

INSPECTION REPORT

Mersey Park Primary School
Birkenhead

LEA area: Wirral

Unique Reference Number: 105042

Headteacher: Mrs C H Cross

Reporting inspector: Mrs O M Cooper
10859

Dates of inspection: 27 September – 1 October 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 706744

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:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Elm Road Birkenhead CH42 0PH
Telephone number:	0151 647 8197
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr D Selby
Date of previous inspection:	15-18 January 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs O.M.Cooper Registered Inspector	Design and technology Art Music Special educational needs	Attainment and progress Teaching Leadership and management
Mr K. Osborne Lay Inspector		Attendance Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Partnership with parents and the community Staffing, accommodation and learning resources. Curriculum and assessment
Mrs R. Rodger Team Inspector	English Geography Under fives	
Mrs E. McDonald Team Inspector	Mathematics History Religious education Equal opportunities	Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Mr. M. Brammer Team Inspector	Science Information technology Physical education	Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Efficiency of the school

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Main findings

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Number of full-time pupils:	412	plus 33 part-time
Pupils with English as an additional language:	1%	below average
Pupils entitled to free school meals:	56%	above average
Pupils on register of special educational needs:	85	slightly above average
Average class size:	27	

Overall attainment on entry to the nursery and to the reception classes is below that expected for the age of the children with language skills being the weakest area.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- The quality of teaching is good overall and enables pupils to make good progress.
- The school has good procedures for implementing the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. These are helping to raise standards.
- Leadership and management of the school are very good.
- The school provides good value for money.
- Pupils achieve high standards in information technology by the age of eleven.
- Behaviour is good and relationships between pupils and adults are very good and aid pupils' personal development.
- Provision for the support, guidance and welfare of pupils is very good and helps pupils to overcome problems.
- There are very good procedures for assessing pupils' attainment.
- There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities that promotes pupils' physical and social development.

WHERE THE SCHOOL HAS WEAKNESSES

- I. There is no policy for setting homework and pupils and parents are not sure what is expected of them.
- II. There is insufficient emphasis on the development of language skills in the nursery.
- III. The curriculum for children under five in the nursery includes outdoor play but there is no planning for this.

The strengths far outweigh the weaknesses identified during the inspection. The weaknesses will form the basis of the governors' action plan, which will be sent to all parents or guardians of pupils at the school.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION

The action taken in response to the key issues in the last inspection report has been successful and very good improvements have been made. Standards of attainment have risen by the end of Key Stage 2, particularly in English and mathematics. The arrangements for the implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are very good and are benefiting pupils' progress. There has been a notable improvement in the quality of teaching and this is now enabling pupils to make good progress over time, although it will take longer for the full impact of this progress to be evident in national test results.

The curriculum leadership role of the senior management team has been extended to include the effective monitoring of standards and the evaluation of the progress made by individual pupils. There are very good systems for tracking pupils' progress, part of which involves the pupils themselves at Key Stage 2. Financial planning has improved and the school now maintains a balanced budget. Strategic planning is beginning to include measures for the assessment of cost effectiveness, for example the cost of establishing the computer

suite is being monitored against the improvement in pupils' skills in information technology. Standards have risen above average levels in information technology at the end of Key Stage 2. Good use is being made of the computer suite and the range of resources available to aid pupils' progress. There has been a significant increase in resources, especially books to support the teaching of literacy, but the library is still in need of further development when finances permit. The school has the capacity to make further improvement.

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>	A
			<i>above average</i>	B
English	D	A	<i>Average</i>	C
Mathematics	E	C	<i>below average</i>	D
Science	E	D	<i>well below average</i>	E

This information shows that whilst the school's results in English in 1998 were below the national average, when compared with similar schools they were very high. In mathematics and science, the school's results were well below the national average, and in science they were also below those of similar schools. The results in mathematics were broadly in line with the average for similar schools. The school's results of national tests in 1999 showed improvement in all three subjects, with significant improvements in mathematics and science, but national figures are not yet available for comparison. Inspection findings show pupils' attainment is broadly average in all three subjects and religious education, and is above average in information technology by the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is broadly average in English, mathematics, science, religious education and information technology. On entry to compulsory education the children's attainment is below average in language and literacy, knowledge and understanding of the world and personal and social development, but is average in mathematics, creative development and physical development.

QUALITY OF TEACHING

Teaching in	Under 5	5 – 7 years	7 – 11 years
English	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Good
Mathematics	Satisfactory	Good	Good
Science		Satisfactory	Good
Information technology		Good	Good
Religious education		Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Other subjects	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Good

The quality of teaching is good overall. In 96% of lessons the teaching is satisfactory or better. Over half of all lessons are good and this includes one-tenth that is very good and a small proportion that is excellent. The overall quality of teaching is better at Key Stage 2 than at Key Stage 1 or for the children under five. Most of the good teaching is in literacy and numeracy lessons, although there are examples in most other subjects.

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	Good both in lessons and throughout the school. Pupils are courteous and polite.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance rates are just below the national average. Records show an increasing tendency for family holidays to be taken during term time. A few pupils persistently arrive late.

Ethos*	Very good; a positive ethos that reflects the school's commitment to striving for high standards of work and behaviour. Relationships are very good and staff set good role models.
Leadership and management	Very good; leadership in the school is very strong and management is effective. Good systems are in place to secure school improvement.
Curriculum	Good overall; meets national requirements and gives appropriate emphasis to literacy and numeracy, although the emphasis on language and literacy is not as strong in the nursery. Planning for the progression in pupils' learning is very good at both key stages. Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good.
Pupils with special educational needs	Support for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory at Key Stage 1 and is very good at Key Stage 2 where additional teachers support literacy and numeracy sessions. There is high quality support available for individuals and groups of pupils in Years 5 and 6. The school makes appropriate provision for more able Key Stage 2 pupils to work with pupils a year older where appropriate.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Overall provision is good. Provision for pupils' social development is very good, for their moral development is good and for cultural and spiritual development it is satisfactory.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Good overall; additional classroom support assistants have been appointed and will take up their posts very shortly. Adequate accommodation and sufficient resources for learning in most subjects although there is a lack of large equipment for physical education.
Value for money	Good.

**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

- IV. Their children like going to school.
- V. Parents are encouraged to play an active part in the life of the school.
- VI. The school's attitudes and values have a positive effect on the children.
- VII. The school keeps parents informed about what is being taught.
- VIII. The standards achieved by pupils.

What some parents are not happy about

- IX. The amount of homework set.
- X. Provision for pupils with special educational
- XI. The approachability of some staff.

Inspectors' judgements support the parents' positive views. The school's policy on setting homework is not clear to pupils or parents and inspectors agree that a consistent approach in line with an agreed policy is required.

The school makes appropriate provision for more able pupils. Lessons are carefully planned to meet the needs of all pupils with special educational needs, most of which relate to literacy skills. At the time of the inspection the learning needs of the pupils in the nursery who have English as an additional language were not being met, as the induction period was only just complete and external support had not been arranged.

Inspectors observed parents approaching all staff to discuss issues of concern without any difficulty at the beginning or end of the school day.

Key issues for action

In order to continue the improvement made since the last inspection the headteacher, staff and governors need to:

1. Formulate and implement a whole school policy for homework and check that homework is set in accordance with the policy.

(Discussed in paragraph 50)

2. Improve the provision for under fives in the nursery by:

- placing more emphasis on the development of skills in language and literacy;
- making better use of the outdoor play area for children under five through planning activities which will develop the children's physical skills and extend their knowledge and understanding of the world around them.

(Discussed in paragraphs 71-78)

1. In addition to the key issues above, the following should be considered for inclusion in the action plan.

- Increase the range of books available in the school library.

(Discussed in paragraph 62).

- **Introduction**

- **Characteristics of the school**

1.The school serves the Tranmere area of Birkenhead. The majority of pupils come from Victorian terraced housing in the immediate vicinity. Since the last inspection the area served by the school has been reduced with the loss of pupils from larger private houses. Many pupils are from relatively economically disadvantaged backgrounds as unemployment rates are high and almost half the pupils come from single parent families. Over half of the pupils are entitled to receive free school meals, which is well above the national average.

2.There are currently 412 full-time pupils in the main school and a further 33 part-time pupils in the reception year who are not yet five years of age. In addition there are 52 part-time pupils in the nursery. Pupils are admitted to the reception classes in the September following their fourth birthday. Children who will become five before the beginning of March are admitted full time, the younger four year olds attend part-time for the first term.

5.

6. The school has very few pupils from ethnic minority groups although there are three who have English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs is slightly above average. There are 85 pupils on the special educational needs register, with no pupils having a formal statement of need. There is a wide range of ability amongst children on entry to the reception year, with overall attainment being below average.

3.The school aims to educate each child according to their age, ability and aptitude by building good working relationships and developing knowledge, understanding, skills and practical abilities in an increasingly technological world. Current priorities for development and improvement include literacy, numeracy, information technology and nursery education. The school has set challenging targets for English, mathematics, science and information technology up to 2002.

7. **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	21	47	68
7. National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics	
Number of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	Boys	17	14	17	
	Girls	39	38	40	
	Total	56	52	57	
Percentage at NC Level 2 or above	School	82(77)	76(22)	83(52)	
	National	80(80)	81(80)	84(84)	
7. Teacher Assessments		Reading	Mathematics	Science	
Number of pupils at NC Level 2 or Above	Boys	18	17	13	
	Girls	37	40	32	
	Total	55	57	45	
Percentage at NC Level 2 or above	School	81(30)	83(73)	66(77)	
	National	81(80)	85(83)	86(85)	

Attainment at Key Stage 2¹

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for latest reporting year:		Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		1998	24	42	66
7. National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science	
Number of pupils at NC Level 4 or Above	Boys	11	8	10	
	Girls	26	14	17	
	Total	37	22	27	
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	57(42)	34(32)	42(67)	
	National	65(63)	59(62)	69(68)	
7. Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science	
Number of pupils at NC Level 4 or Above	Boys	10	8	14	
	Girls	21	18	22	
	Total	31	26	36	
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	48(27)	41(30)	57(47)	
	National	65(63)	65(64)	72(69)	

.....
¹ Percentage in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

7. **Attendance**

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:	Authorised	School	%
	Absence	National comparative data	7.1
	Unauthorised	School	5.7
	Absence	National comparative data	0.1
			0.5

7.

7. **Exclusions**

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:		Number
	Fixed period	1
	Permanent	0

7. **Quality of teaching**

Percentage of teaching observed which is:		%
	Very good or better	11
	Satisfactory or better	96
	Less than satisfactory	4

7. **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

7. **Educational standards achieved by pupils at the school**

7. **Attainment and progress**

4. Since the last inspection, the action taken to raise pupils' attainment has been very successful, with the outcomes being most noticeable in the Key Stage 2 National Curriculum test results in 1999. At Key Stage 1, taking the three years 1996 to 1998 together, the figures show that the performance of the pupils was well below the national average in reading and mathematics and was very low in writing. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics at Key Stage 1 have risen steadily each year since 1997, with the 1998 results being just above the national average in reading and mathematics, and close to, but just below the national average in writing. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher level was close to the national average in reading and mathematics and was above it in writing. In science, there was a dip in results in 1998, but teachers' assessments showed an improvement in 1999. When compared with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, results are well above average in reading and mathematics and are above average in writing. The same picture of improving trends is evident in the Key Stage 2 results which show improvement in English, mathematics and science each year from 1997, with the exception of science in 1998. The school had been without a coordinator for the subject and the drive for improvement was temporarily lost. Taking the Key Stage 2 results for 1996 to 1998 together, the figures show that the performance of pupils was well below the national average in English, mathematics and science. The 1999 results show further improvement and are close to, but just below, the 1998 national average for pupils reaching the expected level in English by the age of eleven. The 1999 results in mathematics show a significant improvement, with well over half the pupils reaching the expected level. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher level was below average in English, mathematics and science in 1998. When the Key Stage 2 results for 1998 are compared with those of similar schools, pupils' results in English remain well above average, in mathematics they are average and in science they are below average. The action taken following the last inspection focused initially on raising attainment in English and then mathematics and this is reflected in the pattern of results. Inspection findings indicate the school is continuing this pattern of improvement but it will take a little longer for the full impact of the improvements to become evident in the end of key stage tests. There are no significant differences in the attainment of boys and girls at either key stage.

5. The assessment of children soon after entry to the nursery and again on entry to the reception classes shows overall attainment at both points to be below average, with language and social skills being the weakest areas. The majority of children make satisfactory progress over time in all areas of learning, except for some children with learning needs, notably those who have English as an additional language who do not receive adequate support to enable them to make satisfactory progress. The induction period had only just been completed at the time of the inspection and external support for these children was still being arranged. On entry to compulsory education, the children's attainment is at the level expected nationally for their age in mathematics, creative development and physical development, but in language and literacy, personal and social development and knowledge and understanding of the world, the children's attainment is below the expected level.

6. Inspection findings show that pupils' attainment in all aspects of English is broadly average at the end of both key stages. Overall progress in lessons and over time at Key Stage 1 is satisfactory in speaking and listening and reading and is good in writing. At Key Stage 2, most pupils make good progress in all aspects of the subject and there is evidence of pupils with special educational needs making good progress and being taken off the register. Following the previous inspection the school concentrated on improving pupils' reading skills and this has aided their progress and attainment in writing. Pupils have a limited range of vocabulary on entry but make good progress in acquiring subject specific and general vocabulary. By the end of Key Stage 1, most pupils speak clearly and are able to communicate their thoughts, ideas and needs. The literacy hours are supporting the development of their skills in spelling, which they use in their writing. They are able to write simple stories by the end of the key stage. Pupils build systematically on their reading and writing skills at Key Stage 2. They use their reading skills to research information from computers and reference books. Their writing shows some thought for the person reading it, with examples of effective use of persuasive language in descriptions of Tudor Houses for sale in Year 4. By the end of the key stage pupils can compare and contrast several novels by the same author and write detailed accounts and narratives. Lessons in other subjects such as history and design and technology support the development of pupils' literacy skills. Throughout the school handwriting is neat and written work well presented.

7. In mathematics, pupils' attainment is average at the end of Key Stage 1 and confirms the national test results of recent years. Pupils make good progress in lessons and over time and this includes those with special educational needs. By the end of the key stage pupils can carry out a range of mental and written calculations. They understand the properties of two-dimensional shapes and can use standard and non-standard measures. Pupils make satisfactory progress in acquiring mathematical language and use their understanding of numbers when solving problems in numeracy sessions. Pupils continue to make good progress at Key Stage 2, both in lessons and over time and build on their knowledge and understanding. Many pupils express their liking for mathematics lessons and this helps increase their rate of progress. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils have a secure understanding of the four rules of number, and some understanding of probability, fractions, percentages and decimals at the appropriate level for their age. They continue to acquire and widen their range of mathematical language.

8. Inspection findings in science confirm the teachers' assessments in 1999 which showed just over four fifths of pupils reaching the expected level for seven year olds. The pupils' attainment is broadly average for pupils reaching the expected level, but is below average for pupils reaching the higher level at the end of Key Stage 1. No pupils achieved the higher level in 1998 or 1999 and inspection findings confirm this pattern. Pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons and over time, both in developing skills in investigation and experimentation and in acquiring knowledge. Progress improves at Key Stage 2 and is good overall. At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment is broadly average. There was a significant improvement in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level for eleven year olds in 1999 which rose to over two thirds, with approximately one tenth of pupils reaching the higher level. Inspection findings confirm the most recent results. Pupils have a clear understanding of the principles of fair testing.

9. There has been an improvement in standards in information technology at Key Stage 2. At the time of the last inspection attainment was judged to be average at the end of Key Stage 1 and standards have been sustained at this level. At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment was judged to be below average at the time of the last inspection but, as a result of the effective use of the computer suite, pupils' attainment is now above average. Weaknesses in controlling and modelling have been remedied with appropriate resources now available to cover this part of the programme of study. Staff development has been a critical factor in securing this improvement and enabling pupils at both key stages to make good progress in lessons and in recent years. Pupils of all abilities are confident in using a range of programs appropriate for their ages and in accessing and storing information.

10. In religious education, the previous inspection judged pupils' attainment to be average at the end of both key stages, with no identified weaknesses. Standards have been sustained at average levels at both key stages and in line with the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. Overall progress is satisfactory at both key stages. Pupils make satisfactory progress in developing their personal relationships at Key Stage 1 and begin to understand the main festivals and ceremonies of the Christian faith and other major world religions. Pupils continue to build on their experiences and deepen their understanding of Christianity and other major world religions at Key Stage 2 and develop some understanding of the impact of religion on people's daily lives. Pupils' ability to reflect on the stories they hear varies among the classes according to the emphasis given to this by teachers.

11. In art, design and technology and geography, pupils make satisfactory progress at both key stages. In history, music and physical education pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 1 and good progress at Key Stage 2 where the proportion of good quality teaching is higher. Pupils build on their prior attainment as they mature and acquire knowledge and skills and deepen their understanding. Pupils' progress in history and geography at Key Stage 2 has improved since the last inspection when progress in acquiring knowledge was slow leading to them gaining insufficient knowledge over the key stage.

12. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress towards their targets at Key Stage 1 and good progress at Key Stage 2 where there is a higher level of support from qualified teachers. In Years 5 and 6, there is additional support for individuals or groups of pupils in literacy and numeracy lessons and some of this support is of a high quality and enables pupils to make very good progress towards their targets. The pupils' attainment is in line with their capabilities. Where higher attaining pupils work with older pupils in mathematics their progress is also good and these pupils' needs are well provided for.

13. A large amount of statistical information is now available to the school from a range of tests including National Curriculum and other standardised tests. This is effectively analysed by the deputy headteacher to

pinpoint the areas in need of development and improvement. Targets have been set for individual pupils and classes by the end of each key stage and these include targets for information technology and science as well as English and mathematics. The targets are reviewed annually in the light of the transient nature of the population and the pupil turnover in each year group. The targets are realistic and challenging. Key Stage 1 targets were not achieved in 1999 due to long term staff absence. The Key Stage 2 target for English was achieved, and the targets for pupils reaching the expected level in science and mathematics were achieved, but the targets for pupils reaching the higher level were not achieved in mathematics or science.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

14. Pupils throughout the school have positive attitudes to their work. They usually listen attentively and respond enthusiastically to their teachers and to one another. Pupils in both key stages settle to work quickly and without fuss. The children under five in the nursery are still settling into school routines, but most are showing a positive attitude to school and work, although concentration spans are short. Pupils work well, both individually and collaboratively in pairs and groups, and support those who find the work difficult. This can be seen during guided reading in the literacy hour and when pupils are using computers. Older pupils develop their capacity for personal study when researching information using computers or reference books. However, there is no homework policy to encourage their capacity for personal study beyond school.

15. The behaviour of pupils, whether in class, in the dining hall or at play is good and they have a well-developed sense of right and wrong. They are conscious of the need to consider their own well-being and that of others. The school's merit system is successful in promoting good behaviour and in producing an atmosphere that is conducive to learning. Most parents agree that the school achieves high standards of behaviour and that this has improved since the last inspection. Pupils report few incidents of bullying or harassment and none were seen during the inspection. There has only been one pupil excluded for unacceptable behaviour in the last year. Pupils are courteous to adults including visitors to the school.

16. Relationships in the school are very good. There are positive relationships between pupils and all the adults and these are one of the school's strengths. The adults are friendly towards and supportive of the pupils. They, in turn are friendly towards each other. Girls and boys work and play well together.

17. Opportunities for personal development are very good. All pupils, through the merit system, help the position of their house team. Many pupils in Year 6 are monitors and assist with the care of younger children as well as showing visitors around the school. Pupils could recall opportunities in the last year when they have shown their initiative and taken responsibility for organising events for charities.

21. Attendance

18. Attendance rates are satisfactory, although slightly below the national average for all primary schools. There has been a slight increase in the rate of unauthorised absence over the past few years, and the school reports an increasing trend of family holidays in term time. The majority of absences are due to illness. Most pupils arrive at school on time, but there are a small number of pupils who frequently arrive late and disrupt lessons for others.

22. Quality of education provided

22. Teaching

19. The action taken in response to the key issue in the previous report has been successful in improving the overall quality of teaching and this is now good. The proportion of lessons which are satisfactory or better has risen from 75% to 96% and the proportion of good lessons has risen from one third to just over a half and includes approximately one tenth which are very good and occasionally excellent. The procedures already used to improve the quality of teaching now form part of the monitoring policy and there is every indication that further improvement is possible.

20. The quality of teaching of children under five is satisfactory overall and is good in just over one fifth of lessons seen in the reception classes. There is no unsatisfactory teaching in this phase. The activities planned in the nursery do not always interest the children as much as they could do. Language and literacy skills are under-emphasised in the planning in the nursery. During the inspection most emphasis was on personal and social skills to enable the children to get on with each other. Language skills are well catered for in the reception classes; literacy hours are adapted well. Personal and social skills are promoted well in daily activities. The planning for daily outdoor play activities is less effective as it does not show the skills to be developed.

21. At Key Stage 1, the teaching is satisfactory overall. Just over one third of lessons are good, but a very small

proportion is unsatisfactory. The examples of good teaching are in all core subjects, history and physical education. The good features are the quality of the lesson planning, the clear explanations of what pupils have to do, the efficient management of resources and the feedback to groups and individual pupils that enables them to make good progress. The unsatisfactory teaching is characterised by inappropriate teaching methods in a literacy hour where the task set for group work did not allow pupils to build appropriately on previous work covered.

22. The most notable improvement in teaching since the last inspection has been at Key Stage 2 where approximately two-thirds of lessons are good, including a small number of excellent lessons and just over one tenth which are very good. This improvement has been achieved through the implementation of the action plan from the last inspection, the support of the Local Education Authority, the determination of the staff to raise standards and their openness in asking for support or advice when necessary. The impact on pupils' attainment and progress is to be seen in the improving trend in national test results particularly at the end of Key Stage 2. The very good lessons are characterised by the brisk pace, continual challenge for pupils through precise questioning, and the correct use of technical vocabulary, for example in Year 4 when pupils were learning the properties of quadrilaterals such as a rhombus and a trapezium. The small number of unsatisfactory lessons resulted from a lack of confidence in delivering the literacy hour and a lack of thorough preparation for lessons.

23. Teachers are competent in teaching the basic skills of literacy and all are confident and competent in teaching the skills of numeracy. They have sufficient knowledge of the other subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education, with most teachers at Key Stage 2 being secure in their subject knowledge. They give of their own time to develop skills in information technology, through working in year teams. Teachers working with children under five have secure knowledge of the nationally agreed learning outcomes, but some activities planned for the children lack interest. In the majority of lessons with under fives staff have reasonable expectations of the children. At Key Stage 1 expectations of work and behaviour are good and at Key Stage 2 they are very good and continually challenge pupils and deepen their knowledge and understanding. However, there are occasions in mathematics and English when expectations are too high and the pupils struggle.

24. Teachers' planning of lessons is satisfactory in the under fives phase and is good at both key stages where there is consistency in the format, but not in the quality. Some teachers clearly link all their lesson plans to National Curriculum programmes of study or the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and this gives a clear focus as to what pupils are expected to learn. Planning for teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is detailed and takes account of the differing ability levels of pupils, with tasks often planned at three levels of difficulty. Few lesson plans contain specific planning for pupils with special educational needs, although the individual education programmes are available in classrooms and followed by teachers. Planning takes place in year groups to ensure all pupils of the same age have the same opportunities and experiences. The aims of lessons are shared with pupils at the beginning and often returned to at the end to check that they have been achieved. Teachers in Year 5 often explain to pupils what they will be doing in the next lesson so they know how their work will be developed.

25. The teachers use a range of teaching methods and structure their lessons in ways that are usually appropriate to the task being undertaken and which are effective in enabling pupils to make progress. The range of teaching methods is wider at Key Stage 2. There is due emphasis being placed on developing pupils' problem solving skills, for example in mathematics, science, and design and technology in Year 5 when having to construct a four-wheeled vehicle from a given set of components. There is a tendency for teachers to do too much of the talking in a small number of lessons with under fives and in Key Stage 1 and this hinders pupils' development of speaking skills. Teachers manage pupils well in lessons and strive to motivate them, especially at Key Stage 2 and this is a strength in the teaching of pupils in Years 5 and 6. Challenging behaviour is swiftly dealt with and disruption for others is kept to a minimum. Time available for learning is used effectively in most lessons, except for under fives where there is often a slow pace. There is time slippage due to the timetables, of which the school is aware; music lessons often follow physical education and pupils arrive late due to the time taken to get dressed. The use of time is generally better at Key Stage 2 than at Key Stage 1 as lessons proceed at a brisk pace. The arrangements made for more able pupils in Key Stage 2 to work with classes containing older pupils is successful in matching the work to the ability of those concerned. The combination of setting the more able pupils and combining the remaining pupils into two parallel groups in mathematics in Years 4 and 5 works well and enables pupils to make good progress. The additional support in literacy hours in Years 5 and 6 also enables pupils in these year groups to make good progress. There are however, occasions when pupils with special educational needs are withdrawn from mathematics lessons for reading instruction and this is not good

practice.

26. Teachers evaluate their lessons each week and make specific comments daily on the pupils' attainments. They make good use of the information gathered about pupils' attainments from their evaluations, marking books, observing them at work and through discussions and plenary sessions, particularly at Key Stage 2. The information is used to plan future tasks, which are usually well matched and challenging for most pupils. Also to discuss with pupils the completion of their 'I can do' sheets. Marking is usually of very good quality and consistent with the school policy. It sets targets for pupils to work towards and provides helpful information as to how work can be improved in the future. Pupils' understand the marking procedures and value the comments and help they provide. The use of the information gathered in the nursery is less evident. Classroom assistants as well as support teachers play a valuable part in assessing the achievements of pupils with special educational needs. The individual education plans are of good quality, have specific targets usually to develop literacy skills and are monitored by the special educational needs coordinator. Where pupils are withdrawn from class to work with the teacher on an intensive reading programme during literacy hours, the teaching is excellent and does much to improve the self-esteem of the pupils as well as developing their reading skills.

27. The school's approach to homework is unclear to parents and pupils. There is reference to homework in the school prospectus, but no policy. Some teachers set homework during the inspection, but the only regular homework reported by parents and pupils was spelling lists and reading. There is a need for a clear, agreed policy for homework to be implemented and applied consistently to extend learning into the home and build on the improvement which have taken place since the last inspection.

31. **The curriculum and assessment**

28. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum overall, that includes all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. At Key Stage 2, the breadth and balance of the curriculum is good, with effective links between subjects that promote pupils' learning. The pupils' intellectual, physical, and personal development are well promoted and they are effectively prepared for the next stage of their education. The curriculum meets the statutory requirements to teach all subjects of the National Curriculum. Arrangements to teach religious education, sex education, and health education are appropriate. Drugs education is taught to older Key Stage 2 pupils. The deputy headteacher has responsibility for monitoring the breadth and balance of the curriculum and has recently introduced an effective policy for the planning of cross-curricular areas of study. The policy provides guidance on the time allocations for all subjects to make sure that units of work are completed in sufficient depth to cover the requirements of the programme of study.

29. In the early years, which includes the nursery and two reception classes the curriculum is planned around the six areas of learning and includes reference to the nationally agreed Desirable Learning Outcomes. Whilst planning takes account of all the areas of learning there is currently too little emphasis placed on language and literacy in the nursery. The admission of children to the nursery had not been completed at the time of the inspection and the emphasis in the first few weeks is on personal and social development. Children in the reception classes are following a modified version of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, although this is not clearly indicated in their weekly planning which is too general and takes too little account of what the children are expected to learn. Children in the nursery have access to a daily outdoor play session, but there is no planning for this, which is a weakness. Procedures for assessing children's attainment on entry to school and to the nursery are satisfactory. Parents of the nursery children are involved in the process and complete a useful entry profile. A baseline assessment is carried out for all children on entry to statutory education. The results of this provide information which is used to assess the value added by the school at the end of the reception year and at the end of Key Stage 1.

30. A high priority is given to the teaching of English throughout the school, both in the literacy hour and in additional English lessons to support other foundation subjects. For example, pupils are taught how to write notes and to write narrative as part of their history lessons. The school has had additional support for the teaching of literacy from the LEA. A consistent and effective planning format is adopted for the teaching of literacy in each class.

31. There are policy documents for all subjects. The policies for geography and history are out of date and do not reflect the nationally recommended reductions in coverage of the programmes of study. Other policies are of satisfactory quality and provide helpful information. Very good attention to continuity in teaching and

progression in pupils' learning is a consistent feature in the planning for the core subjects throughout the school. The curriculum is enhanced considerably by an extensive number of extra-curricular activities, such as a drama club, infant and junior choirs, and games and gymnastic clubs, which are attended by large numbers of pupils throughout the year. Year 5 and 6 pupils attend a residential outdoor pursuit centre in Wales where they have the opportunity to go climbing and canoeing.

32.All pupils, including those with special educational needs have equal access to the curriculum. The previous inspection reported that the less and more able pupils were insufficiently challenged due to low expectations. This is no longer the case, and all pupils are usually appropriately challenged in lessons.

33.Arrangements for pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory overall and are very good at Key Stage 2. They fully meet the requirements of the Code of Practice for these pupils. Individual education plans are regularly reviewed and contain clear targets. The pupils are well supported in the classroom, particularly at Key Stage 2. At Key Stage 1 pupils are less well supported and at times are provided with work which is too difficult. Children under five who have English as an additional language do not receive any external support.

38. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment are very good. An extensive amount of assessment is carried out throughout the year to provide useful information to inform teachers' planning. Effective use is made of a range of assessment data from teaching to group pupils. In mathematics, the pupils are set according to their prior attainment. Detailed records of the progress of individual pupils are kept in the form of 'I can do' record sheets, which provide a good indication of individual pupils' levels of attainment in all subjects, apart from information technology. Each pupil has an individual profile that contains information about testing, reports to parents and indication of the National Curriculum level achieved at different points. In addition, each pupil has a writing file in which individual targets are set. These are informative and useful to teachers in the next class. The reports to parents include specific targets for learning. Lesson plans are evaluated weekly and good use is generally made of pupils' prior attainment as an introduction to lessons, particularly in the literacy hour. A portfolio of annotated samples of pupils' writing is available to support teachers' assessments. The integration of assessment information into the daily work of the school is very good, with effective systems for tracking the progress of individual pupils. The quality of marking of pupils' work is also very good.

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

34.Overall, provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Assemblies and acts of worship are of satisfactory quality, meet statutory requirements and provide adequate opportunities for quiet reflection and prayer. Assemblies and topics studied in religious education provide pupils with an understanding of Christianity and other beliefs. Pupils visit local churches and the clergy from them visit the school to lead assemblies. Pupils celebrate Christian festivals such as Christmas and Harvest.

35.The provision for pupils' moral development is good. Pupils are taught the difference between right and wrong; this is evident in their good attitudes and behaviour. The staff act as very good role models and show clear concern for their pupils. Cross-curricular topics in science and geography provide opportunities for pupils to discuss moral issues in the wider sense, such as conservation and recycling. Pupils demonstrate a respect for the property of others in their handling and use of books, equipment and artefacts in lessons, as well as in the lack of damage to furniture and displayed work.

36.The provision for pupils' social development is very good. Pupils are friendly and well mannered. Adults and visitors are treated with courtesy. Relationships throughout the school are very good. Pupils work together sensibly and feel confident in expressing their views in class discussions. Pupils take responsibilities within their classroom, carrying out small tasks, such as taking registers. Older pupils take more responsibilities in the school community, such as acting as wet playtime monitors who read to younger pupils. The social development of pupils is enhanced though day visits where they are given opportunities to interact with each other and work together, and a residential visit, which widens their experience and offers opportunities for teamwork in a new situation.

37.Arrangements for teaching pupils to appreciate their own and other cultural traditions are satisfactory. Pupils have opportunities to increase their knowledge and understanding of different aspects of art, music and history. They study art from their own culture and others, such as Islamic and Chinese art, as well as the work

of famous artists such as Monet and Lowry. Pupils visit local parks, churches and a synagogue. Visitors to school, such as musicians, artists and authors, enhance the provision and broaden the pupils' experiences.

42. Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

38. Provision for the support, guidance and welfare of pupils is very good overall, and continues to be a strength of the school. All adults working in the school show a concern for the pupils and a wish to provide the best possible educational chances for them. Pupils feel they are well supported and they are encouraged to discuss problems with their teachers.

39. Procedures for monitoring academic progress and personal development are very good. Teachers maintain detailed records of progress, and pupils keep their own records of progress through the National Curriculum up to date on 'I can do' sheets, which is a simple, yet effective system. The school's marking policy ensures that pupils' work is marked constructively and critically, with helpful comments and targets included. Provision for sex education and the welfare of older girls is satisfactory. All teachers in upper Key Stage 2 share the responsibility for girls' welfare. Parents and the school nurse are appropriately involved in teaching both boys and girls about puberty and reproduction in Years 5 and 6. Fathers were recently given the opportunity to attend a session on how to teach their sons about positive parenting.

40. Procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour are very good. Good behaviour is encouraged through an effective system of rewards, house points and good work assemblies. Pupils are well aware of the sanctions that will be applied for serious misbehaviour; they report very little bullying or fighting. The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour, which are met in practice.

41. Procedures for monitoring attendance rates are good. The computerised registration system, which has recently been upgraded, ensures that letters are sent out automatically where no reasons for absence have been given. A support assistant has recently taken over, from the deputy headteacher, the task of checking the registers weekly and following up absences. The school discourages parents from taking family holidays during term time.

42. Procedures for child protection and promoting pupils' well being, health and safety are good. The school has good arrangements for child protection. In addition to the headteacher, two other teachers have received recent detailed training, and all members of staff are aware of the school's requirements. The pastoral meetings system mentioned in the last inspection report provides a regular and effective channel for staff to share concerns about pupils, and a prompt response to a possible concern was noted during the inspection week.

43. Good procedures are in place for promoting health and safety. The school's health and safety policy has recently been revised. It is comprehensive, and covers risk assessment procedures as well as inspection and reporting procedures. The governing body has not yet formally approved the policy. Teachers pay good attention to the safety of pupils during lessons, such as in physical education, or when using overhead projectors, and regularly remind pupils of the need to be careful. The headteacher has received recent training in risk assessment, and has implemented a formal process. Potential playground hazards have already been identified and some remedial action taken. All accidents are correctly recorded and analysed. There are clear procedures for first aid and the administration of medicines, and six members of staff are trained first-aiders. Systems for checking fire extinguishers and electrical equipment are properly in place, but the official fire precautions log is incomplete. Arrangements have been made for the caretaker to receive further training in fire and other safety issues; he responds promptly and effectively to safety issues.

48. Partnership with parents and the community

44. The quality of information provided about the school, and about pupils' work and progress through annual and other reports and parents' meetings is good. Annual reports on pupils are well written, understandable, and give clear targets for improvement. The school prospectus and the annual report from the governors are clear and attractive. A steady stream of newsletters keeps parents well informed of events.

45. The contribution to the pupils' learning through parents' involvement with the work of the school and with their children's work at home is unsatisfactory. There is no homework policy to encourage parental

involvement. Parent helpers are used well to enhance pupils' learning in information technology, art and literacy hours. A new drive to encourage parents to help in class has been initiated this term. Parents raise money to supplement the school's budget, including the voluntary coffee bar which also provides a meeting place before and after school.

46. Enrichment of the curriculum through links with the community is satisfactory, and much the same as at the time of the last inspection. There is a good liaison with two local high schools, providing opportunities for curriculum development, for example in literacy, as well as pupil transfer arrangements. Local clergy make an appropriate contribution to assemblies, and the police and emergency services also play a valuable role. Pupils sing at local churches and old people's homes. Links with industry are limited, but the headteacher is a director of the Tranmere Alliance, a local community group, which has recently been awarded funding to improve the local park. Pupils can now use part of it for playtimes and games, when appropriate. A limited programme of adult education classes operates on school premises, and the local playgroup has the use of a mobile classroom on site.

51. **The management and efficiency of the school**

51. **Leadership and management**

47. The leadership and management of the school are very good. The weaknesses in school leadership identified in the previous inspection, in those areas relating to quality and standards in the curriculum have been remedied. The success of the action taken is evident in the improvement in national test results at the end of Key Stage 2, particularly in the 1999 results. The head teacher gives clear educational direction to the work of the school and provides firm leadership in pursuit of school improvement. The decision to involve Local Education Authority and other external advisors in the school improvement process was prudent and effective. The senior management team and curriculum leaders gained much from the external advisors and are now in a position to support ably the headteacher in monitoring pupils' progress throughout the school. All members of staff have job descriptions that set out their roles and responsibilities precisely and the teachers are clear about their role in school development and improvement. However, the deputy headteacher carries out some duties normally assigned to the school secretary, for example until very recently he has been responsible for maintaining attendance figures and the school fund account. This is inefficient deployment of a senior member of staff. The key features in the improvement have been the sheer hard work and determination to succeed on the part of staff, emphasis on raising the quality of teaching through regular monitoring and the successful implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. There is ongoing evaluation of the impact of the action taken on pupils' performance through careful analysis of test results.

48. The governing body is well informed. They have an appropriate committee structure with minutes of all committee meetings being forwarded to all governors immediately after the meeting. Governors are clear about where the school is heading and the areas that still need to be targeted for improvement. The headteacher's termly reports to governors contain a section on each curricular area prepared by curriculum leaders. All policies are discussed and agreed by governors, often after lengthy discussion and challenge. Some of the governors are actively involved in the daily life of the school supporting staff in classrooms or running the coffee bar. The headteacher, senior management team and governors all work together well for the benefit of the pupils.

49. There are very effective systems for monitoring the quality of teaching which involve the headteacher and deputy headteacher sitting in on lessons. Where support is needed to improve the quality of teaching, curriculum coordinators are informed and appropriate support and guidance is given. Curriculum coordinators are effectively involved in the monitoring process in some subjects by looking at examples of pupils' work. The headteacher and her deputy have a programme for the thorough scrutiny of pupils' workbooks to ensure pupils are making satisfactory progress. All teachers evaluate their own teaching and the success of their planning each week and any problems are passed back to curriculum leaders at review meetings. In this way the curriculum is continually developing to meet the needs of all pupils. Information technology lessons are monitored to check the appropriate software for the year group is being used. The openness of all staff to admit when help is needed and the support offered by other teachers have contributed significantly to the improvements made. Staff work very closely in year groups and as a whole staff. Teachers from year groups were frequently to be seen working in the computer suite early in the morning or late in the evening, supporting each other in the development of their own skills.

50.The school is now achieving considerable success in meeting its curricular aims as well as those concerning pupils' personal development and welfare which is a further improvement since the last inspection. The school's aims, values and policies are reflected in practice and are supported by the large majority of parents. Some whole school policies are out of date and in need of review.

51.School development planning is very good. The plan has continued to focus on the priorities in the action plan in order to continue to raise standards particularly in the basic skills in literacy and numeracy. The current plan identifies relevant areas for development over the next five years and is a good document, sufficiently detailed and easy to follow. School development planning is clearly linked to financial planning and staff development. The plan contains attainment targets for Year 2 and for Year 6 up to 2002. These targets are based on the evaluation of the action to date and analysis of data available to identify areas that require further development. Targets have been set for science and information technology as well as English and mathematics.

52.The ethos of the school reflects its commitment to raising standards through high expectations of the quality of pupils' work and their behaviour; the pupils respond well. The mission statement underpins this commitment. The atmosphere within the school is conducive to learning with very good relationships and equality of opportunity for all pupils, except for those who receive instrumental tuition and sometimes miss parts of lessons. During the inspection pupils with special educational needs were withdrawn from numeracy sessions in Year 5 and this is not good practice. The shortcomings in meeting statutory requirements noted in the last inspection report; the failure to publish national and school test results in the annual governors' report has been remedied and statutory obligations are now met in full.

53.The parents present at the pre-inspection meeting were of the opinion that the school has improved significantly since the last inspection and that standards of attainment, behaviour and improvement to the accommodation are to be commended. The inspectors fully support the parents' views.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

54.The match of number, qualifications and experience of teachers to the demands of the curriculum is good. There is a wide range of expertise and experience, and additional teachers have been employed to permit more intensive teaching in literacy and numeracy lessons. At the time of the inspection, two teachers were on maternity leave, and temporary appointments had been made. The match of the number, qualifications and experience of support staff to the demands of the curriculum is satisfactory, although they are currently linked to Key Stage 1. Additional appointments by way of two classroom assistants for literacy have been made and will enhance provision very shortly when initial training has been completed.

55.Arrangements for the professional development of all staff are very good, and intensive. The staff development programme is clearly linked to national initiatives and the school's needs, which have been defined with the help of independent consultants and the LEA. Appropriate systems for appraisal are in use and a detailed programme of staff development interviews enables staff training needs to be matched against national and local priorities. Newly qualified teachers receive good support. Staff give up their time voluntarily to improve expertise in, for example, information technology.

56.The accommodation is good and enables the effective delivery of the curriculum. Classrooms vary in size, but all are large enough for the number of pupils. The upper hall has been effectively redesigned to become a computer studies suite and library. The junior building has been extensively refurbished and redesigned recently, but the infants' block shows some signs of damp and cracked ceilings. There are insufficient toilets for girls in the junior building, but numbers are predicted to fall which will resolve the problem. Playground space is adequate overall, but split into four separate areas; trees and lawns help to create a pleasant environment for younger pupils, but the upper playground is quite bleak. However, an environmental charity is working with pupils to design and implement improvements.

57.There are sufficient resources overall for the effective delivery of the curriculum. The range of books and equipment in classrooms, especially for literacy, is good. The computer suite with its new computers motivates pupils and enables high standards of research. There are some shortages in resources for history, religious education and science and there is no climbing frame for junior pupils to use in physical education lessons. The central library has benefited from a major weeding out of obsolete books, but now needs major investment as soon as funding is available.

62. The efficiency of the school

58.The last inspection report concluded that with a deficit budget, high staffing costs and generally low standards at the end of Key Stage 2, the school did not offer value for money. The action taken in response to the key issue to maintain a balanced budget and develop strategic planning to include measures of cost effectiveness has been successful. There was a budget surplus of £26,207 carried forward from the last financial year, and the school is on course for a smaller surplus at the end of this financial year.

59.Financial planning procedures are good. The governors are fully involved in setting the budget, making choices between options prepared by the headteacher in discussion with the deputy headteacher and bursar from the LEA. The budgetary plan is closely linked to the priorities in the school development plan and to the staff development plan. The school development plan covers the period to 2002 and is realistic, but lacks some timescales for completion as accurate costings cannot be determined. Expenditure is monitored at each meeting of the full governing body and more frequently by the finance committee. The governors are measuring the cost effectiveness of the computer suite by assessing the extent to which it is raising pupils' attainment and the confidence and competence of the staff. Targets have been set for pupils at the end of the key stages as a way of measuring its effectiveness.

60.There is no additional funding for pupils with special educational needs. The school makes provision to support a significant number of children from within its own budget and does so effectively, through support mostly within the classrooms. Teaching and support staff are deployed satisfactorily, with effective setting arrangements in mathematics for pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6, and additional teacher support for lower attaining pupils during literacy hours in Years 5 and 6. Sometimes support staff sit and observe when waiting for a long introductory whole class session to finish, which is an inefficient use of their time. The deployment of the deputy headteacher to carry out administrative duties is an inefficient use of his time when the school has a

clerical assistant. The use of accommodation is good, with a specialist music room, SEN rooms and computer suite frequently in use. The outdoor play area for children under five is not used effectively to develop the children's physical skills. Resources for learning are used well to make lessons interesting.

61.The day to day financial management is satisfactory. The school's purchasing procedures ensure that value for money is obtained, and there is a clear division in the responsibility for ordering and receiving goods and services. The latest auditor's report made a significant number of recommendations that have been carried out.

62.In relation to the context within which the school works; the progress made by the pupils; the significant improvement in the standards since the last inspection; the generally good teaching, the positive attitudes and very good personal development of the pupils set against the costs per pupil which are broadly average, the school gives good value for money.

67. **PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

67. **Areas of learning for children under five**

63.Children under five are taught in the nursery and in two reception classes. The children enter the nursery in the year in which they are four. All children enter the reception classes in the year they are five. The younger children attend part-time until Christmas. The admission of children to the nursery class was only completed during the week of the inspection. The planning includes a balance between self-chosen and activities directed by adults. The planning for sessions under-emphasises the development of the children's language and literacy skills and does not include planning for outdoor play, although this does take place on most days for children in the nursery. Progress over time is satisfactory in all areas of learning.

68. **Personal and social development**

64.Attainment in personal and social education is below the level expected by five years of age. At the time of the inspection children had only been in the nursery for a short time. They are learning how to play and get on with each other through a wide range of self-chosen activities as well as through the daily routines of the nursery. The children in the nursery take time to respond to instructions from adults. In the reception classes they attend well and frequently listen with good levels of concentration to their teacher. Behaviour is generally good in all classes. There are fewer opportunities for children to develop skills of independence in the nursery. In the reception classes the children work alongside each other sharing equipment. Progress in the nursery is satisfactory and in the reception classes is good and the children grow in confidence. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. The staff support the children well and are good role models. They have daily routines which help the children to settle and feel safe and secure.

69. **Language and literacy**

65.Attainment is below that expected of children of five years of age. On entry to the nursery children have very limited language skills. They have the opportunity to take part in domestic role-play in both the nursery and the reception classes, which provides good opportunities for the children to talk to each other. There is insufficient planning for role-play activities that are an important aspect of language development. The children in the nursery can follow simple instructions and talk about their drawings but few talk in sentences. Writing skills are in the very early stages as the children have difficulty in holding pencils correctly. In the reception classes the children are encouraged to listen to stories and to their teacher. For example, during an introductory session to a literacy hour the children listened with interest and a reasonable level of concentration as the big book was read. In the nursery the children are able to sit and listen to a short story at the end of the session, but are not yet willing to wait for their turn to speak. The children in the reception classes knew the title and author of the book they were reading and some remembered the storyline.

66.Many children lack the confidence to respond in a group situation. They are beginning to know the words of nursery rhymes in the reception classes, but they cannot do this in the nursery. Children enjoy and show interest in books. In the reception classes they take part in shared reading and begin to associate words with print. Many of the children are unable to distinguish between words and pictures. One third of the children can write their name on entry to the reception classes. This is very low and reflects the low attainment on entry to the nursery. A range of opportunities is provided to encourage children to make marks and to develop the dexterity to use a pencil correctly. The children were adjusting well to their new classes at the time of the inspection and enjoyed the activities available to them. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, although the resources used for sharing books in the nursery are unsatisfactory, and planning takes too little account of this area of learning.

71. **Mathematics**

67.Attainment is generally typical of what is expected nationally. Almost all of the children can count to 10, about half of them can count backwards as well. Individual children can identify the four basic shapes and colours. Several children are beginning to understand when a pattern is repeated, which they demonstrated as they alternately threaded large and small beads. They can join in and sing number rhymes and count on. A range of practical activities is provided to help develop understanding of number in the reception classes. The children begin to develop their mathematical vocabulary such as 'less than' and 'more than'. The children

enjoy their work and play, and are beginning to take responsibility and to become independent as they select and put away equipment at the beginning and end of sessions. They listen and behave well.

68.The quality of teaching overall is satisfactory. In the reception classes the teachers effectively support and explain new ideas to the children. Additional staff and parents are effectively deployed to work with small groups. At times time-filling work sheets are given to the children to help them learn the names and properties of shapes. These activities are of little value when they are used for colouring in only. Overall activities in the reception classes particularly challenge the children, and they make satisfactory progress.

73. **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

69.Attainment by the time the children are five is below that expected nationally. The children have very limited language skills and do not readily talk about their experiences. As part of a topic on senses children in the reception classes tasted various foods and used their sense of smell and taste to identify them. In the nursery class the children learn about themselves, how they differ from others and how they have changed since birth. Parental help is used effectively to teach children how to control a programmable toy in the reception class. From daily weather charts the children learn about seasonal changes and weather patterns. In the reception classes the children use their sense of taste and smell to identify common foods such as vinegar and mint rock. They extend their vocabulary, using words such as sour and sweet. Overall progress is satisfactory.

70.The quality of teaching is satisfactory. The children are encouraged to talk about their experiences. Photographs around the nursery indicate that children have used the outdoor environment to grow plants. Generally, too little attention is given to the way in which the outdoor environment can support this area of learning

75. **Physical Development**

71.Attainment is typical of that expected nationally. A small amount of physical activity was observed in both the nursery and the reception classes. In the nursery, children play outside on wheeled toys and climb over barrels. A gymnastics lesson in the reception class provided children with a good level of challenge as they travelled in different ways, on their hands, feet or trunk. The children were able to finish off their sequence of movement with a good posture. They are able to run, jump, hop and skip and can change the speed at which they travel on command. They have a good awareness of space and of those around them. The children enjoy the opportunities to play outside and were very disappointed during one wet day when it was impossible to go out. The children make good attempts at dressing themselves. They can grasp small items of equipment, mould play dough and hold pencils and paintbrushes firmly.

72.The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, but is better in the reception classes where planning identifies the objectives of the physical activities. There are children who get over excited during physical activities, but the teachers manage them well in a quiet, but firm manner.

77. **Creative development**

73.Attainment is typical of what is expected nationally. A range of activities are provided to allow children to explore materials and to paint, for example when moulding play dough and making hand prints. Attainment is typical of what is expected nationally. Most children can use scissors correctly. In the reception classes children cut out and make a jointed figure with a reasonable level of skill. Younger nursery children make a decorated shape with various materials they have glued together. Many of the younger children are still learning how to get on with each other. The role play area provided a good opportunity to do this and on several occasions the girls chased the boys out of this area. They begin to learn simple songs and to play percussion instruments and children in the reception classes can play instruments to accompany their singing .

74.The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, a satisfactory range of activities are provided to develop creativity, as shown by the range of work on display which include collage and painting. The children all painted their own portrait at the end of their time in the nursery class and these are on display in the reception classes. With adult support the children can apply paint without smudging and with appropriate use of colour by the end of their time in the nursery.

79. **English, mathematics and science**

79. **English**

75. Standards in English have improved since the last inspection and are now close to the national average at the end of both key stages. The results of the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 1 show that the school's results in reading were above the expected levels. This is similar to the 1998 national test results. Attainment in writing has improved since 1998 with almost eight out of ten pupils attaining the national expectation. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels in writing is slightly lower than that found nationally, but has improved considerably since the last inspection. The results of the 1998 tests in reading were well above average in comparison with similar schools. The results of the inspection mirror the national results, with a growing proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels in reading. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys or girls.

76. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 in the 1999 National Curriculum tests show six out of ten pupils attaining the expected level. The same proportion of pupils attained the higher levels in 1999 as the previous year. The proportion of pupils who attain the higher levels is smaller than that found nationally. The school's results of the 1998 national tests were well above the average achieved by similar schools, but below the national average. The results represent a considerable improvement on the previous inspection findings and exceed the targets set by the school to improve by a fifth the proportion of pupils reaching the national expectation. The inspection findings are that attainment is slightly higher than the 1999 national tests, particularly in reading. The difference in attainment between boys and girls is insignificant. In some classes boys attain slightly higher than girls. This finding is mirrored in the national tests. Attainment in the past three years has increased markedly year on year. The school has doubled the number of pupils attaining the national expectation in the last four years. Improvement in the current standards in Year 6 can be accounted for by an improvement in the quality of teaching, additional classroom support and the high priority given to teaching English in the school development plan.

77. At the end of Key Stage 1 standards in speaking and listening are in line with national expectations. Frequent opportunities are included in the literacy hour for pupils to recall familiar texts. For example, Year 2 pupils described what had happened in "Peace at Last" with confidence, clarity and enthusiasm. Plenary sessions are generally used effectively to encourage pupils to talk about their work. Whole class games to develop pupils' phonetic skills very effectively develop their listening skills. A weekly achievement assembly provides an additional opportunity to develop oral skills. However, there were missed opportunities for pupils to share their work with the rest of the school as adults told the school about the good work the pupils had done. Progress is satisfactory through the key stage. Pupils with special educational needs generally make satisfactory progress.

78. At the end of Key Stage 2, standards in speaking and listening are broadly in line with national expectations. For example, when asked to suggest story starters pupils confidently expressed their views and challenged the views of others who disagreed with their point of view. Pupils listen attentively to each other and their teacher during the literacy hours. Pupils are encouraged to talk about their understanding of new work. For instance, a pupil described his understanding of the use of brackets confidently. Teachers correct misuse of English and set high expectations themselves of pupils' oral responses to questions. Pupils with special educational needs are encouraged to contribute and are developing increased confidence in making oral contributions in lessons. All pupils, including those with special educational needs make good progress. The school is aware of the need to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills and is including drama in the curriculum for this purpose.

79. Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 are average in reading. High attainers can read fluently and self correct by rereading a sentence. All pupils have a good range of phonic strategies to decode unknown words, which they apply when needed to their independent reading. The use of a shared 'big book' as the main tool to teach reading is very effective in developing pupils' ability to read with good expression and understanding. The word level work in the literacy strategy is very well integrated into the shared text of the week. Generally, pupils are confident about authors and can name several favourite authors. Pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the key stage, although at times the group activities in the literacy hour are too difficult for low attaining pupils who make less progress as a result of the mismatch of the work to their abilities. A range of texts are available as home readers and an effective log of the books read includes comments by parents, the child and the teacher.

80. Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 are average in reading. Progress throughout the key stage is good, with evidence of higher levels of attainment than expected in Years 3 and 4. High attainers read aloud with confidence and accuracy. They have an appropriate range of strategies to decode unfamiliar words, and make particularly good use of the strategy of rereading a sentence to get a sense of it. Pupils can scan texts and make very good use of information technology to gather information for a history topic. For example, a pupil of average ability was able to enter her log in number and find information about Ancient Egypt, which she then saved, with ease, on a file for later use to construct a quiz. Pupils with special educational needs can use a CD-ROM for a similar purpose. A group of less able pupils reading during a guided reading session had few strategies to read unknown words and needed a lot of support as they read "Anne Frank's Diary". Knowledge and understanding of the works of several authors and poets is strong. Year 5 pupils complete an anthology of poetry throughout the year in which they analyse some well-known poems, such as, "Stop all the Clocks".

81. Standards of attainment in writing at the end of Key Stage 1 are in line with the national average. All pupils, including those with special educational needs make good progress. Attainment in lessons and over time is slightly above that of the 1999 national tests. High attainers use punctuation and capital letters well. They can write a story with a clearly defined beginning, middle and ending. Other pupils can write lists of words, forming their letters correctly and are beginning to write several sentences. For example, a group of pupils writing a bedtime rhyme do so reasonably accurately. Shared writing is a regular feature of the literacy hour and is providing a good basis on which to develop pupils' skills, particularly in Year 1.

82. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are in line with national averages in writing. A higher number of pupils are attaining the higher levels than in last year's national tests. Pupils in Year 6 write recipes, poetry, menus, plays and several pieces of persuasive writing. There is a consistent expectation throughout the key stage that work is redrafted and the content, spelling and punctuation are improved. Progress throughout the key stage is good. Year 5 pupils know what a trilogy is. They are aware of the features of a story opening, and know the importance of a story opening, characters, settings and plot and use this knowledge effectively in their own writing. They understand how to move between tenses.

83. Pupils write in a well-formed, cursive style of handwriting. In line with targets to continue to improve standards in writing additional English lessons are held in which higher order writing skills are applied to other subjects. For example, as part of their work on Ancient Egypt, Year 6 pupils are taught how to organise their notes to write a paragraph. In their writing about Tudor homes Year 4 pupils are taught to write using persuasive language. Writing frames of various kinds are used effectively to support pupils' writing, especially those with special educational needs. For example in Year 5, lower attaining pupils wrote several simple sentences correctly spelt and accurately punctuated. They understand the terms prefix and synonym, and use such vocabulary in their lessons easily. The very good progress made by these pupils was directly attributable to the very good support and encouragement of the part time special needs teacher. Pupils respond well to literacy hours, present their work well and say they enjoy them.

84. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 1 and good at Key Stage 2. There are examples of excellent teaching at Key Stage 2 and good teaching at Key Stage 1. The very good teaching results from the deep understanding of the Literacy Strategy and detailed planning which enables lessons to proceed at a brisk pace throughout, offering continuous challenge to pupils. The teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. There is little unsatisfactory teaching, but where this occurred it was due to inadequate planning and knowledge of the National Literacy Strategy. In most lessons of the National Literacy Strategy, the planning is good. Objectives for lessons are shared with pupils and constantly referred to as the lessons progress. Resources are used effectively, including the high quality classroom literacy boards which include examples of current word and text level work, as well as examples of pupils' work. Several teachers provide detailed instructions to pupils on, for example, the stages of redrafting their work. Lessons are well managed and pupils behave well. Big books and group readers are well used to promote reading skills. Generally lessons are well paced and balanced. All teachers follow the guidelines to the National Literacy Strategy closely. Introductions to lessons effectively revise previous work. Additional support is provided throughout Key Stage 2 for lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. Whilst this is generally very effective, at times support staff do little more than observe passively during the first half of the literacy hour. The quality of marking is consistently good and used well to inform pupils of their strengths and weaknesses. Information technology is effectively integrated into all lessons, and pupils are taught to construct databases and retrieve information, effectively using the CD ROM. Classrooms are well resourced with good supplies of new books and display areas. Dictionaries of various types and thesauruses are used continually. Overhead projectors are

used very well to show examples of pupils' work for whole class re-drafting sessions. A weakness is the lack of homework given to pupils, other than the weekly spellings they are expected to complete and the completion of the home reading log.

85.The school has improved standards in English considerably since the last inspection. This is due to the effectiveness of the leadership and management of the headteacher, the literacy and the assessment coordinators. The headteacher monitors the literacy weekly planning diligently and sets teachers individual targets for improvement, which are rigorously checked. The coordinator provides extensive support for planning and resourcing the literacy hours and the assessment coordinator has produced a file of moderated samples of work to assist with assessing pupils' work. The 'I can do' statements are a useful tool to support the ongoing monitoring of progress by teachers and to inform end of year reports to parents.

90.

Mathematics

86.At Key Stage 1, pupils' attainment is close to the national average. Over four fifths of pupils attained the expected level in 1999, although there was a dip in the proportion of pupils attaining the higher level. Since the last report there has been an improvement in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level. Inspection findings confirm the average standards; lessons and work from last year indicate that pupils currently in Year 2 classes are working at appropriate levels in order for them to reach average standards by the end of the key stage. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 have improved significantly since the last inspection report, particularly between 1998 and 1999 and moved closer to, but still below, the national average. In national tests in 1999, six out of ten pupils reached the level expected for eleven-year-olds, the proportion reaching the higher level also rose slightly. Inspection findings show further improvement and pupils' attainment broadly average at the end of the key stage. There is no significant variation in the attainment of boys and girls. The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy and the good quality of teaching, planning and assessment are all helping to raise standards.

87.At Key Stage 1, pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs make good progress in lessons and over time. At the end of the key stage pupils can add and subtract to 10 and beyond mentally and in written calculations. They show understanding of terms such as difference, add, subtract, more, less and equals. They count in tens up to 100 and are beginning to add sums of money to 60p. Higher attaining pupils add and subtract to 20, and find missing numbers by counting on. They recognise odd and even numbers, and are beginning to develop an understanding of place value. Lower attaining pupils can add and subtract up to 10. Other pupils are still uncertain of number bonds and work with numbers up to 5, using counters and cubes to help them. Pupils are able to name basic two-dimensional shapes and some solid shapes and use mathematical language such as sides and corners. They can present information in Venn diagrams. Other pupils draw simple graphs, for instance about door colours or birthdays. There is satisfactory progress in pupils' acquisition of mathematical language.

88.Progress is good at Key Stage 2, both in lessons and over time. In the upper key stage, pupils can add and subtract to two decimal places. They can name square numbers, prime numbers and factors. Pupils use inverse operations, sometimes with the aid of calculators, to check results. They can calculate areas of shapes by multiplying. Pupils show an understanding of probability terms, such as likely, unlikely and impossible. They collect data and record it on tally charts and frequency tables. Higher attaining pupils can order decimals to three decimal places. They calculate percentages, using cancelling and multiplication. They find the area of compound shapes that can be split into rectangles, using the appropriate formula. Lower attaining pupils can add and subtract to 1,000 demonstrate a developing knowledge of tables in mental multiplication and division. They can calculate fractions of whole numbers. They can identify regular and irregular shapes and discuss their properties. They can collect data and construct a bar line chart to represent it. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

89.Pupils throughout both key stages enjoy their lessons. In Key Stage 1 classes, pupils listen attentively. They are willing to join in oral work and answer questions willingly. They settle quickly to their group tasks and are able to work independently. They work quietly and try hard. In Key Stage 2 classes, pupils listen well to teachers and to each other. They react sensibly to incorrect answers and are willing to express ideas and answer questions. They are able to work in pairs or groups discussing their methods and findings sensibly. They enjoy challenging tasks. They are eager to improve their speed and accuracy and work hard. Pupils work carefully and with obvious pride in the presentation of their work. Standards of presentation are very good.

90. The quality of teaching is good overall at both key stages. The school has adopted a good strategy for the full implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy with some setting of pupils by prior attainment in Key Stage 2. In Key Stage 1, three fifths of lessons are good, and the remainder satisfactory. In Key Stage 2, three quarters of lessons are good, with equal proportions of good and very good lessons, and an occasional excellent lesson. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers are secure in their knowledge of the National Numeracy Strategy and have specific aims for pupils' learning in lessons. These aims are shared with the pupils which focuses their attention on the purpose of the lesson. Whole class teaching in the first part of lessons keeps pupils alert and thinking, with questioning skills used effectively to improve speed and accuracy and consolidate previous learning. Pupils are regularly asked to explain their methods or justify estimates or opinions. Group activities are well matched to pupils' needs, giving all pupils the opportunity to consolidate previous work; practise and extend new skills; and gain understanding of the topic. The last part of the lesson is used to question pupils in order to assess their understanding and check whether lesson aims have been met. Sometimes pupils are given information about the next lesson and further development of the work. Teachers make very good use of their assessment in lessons to plan future lessons and to ensure that the needs of all pupils are met. Management of the subject is very good. All planning is well monitored and pupils' work from all classes is checked for continuity in their learning and to assess their attainment.

95. Science

91. In the last inspection, pupils' attainment was judged to be average at the end of Key Stage 1 and below average at the end of Key Stage 2. Inspection findings show pupils' attainment is now average at the end of both key stages. Results of the end of key stage assessments have shown some fluctuation. In 1998, teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 showed a dip in performance. Two-thirds of pupils reached the expected level for their age, which was in line with the national average; however no pupils attained the higher level, whereas almost one fifth of pupils achieved this higher level nationally. This made overall attainment well below the national average. The 1999 results show the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level increasing to over four fifths. The overall trend is one of improvement. The national test results at the end of Key Stage 2 also showed a dip in 1998 when they were well below the national average, and were below those of similar schools. The 1999 results showed an improvement with almost four fifths of pupils reaching the level expected, or higher, and a small number reaching the higher level. A scrutiny of pupils' work completed, last year and so far this year, and lesson observations confirm that standards are continuing to rise.

92. Overall, progress is satisfactory at Key Stage 1 and good at Key Stage 2. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils can investigate the properties of materials to make a bag for a picnic lunch. They recall and use accurately words such as flexible, waterproof, transparent and rigid. They begin to understand the conditions necessary to sustain life from their topics on humans and plants. They understand that pushing and pulling are forces that have an effect on the movement of objects. Progress is more rapid on entry to Key Stage 2 where pupils can explain the differences and similarities between creatures from their observations. In the more successful lessons they pose questions which can form the basis of an investigation. In Year 4 pupils deepen their understanding of forces when they investigate the effect of gravity on the spinners they have made. They design different spinners to see how the design affects the rate of descent. They know that all models must be released from the same height and find out that the spinner with the longer arms descends more slowly. Year 5 pupils understand that some substances dissolve in water and test the solubility of a range of well known products. By the end of the key stage pupils are able to carry out an experiment to investigate the effect of forces on a block of wood moving across a tabletop. They examine, with some sophistication, the variables present as they move the wood block and try to ensure a fair test. Pupils have a good understanding of the principles of fair testing by the end of the key stage.

93. The pupils' response is satisfactory at Key Stage 1 and is good at Key Stage 2. They usually listen attentively and work well. In most lessons, there is an industrious working atmosphere in which pupils engage well in practical activities, working together and sharing resources fairly. They appreciate the opportunities to investigate, but occasionally get carried away and then the noise level rises to an unacceptable level.

94. Overall the quality of teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 1 and good at Key Stage 2. Teachers have a sound knowledge and understanding of the subject, which they use well when posing questions. The lesson planning is detailed and clear. There are too many examples of work being copied into books by pupils which

does not increase their understanding, or provide opportunities for teachers to assess exactly what pupils have learned. This is not so evident towards the end of Key Stage 2. There is good teaching at Key Stage 2 where the investigative work takes place alongside the learning of factual knowledge and plenary sessions prepare pupils for the next stage of their learning. There is effective monitoring of curriculum planning which is contributing to raising standards. The school has been without a curriculum leader until recently and this partly accounted for the dip in standards in 1998, as there was no coordinator to help drive up standards and support teachers on a daily basis. The school sensibly requested support from the Local Education Authority during this period, with their advice being followed with a resulting upturn in results in 1999 and continued improvement since.

99. **Other subjects or courses**

99. **Information technology**

95. At the time of the last inspection, standards were average at the end of Key Stage 1, but were below average at the end of Key Stage 2 where the inspectors found a wide variation in pupils' attainment from class to class and most of this focused on communicating and handling information. There has been considerable improvement, particularly since the computer suite has been established and attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is now above average, with attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 being sustained at average levels.

96. The progress of pupils in both key stages, including those with special educational needs, is good. Gains are made in understanding how to handle and communicate information as well as in controlling, monitoring and modelling. In Year 1 pupils gain confidence and understanding in how to log on and off and use the mouse to move words and pictures around the screen. They begin to acquire subject specific vocabulary. By the end of the key stage pupils understand how to use the enter key to insert line breaks, for example when positioning the lines of a limerick in Year 2. Pupils recognise that control is integral to many everyday devices and can send a programmable toy along a predetermined route with some success.

97. At Key Stage 2 pupils continue to build on their attainment. In Year 3, pupils can combine texts and graphics to caption a picture appropriately and then save their work. In Year 4, work is linked to mathematics as pupils create symmetrical designs in colour and then print them. Pupils in Year 5 are currently in the process of producing a brochure for their forthcoming visit to Roman Chester. By Year 6 pupils use CD Roms with confidence as a research tool for the booklet they are producing on Judaism and use the prompt box to develop their note taking skills. Pupils are able to use a digital camera to enhance the appearance of their brochures. Lessons in information technology also support pupils' progress and attainment in mathematics, English, history and religious education. The development of note taking skills is of use in most subjects. There are appropriate resources to support the development of literacy skills for pupils with special educational needs. Whilst most of the work currently being undertaken focuses on communicating and handling information, curriculum planning shows that controlling, monitoring and modelling are taught satisfactorily. For example, the planning shows that Year 6 pupils are to learn about control and monitoring using sensors in the second half of this term, multi-media presentations in the spring term and spreadsheet modelling in the summer term.

98. All pupils show a positive attitude to their work. They cooperate well in pairs and there are good examples of more able pupils helping others. They discuss their work enthusiastically and with a clear interest in the subject and a desire to obtain certificates of competence in aspects of the subject.

99. Teaching at both key stages is good. Planning is detailed and clear about the skills to be taught. There is effective direct teaching in many lessons to remind pupils of what they have done to date and then to move on to the next stage in the process. Instructions are posted in strategic places giving guidance to pupils should they forget what to do next. Support staff and parent helpers work effectively with pupils from Key Stage 1 and this support enables a high level of interaction with the pupils, which is beneficial to their progress.

100. The subject is very well managed and there is a high level of support for staff when necessary. Teachers are competent and confident in their work with pupils as their individual training needs have been assessed. Support staff and parent helpers have been trained appropriately. The new computer network facilitates teaching and the resource is used well by all pupils from Year 1 onwards and timetables show reception classes are to use the computer suite after Christmas when they are fully settled into school routines. There is no evidence of any difference in attainment between girls and boys, but for the small number with access to computers at home, progress is more rapid and they have more confidence in carrying out the tasks.

105. **Religious education**

101. Standards at the end of both key stages are satisfactory and are in line with those expected in the locally agreed syllabus. This is very similar to the standards found at the time of the last inspection. Overall progress is satisfactory at Key Stage 1, although it is good in occasional lessons. By the end of the key stage pupils have an understanding of several features of major world faiths, such as the Jewish festival Hannukah, as well as the story of the Last Supper in the Bible and the link between this and Communion and Confirmation in Christianity. In lessons, pupils are developing an understanding of kindness and of helping others through simple stories from the Bible. They are developing a sense of belonging to a community and the need to consider the feelings and needs of others.

102. Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 2, where pupils of all levels of attainment show satisfactory development in knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other faiths. They learn to ask and answer questions and relate what they have learned from Bible stories to every day life. Key facts of major world faiths are known, and pupils show development of tolerance and understanding of the beliefs of others. By the end of the key stage pupils know the main events in the Christian calendar, such as Christmas, Good Friday and Easter Sunday and can describe the Easter story in some detail. They discuss Judaism and are able to identify elements of the Passover meal and describe their symbolism, showing good understanding of the link with the escape from Egypt. Year 5 pupils can identify and describe different parts of a mosque in some detail, using appropriate subject vocabulary such as Qu'ran, Wudu, Imam and Allah. In year 4 pupils gain knowledge of journeys and pilgrimages in different faiths. They can recall previous work about pilgrimages to Mecca and to Jerusalem. They describe details of events in the Bible story of Saul's journey to Damascus. They can identify changes in his character and suggest reasons for them. Pupils in Year 3 deepen their understanding of Sikhism, making sensible suggestions about the purpose of different parts of the Sikh temple based on their knowledge of Christian churches.

103. The response of pupils is good overall. Pupils are interested and listen attentively. As they progress through the school they gain confidence in answering questions and expressing ideas. They show sensible attitudes to different practices in faiths. Almost all pupils make some contribution in discussions. Younger Key Stage 1 pupils are less responsive to questioning, but listen attentively and behave well.

104. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall at both key stages, although there are good features in one third of lessons and an example of very good teaching. Teachers' subject knowledge is satisfactory and lessons are well planned with appropriate activities. Pupils are well managed. Teachers work hard to get pupils involved in discussions on a range of topics. There are cross-curricular links with other subjects such as history and art. Appropriate resources are chosen and pupils are given opportunities to express themselves in descriptive writing, narratives, comprehension exercises and pictures. The curriculum coordinator provides appropriate support for colleagues and management of the subject is satisfactory.

109.

Art

105. It was not possible to observe any lessons at Key Stage 1 as the focus this term is on design and technology. It is possible, however, to make judgements based on the work on display from this year and examples from the previous year, the teachers' planning files and discussions with the curriculum leader and other staff. The average standards reported in the last inspection have been sustained. Art has not been a priority subject in recent years and the weakness in the use of sketch books identified in the previous report has not been remedied and the development of skills in observational drawing are still under-emphasised. In Year 4, there are examples of pupils using sketch books effectively when drawing facial expressions as pencil sketches and then using pastels, but these are the exception and the books do not show pupils' progress in developing skills over time. There continues to be good links between art and other subjects such as history, English and religious education.

106. At both key stages, pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress in developing skills and techniques and acquiring the knowledge of the work of famous artists. At Key Stage 1, for example, pupils have successfully created pictures in the style of Picasso using colour washes on newspaper for the background before gluing on paper shapes. The examples on display

showed good use of colour. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils paint pictures using small brush strokes and applying colours on top of each other to create the effect seen in Monet's paintings. The pupils could explain the effect they were trying to create and the way in which they were creating their picture. In one Year 6 class, pupils' understanding of colour mixing is not as well developed as in the other class. The pupils are unsure of the effect of adding black or white to a colour. The long term planning shows the pupils experience the skills of painting, printing, collage, textiles, three-dimensional work and works of art over each key stage. There are examples of high quality work in collage from last year's Year 3 pupils. Sections of a picture by David Hockney had been studied and group pictures show evidence of pupils selecting media and materials from a wide range to create different textures.

107. Pupils enjoy their lessons and take care when washing brushes or moving about the room so that they do not spoil the work of others. They willingly accept help or advice on ways to improve their work, or ask for help when necessary. They persevere when mixing paint to obtain a close match to the desired shade, but for some pupils this is hindered by their lack of knowledge of colour mixing.

108. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall at both key stages, although there are good lessons at Key Stage 2 where teachers give demonstrations on how to approach the task and the class is well organised. Artwork is well presented in good displays in classrooms and around the school and these enhance significantly the learning environment. There are problems with timetabling when two classes in the same year group have lessons at the same time and resources have to be shared leaving both with barely sufficient pictures for pupils to work from. This also results in unnecessary wastage of paint when palettes containing the remaining paint from both classes are washed. There is effective monitoring of pupils' progress by the curriculum leader who checks the work displayed. Lessons contribute significantly to the provision for pupils' social and cultural development.

Design and technology

109. Standards in design and technology are broadly average at both key stages and very similar to those found at the time of the last inspection. There is some evidence of improvement in the skills of designing and planning. For example, the scrutiny of work from the previous year showed plans for the base of a Ferris wheel drawn to scale. The finished products show appropriate use of gears and cams and of card triangles to strengthen the corners of the wooden base. However, as identified in the last report, there are still too few opportunities for pupils to plan their own tasks, for example in Year 4 all pupils use the same template for their masks which they cut out of sheets of card. The time given to the subject has been reduced due to the implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and pupils only undertake one major task each year. The long period in between means time has to be spent reinforcing previous learning and in particular the subject specific vocabulary. This was evident in Year 5 classes where pupils did not know where the axles or chassis of a vehicle were to be found.

110. At Key Stage 1, pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress. They develop skills in cutting out in Year 1 and begin to understand levers and hinges when making toys with moving parts. In Year 2 they design and make bags selecting the most appropriate fastener from a range available. Prior to this pupils made a purse and this proved challenging for pupils especially when it came to deciding where to fix the pieces of velcro so that the purse would fasten. Overall, progress is satisfactory at Key Stage 2, with good progress evident in one Year 5 class where pupils have to work in groups to make a four wheeled vehicle from the range of construction equipment given and within a time deadline. All groups completed the task successfully, with more able pupils also beginning to assemble part of the body of the vehicle. There is evidence of pupils with special educational needs making good progress in Year 5 when choosing to work alone in building a vehicle and completing the task in the time given. All pupils in Year 5 were able to produce an exploded diagram with correct labelling once the vehicles had been disassembled and the parts placed on the desk. These diagrams will form the basis for future work when a motorised vehicle will be produced with a balsa wood chassis. Discussions with pupils revealed they had some understanding of pneumatics and hydraulics from their work in Year 3 when making Jack in the boxes, and had made Tudor houses in Year 4.

111. Pupils at Key Stage 1 show interest in the subject and by Key Stage 2 there is enthusiasm for construction work. The pupils work well together in small groups, offering suggestions as to how best to proceed with the task and solving the problems through discussion and experimentation. When working in groups of boys and

girls, all actively participate in completing the task.

112. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall at both key stages and is good in one Year 5 class where the teacher has secure knowledge, understanding and enthusiasm for the subject. Lessons are well prepared throughout the school with all resources to hand, and due attention is given to safety aspects which are noted in lesson plans. Classes in Year 1 are well organised and managed to ensure adequate supervision of young children when using scissors. There is a tendency in Key Stage 2 for teachers to do too much of the talking in lessons which reduces the time for making, problem solving and evaluating the success of the products by the pupils. There is appropriate emphasis on developing subject specific language in lessons throughout the school. Lessons are planned to contribute to the provision for pupils' social development.

Geography

113. Due to the timetable only one year group was studying a geographical topic during the inspection. One lesson was observed at Key Stage 1. Scrutiny of pupils' books for the past year, curriculum plans and discussions with pupils indicates that there is appropriate coverage of the reduced requirements to cover selected parts of the National Curriculum programme of study.

114. Overall, pupils at Key Stage 1 make satisfactory progress. Pupils have a satisfactory introduction to features of landscapes and to using maps to locate places of interest. A contrasting locality is studied and pupils have drawn plans of their classroom and a local park making satisfactory use of directional vocabulary. Year 2 pupils know the names of the local seaside resorts and can locate these on a map of the area. They used their observational skills to identify the physical features on photographs of the sea.

115. Overall, pupils at Key Stage 2 make satisfactory progress. They talk confidently about a topic on St. Lucia studied last year demonstrating a satisfactory knowledge of the location of the island, the climate and how it affects the lives of the inhabitants. The pupils understand the difference between going to school in St Lucia and their own experiences. In a topic on rivers around the world, pupils learn appropriate vocabulary such as channel, tributary, meander and mouth and the location of the main rivers of the United Kingdom. Younger Key Stage 2 pupils carried out a study of Tranmere as their local study. They used the maps of the locality and indicated the whereabouts of various features accurately. Other year groups have studied Port Sunlight as a locality.

116. The presentation of pupils' work and the evidence from the one lesson observed at Key Stage 1 suggest that attitudes to their work are good. In the one lesson seen behaviour was satisfactory and pupils got on with their work with reasonable levels of independence.

117. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Resources are used well and planning is based on a national scheme of work, and is appropriately pitched for pupils of all abilities. The policy for geography is out of date and bears little relationship to what teachers do. Various planning models appear to be used. The lack of consistency in planning and the updating of the policy have been delayed due to the work involved in implementing the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies.

History

118. The quality of provision has improved since the last inspection. By the age of eleven, all pupils make good progress. Pupils have good understanding of the topics they have studied. Although only one lesson was observed at Key Stage 1, the scrutiny of pupils' work shows that by the age of seven they have made satisfactory progress. Pupils develop a sense of chronology from sequencing old and new toys, and learn the skills of observation and enquiry. Scrutiny of work from the previous year shows pupils learned about events from recent history, such as the first landing on the moon and the conquest of Everest.

119. At Key Stage 2, pupils communicate what they have learned through narratives and descriptions. For example, pupils in Year 3 compare Victorian toys and modern toys and record the similarities and differences. Year 4 pupils compare and contrast different types of homes in Tudor times and write descriptions of the buildings. They use information and knowledge gained to make appropriate judgements about the people living in them. Year 5 pupils deepen their understanding of primary and secondary sources of evidence when studying the Romans and learn how to extract information from them. Pupils use computers for researching details about Roman houses and forts. By Year 6 pupils use their research and enquiry skills to locate information in reference books and from artefacts, for example when studying Ancient Egypt. They use the information to find out facts about various aspects of life in Ancient Egypt, form opinions and extend their subject vocabulary.

120. Pupils respond well in lessons, particularly in Key Stage 2, and enjoy the subject. They use the available resources with interest, discussing what they have found out with each other. They show curiosity and a desire to find out more. Written work is well presented. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 1 is satisfactory and at Key Stage 2 it is good. At Key Stage 2 teachers are confident in teaching the subject and plan lessons well to include interesting and appropriate activities. They make good use of dialogue with pupils to emphasise new vocabulary and to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding. The resources available, including artefacts, photographs, books and teacher-generated materials are used well.

Music

121. There have been improvements in the curriculum provision and in the teaching of the subject since the last inspection when standards were reported to be average at both key stages. There is increased confidence and subject competence on the part of some staff due to better planning and good support from the curriculum leader. Additional resources have been purchased recently and these are used well to extend the range of instruments available in lessons.

122. At Key Stage 1, overall progress is satisfactory for pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs. They begin to build up a repertoire of songs and develop a sense of rhythm. They can name a range of percussion instruments and select appropriate instruments for their compositions. By the end of the key stage, pupils are beginning to understand some of the musical elements, such as timbre and pitch. Progress improves as pupils move into Key Stage 2 as a result of the improvements in the subject, and by the age of eleven the large majority have made good progress, particularly in singing which is of a high standard with clear diction and good control of the voice. Approximately one fifth of the Year 6 pupils are involved in extra-curricular activities, either in the choir, recorder groups or instrumental tuition and this enhances their rate of progress. By Year 4, pupils have understanding of the musical elements of pitch, duration, tempo and texture and identify them in pieces of music they hear. They also have some understanding of notation, for example they know the length of crotchets, quavers and minims and this is developed further in Years 5 and 6 as pupils build on their skills of composing. All pupils have opportunities to participate in year group and school productions, which contribute positively to their ability to perform with others, such as seen on a video of "Captain Cook". Skills in listening to and appraising music and pupils' knowledge of famous composers are weaker. The Year 6 pupils interviewed could only name Beethoven and did not know any of his compositions. There are lost opportunities to develop pupils' appreciation of different styles of music and knowledge of famous composers as the music played as pupils enter and leave school assemblies is not discussed.

123. Most pupils show interest in and enjoyment of music, evident in the numbers joining the infant and junior choir as well as in lessons. Often in lessons' pupils begin to move naturally in response to music they hear. They handle instruments with care and respect. There was a very good response from pupils in a Year 4 lesson that included a wide range of activities that were conducted at a brisk pace. The pupils were enjoying the music so much that they were disappointed when the bell rang at the end of the afternoon session.

124. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 1 and is good at Key Stage 2. The school is fortunate in having several subject specialists who use their talents to good effect in lessons. There is an example of excellent teaching in Year 4 where pupils had the opportunity to develop their skills in identifying changes in tempo, to learn a new song and improve the quality of their singing by holding the last note for the correct number of beats. The lesson then moved on to develop pupils' skills in maintaining a rhythm when three are played simultaneously. The lesson ended with all pupils performing a rap. The brisk pace and enthusiasm of the teacher had pupils 'on the edge of their seats' throughout. The improved confidence in teaching the subject is the key feature underpinning the good quality of teaching. There are problems with timetabling for some music lessons, notably in Key Stage 2, which often follow physical education activities. The time taken for pupils to get dressed often leads to lessons being late starting and pupils taking time to settle. Lessons in music make a good contribution to pupils' social development, but are not having as much impact on cultural development as they could.

Physical education

125. The provision in physical education has been sustained since the last inspection, although few pupils are attaining standards above those expected for their age. During the inspection the lessons involved indoor and outdoor games and gymnastics. Year 5 pupils have swimming lessons this term and records show the majority of pupils are making satisfactory progress. At the end of Key Stage 2 over two-thirds of pupils are able to swim unaided, competently and safely, for a distance of at least 25 metres. Pupils are making satisfactory progress in lessons and over time at Key Stage 1 and good progress over time at Key Stage 2. Pupils with special educational needs are fully involved in these lessons and make good progress relative to their ability.

126. In Key Stage 1, pupils attain the standards expected for their age in gymnastics. They demonstrate their ability to perform rolling movements in different ways and, through practise, improve the quality of their bodily movements. They work safely and are aware of the need for other children to have space to work in. Pupils understand the need to carry out warming up and cooling down activities in lessons. Observation of the pupils at playtimes showed evidence of their skills developing in running, chasing, dodging and avoiding others. In Key Stage 2, pupils build on their skills, for example pupils in Year 3 demonstrated their ability to throw and catch bean bags, small balls and quoits, working safely with partners and in small groups. In Year 4 pupils are able to transfer their bodily weight from one part of the body to another and combine their movements into a sequence with a good finish. They show good control of their movements and good posture. By the end of the key stage pupils understand and play small-sided games in which they use simple tactics and demonstrate their ability to pass, receive and strike balls and to dodge and avoid contact with others. They understand the need for rules in a game and the need for fair play.

127. The large majority of pupils respond well to physical activity, they concentrate well and try hard to improve on their personal best. Occasionally there is some over exuberant behaviour and reminders of the standards of behaviour expected have to be given. A small number of Year 6 pupils found it difficult to sustain their concentration when working out of doors. All pupils are appropriately dressed in lessons, but it takes too long for pupils to get dressed at the end of some Key Stage 2 lessons and this reduces the time available for the next lesson.

128. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 1 and is good at Key Stage 2. Teachers use the scheme of work to plan and build on the skills that pupils have gained previously. Lesson planning is consistent across each year group so that all pupils have the same opportunity irrespective of which class they are in. The pace of lessons is generally appropriate. There are examples of good teaching in Years 2, 4 and 6, with the good features being the feedback given to pupils on their movements and the insistence on a high level of performance. The lessons conclude with a clear reinforcement of the new learning or improvement that has taken place and how the next lesson would build on this. During the lessons there is a focus on specific language to help develop the pupils' range of vocabulary. Teachers make good use of the resources that are available, but pupils' gymnastic skills at Key Stage 2 are hindered by the lack of a climbing frame. The school has no playing field but has access to an adjacent park, although this does not have marked out pitches.

129. There is an exceptionally wide range of extra-curricular activities that are offered to the pupils from Year 1 upwards. These include netball, football, cross-country, gymnastics, dance and short tennis. Pupils from Years 5 and 6 have the opportunity to undertake outdoor and adventurous pursuits such as climbing and

canoeing during a residential visit. This high level of commitment is a tribute to the curriculum leader and her colleagues.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

134. Summary of inspection evidence

130. The inspection was carried out by a team of five inspectors, including a lay inspector, over a period of five days. Almost 71 hours were spent observing 125 lessons or parts of lessons. Over 10 hours were spent interviewing staff, with further time spent talking to governors and parents. In addition, school assemblies, registrations, lunch times, play times, home times and extra-curricular activities were observed.

131. A sample of written work and practical work from the current and previous years, covering pupils of all ages and abilities was scrutinised. This took a further 10 hours. Inspectors talked to pupils about their earlier work and what they had learned, heard one tenth of pupils read and asked groups of Year 6 pupils about their perceptions of the school. Inspectors examined teachers' plans and a full range of documentation, data, records and reports. In total almost 109 hours were spent on gathering information and evidence.

132. A meeting attended by 17 parents was held to seek their views. A questionnaire was sent to all parents to seek their opinions on the work of the school. One hundred and eight questionnaires were returned out of 445 sent out. A few letters were received.

137. **DATA AND INDICATORS**

137. **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	428.5	0	85	241
Nursery Unit	26	0	0	N/A

137. **Teachers and classes**

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

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	19
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	22.5

137. **Education support staff (YR - Y6)**

Total number of education support staff:	4
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	75.1

137. **Qualified teachers (Nursery unit)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	26

137. **Education support staff (Nursery unit)**

Total number of education support staff:	2
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	32.5

Average class size:	26
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137. **Financial data**

Financial year:	1998/9
	£
Total Income	749,803
Total Expenditure	745,546
Expenditure per pupil	1,530.90
Balance brought forward from previous year	22,350
Balance carried forward to next year	26,607

137. **PARENTAL SURVEY**

Number of questionnaires sent out: 445
 Number of questionnaires returned: 108

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	26	55	11	4	4
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	34	48	5	8	6
The school handles complaints from parents well	10	48	32	5	5
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	20	63	7	8	2
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	32	50	5	12	1
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	23	57	9	9	2
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	18	55	20	5	2
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	19	41	11	23	6
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	22	58	13	5	2
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	18	57	19	4	2
My child(ren) like(s) school	41	50	4	4	1

137. **Other issues raised by parents**

There were no other issues raised by a number of parents.

137.

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