the last inspection and there is no distinction between the achievement of boys and girls.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	14.6 (15.3)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	13.1 (15.5)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	14.5 (16.8)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 29 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. Good teaching and effective support have enabled those who have the capability, to reach average and sometimes higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Given the starting point, these children achieved well. When these results are compared with schools that have similar numbers of children registered for free school meals they show that reading is above average and writing is average. Because mathematics results were lower than last year, when compared to similar schools, the analysis indicates that the school concentrates on those children who are close to reaching the higher level. Although the teacher assessments for science were lower in 2003 than those previously recorded this was mainly due to a very high number of children with identified specific learning needs. Nevertheless they did well in the progress they made. In the current Year 2 there are 41 per cent of children with special educational needs but the school has a number of different support mechanisms to help them do as well as they can and has already planned developments to raise standards.

Inspection findings

5. In lessons and in samples of work standards in English, mathematics and science are average overall by the end of Year 2 and in Year 3. The secure foundations at the end of the Reception Year are built on as children move through the school so that by the end of Year 2 all children achieve well and make good progress. The school recognises that development to raise standards is essential and intends to carry on using the innovative teaching methods that have proved so successful in raising standards over the last four years. The patterns of change to raise standards have been highly effective and the leadership has kept its eye on learning as a relentless principle.
6. Reading standards are better against similar schools and children are positive about themselves as readers. The catch-up project work to improve reading has been an excellent intervention. For example, a group of Year 2 children whose reading ages were below their chronological age have all gained one to two years on their reading age and several months on their spelling age. Every week adults from local businesses are used as reading partners for the children and this initiative has contributed positively to the good progress made in reading and raised children's self-esteem. Samples of written work show that creative writing is improving but letter formation and presentation skills are poorer than is usually expected for age. Handwriting has been identified as a focus for raising standards.
7. Raising standards in mathematics is now a school priority. Teachers have made changes to the way the subject is taught by grouping the children for age and ability rather than trying to teach two year groups together with a very wide span of ability. Although there have been no national tests yet to see how well this is working there is clear evidence in lessons that it is succeeding in improving standards.
8. Standards in information and communication technology have improved and are much higher than expected for the pupils' age at the end of Years 2 and 3. This is a very good improvement since the last inspection.
9. Standards in music have improved since the last inspection and are higher than expected for children by Year 2 and 3. Staff are very well supported by a specialist teacher whose expertise is having a positive effect on standards in this subject.

10. Standards in religious education are satisfactory and in line with the expectations of the Norfolk Agreed Syllabus for pupils at the end of Year 2.
11. Although no lessons were seen in art and design there are strong indications that standards are higher than is expected for the children's age. The samples of work and displays around the school show children particularly benefit from contact with artists and craftspeople and their work is exhibited publicly. This is an improvement since the last inspection.
12. There was insufficient evidence to judge standards in all other subjects but from the work sampled and some discussions with staff and children the standards are in line with expectations for pupils at the end of Year 2.
13. Children with special educational needs achieve well in lessons, in small groups, when working individually or towards their own personal targets. Because of the first rate support they receive from all the adults who work with them, most make good progress in their learning with some children reaching standards better than expected. Because they have the range of support they need, those from ethnic minorities or who speak English as an additional language work hard, enjoy lessons and generally achieve well for their capability.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Children's attendance is **good** and they have **very good** attitudes to work and learning. Children's behaviour is **good**. There is **excellent** provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children have very positive attitudes to the school and their work because the relationships throughout the school are excellent and they want to please their teachers.
- Behaviour is good as the school sets very high expectations for children's conduct and teachers are very good at managing them.
- The good attendance is a considerable achievement because children are willing to come without the promise of reward.
- Overall the school makes excellent provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which has a very positive impact on their personal development.

Commentary

14. Children view their school as a safe, happy place. They enjoy coming to school and have very good attitudes to learning, responding well to the range of interesting and worthwhile activities. Most children learn well because the school helps them to become motivated, confident and mature and children respond very well to encouragement and praise. The confidence and self-esteem of those with special educational needs, those from ethnic minority groups or those speaking English as an additional language are similar to those of other children, boosted by the help they receive from teachers and learning support assistants. They are helped too by the understanding they receive from one another as shown by the support one child had in a Year 1 class when his lack of English made it difficult for him to understand mathematics until another child patiently showed him what to do.
15. There are good arrangements for children to start in the Reception class and they settle happily into school routines. The patience and understanding of their teachers helps them adopt good attitudes to school and learning. As they grow more confident they show interest in the activities, most want to join in and they learn to take turns and share materials and equipment. Teachers are particularly sensitive to children's needs. Lessons have flexibility to retain security and trust as when one child, who is still not able to join in with play as others do, watches, listens and when questioned understands what is being taught.

16. Children behave well in and around the school. They know what is expected of them and most respond well. A calm and purposeful atmosphere is evident in most lessons because teachers very effectively manage those children who, from time to time, find it difficult to behave appropriately. As a consequence there is little disruption to classes. At playtimes the children are lively but considerate to one another. They get on well with others, particularly the brothers and sisters of their friends. Bullying is not seen as a problem. No incidents of harassment in any form were observed. The 'playground angels' take responsibility for watching behaviour and try to deal with upsets in the playground so no one is unhappy. The school council monitors behaviour and makes suggestions for improvements at their meetings. There is a growing understanding of being responsible for your own actions.
17. Children enjoy social occasions, co-operate well and respond to the opportunities to take responsibility provided by the school, for example by becoming representatives on the school and class councils. Children are given constant guidance to help them distinguish right from wrong and are encouraged to value each other's efforts. They take the many opportunities to discuss and reflect on the impact of their actions and matters that are troubling them and this also helps to raise their self-esteem and respect for themselves and each other. Children are supportive of any in their school who have disabilities and help them join in with activities.
18. Teaching and learning take place in a context of strong principles and values of fairness and respect for all. This helps children develop an understanding of their own and other people's values and beliefs. Opportunities to raise children's spiritual awareness abound. Acts of collective worship, religious education, personal, social and health education and lessons in philosophy encourage children to learn to think through ideas and issues and to ask relevant questions and justify their opinions. The school is very successful in its aim to foster the social development of its children by encouraging feelings of self-worth. The school is committed to promoting a sense of community with common and inclusive values. It is at the heart of the community, which is well involved in school life. Children learn to be part of broader groups of people in less formal situations, which develops an understanding of their community and their rights and responsibilities to that community. Projects to care for the local environment such as the creation and maintenance of a school garden, creating a butterfly area, caring for newly hatched chicks and their involvement in visiting farms are just some of the ways pupils are helped to understand their responsibilities as citizens.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year %

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.2%	School data	0.6 %
National data	5.4%	National data	0.4%

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

19. Attendance and punctuality have improved since the last inspection and are now good and above the national average. The school works well with parents and carers to encourage the regular attendance of children and authorised absence is lower than the national picture. Most children arrive in time for the beginning of the school day and are ready to begin lessons promptly.

Exclusions

20. There have been no exclusions at the school in the last nine years.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **very good** reflecting the strong teaching and learning and innovative curriculum that is **very relevant** to the needs of these children. Overall teaching is **good** with a significant proportion of very good teaching. The curriculum is **very good** and offers an interesting range of extra-curricular activities that are well attended. The links with parents, other schools and the community are **very good** resulting in an effective partnership from which children benefit.

Teaching and learning

Overall, teaching and learning are **good** and often very good. The teaching and leadership of the school are the two main reasons that children achieve as well as they do. The quality of assessment of pupils' work is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership provides very good direction for the teaching and learning.
- There is very good teamwork and a consistent approach to lessons.
- The excellent relationships established between teachers and children give a firm foundation for learning and motivate most children to make their best efforts.
- The innovative methods keep children interested and are an important factor in how well they achieve.
- The deployment of assistant staff in supporting and teaching children is effective in raising their self-esteem and helping children achieve success.
- The thorough system of assessment ensures an appropriate response to the needs of individuals and influences the teachers' planning of lessons.
- Teachers make effective use of the resources they have but the lack of some essential equipment in mathematics, religious education and of outdoor equipment for the Foundation Stage restricts planning and sometimes limits the progress children make.

Commentary

21. As at the last inspection all lessons were satisfactory or better but improvements are seen in less satisfactory teaching and more that is very good. The teaching is good overall, a real strength and a significant factor in the children achieving as well as they do. The innovative methods used are very appropriate for these children and are succeeding in driving up standards to the point that despite the low attainment on entry and the high proportion of children with special educational needs, the majority reach satisfactory levels for their age by Year 2 and in some subjects do better. There is still a commitment to lifelong learning and the teaching of critical thinking skills is central to planning for lessons.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 27 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	10	14	3	0	0	0

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

22. There have been some changes of staff since the last inspection and an extensive programme of professional development, encouraged by the leadership has led to consistency of lesson planning and to the methods used. Now teachers plan well so that effective teaching results in effective learning. Under the guidance of the headteacher, the teachers try to ensure that all learning is relevant and useful to pupils' everyday lives and will have a positive impact on preparing them for life in a changing world.
23. The very effective teaching at the Foundation Stage in the Reception class gives children a good start towards achieving the goals expected for children at this age. Considerable care

and patience is needed to help them settle and accept class routines and even now there are a few who still find this difficult but the teachers are such good role models that children learn quickly from watching and listening to them. The very good teamwork in this class is of particular note because the skills of both teachers and the learning support assistant are used extremely well, resulting in a most consistent approach to every activity.

24. The establishment of excellent relationships between teachers and children is a motivating force for improving learning. Teachers listen carefully to children who know their contributions are valued and this makes them eager to do their best work. Activities are matched sensitively to children's needs and children are totally absorbed and enjoyment is evident. This was well demonstrated in music lessons where the warm up activity had some children reluctant to join in the individual response in singing but later, using percussion for accompaniment, they took on the roles of jungle animals singing parts of the song with gusto as they included animal noises in their efforts. It was clear that the warm relationships with all adults and the constant smiling encouragement succeeded in better efforts from the children.
25. Professional development is used effectively to enhance teachers' understanding of what they do and to continually improve it. The involvement in research and its application in school have made teachers more secure and confident. Their knowledge about the curriculum has improved since the last inspection and teaching styles vary to ensure that positive learning takes place. The training to improve the teaching of information and communication technology has benefited staff greatly and because they are more confident in teaching this subject children have achieved very well and standards are higher than expected for their age.
26. There are many strengths in the teaching but the one that has made the most impact on children's learning is the willingness of staff to use innovative methods that have been proved to work well for these children. Staff have benefited from several research trips abroad to learn from international developments as well as those that are local and national. Such innovations as using Mantle of the Expert (contextual drama) as a way of extending children's speaking and listening skills and the teaching of philosophy sessions show how the approaches that appeal to these children enable very good progression. For example, at the Reception Year children have to learn what is meant by 'listening' and 'what a question is' but by Year 3 they understand the differences between *agree*, *disagree*, *justify*, reflect beliefs in their thinking and have a confident and reasoning voice within the school council and school community generally. Now teachers have a good knowledge of their own and pupils' abilities and intelligence and children are now very involved in the process of their own learning, which is a strong motivator.
27. Teachers make effective use of all resources available to them but in some subjects a lack of some essential equipment hampers efforts. At the Foundation Stage the teacher lacked the range of equipment outdoors to extend skills and there are insufficient religious education resources to teach the subject without borrowing or improvising. In a mathematics lesson the range of measuring equipment was of poor quality and the teacher had to bring scales from home.
28. Teachers' assessment of children's work is very good and there is an effective policy to provide guidance. Systems for recording progress and daily assessment are well established and used to plan the next stage of learning. Assessment on entry has been continued and Foundation Stage Profiles are completed by the end of the Reception Year. This information influences planning and identifies specific needs. Good examples are the way children are grouped for specific teaching sessions such as mathematics and catch-up thus ensuring they make good progress. In-depth analysis of national test results is used, together with national and local data to evaluate and target learning effectively. Marking policy and practice indicates constructive feedback to children about their work and their opinions of their own progress are now sought. The sessions at the end of lessons are very effective when used to discuss with children how well they think they have done in achieving the teacher's learning objective. Staff are interested in the progress of all aspects of children's development (not just subjects) and

observations of children followed up by both informal and formal discussions keep everyone up to date about every child in this school. It is not the concern merely of the class teacher.

The curriculum

Curricular provision is **very good**. Opportunities to enrich children's learning are **very good**. Accommodation and resources overall are **good**. All statutory requirements are met.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is very imaginative and extremely relevant to the needs of the children.
- Children's experiences are wide-ranging, stimulating their interest and enjoyment in learning.
- Exemplary provision is made for the children with special educational needs.
- Inclusion is outstanding and reflects the school's commitment to its values and beliefs.
- Children's personal development is very well promoted though all aspects of the life of the school community.
- The school is a vibrant learning environment but some learning resources need improving.

Commentary

29. The school's richly diverse curriculum is built around the needs of the children and promotes creativity, enquiry and thinking skills, together with enjoyment through active learning and teaching lifelong skills that go beyond the subjects of the curriculum. Inclusion is at the heart of the work of the school. Innovations are well judged and very carefully managed. The teaching of philosophy has a real impact on learning in all aspects of the curriculum, as children are encouraged to think through ideas and issues, ask relevant questions and justify opinions and beliefs. They use these skills in everything they do. Throughout the school, much work is very successfully undertaken through "Mantle of the Expert" enterprises, a way of working that makes learning very real, uses drama to work through problems and cuts across curriculum subjects as the children lead the direction of their learning, becoming "experts" in the enterprises they invent. When the tasks omit planned aspects of individual subjects, these are taught separately. The curriculum is never static but under constant and rigorous review. New ideas are constantly evaluated to try and improve the quality of the curriculum further.
30. The provision for children's personal development is very strong and permeates all aspects of the school's work. On many occasions children proudly represent the school sharing their achievements on a wider stage. Active citizenship through the work in class and school councils reflects the discussions, decision-making and responsibilities of living in a vital caring community. Children understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle to maintain concentration and work hard and its success is seen in the "Healthy Schools" award.
31. Children benefit greatly from an extensive and varied programme of learning experiences. Many visitors, ranging from artists, poets, storytellers and librarians to gardeners and farmers, share their enthusiasms and expertise with the children often taking part in school events such as the "Expressive Arts Week". Regular visits to places of interest extend children's knowledge and understanding of the wider world. Farm visits, time spent at Houghton Hall and trips to the city or theatres really widen children's horizons bringing them into contact with different environments. Sports coaches work to develop seasonal games skills and given the pupils' age, the very good range of clubs, including French, are well attended. Brain exercise sessions help children improve their concentration and co-ordination in a very enjoyable way.
32. The school provides for large numbers of children with special educational needs exceptionally well. Ensuring needs are met in the most effective way is central to the values the school lives by. The quality and range of support that is provided is first-rate. Individual targets are very clear and precise and the adults supporting the children are very skilled and well trained. The extensive range of support includes: nurture work, counselling sessions, basic skills and

intensive literacy support groups and particularly good letter sound work to support reading and spelling. All build the confidence and skills children need to do as well as they can. The “catch-up project” is highly successful and children often make very good progress in reading. The light sensory room is particularly effective in helping children manage their anger. When children have particular strengths or talents, they too are recognised and are well supported.

33. The accommodation is very good overall. Very effective use is made of additional spaces beyond the classroom. The library, ICT laboratory and light sensory room, are organised imaginatively and children enjoy working in them. Classes and corridors are full of very attractive displays both celebrating children’s achievements and informing others about their work. The main foyer, with its striking illustrations of the school’s values, is very welcoming and children are proud to explain them to visitors. The nurture room offers a calm, homely learning atmosphere for the least confident children. The outside environment is a well-used and invaluable learning resource, helping the children to understand the biodiversity of the world around them as they work towards improving their Eco-school award. The facilities are having a positive impact on children’s learning and the standards they achieve.
34. Resources are generally adequate but many of those for mathematics are outdated and religious education lacks artefacts to represent all world faiths studied. ICT is very well equipped, which contributes significantly to children’s high achievements in the subject. Although the outside facilities for the Foundation Stage are satisfactory, resources are not of the same quality as those provided indoors for these youngest children and there is no secure area for purposeful play.

Care, guidance and support

The school has **very good** provision for promoting the care, welfare, health and safety of children. Support, advice and guidance for children are **very good**. The ways the school seeks and values the views of children and involves them in the development of the school is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school council is impressive and children know their views are valued and taken into consideration when decisions are made.
- Procedures for ensuring the welfare, health and safety of all children, including child protection are very good.
- Excellent relationships between children and adults are reflected in the trust children have in their teachers.
- All staff know the children and their families very well and use this information very effectively to provide the right level of support, advice and guidance for them.

Commentary

35. The school has a very positive, caring ethos, which provides a well-organised and safe environment. Members of staff know the children exceptionally well and are always available to discuss with children any problems they may have on a personal and confidential basis. They are quick to notice if a child appears to be in difficulties and they offer immediate help. All staff work extremely hard to develop and maintain the excellent relationships observed within the school community. Teachers foster the development of personal and social skills and children respond well to opportunities to take responsibility. The good procedures for the induction of new children support their individual needs.
36. The headteacher is the designated person for ensuring the child protection procedures, which are very effective. Governors are vigilant and effective in ensuring children have a safe, clean and healthy place to work. All children say they feel very well supported by staff and that they are confident that they can rely on them to offer help and give advice when needed. Close working relationships with outside professional agencies are well established and give valued

support to the work of the school such as those who receive counselling to overcome problems. All staff are supportive of both the academic and pastoral needs of children. Children with special educational needs are extremely well cared for by all those who work so effectively to guide all aspects of their learning. The school is constantly alert to how this may change as they move through the school. When a statement of special educational need is awarded, the statutory requirements are met and the provision is fully implemented. Many experiences such as those easily at hand in the light sensory and nurture rooms, greatly strengthen the high quality care provided for the children.

37. The school is very keen to involve children in the life of the school and to gain children's views. To this end the school pays close attention to children's ideas through the regular meetings of the school and class councils. The school frequently acts on children's suggestions, for example, they are currently deciding what further play equipment could be made available in the playground.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's partnership with parents, other schools and with the wider community is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school makes excellent efforts to involve and inform parents about life in school and their children's learning. Consequently, parents have a high opinion of the school, trust staff and want to be partners in their children's education.
- Very good links with other schools and colleges enhances children's opportunities to learn.
- The very constructive links with the community benefit the children's learning.

Commentary

38. The school has a strong commitment to partnerships with parents and they, in turn have a very high opinion of the school. The headteacher has excellent relationships with parents, who are made very welcome. There is trust between them and they are comfortable discussing personal matters that affect their children so staff are well informed and consequently provide very well for the children's individual needs. Parents are shown how to support their children and are kept up to date about their children's development in many ways, including annual reports. These enable parents to gain a clear view of their children's progress because they tell parents about their children's strengths and weaknesses and encourage them to write comments in response. Parents come into school every morning for early activities and many support their children in class. They also attend workshops to extend their own understanding about their child's curriculum.
39. The school is very keen to gain parents' views and to involve them in their children's education. Concerns are listened to and there is much informal dialogue with parents on a daily basis. They are contacted immediately if there are any concerns about their children during the school day. Because they receive very good information about school life and their children's progress, parents place great trust in what goes on there and a few have accompanied the headteacher and children to other schools and conferences to share how the school's innovative curriculum helps their children to achieve as well as they can.
40. Arrangements for parents of children who have special educational needs to receive appropriate information and attend reviews when necessary are excellent. A very close and open relationship is built with parents and carers of children with special educational needs and they are fully involved throughout their children's time in school. From the earliest meetings when the children enter school, they know what the school provides and where there is a physical need, the partnership begins before this time. Each term, parents are invited to discuss their child's progress towards their individual specific goals and share in the setting of new targets. Where a statement of educational need has been granted, the parents' views are

actively sought and contribute to discussion. As well as considering each child's needs, the school works very hard to make sure that parents can also, if needed, have access to appropriate help and support to benefit their children.

41. There are highly productive links with the community. The Business Exchange provides reading partners for the children and supports curriculum initiatives. There is a wide variety of family learning courses that help parents to support their children's education. A planned programme of three visits every term enables children to learn from the community and those with specific expertise, such as football, French, recorders and gardening, support clubs. The very active Friends of Tuckswood School Association organises many events throughout the year, both social and fund raising activities.
42. There are very well developed links with other schools. The headteacher meets regularly with and visits those in other schools to discuss initiatives and innovative practice. This enables the school to build constructive curricular links with other schools and these provide the children with further opportunities to extend their knowledge and skills. For example, sixth form students assisted children in making a film and there is a special liaison with a partner special school from which the children at Tuckswood benefit and their experiences enable Year 3 to talk to adults about their understanding of 'inclusion'. There are good arrangements for the smooth transition of children to the middle school. The school makes a very effective contribution to the initial training of teachers.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, leadership and management are **very good**. The headteacher's leadership is **outstanding** and the **very good** leadership of key staff supports her very well. The leadership has some outstanding features and is highly influential beyond the school. The **very good** management enables the school to fulfil its vision and strategic objectives. The school is governed effectively and provides **very good** value for money.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has created the climate and established the vision that learning needs to be at the heart of the school.
- There is very good leadership from the deputy and other key staff.
- The leadership and management of special educational needs is exemplary.
- The very strong commitment to inclusion permeates all that the school provides.
- The school's innovative work in developing effective teaching for successful learning has been developed, sustained and strengthened over several years.
- Management is very good to help raise standards and ensure a high quality of education for the children.
- The very good financial management helps the school achieve its educational priorities but the budget is tight and the school lacks some resources that would make teaching easier.

Commentary

43. The leadership in this school is inspirational and has resulted in a much-improved school from the one that the headteacher inherited nine years ago. It has outstanding features and is highly influential beyond the school. The headteacher has clearly created the climate and established the vision that learning needs to be at the heart of the school. Her drive and determination have led to the success achieved with effective learning for those regarded as some of the most challenging children in this area. The patterns of change to raise standards have been highly effective and the leadership has kept its eye on learning as a relentless principle.
44. The staff, parents, pupils and governors have confidence and trust in the headteacher. In her confident determination to help all the children achieve as well as they can, she has ensured

that all staff have the support they need to do a good job. She is always prepared to make time to deal promptly with any issues that arise and parents and carers discuss family concerns with her, which helps staff to meet individual needs effectively. In return, all staff set a very good example to the children, especially in creating very secure, caring relationships throughout the school. The school ethos is excellent reflecting the very genuine concern to make children and their families feel this is a desirable place for children to learn, where they will achieve as well as they can. It is well placed to improve further.

45. The subject leaders play an important part in developing and managing their responsibilities well. They understand the strengths and areas for development. The very good use made of the analysis of data from their assessments and from national tests has helped them to know what works well and why. For example, the improvements to provision for ICT have resulted in standards higher than is usually expected for the age of the children. Such innovations as using Mantle of the Expert (contextual drama) and the teaching of philosophy sessions show how the approaches that appeal to these children enable very good progression.
46. The leadership and management of special educational needs are exemplary and shared between the headteacher and her deputy who work closely with the governor who has designated responsibility for this aspect. Need is identified early and often begins before children start school because the families make the staff aware of the difficulties their children experience. The leadership has introduced many approaches to meet the wide variety of needs and most sessions are for those identified through assessments as the most needy. Using a very intensive programme and advising and involving parents in the learning works extremely well. In some approaches such as catch-up the progress is extraordinary and when a two-year gain in reading age over a short space of time was made parents were thrilled by the response to a new reading book. Sessions in the nurture room provide breakfast first before attending to the additional support these children need. Those who use it are emotionally upset, have far fewer skills than others of their age and cannot retain what they learn very easily. Eating and learning together has been found to improve the rate of progress. Counselling sessions are weekly events and confidential. They are undertaken in the context of the family and there is support for parents as well as their children. The light and sensory room is effective in anger management and in helping children overcome emotional difficulties.
47. The headteacher's considerable skills in managing people have succeeded in empowering others, whatever their role and they value one another and they feel valued too. A climate has been created in which staff work together productively. There are effective procedures, which ensure that highly competent people are recruited, deployed, trained and developed further. Improvements to premises have made the school a place where staff and children feel able to work hard and are motivated to do so. Changes to staff and the way people work, together with a consistent approach have resulted in better teaching and children achieving well. Of particular success has been the way that building on individual strengths has resulted in collective responsibility.
48. Falling rolls due to demographic change have meant the school has had to manage its finances very carefully. Rigorous self-evaluation has led to identifying priorities very carefully and this is evident in the school development and improvement plan. One priority this year has been the retention of staff following a reluctant decision to terminate the employment of four learning support staff last year. The school lacks some resources that would make teaching easier but although the costs for learning resources are lower than they would like, the governors feel that the specific needs of these children with their emotional and behavioural problems necessitate spending on the numbers of learning support staff they have at present.
49. Governors are vigilant about monitoring the budget and want the funds spent to show an improvement in standards. In this they have been successful, as children enter school with well below average attainment but leave with standards mainly at a satisfactory level for their age and some do better. Balances show a small deficit but with support from the local authority a source of extra contingency funding has been found to resolve the problem.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	367,565
Total expenditure	371,834
Expenditure per pupil	3,262

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	2,857
Balance carried forward to the next	-1,412

50. The governing body fulfils its role effectively in the way it both challenges and supports the school. Governors have the same aspirations as the staff in wanting the best possible provision for the children. They are well informed about strengths and areas for further development from a programme of school visits, keeping good records that are shared with all governors and their involvement in committee work and the school development plan. Consulting families and the children when taking decisions has been an essential priority in ensuring there is support for new proposals and significant changes. At all times the governors give close attention to 'best value' principles and monitor whether opportunities for learning have been improved. Some governors take a very active part in the provision for children. One governor looks after the building, keeps tabs on health and safety aspects, gives endless time to the technical support for the ICT work and joins in with music lessons, using his expertise and skills very effectively in the children's learning.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

51. Provision for the reception children in the Foundation Stage is **very good overall** reflecting the innovative teaching and effective support that enables the children to achieve very well.
52. The children's skills when they start school are lower than reported to be the case at the time of the last inspection and attainment on entry is well below that expected for this age. Most find it difficult to communicate, language is restricted and many children have little experience of books. Their personal development is poor. They enter Reception in the September before they are five and are taught in a single age group. Teachers plan effectively for the needs of the children, who have access to a wide range of exciting and relevant activities. The methods used by teachers such as 'Mantle of the Expert' approach to learning, together with other learning methods that include thinking skills development, philosophy and individualised programmes for learners with challenging learning needs help children learn faster and achieve very well. The adults provide excellent role models for the children and manage them very well. The teamwork is particularly good and teachers and the learning support staff work in the same way with the children and all are involved in keeping track of the children's progress. The accommodation indoors is particularly good with large spacious areas but outdoors it is unsatisfactory because there is no separate secure outside area so children cannot have continuous access. Although the resources have been improved more are needed.
53. By the time they leave the Reception class, most children generally reach the goals expected for children of this age in all areas of learning. Every year there are some children who need a great deal of support and guidance to keep up with others in the class and the well trained learning support assistants are used very effectively in this task by working with individuals or small groups. Because the range of facilities and adults to undertake this support is outstanding, children succeed in feeling secure, have trust in the staff and make good efforts to overcome their difficulties.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent relationships have been established so children are secure and happy.
- Teaching is very good and children make rapid progress and achieve very well.
- Effective use is made of thinking skills sessions and philosophical discussions to help children understand the importance of listening, asking questions and what it means to agree or disagree with another person's idea or opinion.

Commentary

54. The teaching and learning of this area are very good. The excellent relationships motivate children to want to learn. Adults help to build children's confidence, concentration spans have grown and now most manage to maintain attention for long periods of time. In a thinking skills session when children discussed 'What if you were as small as your thumb', the teacher's enthusiasm and encouragement ensured they made positive and negative suggestions for 30 minutes. The use of this method is effective because everyone has to listen carefully and then make either sensible or imaginative suggestions, which they succeed in doing. Although there are still a few who prefer to play alongside others, most collaborate well in a small group, share equipment and take turns. Guidance about acceptable behaviour helps to increase children's

understanding of what is right and wrong and why it is so. They have settled well into class routines and are familiar with class rules. They understand that unsociable behaviour is unacceptable and that there are warnings first before action is taken. Most children respond well to this and because teachers provide interesting activities there are few instances of disruption. Adults are helpful in encouraging children to take care of their personal needs and they gain independence in putting on coats for outdoors, joining in snack time or finding their reading book to take home.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Provision in communication, language and literacy is **very good** and reflects the innovative teaching methods and very good achievement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The linking of sounds and letters is taught well and this is successful in stimulating children's interest in reading.
- Teachers are using challenging new practices in lessons and children benefit by learning reading and writing skills faster.
- The use of investigations through drama (Mantle of the Expert) has extended imaginative thinking and children make rapid progress in their speaking and listening skills.

Commentary

55. Children make very good progress in this area of learning and achievement is very good. Indications are that most children will reach the goals expected for their age by the end of the Reception Year. Teachers are very skilled storytellers who foster a love of books so children enjoy choosing and 'reading' the stories they love and most are keen to take them home. They read words and captions around the room and particularly enjoy reading those they have attempted to write themselves. Because teachers use games and interesting objects the children learn initial sounds and those that come at the end of words. Imaginative teaching methods have brought considerable success in extending children's speaking and listening skills. Because teachers are skilled at helping children feel secure, gain confidence and persevere they have adopted the 'we can do that' approach and are determined to extend their talk and thinking to improve communication. As they imagine they are a firm of builders responsible for rebuilding the homes of the three little pigs, they talk to one another about building problems, share ideas, find ways of warning about the wolf's presence and write notices, quite independently, to reflect this, such as '*Danger, LOPK Awt for the WDLF*' (look out for the wolf). They already have a good understanding that print conveys meaning. Children are developing their handwriting and some write their names with letters correctly formed. Although all make good attempts, the slower writers are working outside their comfort zone but the excellent relationships with staff give them confidence in learning that it is safe to make mistakes.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children benefit from taking part in activities that regularly include counting, sorting, recognising numbers and solving problems.
- Teachers make effective use of purposeful play and practical activities to extend mathematical skills and build on prior learning.

Commentary

56. The teaching is good and children are achieving very well in this area of learning and are on line to reach the goals expected for their age by the end of the Reception Year. Teachers plan regular oral sessions that give children lots of opportunities to practise their counting, recognise numbers, sort objects for shape, colour and other criteria and use their speaking skills to explain such aspects as similarity and difference. Teachers question skilfully, often seeming to make errors, which make children respond with enthusiasm to explain why they are wrong. When the teacher provides apples for counting in different sizes they are quick to spot those largest and those smallest. When asked if any apples are different, they know they are all apples but quickly point out which are real and which are wooden. Each session includes a variety of practical activities that reinforce what has been learnt and this works best when the teacher has more than one learning support assistant because there is more time for individual support and children learn faster. Such activities as building two towers the same but different colours, finding hidden objects and selecting two that are the same keeps children interested and keen to experience all activities. Because teachers organise sessions very well and other adults are very effectively deployed children achieve very well and make good progress. The good balance between teacher-directed tasks and child-selected ones not only gives children confidence to contribute to the discussion and make their own choices but also results in their success at the tasks.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A very good range of practical activities, visits and purposeful play provides children with lots of experiences to explore, experiment and investigate.
- Staff use questioning very effectively to enhance the children's knowledge and understanding of the world about them.

Commentary

57. Children have a great interest in the activities provided for this area of learning and they achieve very well. They have made very good progress since starting school and are very likely to reach the goals expected for children of this age by the end of the Reception Year. Children collaborate well in the making of a large map about the area around the school and explain how to walk from one place to another. Because teachers plan practical activities where they can explore, experiment and investigate, the children use their senses and select suitable equipment to find out more and ask questions about why things happen, such as how heat changes ingredients into biscuits. They select appropriate materials and use tools to make things such as a cat with a moving tail. When they act as young scientists they use words such as *predict* and *observe* when they take part in an experiment to see whether objects frozen in an ice block will melt faster if immersed in hot or cold water. There are effective links to language and literacy when they follow up this experiment by talking it through and finding a way of recording it. However, children make the fastest progress in identifying the uses of everyday technology and using it to support their learning. In the ICT laboratory children are familiar with how to log on, select a program from a choice of two and use a radio controlled mouse and space bar to carry out tasks. Faster learners assist others if the teacher is busy and try a harder task when they finish early. Their learning has been rapid since starting school.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers make the most of the limited facilities outdoors but use the hall for more structured lessons.
- There is no continuous access to a secure outside play area so activities are limited.
- The uses of activities indoors are effective in enabling the development of physical skills.

Commentary

58. No hall sessions were observed during the inspection but an outside session was seen and children were observed using physical skills indoors. Indications are that children are likely to meet the expected goals by the end of the Reception Year. The teaching was good in those aspects seen. Because teachers plan opportunities for children to use a range of small equipment they handle a range of tools, objects, construction and malleable materials safely and with increasing control. They develop their manipulative skills well when they cut, stick and make models, use writing tools and construct with small bricks. In the one lesson seen outside the space used was unsatisfactory because it was too small to use a bat and ball. In a larger area there was a choice between climbing apparatus, footballs, wheeled toys and sand but it was not a secure space and it was difficult to supervise such a large space and teach effectively at the same time.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

59. No lessons were seen during the inspection, so no judgements can be made about teaching but the work seen on display indicates that standards are better than might be expected for the children's age. It was evident that children use a range of media and materials. They have clearly used their imaginations well in drawing, painting, junk modelling and using collage. Some stunning paintings of themselves were of a high standard and well explained by such captions as "I have lips to smile with". The music activities are taught by a visiting teacher and children said they enjoy the songs and exploring percussion.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good** reflecting the innovative teaching, very good leadership and very effective support systems that enable all children to achieve success.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All children achieve well because the teaching is good.
- The innovative methods inspire and challenge children to make considerably better efforts than might be expected in speaking and listening.
- The very good leadership ensures that teachers have the advice and support they need.
- The ways that well trained learning support assistants work with small groups and individuals make a very positive contribution to children's learning.
- The content of children's writing has improved but insufficient attention is given to presentation.
- Good use is made of literacy skills in other subjects and effective use is made of accommodation.

Commentary

60. The subject is taught to Years 1, 2 and 3. All children achieve well because the teaching is good. Standards vary depending on the proportion of children with special educational needs in each year group but overall they are average for the children's age. The results in national tests last year are a tribute to the hard work of the teachers because over 40 per cent had special educational needs and when compared to similar schools, standards in reading were above average and in writing were average by Year 2.

61. The commitment of the teachers and the leadership of the co-ordinator are the main reasons that children achieve as well as they do and by Year 2, children have made good and sometimes very good progress since they entered school with poor communication skills, a very limited vocabulary and little incentive to make the efforts needed to do well.
62. The school has introduced some innovative teaching of literacy skills, with sessions for teaching the basic skills that are separate to the longer sessions using Dorothy Heathcote's Mantle of the Expert or contextual drama approach to learning. This system has proved very relevant to these children who need a 'hands and minds on' approach if standards are to be raised. The growth of imagination through imagined contexts is fascinating and the teaching of English is no longer just a knowledge-based approach. Other learning breakthrough methods such as philosophy, thinking skills development and individualised learning programmes for those with challenging needs are employed in this as in other subjects to ensure children achieve as well as they can.
63. The use of these many and varied approaches has had a dramatic effect on children's speaking and listening skills which are better than expected for their age. By Year 2, children are learning the skills of communication by asking questions, listening to the thoughts of others and responding. As they play out the roles of a time travel company one child chairs the meeting reminding others to make their points through the chair. They have to listen carefully and express opinions that show good recall of the point they have reached in the drama before dealing with the latest element, which is a discussion about a letter where they are refused planning permission for their new offices. Some interesting moral issues are discussed such as whether verbal promises can be trusted and they begin to question the actions, motives and values of others. The very good teaching keeps children engrossed in the task and they make better progress than might be expected. Although some children lack the vocabulary to express themselves articulately they persevere to make their views known and some emotional responses emerge.
64. The ways that well-trained learning support assistants work with small groups and individuals make a very positive contribution to children's learning. The additional literacy support is good because the support assistant uses her knowledge and expertise effectively and values everyone's contributions. Particularly good use is made of oral and visual learning to extend children's reading skills and improve spelling. The direct teaching of letter sounds, word endings and patterns in words is making children more confident and games put fun into learning. The catch-up support is having a powerful impact and particularly helps those children whose reading age is below chronological age. These short, individual sessions have a dramatic effect because within a short space of time improvements are seen and reading ages rise by two years in some cases. Some children spend time in the nurture room where a very small group who lack the confidence to speak in the whole-class group are having the support they need to take part in conversations and respond to one other person. Eating and talking together produce the best results so children have breakfast together, talk about what they are doing and then move on to very early speaking, listening and reading activities such as matching a piece of fruit to a picture and learning the name of that fruit. Because they feel safe with the teacher they respond to her quite well, but are more reticent at doing so with those they do not know.
65. In samples of written work and in lessons there is good progression in writing as children move through the school. Children now have a good understanding that print conveys meaning. In every class, teachers ensure there are many examples of the written word, in displays, on furniture and in large books made in lessons. Endless support systems to help them with their writing surround children. In Years 2 and 3, children remarked on the constant reminders to help them tackle a writing task and they read the teachers' comments in their books which clearly raised their awareness of what was good and where further development was needed. They stated that they were given good help when they made mistakes, got stuck or did not understand what to do. Children have a love of poetry and some writing has been inspired by

what they have read. There is some extended story writing. One piece was an account by a child entitled, "Boy attacked by maniac" and some sensitive writing in a letter about "The cathedral, full of secrets". In one class the children used notebooks to make notes during meetings. By Year 3, story writing has a beginning, middle and an end and the children think of interesting details, including use of adjectives and they sometimes add a really good surprise. However, although the content of children's writing has improved the presentation is poor and the co-ordinator has identified this as the next stage in development.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

66. Very good links exist between language and literacy and personal development. The innovative teaching has created a spark that has lit up children's ability to feel confident when speaking to others about any subject. As part of their history work, Year 3 had made effective use of their technology skills to create a PowerPoint presentation of life in World War 2. When demonstrating this, their capacity to explain their thinking and learning was very good and their confidence in answering questions resulted in some exceptional responses. The use of philosophical discussion permeates all subjects and by Year 2, children make good progress in justifying and explaining thinking clearly, exploring and using different types of questions and in being able to disagree with someone else without falling out. They use the library and the Internet to research topics and write factual accounts and in science they write about and record experiments.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- As a result of strong teaching, children achieve well in their lessons.
- Learning is carefully matched to children's mathematical capabilities so they can gain in confidence and make good progress.
- Practical activities involve children in solving problems, making decisions about their work and thinking mathematically.
- Numeracy skills are successfully applied to new situations in other subjects.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.
- Many resources are in need of replacement and their range requires extension.

Commentary

67. By the end of Year 2, children reach standards that are average overall and from their low mathematical starting point they make good progress and achieve well. In the most recent national tests, the school targets were exceeded with most children, including many with special educational needs, reaching the expected standard but few achieve higher. In response to this, the current Year 2 and Year 3 are now taught in groups organised by age and similar ability where teaching is more tailored to the specific level of understanding and pace of learning of each group. These changes have not had sufficient time to impact on national results yet but in lessons progress is at least good because the work of each group is very well matched to children's stages of learning. Over time, standards have improved and although disappointing, the dip in 2003 does reflect the very high number of children with special educational needs in that year group. Boys and girls do equally well.
68. Children achieve well because teaching is good and in half of the lessons it is very good. Teachers plan lessons that take into account what the children need to know to build on their previous learning and because they find the best way that it can be taught children make faster progress in using numbers and mathematical ideas. Because teachers have well-established routines and provide plenty of thinking time the slower learners in Year 2 are helped to use their

knowledge of numbers that add up to ten when solving such problems as $16+? = 20$. The planning is effective because tasks are appropriate for children's capability and consequently all the children, including those who join the class from a special school, are totally involved, sharing success and enjoying the confidence gained by working together. Some work on symmetrical patterns and learn to recognise the properties of two and three-dimensional shapes while higher attainers work independently on their reflective patterns.

69. Children do better now in number work because of the focus now given to this at the start of each lesson. Now whole-class activities widen children's mental agility effectively including counting in groups of numbers, boosting number bonds to ten, quickly recognising shapes and estimating the positions of numbers on a line from 1-1000. Because teachers provide varied practical experiences, children are actively involved in their mathematics learning especially thinking how to tackle their tasks. In a Year 3 lesson, many decisions had to be made before tasks could be accomplished such as thinking about how to compare several food packages before ordering them from heaviest to lightest and accurately measuring the weight of various objects by using a balance or reading different scales.
70. Because teachers have high expectations of what children can do they explain and demonstrate tasks clearly. They question very effectively so children think through their work mathematically and explain their answers with confidence. Very good assessment procedures are in place and children's progress is regularly checked and considered well when new work is planned. Teachers' marking comments, discussions during lessons and children's emerging judgements about their own learning all help them to know how well they are doing.
71. The subject leader manages the subject very well because he knows the strengths and areas for development as well as standards. His good overview of mathematics throughout the school through his observations of teaching and lesson planning give him a strong basis for improving standards. He has correctly identified the need to renew many older resources that children use and increase the range of equipment from which they can choose.

Mathematics across the curriculum

72. Children's use of their mathematical skills is reinforced and strengthened by the links made with other subjects. In Year 2 they use computer skills to expertly control the different shapes to fit into the frame. Accurate measurements are regularly needed in a variety of activities such as weighing the eggs from the incubator and making a graph of the results or making careful measurements and calculations to create a reduced scale map of the playground in geography. The many opportunities to promote children's use of their mathematical skills across the curriculum are good and make learning relevant.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well as a result of strong teaching.
- Because children are first hand, practical investigators, they discuss ideas and think carefully about what they are finding out.
- Learning is realistic and purposeful because it is linked to other subjects or is part of innovative teaching.
- By using the outside environment, visits and visitors in lessons, the children have wide and rich experiences in science.

Commentary

73. From their poor understanding of the world when they start school children make good progress and achieve well. Many reach average standards by the end of Year 2 and a few higher attaining children do better. Although the teacher assessments were lower in 2003 than those previously recorded, the year group includes a very high number of children with special learning needs who did well to achieve as well as they did. In lessons standards are average and all children achieve well for their stage of learning because of good quality teaching and very effective support.
74. Overall, teaching is good. Teachers make the learning in science a real life experience and it is intrinsically linked to children's personal development, establishing their delight in the world around them and creating the foundations for understanding a healthy lifestyle. Because teachers use innovative teaching methods such as investigative drama (Mantle of the Expert) children take on the mantle of business personnel experts establishing a new space company; they have to research the subject well. In doing so they discover many facts about the sun's solar system, identify the planets and are completely amazed to realise our incredibly tiny presence in our galaxy. This way of teaching extends children's achievement, but teachers need to ensure it meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and that assessments made are thorough and progress is carefully and regularly checked. Teachers' marking comments and the discussion groups help children to recognise their successes and know how to improve their work, although written work is not always well presented. Where numeracy skills are needed such as the measurement of time or tables to record results, they are used well, but as yet the children's high level of ICT skills has not been fully explored in science. Because teachers encourage the use of correct scientific words to describe their observations the children's everyday vocabulary is extended. Children with special educational needs achieve well because of the help they are given and are fully included in lessons. Because teachers use questioning very effectively, children make good progress in thinking through scientific ideas, testing opinions and reflecting on their findings.
75. The use of the outside environment is becoming an invaluable resource for learning because it provides children with first hand experiences of, for example, the relationships between plants and animals. Their use of gardening skills and responsibilities such as sowing, planting, nurturing and harvesting their flowers, fruit and vegetables often provide fresh produce for the playground market as well as extending their knowledge and skills.
76. The subject leader manages her responsibilities well. She is particularly enthusiastic in developing children's awareness of the biodiversity of their own and other environments and in enriching their opportunities in science.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children, including those with special educational needs, achieve highly in their work because of the many creative, original and exciting learning opportunities open to them.
- Standards are much improved since the last inspection because of the importance and value placed on the subject.
- The inspiring leadership of the subject co-ordinator and the confidence and expertise of the staff enable children to become independent users of ICT.

Commentary

77. The aim of the school's work in ICT is for children to become learners who are "confident, effective and creative in their use of information and communication technology" – and in this it is very successful. By the end of Year 2, children achieve highly, reaching standards much better than expected for their age and showing considerable improvement on those found at

the time of the last inspection. In discussion, children talked confidently about the uses of technology and were making very good progress in their knowledge and understanding of use of digital video technology and using e-mail. When sharing information they are extremely confident and demonstrate efficient use of all the tools in a piece of software. The improved facilities of an ICT laboratory, skilled support from a technician and the specialist skills of the subject leader have resulted in teachers who have a very secure knowledge about what to teach, together with creativeness in planning that has been a prime factor in raising standards.

78. In the lessons seen in the Reception Year and Years 2 and 3 the teaching is very good. Because teachers inspire and challenge children they make very good progress in carrying out tasks that make full use of their computer skills and technological knowledge as in a Year 2 class when children worked enthusiastically as 'experts' for the "Time Travel Company" following their responsibilities with great purpose. Having previously researched a topic on the Internet, the Year 3 children prepare their own sophisticated visual presentations very confidently using Power Point to explain what life was like in the Second World War. Teachers ensure that, although the work often follows the children's inventive programmes, the requirements of the ICT curriculum are fully met and children's learning is constantly extended. Teachers plan effectively so there are many different activities in technology apart from using computers. Digital cameras are used frequently. For instance the nurture group record the results of a numeracy activity exploring heavier and lighter fruits and reception children take photographs of models they have made or work completed to show their family how well they are progressing.
79. Children benefit greatly from the skills of the subject leader and sometimes this involves their parents for considerable periods of time. One such project was not only ground breaking but very exciting when the Year 2 and 3 "Star Company" undertook a project to film the ancient Egyptian myth of Seth and Orsiris. This was a piece of outstanding practice.

Example of outstanding practice

Making a film with Year 2/3 pupils by drawing on the expertise of the local community, businesses, designers, financiers, local sixth form and using proven methods from educational research to raise standards in ICT.

From the beginning, pupils were responsible for decisions about everything concerned with the production of the film and used a whole range of skills in script writing, developing the company website, set and costume design, advertising, drama and filming. They became "experts" in film making techniques. E-mail contacts were made with a designer for ideas. A financier was sought who demanded a business plan. A presentation of the company's plans was essential before the problem of finance could be solved successfully. Support from other pupils and students helped to move the project forward. The ICT club members and local sixth form students used their expertise to advise on interesting techniques and parents were constantly involved over a two-week period using every talent they had to work in partnership with the school. The systems used emphasised 'hands on' learning, which was essential to raise standards. Behind the project was an inspirational teacher whose vision is that children will learn faster when it is more than knowledge acquisition and when they take responsibility for their own learning. They produced an amazing award winning animated film. A prodigious national award and public showings of the film are justifiably celebrated with pride.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

80. ICT is becoming more widely used within other subjects so that children can use and extend their skills, for example, in mathematics for making tables and graphs or checking their answers with calculators. ICT is used very effectively within topics or projects of other subjects in support of the wide-ranging enterprises of the "Mantle of the Expert" way of teaching and learning across the curriculum. Its use for communication is good whether in simple word processing or using PowerPoint demonstrations of factual information to extend knowledge and understanding, as in history. Children regularly use their school website or search engines to access the Internet to research information for their work.

HUMANITIES

81. No lessons were seen in either geography or history so no judgement is made about provision or teaching and learning. Pupils' work was sampled, the school's documentation was scrutinised and discussions with teachers and children took place.

Commentary

82. In **geography** the focus develops children's natural curiosity about the world around them. The environment and maps inspire much of the work on display. Regular visits to farms and Houghton Hall widen children's experiences of the countryside and photographic records extend their understanding of the way people live beyond their more familiar urban landscape. The city and immediate locality are used well to respond to children's questions and to make links to other subjects. When comparing features of London with their home area they make links to history work about the Great Fire of London. They use mathematical skills such as measuring to produce a scale map of the school playground. Every opportunity is taken to raise children's awareness of places and features of interest by using world and national maps and mapping skills are well developed. As children help to change the outside environment through their planting and gardening, they learn at first hand how the quality of a place can be improved very successfully.
83. In **history** there was insufficient evidence to judge standards at Year 1 but by Years 2 and 3 standards are typical of those expected for the children's age. History is not taught in all classes this term but teachers' planning shows an appropriate range of work is taught. When studying aspects of life during the Second World War, they are discovering sources of information to extend their knowledge and understanding and have had visitors who explained about such items as identity cards and ration books. Some found their older relatives a good source and recorded what they knew. Children produced a variety of work linked to other subjects, such as posters encouraging young men to enlist and those instructing everyone to use gas masks. They have access to a range of items used at that time and using posters, photographs and artefacts have built up a good knowledge of that period. Displays show that children are involved in a range of interesting activities. The most effective learning was linked to ICT. Year 3 children produced a power point demonstration that clearly demonstrated a good knowledge and understanding of the period.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children have many opportunities to give their opinions and explain their thoughts and ideas.
- Teachers lack a range of artefacts and resources to support teaching and enhance learning.
- The very good relationships encourage openness during discussions and contribute well to children's personal development.
- The effective use of literacy skills gives meaning to children's learning and reinforces skills.

Commentary

84. Few lessons were seen in religious education but teachers' planning and talking to children show that they reach satisfactory standards in this subject by Year 2 and Year 3 and have a growing knowledge that religion has an application to everyday life and that religious belief can give guidance and motivation to ethical decisions. This is in line with the requirements of the Norfolk Agreed Syllabus and standards have been maintained since the last inspection.

85. Teaching is good and children achieve well. Teachers use philosophy sessions as one way of teaching this subject, which is successful because children are confident at taking part in discussion, explaining their thoughts and feelings and giving an opinion about moral issues. Because teaching is imaginative and challenging children are keen to be involved and participate very well. In one lesson for Years 2 and 3, children took on the mantle of 'advisers to the king' and made suggestions how a dilemma, concerning the king of Denmark helping one group of people in his country who were being forced to wear a yellow star on their outdoor clothing, could be resolved. Because teachers use storytelling effectively the children listen attentively, interest is maintained and they are stimulated to participate in tasks. Teachers make effective use of literacy skills in this subject, which gives meaning to what they have learned so they can explain, for example, that bullet points are used to 'spark off the memory' and if a vital word is missed out it can change the meaning of a sentence. The use of appropriate terminology in a lesson about Buddhism showed children understood the meaning of '*meditate*' and began to use '*enlightenment*' as they talked.
86. The subject is led well and the deputy headteacher assists the co-ordinator with some tasks but the school sorely lacks an appropriate range of resources to represent all the world faiths, as expected by the local syllabus.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

87. No lessons were seen in art and design or design and technology and just one lesson was observed in physical education so no judgements are made about provision, teaching, standards or achievement in those subjects. Two lessons were seen in music both taught by a visiting teacher.
88. In **art and design** children experience a whole host of activities and there are clear indications that standards are higher than expected for their age. Much of the work results from lessons using the "Mantle of the Expert" way of working and makes genuine links across the subjects of the curriculum. Most recently, in "Art Company", the talented young artists in Years 2 and 3 worked alongside a local artist to produce mono-prints using stencils rolled in oil paint; their high quality artwork was celebrated at a public exhibition. Inspired by the book "*The Dragon with Red Eyes*" by Astrid Lindgren, children make very good progress in using their imagination to combine a wide range of their art techniques to create giant creatures, plait their individual paper dragons and design Chinese lanterns. Because teachers introduce children to the work of many different artists and demonstrate the techniques used older children are very successful in producing their own startling black and white portrait images in the style of Picasso. Artwork often has a real purpose through which children experience the full range of materials and teachers systematically build on techniques. The younger children have made good connections to science and mathematics and inspired by the changing seasons and world around them, they make effective use of natural materials for their special portraits, investigate patterns through bark and leaf rubbings, blow paint to represent their ideas of the silhouettes of winter trees and make careful drawings of increasing detail of their fungi before discovering the patterns the spores produce.
89. The **design and technology** activities explored have real value because they arise from meaningful situations and enjoyment is a very important element of the work they do. Indications from work sampled show that children are making good progress and work is often linked to other subjects. For example, the Year 1 scientific investigations of the waterproof and insulating qualities of materials inspired children to design and make a winter shelter for their hibernating "clay" hedgehogs and the teacher capitalised on recent stormy weather to raise questions about the suitability of some of their outdoor structures, thus identifying new problems to be solved. Work is often of a high standard. Within their work for the "Time Travel Company" children work enthusiastically in using their skills for contributions to a Second World War public exhibition. Some children design and make aeroplanes and produce instruction sheets for visitors to follow, while others consider the design of new company

offices and produce scale models for use by the firm of architects. Whichever way the children's "expert" decisions and ideas lead the work, teachers ensure that children build on their range of skills to work both creatively and safely and widen their experience of working with different tools and materials. Wheeled vehicles, made during the annual "Craft Circus" week of activities and on display in school, show that children can strengthen their structures, successfully join wood and paper, know how to attach wheels and axles and carefully complete their vehicles in an attractive way.

90. In **physical education** the planned provision is good and meets National Curriculum requirements. The gymnastics lesson seen indicates that children are taught how to perform basic skills in travelling, be still, find space on the floor and when using apparatus. Children made good efforts in that lesson to improve their skills in balancing, turning and rolling. Effective use was made of demonstration to improve their skills of co-ordination and balance. Children are made aware of the need to move equipment safely and to consider others when moving around. The lesson clearly demonstrated that planning for those with special educational needs is good because they were fully involved in the lesson and support is provided for those who need it so all achieve success.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching by the specialist is very good and driving up standards.
- The subject makes a good contribution to spiritual and cultural development.
- Lessons are used effectively to instil confidence and raise children's self-esteem.

Commentary

91. A specialist teaches music and children are making good progress in developing their early music skills. By Year 2 and in Year 3 standards are better than those expected for children of this age, which is an improvement since the last inspection. Because the skills are introduced at the Reception Year and built on systematically, the children achieve very well, they look forward to lessons and their enjoyment is evident. This is one of the few subjects when children are taught only in year groups rather than as a mixed age class and the specialist and class teachers work together to ensure that the planned progression ensures good continuity. Because the teachers have built up trusting relationships with the children, most children are confident in trying new things and sing unaccompanied and sometimes alone. The children are well supported in this subject by assistant staff and one governor whose skills and expertise are used effectively in the class group. Because teachers plan effectively, children have a range of experiences that excite them, maintain their interest, challenge them and extend their knowledge and skills so they make good progress. Every lesson has a warm up activity to put children in the right mood for the subject. Because teachers include a range of activities that include: singing, learning new songs, listening and appreciating music, demonstrating progress in playing an instrument such as percussion or recorders, the children are totally absorbed and make very good efforts. There is a very good range of percussion so children have every opportunity to use appropriate ones when selecting mood music for a character in a story. Once the singing warms up it is spiritually uplifting and this is evident in worship sessions too. Children are confident singers with good tone and sense of rhythm. The range of music presented to the children includes that of many cultures and during the lessons children enjoyed songs from the Caribbean.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education

Although only one lesson was seen in this area of the work of the school, the subject features strongly in the overall curriculum and provision is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The effective programme of activities links closely to the school's aims and values and raises children's awareness of the need for a safe and healthy lifestyle, being confident and getting on well with others.
- The teaching is good and characterised by a high level of commitment to the children and by their excellent relationships with them.
- The philosophy sessions make a very pertinent contribution to children's personal development.

Commentary

92. Children's personal development is an important part of the school's work and the very caring ethos is the foundation on which the excellent relationships are built. Because these relationships are so good, children trust teachers and talk openly about their concerns and successes. Some visitors from outside agencies provide counselling for children and this is successful because they win the children's trust, make them feel secure and listen carefully to what children want to share. There are visitors to the school almost every day and children have a growing understanding of their responsibilities within a wider society. This is demonstrated well in the way they care for and look out for one another in school. They learn the basic rules and skills for keeping themselves healthy and safe and for behaving well. Because teachers give them opportunities for responsibility they show that they can take some responsibility for themselves and for their classroom and school generally.
93. The development of the school council has extended to class councils and recently ways were found to involve even the youngest children so views are totally representative of the whole school. Those children who stand for the council have to convince 'voters' why they can do the job well and a secret ballot takes place so the voting is democratic. This helps children to understand what it means to be a responsible citizen. At their most recent meeting, discussions about fund raising for equipment heightened their awareness that money comes from different sources and can be used for different purposes. Because teachers plan philosophy sessions, children have a well developed understanding, for their age, about other people's feelings and have a growing awareness of the views, needs, rights of other children and older people.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	2

Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	1
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	2
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	1
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2

The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

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