

INSPECTION REPORT

St. Edward's R.C. Primary School
Runcorn

LEA area: Halton

Inspection Number: 187985
Unique Reference Number: 111319

Headteacher: Mrs Janet Lawrence

Reporting inspector: Mr M Thompson

Dates of inspection: 20th – 23rd September 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 707075

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
Type of control:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Wivern Place Runcorn WA7 1RZ
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Father Paul Sidoli
Date of previous inspection:	April 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mike Thompson <i>(Registered Inspector)</i>	English; Art; Design and technology; Music; Physical education; Special educational needs; English as a second language.	Characteristics of the school; Attainment and progress; Leadership and management; The efficiency of the school.
Diane Willson <i>(Lay Inspector)</i>		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development; Attendance; Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; Support, guidance and pupils' welfare; Partnership with parents and the community; Staffing, accommodation and learning resources.
John Earish <i>(Team Member)</i>	Mathematics; Science; Information technology; Geography; History; Under fives; Equal opportunities.	Teaching; Curriculum and assessment.

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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

The attainment of seven year olds in mathematics and science is above national expectations.

Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported and make very good progress.

The school is a caring community in which relationships are very good. The pupils have good attitudes to their work and are polite and well behaved both in class and around the school.

All pupils are carefully assessed and their progress is very well monitored.

The school's provision for pupils' spiritual and moral development is very good.

The headteacher provides clear educational direction for the school; all staff and governors work well as a team and are committed to further improvement.

The school has developed a very good partnership with its parents and with the local community.

Where the school has weaknesses

Standards in writing are unsatisfactory at the end of Key Stage 2.

Attainment in information technology is below national expectations at the end of both key stages.

Throughout the school, pupils' progress in music is unsatisfactory.

In some lessons, teachers do not always provide activities which sufficiently challenge more able pupils.

Some lessons are too long.

The school has many more strengths than weaknesses. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection are to be addressed. The plan will be sent to all parents and guardians of pupils at the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has successfully addressed almost all of the weaknesses pointed out in its last inspection in 1996. The provision for pupils at Key Stage 1 has been significantly improved. Lesson planning is good, the organisation of lessons is satisfactory, and higher-attaining pupils are more appropriately challenged. Standards of behaviour are now good and pupils have good attitudes to their work. At Key Stage 2, the good attitudes and behaviour of pupils have been sustained. Overall, attainment at the end of the key stage remains at nationally expected levels and pupils make sound progress, even though a high proportion of pupils either leave or are new to the school during this key stage. However, higher-attaining pupils are not challenged enough in some lessons. The school's current targets for improvement include further development of both assessment procedures and target setting

for individual pupils.

Standards in subjects

This table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds in 1998 based on the National Curriculum tests:

Performance in	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key	
			<i>well above average</i>	<i>A</i>
			<i>above average</i>	<i>B</i>
			<i>average</i>	<i>C</i>
			<i>below average</i>	<i>D</i>
			<i>well below average</i>	<i>E</i>
English	E	E		
Mathematics	D	C		
Science	C	A		

The information shows, for example, that while standards in mathematics in 1998 were below the national average, they were average when compared with those of schools with a similar percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals. Inspection findings show that standards have improved since 1998. Overall, attainment in mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 2 is broadly in line with national expectations. While standards in speaking and listening and reading are average, overall attainment in English is below expectations because standards in writing are unsatisfactory. Less than two thirds of pupils are currently in line to achieve the national target of Level 4 in terms of the degree of fluency and expression normally expected of pupils of a similar age, and standards of handwriting are very low. Attainment in information technology is below national expectations because in previous years pupils have not experienced the full breadth of the curriculum in this subject. Pupils make satisfactory progress in all subjects except information technology and music, and by the time they reach the end of Key Stage 2 they achieve standards normally expected of pupils of a similar age. However, standards in music are lower than normally expected because some aspects of the subject are not regularly taught.

Quality of teaching

Teaching in	Under 5	5 – 7 years	7 – 11 years
English	Good	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Mathematics	Good	Good	Good
Science		Good	Satisfactory
Information technology		No lessons seen	No lessons seen
Religious education			
Other subjects	Good	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and has significantly improved since the last inspection. In almost 97 per cent of lessons observed, the quality of teaching was at least satisfactory and in over 34 per cent of lessons it was good or better. Three per cent of lessons were unsatisfactory. The teaching of children under five is consistently good. Good teaching is a feature of science at Key Stage 1 and of mathematics at both key stages. Strengths of teaching at Key Stage 1 are in teachers' planning, in their expectations of pupils and in the quality and use of day-to-day assessment. At Key Stage 2, planning and assessment are generally good, and pupils are well managed. However, in some lessons for older pupils, particularly in English and science, activities are over-directed by teachers.

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that strengths outweigh any weaknesses

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	The great majority of pupils are well behaved during lessons and throughout the school day. The behaviour of pupils at Key Stage 1 has improved since the last inspection.
Attendance	Good. This has improved since the last inspection. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are excellent.
Ethos*	Very good. Pupils are valued and cared for as individuals. The school's strong Catholic ethos underpins all its work.
Leadership and management	Very good. The headteacher and governors give clear educational direction.
Curriculum	Sound. A new scheme of work has recently been implemented in information technology. The timetable needs to be reviewed, because some time allocations are too long.
Pupils with special educational needs	The provision for pupils with special educational needs is a significant strength of the school. Work provided for these pupils is very well matched to their abilities to provide achievable challenges. Non-teaching staff provide good quality support, and pupils' progress is very carefully monitored.
Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Provision for pupils' spiritual and moral development is very good.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Teachers are suitably qualified and are very well supported by hardworking and committed non-teaching staff.
Value for money	Satisfactory.

**Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards.*

The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All staff are approachable ● The school keeps parents well informed ● They are encouraged to play an active part in the life of the school ● Their children enjoy coming to school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Very few negative comments were

Inspectors' judgements support all of the parents' positive views. Only 14 per cent of parents' inspection questionnaires were returned. Thirteen parents attended the pre-inspection meeting with the Registered Inspector.

· **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

To develop the effectiveness of the school and raise standards, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

- Raise attainment in writing at Key Stage 2 by:
(*Paragraphs 11, 12, 13, 16, 19, 109, 114, 117*)
 - * approaching the development of pupils' writing with greater rigour;
 - * improving the range of pupils' writing to include a greater number of different forms of writing, for a greater variety of purposes and for different audiences;
 - * improving standards of handwriting through regular practice and the progressive development of pupils' skills from an early age.

- Raise attainment in information technology by:
(*Paragraphs 11, 12, 17, 20, 39, 82, 146, 147, 150, 153*)
 - * consolidating recent improvements in information technology;
 - * ensuring that statutory requirements are met.

- Ensure that all pupils receive their entitlement to a balanced music curriculum.
(*Paragraphs 11, 12, 17, 20, 39, 82, 170, 171*)

- Provide an increased level of challenge for higher-attaining pupils, particularly at Key Stage 2, by:
(*Paragraphs 21, 24, 27, 34, 43, 51, 76, 118, 131, 139, 141, 166*)
 - * involving these pupils more in planning and organising their own work;
 - * improving the quality of the match of work to their abilities;
 - * raising teachers' expectations.

- Review the timetable allocations for subjects to ensure that lesson time is more effectively used.
(*Paragraphs 33, 39, 44, 92, 116, 118, 140, 142, 179, 181*)

In addition to the Key Issues above, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- * Further develop the role of the curriculum co-ordinators to include the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning through direct observations in the classrooms.
(*Paragraphs 78, 168*)

- * Update the school portfolios of examples of pupils' work in mathematics and science and complete the portfolio in information technology, so that they can become useful reference points for teachers when assessing their pupils.
(*Paragraphs 132, 143, 155*)

* **INTRODUCTION**

* **Characteristics of the school**

1. St. Edward's Roman Catholic Primary School is one of two Catholic schools serving the parish of St. Edward's. It is located in the Mersey ward of Runcorn 'Old Town', which is a regeneration area of the Borough of Halton. The school serves an area of considerable social disadvantage. It takes approximately one third of its pupils from the Mersey ward and the large majority of the remainder from the Halton Brook and Grange wards. The school was founded in 1846, and has occupied its present site since 1980. The school now caters for more pupils than originally intended. In 1987 a temporary classroom was erected on site to accommodate an increase in numbers, and in 1995 further alterations were made to the main building to create more teaching space.

2. There are currently 129 pupils on roll, just over 10 per cent of whom are non-Catholics. Just over 26 per cent of pupils are identified as having special educational needs. This is above the national average. No pupils have statements of special educational needs. Almost 32 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals. This figure is above the national average. There are no pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. Owing to the transient nature of the population, there is a high turnover of pupils.

3. The most recent figures produced by the school show that during the course of Key Stage 2, the group of pupils in Year 6 in 1998 reduced in number from 15 to 11, with nine pupils leaving the school and a further five joining. Similar statistics apply to other year groups.

4. Pupils are admitted in a single intake at the start of the academic year in which their fifth birthday falls. At the time of inspection there were 11 full time and four part-time under fives on roll. Very few pupils have any nursery education before coming to school, but many have attended pre-school playgroups. Attainment on entry to the school is broadly in line with national expectations.

5. In addition to its work in implementing the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, current targets for improvement set by the school include:

- *. The continued development of teachers' skills in assessing pupils;
- *. The further development of portfolios of examples of pupils' work to be used as a reference point for teachers' judgements;
- *. The introduction of target setting for individual pupils.

6. Key indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 1¹

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1

For latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1998	10	11	21

6. National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Number of pupils at NC Level 2 or Above	Boys	7	6	8
	Girls	10	11	10
	Total	17	17	18
Percentage at NC Level 2 or above	School	81(82)	81(82)	86(82)
	National	80(80)	85(80)	86(84)

6. Teacher Assessments		Reading	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 2 or Above	Boys	6	7	7
	Girls	10	11	10
	Total	16	18	17
Percentage at NC Level 2 or above	School	76(82)	86(83)	81(83)
	National	81(80)	85(84)	86(85)

¹ Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Attainment at Key Stage 2²

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2
for latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1998	7	4	11

6. National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 4 or Above	Boys	1	3	4
	Girls	4	3	4
	Total	5	6	8
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	45(61)	55(74)	73(91)
	National	65(63)	59(62)	69(69)

6. Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 4 or Above	Boys	1	2	4
	Girls	3	3	4
	Total	4	5	8
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	36(65)	45(78)	73(96)
	National	65(63)	65(64)	72(69)

6. Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:

		%
Authorised Absence	School	4.5
	National comparative data	5.7
Unauthorised Absence	School	0.2
	National comparative data	0.5

6. Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:

	Number
Fixed period	1
Permanent	0

6. Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	6.3
Satisfactory or better	96.9

² Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Less than satisfactory	3.1
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6. PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

6. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

6. Attainment and progress

1. Results of the National Curriculum tests show that the attainment of seven year olds in 1998 was close to the national average in reading, writing and mathematics in terms of the proportion of pupils achieving the national target of Level 2. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 3 was well below the national average in reading and below average in writing, but well above average in mathematics. When these results are compared with those of similar schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, standards are average in reading and writing, but well above average in mathematics. This better overall standard in mathematics is due to the higher proportion of pupils attaining at the higher Level 3. In science, results based on teachers' assessments show that the proportion of pupils achieving Level 2 was well below average in comparison with other schools, but the proportion achieving Level 3 was average.

2. When statistics from the previous two years are compared, the trend is of a slight decline in standards of reading, from just above the national average to broadly in line. Performance has been consistently at an average level in writing, and above average in mathematics. Data provided by the school shows that results in the 1999 tests were broadly similar to those of 1998, although no national comparisons can yet be made.

3. National test results at the end of Key Stage 2 show that in 1998 the proportion of pupils achieving the national target of Level 4 was well below the national average in English and close to the national average in mathematics and science. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 5 was below average in mathematics and close to the average in science, but in English no pupils achieved this level. In comparison with those of similar schools, standards were well above average in science, average in mathematics and well below average in English. However, comparisons drawn from the results may not be reliable, since the group of pupils tested was very small and contained a high proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs. Results of the 1999 tests are significantly better, but cannot yet be compared against a national average since the data is not available.

4. When results over the previous years are compared, the trend is of a steady decline from 1996 to 1998 in English. In mathematics, results improved from average to above average from 1996 to 1997, but sharply declined in 1998. In science, results have remained well above or above average for the past three years.

5. Inspection findings show that at the end of Key Stage 1 a large majority of pupils are in line to achieve Level 2 in speaking and listening, reading and writing by the end of the academic year, and therefore attainment is broadly consonant with national expectations. However, few pupils are currently on course to achieve Level 3 in writing, because standards of handwriting are too low. In mathematics and science most pupils are likely to achieve the target of Level 2 and a significant number are on course to exceed it, and therefore attainment is above national expectations. Small differences between the 1998 test results and inspection findings are due to year-on-year differences between the groups

of pupils compared and to the breadth of the curriculum, inspected in comparison with the relatively narrow areas of the subjects assessed in the national tests. Attainment in information technology is below national expectations. This is because in previous years pupils' skills were not progressively developed in all areas of the subject. In art, design and technology, geography, history and physical education, pupils achieve standards normally expected of pupils of a similar age. Standards in music are low because the curriculum offered is very limited.

6. At the end of Key Stage 2, the proportion of pupils likely to achieve Level 4 is broadly in line with national expectations in mathematics and science. In English, standards in speaking and listening and reading are broadly average, but only about 60 per cent of pupils are currently on course to achieve the target of Level 4 in writing; consequently attainment is below national expectations overall. As found in Key Stage 1, attainment in information technology is below national expectations and standards in music are low. In all other subjects pupils achieve standards normally expected of pupils at the end of the key stage at this point in the academic year.

7. Standards in English at the end of Key Stage 1 are broadly similar to those found at the time of the previous inspection in 1996, but at the end of Key Stage 2 standards are lower. This is largely because pupils' writing lacks the degree of fluency and expression normally expected of pupils in Year 6 and because almost all pupils are unable to write in a consistently cursive style. The levels of literacy of pupils joining the school have affected standards, since the presence of just a few lower-attaining pupils significantly affects the overall average scores when a small group is tested. In mathematics and science, standards have improved at the end of Key Stage 1 and are broadly similar to those previously reported at the Key Stage 2.

8. The attainment of children when they enter the school varies considerably, but overall it is broadly typical of average four year olds. However, a significant number have poorly developed language and literacy skills. At the time of the inspection many children had only recently been admitted to school, and for some children the first day of the inspection was their first day at school. Evidence provided by the school shows that the overall attainment of the current intake of children is slightly better than in previous years. From the limited evidence available at this early stage in the academic year, children are making good progress in developing early skills in language and literacy and in mathematics. Through activities such as 'signing in' at the start of the school day, children are encouraged to behave as writers. They are developing early skills in reading, and most understand that words and pictures convey meaning and that text runs from left to right. Mathematical skills are effectively developed through practical activities and, with support, children are able to count to ten and are beginning to recognise and name some numbers.

9. Rates of progress at both key stages are affected by the high turnover of pupils. During the course of each academic year, a large number of pupils either leave or move into the school. This movement of pupils is a particular feature of this area.

10. At Key Stage 1, pupils make satisfactory progress in building on the firm foundations of their experiences as under fives. They make satisfactory progress in language and literacy. Pupils' skills in listening are better developed than their skills in speaking. They speak with greater confidence and immature speech patterns disappear as their vocabulary improves. However, many pupils speak rapidly and as a result they are sometimes not easily understood

by those unfamiliar with this habit. As their sight vocabulary develops, pupils begin to use a number of strategies to work out unknown words when reading, and increasingly transfer the skills they have learned in reading to their written work. Pupils are encouraged to write from an early age, and soon higher-attaining pupils independently produce short pieces of legible text, transferring skills learned in reading sessions to the writing of simple words. Older pupils write in simple sentences, correctly using basic punctuation such as capital letters and full stops. Skills in handwriting develop satisfactorily in terms of improvement in the formation of letters, but because pupils are not taught how to develop a cursive style they are unable to achieve at a higher level.

11. Pupils make good progress throughout Key Stage 1 in using and applying numeracy skills to solve problems. Good use is made of equipment such as 'number lines' and counting apparatus to enhance pupils' understanding of place value. All pupils know the names of a number of common shapes and are developing a sound mathematical vocabulary. Progress in science is good. This is because of the way in which teachers plan their lessons and carefully identify what is to be learned. Good scientific habits are encouraged from an early age. Teachers try to ensure that the work they plan is interesting and builds effectively on pupils' natural curiosity about their environment. Skills in information technology have developed too slowly in previous years because of a lack of suitable hardware and software. Pupils' rates of progress are now satisfactory, but skills remain underdeveloped. Better rates of progress are not possible, because of the limited number of computers available. Pupils make sound progress in all other subjects, with the exception of music, in which progress is unsatisfactory because all elements of the subject are not regularly taught.

12. At Key Stage 2 progress is satisfactory overall. However, pupils' rates of progress vary considerably between year groups. In general, progress is better at the beginning of Key Stage 2 because of the better quality in the match of work to pupils' prior attainment.

13. Progress is satisfactory in speaking and listening. Pupils are given good opportunities to develop their skills through Literacy Hour activities, and they make confident contributions to class discussions. Reading skills steadily improve through daily practice. Skills in using non-fiction books develop well as pupils learn how to use contents and index pages and become adept at skimming and scanning text quickly to find the information they need. Progress in writing is unsatisfactory. In all year groups, pupils do not produce enough 'extended' writing, and skills in handwriting do not improve significantly on the standard achieved at the end of Key Stage 1.

14. Throughout Key Stage 2 pupils make sound progress in developing skills in numeracy. They develop competence in manipulating numbers and successfully transfer their skills to learning in other subjects. Regular practice in mental arithmetic improves their speed in recalling number facts. Good use is made of information technology in data handling, and pupils' knowledge of shapes develops from two to three dimensions. Progress in science is satisfactory. Pupils make sound progress in the consolidation of skills, knowledge and understanding across the key stage. As they move through the key stage, pupils increase

their understanding of the principles of conducting fair tests, and provide explanations for recorded measurements. They record their observations with increasing skill, using simple diagrams and tables, and draw simple conclusions. Progress in information technology is satisfactory, but slow progress in previous years, caused by shortages of suitable equipment and weaknesses in the curriculum, has resulted in pupils generally working at levels below those normally expected. Progress in all other subjects is satisfactory except in music. Weaknesses in the teaching of the music curriculum in previous years have resulted in pupils having little experience of some aspects of the subject.

15. The previous inspection report noted underachievement among higher-attaining pupils at Key Stage 1. In most cases, higher-attaining pupils now make satisfactory progress at this key stage. In the large majority of lessons, teachers at Key Stage 1 skilfully match work to pupils' prior attainment so that all pupils, including the more able, are provided with achievable challenges at their own level. However, at Key Stage 2, and particularly towards the end of the key stage, higher attaining pupils are sometimes not challenged enough since their tasks are frequently closely directed by teachers and there are limited opportunities for these pupils to use more of their own initiative.

16. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in relation to the targets in their individual education plans. Work at both key stages is particularly well matched to the abilities of lower-attaining pupils, and they benefit from the good quality support provided in classes by skilled learning support assistants. Initiatives such as 'Reading Recovery' at Key Stage 1, a 'Literacy Support Group' in Years 3 and 4, and a 'Fast Forward' group for older pupils ensure that the rapid progress of lower-attaining pupils is sustained.

22. Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

17. Children under five in the reception class have positive attitudes to their lessons. They listen attentively to their teacher, to classroom assistants and to each other. They choose activities sensibly and are developing skills of independence and initiative. Children behave very well; they quickly respond to their teachers' instructions, and have good relationships with their teacher and with each other.

18. Since the last inspection, the school has maintained the positive attitudes and behaviour in Key Stage 2 and improved the attitudes and behaviour in Key Stage 1. Overall, pupils' attitudes to learning are good throughout the school. Most pupils show a high level of interest in their work, concentrate well and complete tasks sensibly. For example, in a science lesson where pupils were investigating different aspects of sight, pupils used microscopes, tested their eyes, looked through microscopes and carried out research, using books and the multi-media computer. They responded very well to the challenge, maintained high levels of concentration, and took great pride in their achievements. However, where lessons were too long or when pupils were not sufficiently challenged, the concentration of some pupils lapsed.

19. The good behaviour of pupils, in and around the school, reflects the school's aims and has a positive effect on the quality of learning. Most pupils listen carefully to their teachers and get on with their work, using tools and equipment sensibly, though a small number of pupils sometimes become restless and cause small background disturbances. Pupils learn to distinguish between right and wrong, and know what is acceptable behaviour. They respond well to the school's system for rewards and sanctions, and are eager to accrue points towards their chosen reward. They play well together in the playground, and no incidents of inappropriate behaviour were seen during the inspection. During the previous academic year, one pupil was excluded from school for a short period.

20. Relationships throughout the school are very good. Pupils relate very well to each other and to all adults in the school. They are friendly, polite and well mannered, and many enthusiastically initiated conversations with the inspection team. The fruits of these positive relationships are seen in lessons, where pupils co-operate well in paired and group work, share tasks equally, and organise their work without fuss. Pupils are able to appreciate the needs and feelings of others, listen well to each other, and show respect for one another's values and beliefs.

21. Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils have responsibilities within their classrooms and around the school. For example, Year 5 and Year 6 pupils act as 'Table Leaders' at lunchtime, and older pupils may read stories to the infants and 'partner' younger pupils into the hall for assembly. The school choir takes part in local choral activities and sings at local homes for the elderly. Pupils help to raise money for charities, and take part in anti-litter campaigns in the community. The great majority of pupils are eager to please, and show a willingness to improve their work. However, in some lessons, over-directive teaching does not allow more able pupils to take responsibility for their own learning.

27. **Attendance**

22. Attendance at the school is good and is above the national average. The percentage of unauthorised absence is below the national average. Pupils come to school on time, and make a prompt start to the school day. Registration is effectively organised, and pupils settle quickly to their tasks. Pupils' good attendance contributes positively towards their standards of attainment, since they can make regular, uninterrupted progress in their work.

28. **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

28. **Teaching**

23. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. In almost 97 per cent of lessons observed, the quality of teaching was at least satisfactory and in over 34 per cent of lessons it was good or better. Three per cent of lessons were unsatisfactory.

24. These inspection findings represent a significant improvement on the findings of the last inspection, when almost 13 per cent of lessons were unsatisfactory.

25. The quality of teaching for children under five is always good. Lesson planning reflects the national Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning, with a clear focus on links to the National Curriculum programmes of study. Activities are very effectively planned and take into account children who work at different rates. Assessment is carefully carried out through group work and individual discussion. Links are made with previous learning, and progressive demands are made on children. There are high expectations of work and behaviour. Lessons proceed at a lively pace, and there is skilful intervention to develop children's learning through questioning and explanation. This is having a direct effect on children's progress. Good support is provided by the learning support assistants, who are skilful in developing appropriate vocabulary, and in sustaining high levels of concentration in the children.

26. At Key Stage 1, the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, with some good features. At this key stage, 30 per cent of lessons were good or better, and just one lesson was unsatisfactory.

27. Where teaching is good or better, effective lesson planning and high expectations of work ensure that all pupils are appropriately challenged. There is a good balance between activities that are directed by the teachers and opportunities for individual pupils to learn through investigation. Questioning techniques are skilfully used to establish what pupils understand, and to challenge their thinking. Teachers' responses are positive and encouraging. For example, in a Year 2 science lesson, there was a genuine air of anticipation and pleasure as the class began to explore aspects of sight through discussion, listening, observing, experimenting and recording. When teaching is satisfactory, lessons are well planned, teachers have a sound understanding of what they have to teach, and resources are well matched to the differing needs of pupils. In the single unsatisfactory lesson observed, not enough thought had been given to the length and timing of the lesson. As a result, a number of pupils became restless and lost concentration.

28. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 2 is satisfactory. Five per cent of lessons were very good, 25 per cent were good and 70 per cent were satisfactory. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed at this key stage. In the best lessons planning is detailed and takes account of assessments made of previous lessons. For example, in a Year 5 mathematics lesson, assessment was very well used to plan activities to provide achievable challenges for pupils of all abilities. There was good pace to the lesson, and time was given for learning, for concentration to consolidate skills, and for reflection. When teaching is good, there are high expectations of behaviour, and the good working atmosphere which is created in classes enables pupils to work effectively without unnecessary interruption or distraction. The best features of the satisfactory lessons are a sound balance between direct teaching and opportunities for pupils to work individually and in small groups. Activities are very well matched to the abilities of pupils of average and lower ability. However, in some lessons for older pupils, particularly in English and science, activities are too prescribed and opportunities are missed to challenge higher attaining pupils to plan and resource their own research and investigations.

29. Teachers know their pupils well at both key stages. They use to good effect such assessment methods as observations, skilled questioning and end-of-module tests. Work is usually thoroughly marked. Few comments appear in pupils' books, because much of the marking is done in class with the pupils, and mistakes are explained in detail with individuals. Homework is regularly set, and the great majority of parents surveyed were very satisfied with the work which their children are expected to do at home.

30. The high priority given to literacy and numeracy within the school is appropriate, and lessons are planned in line with the National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies. The quality of planning for literacy varies from satisfactory to very good, and provides a structured progression of skills for pupils. Planning for numeracy is good, and lessons are well taught. Mental arithmetic plays a key part in mathematical lessons, and is well used by teachers to assess pupils' knowledge and understanding. It is common to see whole class introductions to lessons and effective plenary sessions to sum up learning objectives, and this is having a beneficial effect on pupils' progress.

31. Pupils with special educational needs are very well taught within normal class groups. Individual education plans are very carefully prepared and closely match the needs of each individual. Additional teaching support is well targeted and of good quality.

37. The curriculum and assessment

32. The curriculum is satisfactory overall at both key stages and good for children under five.

33. Children under five are well prepared for compulsory education at the age of five. The curriculum provided for them is broad and balanced, and takes full account of the nationally recommended Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning. However, the curriculum for pupils at Key Stage 1 and 2 lacks some balance, since statutory requirements have only recently been met in information technology, some elements of the music curriculum are not being taught, and some timetable allocations are too long.

34. Equality of access and opportunity is good at both key stages and for children under five. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum, and those identified as having special educational needs are fully integrated into all aspects of school life. Provision for these pupils is very good. They have very good individual education plans that provide achievable and measurable targets for work in both numeracy and literacy. Most pupils are mainly supported within the class, but some are withdrawn for additional work with a part-time Reading Recovery teacher.

35. The curriculum is broadly organised in topics on a rotating two-year cycle, but teaching in English, mathematics and science is provided in separate subject lessons. The curriculum planning for these subjects is not determined by the topics but links are made with them where appropriate.

36. There are policy guidelines for all subjects. Some have very recently been revised in line with the recommendations of the national Qualifications and Curriculum Authority subject documents. These policies provide sound, and sometimes good, guidance about how the subjects are to be taught. In English and in mathematics, they are based upon the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy, which have been carefully and effectively introduced.

37. Planning for the step by step development of skills, knowledge and understanding is good for children under five and at Key Stage 1, and satisfactory at Key Stage 2. The school has made good progress at improving short-term planning and its implementation, particularly at Key Stage 1, where it was described as '*less effective*' at the time of the last inspection. Curriculum planning is now well structured and is based on both content and the systematic development of skills. Planning for the least able and average pupils is very good across the school, and work is carefully matched to their individual needs. However, planning does not generally take sufficient account of the needs of higher-attaining pupils at Key Stage 2 in providing them with opportunities to plan their own work and become independent learners.

38. The overall time available for teaching the National Curriculum is appropriate. The time spent developing literacy and numeracy is being effectively used to develop pupils' skills in these important areas. Although the overall time allowed for individual subjects is appropriate, the way in which it is allocated within the teaching timetable sometimes results in lessons that are over-long.

39. The school's policy and practice complies with the statutory requirements for health education, drugs education, and sex education.

40. There is a satisfactory range of extracurricular activities. Currently available to pupils are football, netball and recorder clubs, plus a weekly 'Fast Forward' session for older pupils, aimed at improving literacy. In previous terms, extracurricular options have included football, board games and pop mobility sessions, supported by a total of almost 60 pupils. Despite having limited outdoor facilities, the school has taken part in competitive sporting activities with other local schools. There are good links with the local football club, and pupils benefit from many school visits, including day visits into the locality, linked to topic work in history, science and geography.

41. Assessment is good overall and very good for children under five. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection, when they were described as '*well organised and consistently implemented*'. Procedures for assessment are good, and the school makes good use of the information gained to plan future work and to inform curriculum development. Assessment of pupils with special educational needs is consistently very good, and is very well used by all teachers, learning support assistants and visiting specialists. The school has collated portfolios of examples of pupils' work, matched to National Curriculum levels, in

order to help teachers to make consistent judgements about pupils' attainment. However, the school is aware that portfolios in mathematics and science need updating, and the portfolio for information technology is incomplete. A 'baseline assessment' of pupils is very effectively used to establish attainment on entry. Information from this assessment is well analysed to ensure that pupils are provided with appropriate experiences from the earliest stages. Other tests, including end of key stage assessments, are well used throughout the school and provide good quality information about pupils' attainment.

47. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

42. Overall, the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good and is one of the strengths of the school.

43. The school's provision for the spiritual development of pupils is very good. The school successfully creates an ethos in which the uniqueness of each child is recognised within a caring family atmosphere. Through prayer and collective worship, during class and whole school assemblies, pupils have the opportunity to reflect on their own lives and those of other people. 'Stilling' time at the beginning of the afternoon session allows pupils time to appreciate moments of stillness in their lives, whilst listening to calm music and focusing on one particular issue. 'Circle' time also provides pupils with opportunities to talk about and reflect on their experiences, and consider sensitively issues related to personal feelings and circumstances. However, opportunities for developing spirituality in other areas of the curriculum are not included in planning.

44. The provision for pupils' moral development is very good. All staff provide very good role models for pupils and insist on high standards. Christian moral teaching pervades the life of the school. The understanding of right and wrong is very well promoted. The school's code of conduct is consistently implemented and pupils understand the moral basis of sanctions for misbehaviour. Parents are pleased with the good standards of behaviour achieved. The school provides good opportunities for pupils to develop self-esteem, and promotes this through the allocation of responsibilities, the celebration of achievement in assemblies, and the reward system at lunchtime and in the classrooms.

45. The promotion of pupils' social development is good. The quality of relationships in the school is very good. Pupils relate well to each other and to all adults and visitors to the school. They co-operate and work successfully as members of a group and in pairs. However, in some lessons, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to work independently and take more initiative. Older pupils are given a range of responsibilities to encourage a sense of community and responsibility. These include setting out chairs in the school hall, looking after younger pupils, and acting as 'Table Leaders' during the lunch break. Extracurricular activities provide pupils with opportunities to participate in competitive sport, and the Year 5 and Year 6 overnight visit to Tattenhall Outdoor Education Centre provides significant opportunities for personal development. Good links with the local Catholic community have been developed and pupils are encouraged to play a full part in church activities.

46.Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. The school effectively promotes many aspects of pupils' own cultural traditions. Opportunities to visit local places of interest, such as the local boat club on the Bridgewater Canal, enhance work on local history, art and geography, as well as teaching pupils about water safety. A 'Victorian Day' gives pupils a good understanding of the cultural heritage of their own country. Their understanding of music is supported through events such as a visit to see the Halle Orchestra, a visiting performance of Blue Grass Music, and visits from other musical ensembles. Pupils' awareness of the theatre is developed and broadened through various visiting theatre companies. Pupils from different cultural backgrounds have been encouraged to share their culture and traditions. However, there is limited evidence of planned opportunities for pupils to learn of other cultural traditions, particularly those of non-western societies.

52.

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

47.Overall, the arrangements for the support, guidance and welfare of pupils are very good, and a significant strength of the school. They have a positive impact on pupils' attainment and progress. The school creates an atmosphere in which pupils feel happy and secure. The high quality of relationships between pupils and staff is a strength of the school, and provides the context for very effective support and advice for all pupils in relation to their personal development, behaviour and attendance. Parents indicate that they are particularly pleased with the arrangements for the gradual induction of their children when starting school. The school is making very good use of detailed and careful monitoring of academic progress. Monitoring of pupils' personal development is based on the very good knowledge that all staff have of their pupils. The work of the school is further enhanced by the full use it makes of outside agencies, such as the educational psychologist, the speech and language teacher, the teacher for the hearing impaired, a 'Reading Recovery' teacher and the Catholic Family Society.

48.Provision for the support, guidance and welfare of pupils with special educational needs is a significant strength of the school. The needs of these pupils are understood by all staff and are particularly carefully monitored.

49.The procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are excellent. The school places a high emphasis on the need for regular attendance. Parents receive regular reminders through the school newsletter and are encouraged not to take their child out of school during term time for their annual holiday. Class teachers keep a record of all absences at the back of the class register. Any absence without an oral or written reason is followed up the same day. The headteacher monitors the registers at the end of each week and meticulously monitors the records of absences. These procedures are underpinned by the support from the local authority education welfare officer. The procedures for reporting and recording of attendance are well met.

50.The procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour are very good. The school's very detailed behaviour policy is based on 'Assertive Discipline', and is an effective tool to promote good discipline and behaviour in the school. Rules are clearly displayed throughout the school and all adults consistently enforce these. Pupils know and respect the sanctions for poor behaviour and value the points system, which rewards their

good work and conduct. Certificates and awards are presented at a whole school assembly at the end of each week. Incidents of unacceptable behaviour are carefully recorded and monitored. Good procedures are in place to deal with any incidents of bullying should they arise. The school takes such incidents seriously, and they are dealt with quickly and effectively.

51. There are good procedures in place to ensure the health, safety and general well-being of all pupils, both in school and on school visits. Any health and safety issues are carefully recorded and are monitored effectively by both staff and governors. The school is clean, tidy and in good repair, and provides a safe environment for pupils. Procedures for lunchtime supervision are very good and support the safety and well-being of pupils very well. The school has a designated child protection co-ordinator, and staff are made aware of the procedures for referring pupils in the event of concern.

57. Partnership with parents and the community

52. The partnership with parents and the community is very good and is a significant strength of the school. Since the last inspection, the school has maintained and developed its effective and open partnership with parents. Parents express their appreciation of the welcoming and friendly atmosphere and actively contribute to the realisation of the school's aims, values and beliefs. Support for the school at the meeting with parents was high. Parents are encouraged to help in school whenever they feel able to do so. Although there is no formal parent-teacher association, an 'Open Forum' system works very well in supporting the school by organising fund-raising and social events. A 'Mothers and Toddlers Group' meet once a week for a Coffee Morning, further encouraging the partnership with parents. The response to the parents' questionnaire and the meeting with parents both indicate that parents are satisfied with the work their children are expected to do at home. The school enables parents to support their children through sessions such as a 'Parents' Numeracy Information Evening and Workshop' and a 'Help Your Child To Write' course.

53. The quality of information provided by the school to parents is very good. The school's prospectus and governors' annual report to parents are well presented and informative, and new parents receive very helpful induction information prior to their child starting school. Parents receive very detailed personalised annual reports about their children's attainment and progress. However, targets for improvement to the quality of their work are sometimes too general and are not sufficiently detailed to meet individual needs. Two evenings a year are set aside for parents to discuss their children's progress and targets. Parents are welcome in the classroom before and after school to discuss any ongoing issues about their children's successes, progress and problems. Parents feel well informed through regular detailed newsletters.

54. Parents of pupils identified as having special educational needs are kept well informed and are fully involved in the regular reviews of their children's progress.

55. The school has maintained and enjoys very good links with the community. Relationships between the school and its community are very strong. They are rooted in parish life, especially through the local priest and nearby church. Events and celebrations are run in conjunction with the parish and include the celebration of mass and preparation of pupils for

the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist. The Catholic Family Society provides a 'Behaviour Management Course' to assist parents in improving their children's behaviour. The local further education college offers free courses for parents, such as computer training, English, French and hair and beauty. A new link with a local power station will provide on-site classroom facilities and a pond area, enhancing pupils' work in their science topics. The school maintains well established links with the adjoining football club, and has a reciprocal arrangement whereby the school has use of the training field and the club uses the school car park at weekends. Partnership with a local boat club enhances pupils' work in art, geography, local history and water safety. The school choir sings to the elderly in a local home and takes part in community choral activities. The school's involvement in local anti-litter campaigns and raising funds for local and national charities further enhances the social development of pupils. Visitors to the school include theatre groups, dancers, musicians, and members of the health and emergency services. Pupils visit local areas of interest and make good use of their local environment.

56. The very good partnership with parents and the strong links with the community make a significant contribution to the attainment and progress of pupils, and their personal development.

62. THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

62. Leadership and management

57. The school is very well led by the headteacher. She effectively manages the school and has established strong links with parents. She knows her pupils well and has a clear view of the future development of the school. She is ably supported by her deputy and by all staff and governors. Teaching staff are committed to improving pupils' attainment and are good at reflecting critically on their practice. There are very good relationships within the school and a strong sense of teamwork among all staff.

58. Following the last inspection in April 1996, an action plan was prepared in response to the key issues identified for future improvement. These key issues have been effectively addressed, and are as follows:

59. Key Issue 1: 'Seek to improve the standards of pupils' behaviour at Key Stage 1.'

60. Very good progress has been made in addressing this issue. A very good behaviour management strategy was devised and is consistently implemented by all staff. Standards of behaviour are now good.

61. Key Issue 2: 'Endeavour to ensure that all pupils at Key Stage 1 enjoy a settled working atmosphere where they can give of their best.'

62. In most lessons at Key Stage 1, a good working atmosphere is created and pupils work effectively. Significant features of the school's provision in this respect are the 'Stilling' periods at the start of the afternoon sessions. The time for quiet reflection provided during these periods helps pupils to settle down after their lunch break and creates a calm

atmosphere in which lessons can begin.

63.*Key Issue 3: 'Ensure that pupils of higher ability at Key Stage 1 make the progress of which they are capable.'*

64. Good progress has been made in addressing this issue. In the large majority of lessons, teachers at Key Stage 1 skilfully match work to pupils' prior attainment so that all pupils, including the more able, are provided with achievable challenges at their own level.

65.*Key Issue 4: 'Review the short term planning and organisation of lessons at Key Stage 1 to improve the pace and rigour.'*

66. The planning and the organisation of lessons at Key Stage 1 have both improved. Lesson planning is now good and the organisation of lessons is satisfactory.

67.*Key Issue 5: 'Continue to maintain the sound attainments and progress, and the responsible attitudes and behaviour which characterise work at Key Stage 2.'*

68. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour continue to be good, and attainment and progress remain sound, even though the turnover of pupils is high.

69.*Key Issue 6: 'Seek to extend the high expectations of pupils and the positive ethos at Key Stage 2 throughout the school.'*

70. The ethos of the school is very good. In general, teachers have high expectations of pupils, although in some lessons in some subjects, higher-attaining pupils are not challenged enough.

71. The governing body is supportive and successfully fulfils its role of critical friend to the school. Governors take a keen interest in the work of the school and visit the school regularly. The governing body is organised efficiently, regularly monitors and evaluates the work of the school, and fulfils its legal responsibilities. Four committees have recently been established to oversee the curriculum, personnel issues, buildings and finance. The effectiveness of this initiative cannot yet be evaluated, since only one of the committees has so far met and reported back to the full governing body.

72. The quality of teaching and curriculum planning are carefully monitored by the headteacher. However, subject co-ordinators have few opportunities for monitoring their subjects. This issue has been debated by teachers, all of whom have been reluctant to spend too much of their time formally monitoring classroom provision during the period of implementation of the national literacy and numeracy initiatives. In a small school such as this, teachers generally have a very good understanding of the quality of work in other classes. Within the limited time available to them, they generally provide advice and support to colleagues in planning and oversee the quality of provision through informal discussions

and observations.

73. The management of provision for pupils identified as having special educational needs is very good. The headteacher is the special educational needs co-ordinator. She closely monitors the progress of special needs pupils and maintains detailed records. Pupils' individual education plans generally contain precise targets for improvement. The policy for special educational needs fully complies with the recommendations of the national Code of Practice. The governor responsible for overseeing special educational needs has regular contact with the school and is kept well informed through her meetings with the headteacher. The school's strong commitment to special educational needs is evident through its active involvement in initiatives such as the 'Reading Recovery' and 'First Steps' programmes.

74. The management of the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy has been sound, and further refinements are now being made in the way in which literacy is taught following the school's evaluation of the strategy's effectiveness at the end of the first year. The new National Numeracy Strategy has been effectively implemented from the start of the current academic year.

75. Overall, the school development plan is very good. Although it is an extremely weighty document, and is not set out in a form that is easily accessible to all, it is proving to be useful to the school. It is comprehensive and contains very good details of clear priorities for development agreed by all staff and governors. Progress in achieving targets set out in the plan is regularly reviewed and evaluated.

76. Legal requirements are met in all areas with the exception of music. Although a sound curriculum is in place, not all elements of the subject are regularly taught in all classes. To some extent this is due to staff changes which have resulted in the loss of some expertise. Requirements regarding information technology have only recently been put in place and have not yet had time to make an impact upon pupils' attainment and progress.

77. The very good management systems that are in place, together with the school's clear commitment to raising standards and the governors' close involvement and support, indicate that the school has a good capacity for future improvement.

83. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

78. The school has a team of hard working and committed teachers who are well qualified to teach the subjects of the National Curriculum. Relationships between all teaching and non-teaching staff are very good. All staff make a very valuable contribution to the quality of pupils' education through their personal knowledge of the pupils and their positive response to them. The school has invested resources in additional staff and this makes a significant contribution to pupils' levels of attainment and the quality of education. A part-time teacher supports two Key Stage 1 pupils on a 'Reading Recovery' programme and this has a beneficial effect on the progress they make. Learning support assistants give good quality help to pupils. They are well deployed and work co-operatively and effectively with teachers in planning, teaching and recording pupils' progress. The clerical assistant, caretaking staff and mid-day supervisors are efficient and contribute positively to the ethos and smooth

running of the school.

79. Arrangements for the professional development of staff are very good. They are well organised and fully costed, with training matched against individual and whole school needs. The induction arrangements for newly qualified staff, and for staff new to the school, are very good. The staff appraisal process is in line with requirements. However, the headteacher's appraisal has been delayed due to the reorganisation of the local authority. Job descriptions are in place and outline general duties and specific curriculum responsibilities.

80. Overall, the accommodation of the school is adequate, and the school buildings and site are well managed and maintained. However, there are shortcomings. Although there is adequate space in the school, the position of the central classroom is not ideal. The passage of pupils through the classroom, and the lack of outside windows, results in a barely satisfactory working environment. Provision for physical education is limited, since the playing field is too small.

81. The range and quality of resources available to support learning across the curriculum are satisfactory overall, and for English and mathematics they are good. All resources have been audited and are looked after carefully. They are efficiently organised and accessible, enabling pupils to work productively. However, in music there are not enough small instruments and no large percussion instruments. Although there is a new range of computers of good quality, the number of computers is barely adequate.

87. The efficiency of the school

82. The school's procedures for financial planning are good. All staff and governors play a part in influencing budgetary decisions through their work in jointly setting priorities for the school development plan. The headteacher then produces and carefully costs various budgetary models, based on the agreed priorities, for consideration by the governing body. In this way, expenditure is closely linked to the development plan, and during the previous year has successfully focused on literacy. However, the school's cautious approach to financial management has resulted in almost 18 per cent of its total income for the 1998-9 financial year being carried forward. Projections for the current financial year show that this surplus will reduce to just over 14 per cent of forecast income by April 2000. To some extent, the large surplus is due to savings made in staffing costs as a result of changes in teaching staff and to adjustments which the local authority made to the school's income in respect of new pupils admitted after the school's spending limits were agreed. The governors are fully aware of the situation and plan to further reduce this fund in the near future as they continue to improve school security.

83. Staff, resources and accommodation are well managed. Teachers are well deployed, and learning support assistants are effectively used to support pupils who need extra help with their learning. However, the role of the subject co-ordinators is underdeveloped in that they are generally not given enough time to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in the classrooms. The school makes good use of its accommodation and resources and makes every effort to supplement its provision through its very good links with the local community.

84. Good use is made of additional funding received for a continuation of the 'Reading

Recovery' programme, which is in its second year at the school. An additional teacher is employed to work intensively with pupils for four mornings per week for 20 weeks. This time is used to good effect, and greatly benefits the pupils concerned.

85. Additional funding committed by the school to support pupils identified as having special educational needs is well used. These pupils are very well supported and make very good progress in relation to their prior attainment.

86. Curriculum time is not always effectively used in some subjects. This is because time allocations are too long.

87. In judging the value for money provided by the school, the following factors need to be taken into consideration:

88. The majority of children start school with attainment that is broadly typical of average four-year-olds. However, a significant number have poorly developed language and literacy skills. They make good progress as under fives, and even though a significant number of pupils move into and out of the school in Key Stages 1 and 2, progress is satisfactory overall. Overall, by the end of Key Stage 2 pupils' attainment is broadly in line with national expectations. Pupils' attitudes to learning, behaviour and personal development are good, and relationships with others are very good. These successes are due to the school's very good provision for pupils' support, guidance and welfare, including its very good provision for their moral development. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at both key stages and the curriculum is sound. While unit costs are high, they are broadly average for a school of this size.

89. In view of the educational standards achieved, the quality of education provided, progress since the last inspection, and the good capacity to improve, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

95.

95.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

95. AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN UNDER FIVE

90.Children are admitted at the beginning of the year in which they reach the age of five years, and at the start of the inspection there were 11 full time and four part time children on roll. Attainment on entry varies, but the majority of children in the current group of under fives are starting school with attainment overall that is broadly typical of average four year olds, but with a significant number having poorly developed language and literacy skills. Evidence provided by the school shows that the overall ability of the current intake is slightly above that of previous years. When children enter the school, baseline assessments are completed to enable the class teacher to plan work appropriate to the needs of each individual.

91.The school has very good arrangements for the admissions of pupils over a period of three weeks from the beginning of the autumn term. At the start of the inspection some children had been in school for three weeks, some for two weeks, and for others it was their first day. Consequently, there is limited evidence to support judgements about attainment and progress.

Personal and social development.

92.Children are making good progress at developing personal and social skills. Teachers, learning support assistants, and helpers are making every effort to help children to become familiar with classroom routines and resources. Very good use of rewards and positive encouragement are helping children to develop friendly relationships with adults, and to seek help when help is needed. Children are already beginning to show independence when selecting activities, and are aware of others as they work.

Language and literacy.

93.Evidence from the lessons seen and from the scrutiny of the limited amount of work indicates that attainment in language and literacy is below what might be expected of children of a similar age. Skills in speaking and listening are satisfactory. Children generally wait quietly for each other to speak, make relevant comments, and listen carefully to stories. Good use is made of the role play area for children to develop and explore the use of vocabulary. However, some are still very shy, and not very communicative. Early reading and writing skills are less well developed than skills in speaking and listening.

94.Most children know that words and pictures convey meaning and most understand that print goes from left to right. They enjoy books and handle them carefully, and some children are able to name some the letters of the alphabet. However' their knowledge of initial sounds is limited. Higher-attaining children write their first name, and read some familiar words in context. Opportunities for early writing to develop are provided in the role play area, when children use emerging writing skills to write prescriptions in a 'doctors surgery', and for signing in at the beginning of the school day. Adult helpers ensure that all children are making good progress.

Mathematics

95. Attainment in mathematics is broadly in line with that of children of a similar age. Mathematical skills are effectively developed through a range of practical activities, and children make good progress. With support, they count and order numbers up to ten and beyond, and recognise and name the numbers. The use of number games and songs consolidates skills in counting, and effective adult intervention helps to develop mathematical vocabulary. For example, children skilfully use number mats to place digits into sequence when playing number games in the hall. Higher-attaining children eagerly put into practice their number recognition skills, and are quickly gaining confidence at learning to count on and count backwards.

Knowledge and understanding of the world.

96. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is broadly in line with that expected of children of a similar age, and they make good progress. In simple science activities, children explore and recognise features of living things, and can identify similarities and differences between animals and people. They use information technology and communication technology well to enhance and reinforce learning through listening to recordings, and through work with the class computer.

Creative development

97. Children make good progress in creative activities and achieve standards that are appropriate for their age. They learn how to cut, paint and glue, and play imaginatively in the role-play area. They work with paint, pencils and play dough to create images of animals, and show reasonable pencil control. They enjoy singing and reciting nursery rhymes.

Physical development

98. Attainment in physical development is at a level appropriate for children under five, and they make good progress. They are beginning to develop awareness of space, and move with increasing confidence and co-ordination. Good use is made of the secure outdoor play area to develop increasing control of large movements. Fine manipulative skills are being well developed through the use of drawing and modelling activities.

99. The management and curriculum development of children under five is good. When account is taken of the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning as a basis for the curriculum, due regard is given to working toward the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. The ethos for learning is very good. Assessment procedures are also very good, and are used effectively to inform planning and to set targets for improvement. Children who cause concern are quickly identified, and appropriate strategies for support are provided.

Parental involvement is a strength of the school, and contributes effectively in promoting good progress. There is very good teamwork between the classroom assistants and the teacher. The school's efforts to develop high standards in numeracy and literacy is reflected in the commitment of all staff to ensure that children are very well prepared for statutory education at the age of five. All pupils, including those with special needs, have full access to all areas of the curriculum.

105. ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

105. English

100. Results of the 1998 national tests at the end of Key Stage 1 show that the percentage of pupils achieving the national target of Level 2 was close to the national average in reading and writing, but the percentage achieving the higher Level 3 was well below average. Data provided by the school shows that results in the 1999 tests were broadly similar to those of 1998, although no national comparisons can yet be made.

101. The 1998 test results at the end of Key Stage 2 show that the percentage of pupils achieving the national target of Level 4 was well below the national average and that no pupils achieved the higher Level 5. However, comparisons drawn from the results may not be reliable, since the group of pupils tested was very small and contained a high proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs. Results of the 1999 tests are significantly better, but cannot yet be compared against a national average since the data is not available.

102. When results over the previous years are compared, the trend is of a steady decline from 1996 to 1998, with results being above average in 1996, slightly below average in 1997 and well below average in 1998. Comparisons of results over time need to be treated with caution because of the transient nature of the population of the school and also because the presence of just a few pupils of lower attainment within the small groups tested has significantly affected the average scores in previous years.

103. Inspection findings indicate that at the end of Key Stage 1 the proportion of pupils likely to achieve Level 2 is broadly in line with national expectations in speaking and listening, reading and writing. However, few pupils are likely to achieve at a higher level because standards in handwriting are low. At the end of Key Stage 2, approximately 60 per cent of pupils are currently on course to achieve Level 4 in writing. This figure is below the national average for 1998 and, when set against a national pattern of gradual improvement, indicates that standards remain below average. The school is strongly committed to raising pupils' attainment and is providing pupils in Years 5 and 6 with additional lessons in a 'Fast Forward' group. Attainment in reading and in speaking and listening is broadly in line with national expectations. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are broadly similar to those found at the time of the previous inspection in 1996, but standards at the end of Key Stage 2 have declined in writing.

104. Although a significant number of pupils enter school with poorly developed language and literacy skills, they make good progress as under-fives and satisfactory progress overall at both key stages. Rates of progress are also affected by the high turnover of pupils. Almost a half of the 1998 group of Year 6 pupils and a quarter of the current Year 6 did not start their education at the school.

105. At both key stages pupils make satisfactory progress in speaking and listening. In Year 1, skills in listening are better than in speaking, but pupils quickly develop the ability to express themselves in short phrases and sentences as they acquire a greater vocabulary. In many cases, speech patterns are immature, and diction is not clear. By the end of the key stage, pupils listen well, and although skills in speaking remain less well developed their speech is generally grammatically correct. Their manner of speaking still lacks clarity, partly due to the speed with which they attempt to reply to questions. The impact of the National Literacy Strategy on pupils' skills in speaking is greater in English lessons at Key Stage 2, as they confidently use a wide range of subject-specific vocabulary when talking about their work. Skills in speaking to an audience are further practised in time set aside for a review of learning at the end of 'Literacy Hour' sessions, and by the time they reach Years 5 and 6, pupils make confident contributions to class discussions. For example, the pupils in Year 5 use appropriate vocabulary in context as they explain the techniques used to edit the first draft of a piece of writing.

106. Progress in reading is satisfactory at both key stages. The majority of pupils in Year 1 are confident in 'sounding out' letters to make simple words and show a developing knowledge of blends of sounds as they read simple texts with some expression. Picture cues are also used to help to 'decode' unknown words. By the end of the key stage, pupils read with greater fluency and expression and use their skills to good effect in class lessons. For example, pupils in Year 2 quickly produced a list of words based upon the sound made by the 'oi' blend of letters, by using their knowledge of letter sounds to create the new words. They use a greater range of strategies to help them to successfully read unfamiliar words and have a developing knowledge of the important features of non-fiction books, such as the contents page. Skills in using reference books steadily develop throughout Key Stage 2, so that by Year 6 pupils quickly and accurately locate information. For example, pupils in Year 3 effectively build on previous knowledge when developing their skills in using non-fiction. Lower-attaining pupils use their knowledge of alphabetical order to good effect when producing their own index for a book, while average and higher-attaining pupils effectively use a simple index to research their history topic. Reading skills also develop steadily throughout Key Stage 2. Pupils have regular, daily opportunities to practise in addition to the opportunities provided in 'Literacy Hour' sessions to study books in greater depth. By Year 6, most pupils read with reasonable fluency and expression and many can skim and scan text to provide references when answering questions about a story.

107. At Key Stage 1, progress in writing is satisfactory. Pupils are encouraged to write from an early age, and by the time they are in Year 1, higher-attaining pupils are independently producing short pieces of legible text, transferring skills learned in reading sessions to write simple words. At this stage, many pupils still use 'emergent writing' techniques, in which words are often only represented by the initial letter sound or, in the case of lower-attaining pupils, by strings of marks on the page. By the end of the key stage, the majority of pupils in Year 2 write in sentences, correctly using simple punctuation such as capital letters and full

stops. Skills in reading readily transfer to their written work. For example, Year 2 pupils build on their knowledge of non-fiction books by producing their own simple books which give instructions about how to play a favourite game learned in physical education lessons. They understand that this form of writing needs to be set out differently from that of story writing and learn the required formula through a class 'rap'. Throughout Key Stage 1, standards of handwriting are never more than adequate. Many pupils in Year 2 form letters of a consistent size, but almost all print their work and are unable to write in a joined style.

108. Progress in writing is satisfactory in Years 3 and 4, but slows in Years 5 and 6 and is unsatisfactory overall. Skills in grammar and punctuation develop steadily throughout the key stage, but the quality of writing is generally limited. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 produce an adequate range of writing, for different purposes and for different audiences, but the range does not develop significantly as pupils move into Years 5 and 6. In all year groups, pupils do not produce enough 'extended' writing and in Year 6, work generally lacks the fluency and expression normally expected of pupils of this age. The school is aware that while the implementation of the 'Literacy Hour' has resulted in improvements in pupils' grammar, opportunities for extended writing need to be planned through additional English lessons and within other subjects. Standards of handwriting are generally unsatisfactory. Only three pupils in Year 6 are beginning to join some of their writing, while all others print their work, and in many cases letter formation is uneven. The best progress at this key stage is made by lower-attaining pupils, because work is most often well matched to their abilities. Higher attaining pupils make slow progress in relation to their prior attainment.

109. In most classes, pupils identified as having special educational needs generally make very good progress. Skilled learning support assistants support these pupils very well, and work provided for them provides achievable challenges. This enables them to develop confidence and to feel that they can succeed. Progress is best where teachers provide work that enables them to play a full part in all stages of 'Literacy Hour' lessons, and in particular involves them fully in the plenary session at the end of lessons when learning is reviewed. The school is strongly committed to raising standards of literacy, particularly among lower-attaining pupils. Effective use is made of an additional teacher who works with a small number of pupils at Key Stage 1 as part of a 'Reading Recovery' programme. These pupils are well supported, and close liaison with the class teacher ensures that their needs are fully met. Other pupils in Years 3 and 4 form a Literacy Support Group, which is an initiative organised by the local authority. Extracurricular work in Years 5 and 6 with the 'Fast Forward' group provides additional time for literacy activities.

110. Pupils' attitudes to English are generally good. Most pupils sustain good levels of concentration, although sometimes pupils' attention wanders when lessons are over-long. In most classes, pupils are keen to take part in class discussions and make thoughtful contributions when questioned. They relate well to one another and to their teachers and share books and equipment without argument. Standards of presentation are satisfactory at Key Stage 1, but sometimes work is carelessly presented at Key Stage 2.

111. Pupils' skills in literacy contribute effectively to their work in all other subjects. For example, research and writing skills enable them to make sound progress in history, and in geography pupils sound standards in reading enable them to satisfactorily analyse questionnaires about the local environment. However, in some subjects such as history, opportunities are missed to challenge pupils to produce more lengthy pieces of writing.

112. The quality of teaching is sound overall. Eighty-nine per cent of lessons were satisfactory and 11 per cent were good. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally sound and lesson plans closely follow the recommended framework for the 'Literacy Hour'. The quality of planning varies, and is satisfactory overall. The best planned lessons, and those in which work is best matched to pupils' prior attainment are to be found at the beginning of Key Stage 2. All teachers provide a good balance of whole class, individual and group work, and have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. The good working atmosphere created in all classes enables pupils to work without disturbance. Most lessons proceed at a steady pace, but on occasions the time allocated for lessons is too long and the pace of learning slows. Resources are generally well prepared and throughout most lessons learning support assistants are effectively deployed to support individuals or, more often, small groups of pupils. On the few occasions where learning support assistants are not efficiently used, opportunities are missed to use their skills to carry out observations of pupils' responses during whole class teaching periods. In some lessons, teaching is too 'directed' and higher-attaining pupils are not given enough opportunities to become more independent in the planning and organisation of their work. In the best lesson observed, the teacher skilfully challenged pupils of all abilities while at the same time involving them all in the same activity. In this lesson, higher-attaining pupils were able to use their initiative since their tasks were not so closely prescribed. Where homework is used to support learning it is effective. For example, in Year 6 specific reading tasks are set as part of a programme to ensure that pupils broaden their experience of books.

113. The quality of subject leadership is good. The headteacher, who is also the subject co-ordinator, has observed 'Literacy Hour' lessons in all classes and evaluations based on these observations and on teachers' own experiences are resulting in adjustments being made to the way in which sessions are taught.

114. Assessment procedures are very good. A portfolio of examples of pupils' work matched against National Curriculum levels has been collated and provides a useful reference point for teachers to use when judging pupils' work. Resources are generally of good quality, and are well stored and easily accessible to all.

120. **Mathematics**

115. Results of the 1998 national tests at the end of Key Stage 1 show that the percentage of pupils achieving the national target of Level 2 was close to the national average, but the percentage achieving the higher Level 3 was well above national figures. These results are well above the national average, and well above average for similar schools. Attainment over the past three years has been consistently above the national average. Data provided by the school shows that results in the 1999 tests were broadly similar to those of 1998, although no national comparisons can yet be made.

116. The 1998 test results at the end of Key Stage 2 show that the percentage of pupils achieving the national target of Level 4 was close to the national average, but the percentage achieving the higher Level 5 was below average. These results are below the national average, but broadly in line with those of similar schools. When results over the previous years are compared, the trend is of a steady improvement from 1996 to 1997, with results

being average in 1996, and above average in 1997; but in 1998 results fell sharply. However, comparisons drawn from these results may not be reliable, since the group of pupils tested in 1998 was very small and contained a high proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs. Results of the 1999 tests are better, but cannot yet be compared against a national average since the data is not available.

117. Inspection evidence suggests that pupils are on course to achieve standards that are above national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1 and in line with national figures at the end of Key Stage 2. This is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection report, when standards at both key stages were described as '*generally in line with what is expected nationally*'.

118. Standards in mathematics are good at Key Stage 1. By the end of the key stage, pupils show an appropriate understanding of place value and can use this knowledge to solve simple addition and subtraction problems. They know what each digit in a two-digit number represents. Pupils can arrange numbers correctly to one hundred, and show a good understanding of the concepts of 'more than', 'less than', and 'between', when finding the missing number in a sequence. Most pupils use the coinage system accurately in making simple costing and in calculating change. They have a sound understanding of simple two- and three-dimensional shapes, and can tessellate regular shapes. Pupils can identify halves, quarters and thirds, and understand ways of collecting information and how to communicate their findings, using simple data handling programs. For example, pupils in Year 2 were able to create a database based on a number investigation, using dice, and produced graphs as an easy and quick way of presenting their findings.

119. Good progress is made throughout the key stage in using and applying numeracy skills to solve problems. The younger pupils are developing quick mental recall of addition of numbers up to ten. They show increasing ability in using a number line, and counters to enhance their understanding of place value. The youngest children make good progress in recognising, counting, and ordering numbers. The teachers carefully emphasise the correct formation of numbers, which ensures that pupils write them correctly. Good progress is shown over time in their work on shape, space and measure and telling the time.

120. Standards in mathematics are sound at Key Stage 2. By the end of the key stage, pupils accurately add and subtract using thousands, hundreds, tens and units. They understand the relationship between vulgar and decimal fractions and can calculate simple percentages. The majority of pupils can calculate the area and perimeter of regular shapes. Skills in multiplication and division are at an appropriate level, and many pupils can accurately use the bracket when writing calculations.

121. Progress across Key Stage 2 is satisfactory, even though almost a half of the 1998 group of Year 6 pupils and a quarter of the current Year 6 did not start their education at the school. Pupils are making sound progress in using information technology to aid learning, and are able to enter data and produce charts and graphs. Higher-attaining pupils are making good progress at using this information to make predications and to draw simple conclusions. Pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 are making particularly good progress in quick mental recall of multiplication facts, and confidently respond to terms such as 'multiple' and

'product'. Many pupils are making sound progress in transferring their numeracy skills to learning in other subjects. For instance, as part of their work in geography pupils in Years 5 and 6 used questionnaires to collect views about the local environment from local residents. They successfully entered the information into a data-handling package, and analysed the results. In Year 3, pupils support their work in science by collecting data about animals. They use the data to answer straightforward questions and to produce bar charts.

122. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported. Work is very carefully matched to provide them with achievable challenges, which interest and motivate them, and they make good progress in relation to their prior attainment.

123. Pupils' attitudes to mathematics are good at both key stages. At Key Stage 1, pupils listen well to their teachers, and readily help and support each other. At Key Stage 2, pupils are capable of more sustained concentration, and they respond well to the teachers and to each other. They share equipment readily and clear away sensibly. The good relationships that exist across the school enable the pupils to work and co-operate well, and there is a purposeful atmosphere in lessons. The pupils' positive attitudes enhance progress, and they take pride in their work.

124. The school is effectively introducing the National Numeracy Framework, beginning lessons with a period of oral work and ending with a brief plenary session. The introductory activities are well organised, with teachers using a variety of strategies to develop the pupils' understanding of basic number skills. This is having a beneficial effect on progress and is raising pupils' confidence.

125. Overall, the quality of teaching is good at both key stages. This is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection, when teaching was described as satisfactory. At Key Stage 1 all of the lessons observed were good, and two thirds of lessons at Key Stage 2 were good or better. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. When teaching is effective the teachers generally have good subject knowledge, and learning is carefully reinforced at the end of lessons. Teachers give appropriate praise and encouragement, and use a wide range of questioning to challenge their pupils' thinking and extend their learning. Teachers maintain high standards of behaviour and have good relationships with their pupils. Teachers' planning is detailed and is appropriately linked to the National Numeracy Strategy. In many lessons there is a variety of interesting activities based on previous learning. However, in the less effective lessons at Key Stage 2 some activities are over directed by the teacher, and do not provide enough opportunities for the higher-attaining pupils to extend their learning.

126. The very recently appointed co-ordinator is knowledgeable and enthusiastic, and provides useful guidance for the staff. The policy and the good scheme of work have been effectively reviewed to bring them in line with the National Numeracy Strategy. There are good systems in place for assessment and recording of pupils' progress. However, the school is aware that the portfolio of examples of pupils' work, matched against National Curriculum levels, needs updating in order to ensure the accuracy and consistency of teachers' assessments. Assessment opportunities are included in teachers' weekly plans, and teachers use assessment well to plan subsequent work and to alter the composition of groups within classes.

127. The school has a good range of easily accessible resources, which are well organised and of sound quality.

133. **Science**

128. At the end of Key Stage 1, the 1998 results based on teacher assessments of seven year olds show that when compared with national benchmarks, the number of seven year-olds reaching Level 2 or above was below average, but the number reaching the higher Level 3 was very high. Inspection evidence suggests that pupils in Year 2 are currently on course to achieve standards that are above national expectations. This is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection report. Data provided by the school shows that results in the 1999 assessments were broadly similar to those of 1998, although no national comparisons can yet be made.

129. The 1998 test results at the end of Key Stage 2 show that the percentage of pupils achieving the national targets of Level 4 and the higher Level 5 were close to the national average. Performance data from previous years shows that standards at Key Stage 2 were above national figures in 1996 and 1997, but dipped in 1998. Standards in 1998 were broadly in line with national averages when compared to all schools, but very high in comparison with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. This is supported by inspection evidence, which suggests that attainment is broadly in line with the national average. These judgements are similar to the findings of the previous inspection report. Evidence indicates that the small 1998 cohort contained a high proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs. Results of the 1999 tests are better, but cannot yet be compared against a national average since the data is not available.

130. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is above national expectations. Pupils in Year 2 can name the parts of an eye and recognise the importance of sight. They know about different sources of light, and most understand the need for scientific tests to be carried out in a fair way. They are able to make sensible predictions, and draw simple conclusions from their experiments. For example, some pupils carried out eye tests using optical charts and understood that it was important for each individual to stand the same distance from the chart. Others used microscopes to enable their eyes to study the surface features of familiar objects in detail. Some used the computer to find out about the structure of the eye, and were able to name the lens, pupil and iris.

131. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is in line with national expectations. Pupils in Year 6 carefully carry out experiments and investigations. They recognise the need for fair tests, and select appropriate apparatus for adequate observations and measurements. For example, when pupils were measuring the friction generated by the soles of different brands of sports shoe they ensured that the tests were fair and tested a number of different types of shoes. They make predictions when it is appropriate to do so, present their ideas through the use of diagrams, graphs and charts, and carefully use appropriate scientific vocabulary.

132. Pupils in Key Stage 1 make good progress, in particular lower attaining pupils, including those identified as having special educational needs. This is because of the way in which teachers plan their lessons and carefully identify what is to be learned. Good scientific habits

are encouraged from an early age. Teachers try to ensure that the work planned is interesting and builds effectively on pupils' natural curiosity about their environment. For example, pupils in Reception and Year 1 know that plants need water and sunlight to grow. They explore and recognise features of living things, and can identify similarities and differences between animals and people, and use appropriate scientific terminology.

133. Progress at Key Stage 2 is satisfactory. Pupils make sound progress in the consolidation of skills, knowledge and understanding across the key stage. For example, pupils in Year 3 can use tests to measure the strength of magnets. They begin to make simple generalisations about physical phenomena, and higher-attaining pupils make suggestions for re-testing. In Years 4 and 5, pupils continue to build on their knowledge of friction and understand that it is a force, which slows objects. They recognise the need for fair tests, and provide explanations for recorded measurements. Pupils record their observations using simple diagrams and tables, and draw simple conclusions. However, there are fewer opportunities for higher-attaining pupils to plan their own work and become independent learners.

134. Pupils' attitudes to work in science are good at both key stages. In the great majority of lessons, pupils sustain good levels of concentration and perseverance. Relationships are good, and they collaborate well together. Pupils sustain interest throughout lessons and take pride in their achievements. They respond well to teachers' questions, and respect each other's views and opinions. Pupils became restless during one lesson because it was too long for them to sustain their concentration.

135. The quality of teaching in science is satisfactory overall, and is broadly in line with the findings of the previous inspection. At Key Stage 1 the quality of teaching is good overall. At Key Stage 2 all lessons were satisfactory. One unsatisfactory lesson was observed at Key Stage 1. Teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding, and in the most effective lessons communicate this to their pupils. They check the understanding of concepts and ideas regularly, and are enthusiastic in their teaching. At Key Stage 1, lessons are generally well structured, expectations are usually high and all pupils, including those of higher attainment, are suitably challenged. In these lessons the teachers ensure that effective use is made of time, and work is well matched to pupils' abilities. In the single unsatisfactory lesson at Key Stage 1 the lesson was overlong and the organisation was too complex. At Key Stage 2, scientific investigations are very closely 'directed' by most teachers, thus ensuring that important concepts are taught to all pupils. Planning for the lower-attaining and average pupils is good, and work is carefully matched to their individual needs. However, planning does not generally take sufficient account of the needs of the higher-attaining pupils in providing them with opportunities to plan their own work and become independent learners. Good emphasis is placed on the use of scientific language, and sound use is generally made of a period in which learning is reviewed at the end of lessons.

136. Leadership in science is satisfactory. The recently appointed co-ordinator has a good understanding of science and has a clear vision for the development of the subject. The curriculum is satisfactory and meets the statutory requirements for science. Considerable work has been undertaken to improve the curriculum since the last inspection. Opportunities for pupils to investigate and experiment are now clearly identified within planning, and there are plans to develop more open-ended investigations. The overall time allocation to science is appropriate. However, its allocation within the teaching timetable sometimes results in some lessons that are overlong.

137. Assessment is good overall. The teachers keep detailed records, which allow the progress of every pupil to be tracked carefully and enable targets to be set for further improvement. However, the school is aware that its portfolio of examples of pupils' work in science needs updating in order to ensure the accuracy and consistency of teachers' assessments. Assessment opportunities are included in teachers' weekly plans, and teachers use assessment well to plan subsequent work and to alter the composition of groups within classes.

138. There is good equality of access and opportunity for all pupils, including those with special educational needs. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in the classroom. They have full access to the curriculum, and make very good progress in relation to their prior attainment, achieving standards that are close to those expected of pupils of similar ages.

139. Resources are satisfactory in range and number to meet the needs of pupils at both key stages. The accommodation is adequate, and is used well by the staff to maximise learning opportunities.

145. OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

145. Information technology

140. At the time of the last inspection, standards in information technology were 'Commensurate with the national standards at both key stages'. However, attainment in information technology is now below national expectations at the end of both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. This occurs because pupils have previously not received their full entitlement to the breadth of the National Curriculum programmes of study, and have not been able to systematically develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in all aspects of the subject year by year. To an extent, this shortcoming has been caused by lack of suitable hardware in previous years.

141. Improvements in information technology are one of the school's priorities, and there is a detailed and useful development plan extending to 2002. New ranges of skills are being successfully introduced, including access to the Internet.

142. There were very limited opportunities to see direct teaching of whole class or group lessons in information technology during the inspection. The evidence gathered was obtained through some observations of pupils using information technology equipment, from scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' plans, and through discussion with pupils. There was insufficient evidence to make a judgement about the quality of teaching.

143. At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils in Year 2 enter text into simple word processing packages and produce sentences that communicate meaning. They use a multi-media computer to support their work in science and mathematics, and can successfully select different icons, using a mouse. At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils in Year 6 can enter text into word processing packages, successfully select appropriate fonts, and change the properties of text, including size, style and spacing. They can analyse data and ask questions using complex searches. For example, pupils used questionnaires to collect views about the local environment from local residents. They successfully entered the information into a data handling package, and presented the results by using appropriate formats such as line, bar and pie charts.

144. Progress is now sound within the range of activities that have been introduced across both key stages. Higher rates of progress are not possible because of the limited number of computers available within the classrooms; this significantly reduces the available time for individual pupils to practise new skills and to develop information technology competencies. Progress overall is unsatisfactory since pupils have been unable to develop their skills in all aspects of the subject year by year. This is because previously there was a limited range of suitable hardware and a lack of a comprehensive scheme of work across both key stages. In Year 1, pupils are introduced to simple word processing skills, including the use of a keyboard and mouse. Pupils in Year 3 continue to develop their keyboard skills, and change the size of fonts and the colour of their work when designing invitation cards. They choose effects that match their purposes so that the graphics and the text complement each other. Pupils are introduced to simple databases to support their work in mathematics. Pupils in Year 4 continue to develop their skills in data handling. They practise their word-processing skills, and many are beginning to successfully merge text and graphics. Pupils in Year 5 can store information in simple databases, and are developing their understanding that data can be retrieved, interrogated and displayed in different formats. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to systematically develop modelling, monitoring and control skills across the key stages and to experience the use of spreadsheets to analyse data.

145. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by teachers, and make good progress in relation to their prior achievement.

146. Pupils' attitudes to information technology are always good. On the occasions when pupils were observed using computers, they worked well either individually or in small groups. They sustained satisfactory levels of concentration on their tasks and treated equipment sensibly.

147. The previous scheme of work was unsatisfactory, since it was insufficiently broad and balanced and provided little guidance for non-specialist teachers. However, the school has devised a good new scheme of work based on guidelines received from the national Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. The detailed planning of new units of work is nearing completion. The co-ordinator is wisely planning to ensure that information technology will be clearly identified within all schemes of work.

148. Leadership is good. The recently appointed co-ordinator is knowledgeable, and has worked very hard to support colleagues with the introduction of new curricular initiatives. She has a clear vision for the development of the subject.

149. Assessment is good overall. The co-ordinator has recently successfully introduced a recording format, and teachers regularly document pupils' attainment. Systems have been developed to ensure that assessment data is properly evaluated. The co-ordinator is collecting a portfolio of examples of pupils' work against which all teachers can standardise their judgements.

150. The quality of hardware is good, but there are still not enough machines to enable the National Curriculum to be delivered effectively. The very recently purchased multi-media machines are of good quality but have only recently been introduced into classrooms. The school has no policy for the systematic replacement of hardware.

156. Art / Design and technology

151. Work in these two subject areas is closely integrated within the school. Owing to the way in which the timetable was arranged, only two art lessons were observed, and no lessons in design and technology were seen. Owing to the timing of the inspection, almost all of the artwork on display was completed during the previous academic year and very few examples of design and technology were available. Judgements are based on the available evidence, from the two lessons observed, from documentation scrutinised and from interviews with teachers and discussions with pupils.

152. Pupils make satisfactory progress in art at both key stages, and in Years 2 and 6 they achieve standards normally expected of pupils of similar ages. Planning documents and discussions with pupils indicate that progress is slower in design and technology but is broadly satisfactory. The very limited number of designs available for scrutiny, together with photographic evidence of completed work, indicate that average standards are achieved in design and technology at the end of both key stages. These findings are similar to those reported at the time of the previous inspection in 1996.

153. Pupils develop sound skills in art, using a variety of media, as they progress through both key stages. At Key Stage 1, they carefully produce finger printing, colourful stencil work on fabric, collage, observational drawings with pencils and chalk, and paintings. The drawings are generally well detailed and the paintings show satisfactory control and composition. At Key Stage 2, a broadly similar range of work is produced. The two lessons observed both followed a theme of 'Shape' and were closely linked to history topics being studied. Pupils in

Year 3 composed effective abstract designs from their observations of Roman armour, while pupils in Year 6 produced good interpretations of everyday life in school in the style of an Aztec Codex. The limited range of evidence available in design and technology included colourful 'Technicolour Dreamcoats' and the designs produced by pupils in Year 3 during the previous academic year. Paper patterns were carefully shaped and pinned to pieces of material before the final 'Dreamcoats' were accurately cut out and decorated to match the original design. Very good quality board games on a 'Snakes and Ladders' theme were well finished and carefully presented.

154. Pupils' attitudes to art are good. They listen attentively to teachers' instructions and treat materials carefully. They sustain good levels of concentration and clear away sensibly at the end of the lessons. No judgements can be made about pupils' response to design and technology.

155. No judgements can be made about the quality of teaching in design and technology at both key stages and in art at Key Stage 1. At Key Stage 2, the quality of teaching in art is satisfactory overall. One of the lessons observed was of significantly better quality than the other. In this lesson good use was made of technical language, and the clear instructions given, together with a good demonstration of the required technique, left pupils in no doubt about what they had to do.

156. In art lessons good support is provided for pupils with special needs in the form of individual attention, the use of praise, and the value placed on their efforts. As a result, they work hard and achieve standards in line with those of their classmates. No judgement can be made about the effects of special needs provision in design and technology.

157. The planned curriculum in both subjects is sound. In art, the recently produced scheme of work sets out clear guidance for teachers in the progressive development of pupils' skills, and maps out when topics such as line and shape, pattern, form and space, tone and texture are to be taught. Good links are made to the study of the work of famous artists as part of these topics. In design and technology, the guidelines produced by the national Qualifications and Curriculum Authority have been used as a scheme of work. In both subjects the impact of the schemes on the quality of pupils' learning cannot yet be evaluated. Resources are generally adequate and in good condition.

163. **Geography / History**

158. There were very few opportunities to observe geography and history lessons during the inspection because of the way that the curriculum in these subjects is planned. Evidence was mainly gained from discussions with staff and pupils and a scrutiny of pupils' past work. There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement about teaching.

159. By the end of Key Stage 1 and 2, pupils' attainment in geography and history is in line with that expected for pupils of a similar age, and they make satisfactory progress. Standards are broadly similar to those found at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils in Year 6 know about everyday life in the Aztec Empire, and collect information from a careful study of artefacts. In geography they compare aspects of life in Victorian times, particularly with reference to Runcorn. They use their mapping skills to compare town maps from the

nineteenth with those of the twentieth century, and observe the changes that have occurred within the community. They use their numeracy skills to construct accurate block graphs of population growth and its subsequent decline. Year 4 pupils study how settlements develop over time, and understand why the Vikings invaded and settled in Britain. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 know about some famous people from the past, including Guy Fawkes and Florence Nightingale.

160. Key Stage 1 pupils are making satisfactory progress in developing their understanding of change over time, and are beginning to use historical vocabulary such as 'now', 'then' and 'long ago'. At Key Stage 2 progress is satisfactory. Pupils understand the importance of evidence in history and the significance of 'time lines'. However, pupils do not fully understand that historical evidence can be biased or can be interpreted in different ways. Through enjoyable practical activities such as a 'Victorian School Day', pupils' understanding of the quality of everyday life in past times is greatly enhanced. On occasions, over-prescriptive teaching of older and higher-attaining pupils does not encourage pupils towards independence in their learning, and progress slows. In both key stages, pupils with special educational needs are making good progress, with well-targeted support.

161. Most pupils show a great interest in geography and history, particularly with reference to their own town. At both key stages pupils generally listen attentively and concentrate appropriately. They talk with enthusiasm about the work they are doing and are proud of what they can achieve.

162. Planning is soundly based on the materials provided by the national Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. Procedures for assessing the progress of pupils are satisfactory. However, there is no systematic monitoring of whole school standards in history or geography, since the co-ordinator does not have time to monitor teaching and learning in the classrooms. The school has adequate reference books, posters, globes, maps, and a selection of software for use in the new multi-media computers. The curriculum is enhanced by good opportunities for local fieldwork, including visits to local places of interest such as Tattenhall.

168. **Music**

163. Owing to the small number of classes and the way in which the timetable was organised, it was only possible to observe two music lessons during the course of the inspection. Judgements are based on the evidence of these lessons together with interviews with pupils, scrutiny of documentation and discussions with teachers.

164. Attainment in music at the end of both key stages is below what is normally expected of pupils in Years 2 and 6. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make slow progress. This is because they are not experiencing a broad and balanced curriculum, as some areas of the subject are not being regularly taught. These inspection findings contrast strongly with those of the previous inspection when standards were reported as

being in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1 and above expectations at the end of Key Stage 2. This situation has occurred because changes in staffing resulted in the loss of expertise in this subject at a time when the curriculum was being adjusted to accommodate the greater emphasis being placed on literacy and numeracy. The planned curriculum is sound, and is based on a commercially produced scheme of work. However, it is inconsistently used.

165. In the single lesson observed in Key Stage 1, pupils in Year 2 made simple evaluations of sounds played on a tape recorder and displayed limited skills in using a variety of percussion instruments to imitate these sounds. In the single lesson observed in Key Stage 2, pupils in Year 3 were learning the names of a variety of percussion instruments and in some cases needed to be shown how to play them. Only about half of the pupils were able to accurately differentiate between notes played by the teacher on tuned percussion instruments. In both of these lessons, the standards achieved by pupils were well below what is normally expected of these age groups and it was evident that class music lessons of this type have not previously featured regularly on the school timetable. Further discussions with pupils and staff showed that only singing features regularly on the timetable, particularly when pupils are learning or practising hymns to be sung at mass or in assembly. During these lessons, percussion instruments are sometimes used to provide an accompaniment. However, opportunities for pupils to compose music are very limited, and skills in musical appreciation are underdeveloped.

166. In the two lessons observed, the pupils' response was satisfactory overall, although on occasions they became over-excited and their teachers needed to remind them about their conduct. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Both lessons were well prepared and teachers made the most of limited resources. In one lesson, the teacher's subject knowledge was less secure and as a result the learning objectives lacked precision and clarity.

167. Good efforts are made to ensure that pupils have opportunities to take part in activities such as a recent 'musical workshop' held at the school by professional musicians, and to experience concert performances. Opportunities are also provided for pupils to sing in the school choir, and extracurricular recorder lessons are planned.

168. The newly appointed subject co-ordinator is enthusiastic and suitably qualified and provides sound leadership. She has a clear understanding of the steps that need to be taken to raise standards. The stock of small percussion is in good condition. The instruments are well stored and are easily accessible, but are limited in number. In both of the lessons observed, the teachers needed to ensure that all pupils were able to take turns in handling and using what was available. There are a few instruments of non-western origin, but no large instruments such as drums or xylophones.

174. Physical education

169. Pupils at both key stages are developing their physical skills satisfactorily through a broad range of activities. At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils attain standards normally expected of pupils of a similar age. Owing to the way in which the timetable was arranged, no lessons were observed at the end of Key Stage 2 and therefore no judgement can be made about pupils' attainment. Standards at Key Stage 1 are similar to those found at the time of the

previous inspection in 1996.

170. Pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 1. In a dance lesson for Year 1 pupils on the theme of 'The Greedy Zebra', pupils demonstrated control and balance appropriate to their age as they gave their own interpretations of animal movements. Pupils in Year 2 jump and skip with reasonable co-ordination, but a significant minority are unable to maintain balance and control sufficiently well to be able to hop. The majority of pupils in this year group have developed sufficient hand-eye co-ordination to enable them to throw and catch over short distances with reasonable precision. Skills continue to develop satisfactorily at Key Stage 2. Pupils in Year 3 confidently move in a variety of imaginative ways, and when working with a partner, the majority are able to copy movements accurately. All pupils in this year group safely handle gymnastics mats when setting out and clearing away apparatus. By Year 4, pupils have greater skill and control and are able to link movements at different levels and hold balances, using different parts of the body. Almost two thirds of pupils in this year group are able to perform a forward roll with confidence and fluency.

171. Statistics produced by the school show that in the previous academic year, all pupils in Year 6 achieved the national target to swim 25 metres, and almost all pupils in Years 5 and 4 had also achieved this standard. In Year 3 almost 50 per cent of pupils are confident swimmers.

172. Pupils with special needs participate fully and with enjoyment. They receive good support from their teachers and make satisfactory progress. All pupils with special needs are fully integrated into all aspects of the physical education programme.

173. Pupils' attitudes to physical education lessons are satisfactory. Almost all pupils behave well, are attentive, and respond thoughtfully to the challenges set by their teachers. However, a few pupils sometimes behave in an immature way and become over-excited during the lessons. In most cases this is due to lack of clearly established routines for physical education lessons and because some lessons are over-long.

174. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at both key stages. In the best lesson observed, at Key Stage 2, the teacher ensured that a crisp pace was sustained for most of the session and that pupils were well prepared for the lesson through a brisk warm-up. Good routines had been established and pupils were provided with increased levels of challenge as the lesson developed. In the majority of lessons, effective use is made of pupils to demonstrate good technique, but opportunities are missed to involve pupils in evaluating one another's performance. In many cases, teachers allow pupils to make too much noise while working, and lessons lack pace.

175. The curriculum is sound. Although there is no detailed scheme of work, all teachers use the same reference materials as the basis for their lessons and therefore maintain the necessary progression in the development of pupils' skills. Although sufficient time overall is allowed for the delivery of the curriculum, the way in which the timetable is organised results in a single session each week for dance, games or gymnastics, with a further session allocated for swimming for older pupils. This arrangement is unsatisfactory, particularly for younger pupils, since it results in lessons being over-long and in pupils being unable to sustain their

concentration and levels of participation. The curriculum is enhanced by after-

school clubs in activities such as football, netball and popmobility. A further development is the school's planned participation in the national 'Top Sport' scheme, which will start once staff training has been completed. The lack of adequate grassed areas means that most sporting activities have to take place on the playground, although the school has arranged to make use of facilities available at the adjacent football ground. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and provides sound leadership.

181. PART C: INSPECTION DATA

181. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

176. The school was inspected for four days by a team of three inspectors, one of whom was a lay inspector.

177. During the inspection, 10.5 inspector days were spent in gathering firsthand evidence. The total time spent in direct observation of lessons, sampling pupils' work and talking to pupils was 36 hours.

- Thirty two lessons or parts of lessons were observed;
- Time spent in direct observation of lessons for the under fives was two hours, 30 minutes; other time spent in other observations of learning in the under fives was one hour, 20 minutes;
- Time spent in direct observation of lessons at Key Stage 1 was six hours, five minutes; other time spent in observation of learning at Key Stage 1, through scrutiny of work in books and on display, plus reading interviews, totalled three hours, 40 minutes;
- Time spent in direct observation of lessons at Key Stage 2 was 13 hours, 55 minutes; other time spent in observation of learning at Key Stage 2, through scrutiny of work in books and on display, plus reading interviews and interviews with pupils in some subject areas, totalled eight hours, 30 minutes;
- Discussions were held with pupils in all classes as part of observations, to ascertain their understanding in all areas of the curriculum;
- The quality of pupils' reading was sampled in each year group;
- Work completed by a sample of pupils was scrutinised;
- Interviews were held with groups of pupils to determine their skills, knowledge and understanding in certain areas of the curriculum [eg: design and technology];
- Pupils' work displayed in classrooms and around school was examined;
- An extracurricular literacy session was observed;
- Teachers were interviewed regarding their curricular and other responsibilities;
- Registration sessions, assemblies, break times and meal times were observed;
- Test results and pupils' records were examined;
- School 'baseline' assessment data was scrutinised;
- National Curriculum test data was scrutinised;
- Teachers' planning was examined;
- Teachers' records were examined;
- Policy statements, schemes of work, financial documentation and the school development plan were scrutinised;
- Discussions were held with parents;
- Members of the Governing Body were interviewed;
- The headteacher was interviewed;
- The school clerical assistant was interviewed;
- 'Reading Recovery' sessions were observed;
- A pre-inspection meeting was held for parents;
- The opinions of parents were also surveyed through the use of questionnaires.

184. **DATA AND INDICATORS**

184. **Pupil data**

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
YR – Y6	129	0	34	41

184. **Teachers and classes**

184. **Qualified teachers (YR- Y6)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	21.5

184. **Education support staff (YR – Y6)**

Total number of education support staff:	4
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	107.5

Average class size:	25.8
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184. **Financial data**

Financial year:	1998-9
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	£
Total Income	236,037.00
Total Expenditure	235,943.00
Expenditure per pupil	1,760.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	42,046.00
Balance carried forward to next year	42,140.00

184. **PARENTAL SURVEY**

Number of questionnaires sent out:	81
Number of questionnaires returned:	11

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	45.5	54.5	0	0	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	45.5	54.5	0	0	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	20.0	70.0	0	0	10.0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	45.5	45.5	9.1	0	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	54.5	45.5	0	0	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	54.5	27.3	0	18.2	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	27.3	54.5	0	9.1	9.1
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	45.5	27.3	18.2	9.1	0
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	45.5	36.4	18.2	0	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	27.3	63.6	0	0	9.1
My child(ren) like(s) school	45.5	45.5	9.1	0	0