

INSPECTION REPORT

Excalibur Primary School

Alsager

LEA area : Cheshire County Council

Unique Reference Number : 111038

Headteacher : Mrs K McDowell

Reporting inspector : Mr D Speakman
20086

Dates of inspection : 13th – 16th September 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 707040

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school :	Primary
Type of control :	County
Age range of pupils :	4 to 11
Gender of pupils :	Mixed
School address :	Ivy Lane Alsager Stoke on Trent ST7 2RQ
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Appropriate authority :	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors :	Mr C Rigby
Date of previous inspection :	April 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr D Speakman	Mathematics Design & Technology Information Technology Art	Attainment & Progress Teaching Efficiency
Mrs C Field, Lay Inspector		Attitudes, behaviour & personal development Attendance, Support, guidance & welfare, Partnership with parents & the community, Staffing, accommodation & learning resources.
Mr P Clark	Special educational needs, Equal opportunities, Science, History, Geography, Physical education.	Curriculum & assessment, Leadership & management.
Mrs M Powell	English, Music, Religious Education.	Under fives, Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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MAIN FINDINGS

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- By the age of 11, standards in English, mathematics and science are above average and most pupils make good progress.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and they make good progress.
- The quality of teaching is good overall.
- Very good attitudes, behaviour and relationships contribute to the high academic standards achieved.
- Provision for pupils' social development is excellent and is very good for their spiritual, moral and cultural development.
- Through very good links with the community and with a very good range of extra-curricular activities, the school enriches the curriculum well.
- The school is well led and very efficiently run.
- The school gives good value for money.

WHERE THE SCHOOL HAS WEAKNESSES

- I. The school is not maintaining the previously high standards in English and mathematics at Key Stage 1.
- II. The level of challenge for higher attaining pupils is not always high enough and they do not always make appropriate progress.
- III. Assessment information is not consistently used to inform curriculum planning or to accurately target work to the needs of all pupils.
- IV. The monitoring of teaching and curriculum development is not effective.
- V. The school does not fully meet statutory requirements in some aspects of reporting to parents.

The school has many strengths and only minor weaknesses. The weaknesses are outweighed by what the school does well and they will form the basis of the governors' action plan, which will be sent to all parents and guardians of the school.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION

The last inspection reported that the school achieved high standards of attainment. These have been maintained for children under five and for pupils at Key Stage 2. At Key Stage 1, the standard of attainment has fallen and is now average. This is in some part due to the large proportion of pupils at the end of the key stage with special educational needs. Another contributing factor was the disruption to the continuity of teaching experienced by Year 2 pupils last year. The quality of education, which includes teaching, curriculum, spiritual moral social and cultural provision, support and partnership with parents and the community, has been maintained and is good. The climate for learning is still good with a good ethos, very good accommodation and good learning resources. The school, which was judged to be very well led in the last inspection, now finds itself in a changing situation. There is an effective acting headteacher in post until the appointed head takes up his post in January 2000. A large number of teachers have new responsibilities this term and, whilst they are working enthusiastically and have good ideas, it is too early to judge the impact of their work.

Leadership and management is now judged to be good. The efficiency of the school, previously judged to be very good, has been maintained. The school however, has made insufficient progress in meeting some of the Key Issues identified in the last report. The school has successfully extended the opportunities that pupils have for investigative work in mathematics and science. These are planned and evident in practice. Schemes of work have been completed for all core and some non-core subjects. However there are still no schemes for geography and physical education and insufficient progress has been made in meeting this respect. There has been insufficient progress in creating opportunities for subject co-ordinators to monitor and evaluate the delivery and implementation of their subjects and this remains a key issue. Although there are some good procedures for assessing the progress and attainment of pupils, insufficient use is still made of this data to inform and refine curriculum planning. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory overall.

Given the quality of the current management and the expertise and enthusiasm of the staff, the school is judged to have a good capacity for further improvement.

STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS

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

English	B	B
Mathematics	A	A
Science	B	C



The information shows, for example, that standards in English are above average both against the national average and against schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. These comparisons are based on the average National Curriculum levels achieved by all pupils in the school. Work in information technology and in religious education is average. In music standards are very high, in art and history above average and are average in design technology, geography and physical education.

QUALITY OF TEACHING

Teaching in:	Under 5	5 - 7 years	7 - 11 years
English	Very good	Satisfactory	Good
Mathematics	Very good	Satisfactory	Good
Science		Good	Good
Information technology		Good	Good
Religious education	Very good	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Other subjects	Very good	Satisfactory	Good

Teaching is satisfactory in about one third of lessons. It is good or better in two thirds and of these, half are very good or excellent. Teaching is consistently very good for children under five, satisfactory overall at Key Stage 1 and good at Key Stage 2. Good teaching was found mainly in science and information technology and in most subjects at Key Stage 2.

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	Very good in classrooms and around the school. This results in a calm and ordered school.
Attendance	Very good. Pupils are keen to come to school.
Ethos*	Good. The climate for working, attitudes and relationships are very good. However the commitment to high standards for all pupils is not high enough.
Leadership and management	Good. There is a clear vision for the future of the school and management and governors work well together. However the monitoring of teaching and learning is insufficiently developed.
Curriculum	Is very good for children under five and is good at Key stages 1 and 2. It is enriched by a very good provision for extra-curricular activities.
Pupils with special educational needs	Provision is good and enables pupils to make good progress.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Provision for pupils social development is excellent. It is very good for their spiritual, moral and cultural development.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	There is a good match of teachers and support staff to the needs of the school. Resources are good and the accommodation is very good.
Value for money	The school gives good value for money.

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

THE PARENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
VI. They feel encouraged to play apart in the life of the school. VII. The school is easy to approach with questions.	XIII. The school does not give a clear

VIII. They feel informed of their children's progress IX. The standards that the children achieve. X. Extra-curricular activities. XI. The school's values and the good standards of behaviour XII. Children like school.	
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The inspection team generally agree with the comments made by the parents, although the inspection team felt that the pupils' annual reports do not sufficiently inform about pupils' progress.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

In order to further improve standards and the quality of education provided, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

1. Raise standards in English and mathematics at Key Stage 1 to previous levels, so that all pupils are reaching their true potential by:

- . making work more accurately matched to the needs of the individual,
 - . raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can do.
- (Paragraphs 6, 97, 107.)

1. Raise standards for higher attaining pupils in science at Key Stage 2 by:

- . using assessment more effectively to plan for the next stages of learning;
 - . by identifying more precise learning objectives in lesson planning;
 - . by making teachers' expectations of these pupils more realistic.
- (Paragraphs 7, 16, 36, 42, 57, 117.)

1. Improve the monitoring and evaluation of curriculum development by:

- . creating opportunities for subject co-ordinators to fulfil their responsibilities;
 - . preparing annual development and action plans for all subjects
- (Paragraphs 45, 65, 75, 106, 115, 126.)

1. Meet statutory requirements by:

- . improving pupils' annual reports to parents;
 - . ensuring that the Governors' Annual Reports and the Prospectus contain all required items.
- (Paragraph 60.)

§ **In addition to the key issues above, the governors should also consider the following points for inclusion in the action plan**

- . assess the school aims to ensure that they more accurately and rigorously reflect the governors' commitment to high attainment,
(Paragraph 68.)
- . improve the provision for the physical development of children under 5 to improve their physical skills,
(Paragraphs 9, 92, 93.)
- . create flexibility in timetabling to enable more efficient use of the hall, grounds and the computer suite.
(Paragraphs 77, 132.)

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

1. Excalibur is a primary school administered by Cheshire Local Education Authority (LEA). It is situated in Alsager. There are 206 pupils aged from 4 to 11, and at the time of the inspection, 27 pupils were under five. The school admits all its pupils in September. The admissions limit is 30 and the criteria for admissions follows the LEA policy. Children starting school in Reception are introduced gradually through a series of pre-school visits in the term preceding their official starting date.
2. Pupils come from the local area, which comprises of both privately owned and council housing. In recent years, the number of pupils has risen steadily, a contributing factor is the number of pupils coming from outside the designated area. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals (10.2 per cent) is below average. The attainment on entry to the school is above average. There is one pupil with a statement of special educational need, and this figure is below the national average. There are 28 pupils on the school's register of special needs. Only one pupil comes from ethnic minorities and there are no pupils who come from homes where English is an additional language.
3. The school states that its overall aim is to help children to be civilised, courteous, healthy, questioning, vital human beings of high purpose, with self control and a love of good things. School aims focus on developing the personal and social dimensions of pupils' development. Challenging targets have recently been set for the schools' academic achievements in coming years. Priorities include raising attainment, investing further in early years education, meeting individual learning needs, further improving learning support, developing the school's grounds and buildings and developing teachers' professional skills.
4. Recently the school has experienced a high level of staff change. The headteacher left in July to take up a new post and the deputy is currently acting headteacher prior to the new headteacher taking up his post in January 2000. Three other teachers are new to the school this term.
- 4.

5. **Key Indicators**
Attainment at Key Stage 1¹

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1

for latest reporting year:

National Curriculum Test Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Number of pupils at NC Level 2 or Above	End of year	15	15	16
	Current year	18	18	17
	Total	33	33	33
Percentage at NC Level 2 or above	School	89(92)	89(100)	89(88)
	National	80(78)	81(79)	84(82)
Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 2 or Above	End of year	15	16	16
	Current year	19	18	19
	Total	34	34	35

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

	o t a l			
Percentage at NC	S c h o o l	92(92)	92(88)	95(96)
Level 2 or above	N a t i o n a l	81(78)	85(82)	86(84)

Attainment at Key Stage 2²

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2

for latest reporting year:

5. National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 4 or Above	Boys	6	7	9
	Girls	6	8	8
	Total	12	15	17
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	63(80)	79(80)	89(88)
	National	65(57)	59(54)	69(62)
Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 4 or Above	Boys	5	6	5
	Girls	6	6	7
	Total	11	12	12
Percentage at NC Level 4 or	School	58(84)	63(80)	63(84)
	Nat	65(60)	65(54)	72(65)

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

above

ion
al

Attendance

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

		%
Authorise	School	4.0
Absence	National	5.7
Unauthori	School	0.0
Absence	National	0.5

Exclusions

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

	Number
Fixed period	0
Permanent	0

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is :

	%
Very good or better	32
Satisfactory or	99
Less than	1

5. PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and progress

5. Standards of attainment and progress are broadly similar to those found in the last inspection. Attainment in English at Key Stage 1 and information technology at both key stages is now satisfactory and was above average at the last inspection. Attainment in mathematics has risen at Key Stage 2, as has attainment in science at both key stages. In the national tests for seven year olds in 1998, the percentage of pupils reaching Level 2 or above was above the national average in reading, writing and in mathematics. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels was close to the national average in reading and writing, but below average in mathematics. When account is taken of the school's results over the past three years, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has remained above the national average, but has fallen slightly each year. When the results are compared with schools in a similar context, attainment in reading is above average, in writing is well above average and is average in mathematics. In science, when comparing the results of teacher assessments with the national average, the percentage of pupils gaining Level 2 or above was average, and average for those achieving the higher level.
6. In the national tests for 11 year olds in 1998, the schools' results in terms of the percentage gaining Level 4 or above matched the national average in English, and was well above in mathematics and science. The percentage of pupils gaining Level 5 was well above average in English, was above average in mathematics, but was well below average in science. When taking into account the school's results over the past three years, pupils' performance in English, mathematics and science has remained above average, broadly matching national trends. When the 1998 results are compared with those of similar schools, they are above average in English, well above average in mathematics and average in science.
7. Both boys and girls performed above the national average in English and mathematics. In science the performance of boys was above whilst the girls was close to the national average. During the inspection, in the present Year 6, there was no discernible difference between the attainment and progress between the boys and girls.
8. The majority of pupils enter school with above average levels of attainment. They make good progress in the reception class and very good progress in their personal and social skills. By the age of five, children's attainment meets all the desirable learning outcomes necessary for them to begin to study subjects of the National Curriculum. Standards are good in personal and social development, language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development. Standards are average in their physical development.
9. In Years 1 and 2, pupils make satisfactory progress in all areas of English and achieve standards that are well in line with the national average in reading and writing and above average standards in speaking and listening. Pupils make satisfactory progress in mathematics and attainment is again well in line with the national average. In science, progress is good and standards of attainment are above average by the time pupil's reach the end of Key Stage 1. Progress in information technology is good, with pupils developing sound skills, which enable them to work competently with computers. Information technology provides good levels of enrichment in other subjects. Pupils make satisfactory progress in religious education and their attainment meets the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus.

10. In other subjects, progress is good in art, history and music and satisfactory in design technology, geography and physical education. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards meeting their targets in reading, writing and numeracy due to the good quality of support.
11. In English at Key Stage 1, a good proportion of pupils is developing confidence in applying phonic knowledge to reading an increasing number of less familiar words. In addition, they apply their phonic skills well -to their writing, where there is evidence of recent improvement in the accuracy of their spelling. By the end of the key stage, most pupils form their letters well and form them appropriately, resulting in neat presentation of their work. The level of talk is above average. Many pupils are fluent when sharing their experiences or talking about their work. They speak clearly when re-telling stories or commenting on books they are reading. The pupils generally listen well and are prepared to respond to each other's observations during discussion. A minority of pupils, whose diction is not clear at the early stages, make good progress. This is a result of additional help provided and the range of strategies employed to improve speaking skills.
12. In mathematics pupils develop sound number skills and use these well in practice. They are steadily building knowledge of shape and know the names of an appropriate range of two-dimensional shapes. Pupils develop appropriate measuring skills and accurately measure lengths of lines to the nearest centimetre. They tell the time to the nearest five minutes and know the names of the days, months and seasons. Pupils are beginning to develop their investigation skills at this early stage.
13. The majority of pupils at Key Stage 1 have a good understanding of experimental and investigative science, a very secure knowledge of life and living processes and a developing understanding of materials and their properties and physical processes. Most pupils at Key Stage 1 can make accurate predictions and explain their conclusions in terms of a developing scientific vocabulary.
14. In information technology, pupils at Key Stage 1, become proficient with the basic skill of operating a computer. Most are able to access a program and work confidently with those with which they are familiar. Standards in religious education are in line with the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils acquire an increasing knowledge and are developing an insight into how religious beliefs affect their lives and how they feel in certain situations.
15. At Key Stage 2, progress is good overall. It is good in English, mathematics and science. However, higher attaining pupils do not make appropriate progress in science, because teachers' planning does not always take sufficient account of the needs of these pupils and their progress is not as good as it could be. Progress in information technology is good and in religious education it is satisfactory. Pupils make satisfactory progress in design technology, geography and physical education. They make good progress in art and history and very good progress in music. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets in their educational plans.
16. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment in English is above average. The results of recent national testing demonstrate that this trend has been maintained over time. There is evidence of a further rise in attainment during 1999. The good, and often very good progress, is a direct consequence of the skilful teaching which stimulates the pupils' interest in a range of literature and develops their ability to use their reading experiences to undertake a wide range of writing.
17. In mathematics, by the end of Key Stage 2, attainment is above average. Pupil's ability to

apply skills in a range of context is a strength. Pupils manipulate numbers with confidence and have a good knowledge in this area of mathematics. Most have rapid recall of number facts and quickly and accurately mentally calculate answers to questions. They demonstrate, and clearly explain, a range of strategies by which they calculate their answers. They know the names and the properties of a good range of two and three-dimensional shapes, accurately describing their properties. Throughout the key stage, pupils develop their investigative skills well and they look carefully at the information given and investigate a range of mathematical situations well. Levels of attainment in using and applying mathematics are good by the end of the key stage.

18. At the end of Key Stage 2, attainment in science is above average. Pupils have a good knowledge of life and living processes, materials and their properties and of physical processes. Pupils' skills in experimental and investigative science are developing satisfactorily. Pupils often devise their own experiments in addition to the prescribed format of listing apparatus, drawing and conclusion.
19. Attainment in information technology is in line with the levels expected of 11 year olds, with some good features. Pupils are competent to load, access, work well with new and familiar software. They competently save and print their work and shut down computers correctly. Pupils' standards in information technology make a significant contribution to enrichment in other subjects. By the time pupils are 11, their attainment in religious education matches the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Pupils attain sound standards and progressively extend their knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other major world faiths. They know about the characteristics of these faiths and how these influence the lives of believers.
20. The school has fully implemented the literacy strategy and lessons are well planned to provide tasks that are appropriate to all pupils, with good opportunities for pupils to write independently at length, such as in history where some very good examples of empathetic writing were seen. Literacy has a recognisable impact on standards in other subjects.
21. Standards in numeracy are enhanced by the early implementation of the numeracy strategy, which takes place in all classes. Pupils regularly practise mental arithmetic skills and number bonds. Most pupils are developing quick and accurate recall of number facts and the ability to apply problem solving skills in other situations. Numeracy has a positive impact in other subjects, such as the accurate counting of heart rates in physical education and good samples of graph work in geography.
22. The school and the local education authority have agreed challenging targets for improving standards, taking account of the size and nature of each cohort of pupils. There are appropriate action plans for literacy and numeracy. The literacy hour being well established and numeracy in the early stages of implementation.
23. **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**
23. There is a positive ethos in the school that is successfully promoting friendly, trusting and harmonious relationships at all levels. Pupils try very hard to do their best in all things and are rewarded for their endeavours and achievements with house-points. The climate for learning in the school is very good and enables pupils to take full advantage of the good quality opportunities provided.
24. The personal and social development of children under five is very good. They settle very well into school, quickly forming relationships and learning daily routines. Their behaviour in

lessons is very good and attitudes to learning are extremely positive. These young children are secure and confident and already show a level of maturity beyond that expected for their age and so early in a new school year.

25. All pupils throughout the school have very good attitudes to work and are enthusiastic learners. They show pride in finished work which they are keen to share with others. Pupils work successfully independently or co-operatively as the activity demands. Pupils with special needs have good levels of self-esteem and work productively to make good progress in meeting the individual targets set for them. Behaviour is very good in class and around the school; pupils respond well to the staff's consistent approach and expectations set out by the "Golden Rules". Where tasks are matched to pupils' ability, pupils with special educational needs respond well and persevere to finish task. Special educational needs pupils integrate very well with other pupils and their personal and social skills are well developed.
26. Older pupils demonstrate particularly high levels of confidence and well developed social skills. Many undertake jobs around the classroom, undertake monitors' duties or organise the library, for example. A Head Boy and Head Girl act as good ambassadors. House captains are democratically elected and take responsibility for organising house points. Older pupils are very considerate to younger pupils, helping them at break and lunchtimes. Year 5 and 6 pupils are good role models. Pupils organise themselves well, accessing resources and, occasionally, the computers, to find things out for themselves. Some independent research takes place at home, such as bringing in items for topic work, but more opportunities for promoting personal study within school would encourage higher attaining pupils to develop further their research skills.
27. The school has maintained the strengths in this aspect of its provision since the time of the previous inspection. Parents are very positive about the way in which the school promotes their children's pupils' attitudes and values.

28. **Attendance**

28. The level of attendance is very good and typically higher than that of most primary schools nationally. Parents are very prompt in letting the school know if their child is absent. Most pupils are good timekeepers and arrive punctually to the start of sessions.

29. **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

29. **Teaching**

29. At the time of the last inspection there was no unsatisfactory teaching for pupils at all levels, including children under five. All teaching was either satisfactory or good. The quality of teaching has been maintained, and in some areas, such as for children under 5, it has been improved. Teaching for these children is very good. For pupils at Key Stage 1 teaching is overall satisfactory, with some strengths, and at Key Stage 2 it is good. Almost all lessons were of a satisfactory or better standard, two thirds good or better, and a third were very good or excellent.
30. Teaching for the under fives is very good, with more than half of lessons seen in the reception class being of a very good quality. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of how young children learn and of the curriculum for these children is very good. This enables good planning of lessons that takes full account of the recommended areas of learning for children under five. Teachers' expectations of these young children are excellent. Management of children in the

reception class is excellent and they are very well supported during lessons by support staff and helpers. Methods and organisation used by teachers and the assistants are very good and have a positive impact on the good progress made by children in reception. Contributing to this good progress is the very efficient use of time and resources. The quality and use of day-to-day assessment of pupils is very good and useful, informative records of pupils' attainment and progress are kept and used well.

31. Teaching at Key Stage 1 is satisfactory with some strong features. Half of the lessons seen were either good or very good. At Key Stage 2 it is good, a third of lessons being satisfactorily taught, another third featuring good teaching and in the other third, the quality of teaching was very good or excellent. Teaching in English and mathematics is sound at Key Stage 1 and good at Key Stage 2. It is good in science and information technology at both key stages and satisfactory in religious education. The quality of teaching in music is very good. It is good in art and history and satisfactory in design technology, geography and physical education.
32. Teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good. Classroom support staff have a good understanding of the needs of pupils with special educational needs. Outside the classroom, work is generally planned with appropriate reference to tasks contained within the individual education plans. In some classes, however, tasks are not always individualised and work is often differentiated by outcome. Pupils receive good support from classroom support staff. Classroom assistants are generally well deployed by teaching staff. However, a consistent approach to joint planning and assessment of pupils' work is not a regular feature.
33. Across the school, teachers have a good command of their subjects, which enables them to give clear explanations and to question pupils to good effect. They are aware of the requirements of the national literacy and numeracy initiatives, and the teaching of these is effective and well supported by most teachers' good knowledge and effective planning and organisation in these lessons. Teachers' knowledge in some areas of information technology, such as newly introduced programs, needs some development. Their knowledge and understanding of their pupils is good. Even at this early stage in the year, teachers are beginning to know their pupils well and informally monitor work carefully in lessons, using praise to encourage and stimulate pupils to make good progress.
34. An issue of concern in the last inspection was that assessments in English and mathematics were supported by national and published tests, but regular assessment in other subjects was not sufficiently developed, and did not ensure that all pupils, including higher attainers, were consistently challenged. Aspects of this concern are still evident and current inspection findings show that, although teachers' expectations at Key Stage 1 are sound and good overall at Key Stage 2, the level of challenge for higher attaining pupils in some lessons is not high enough.
35. Lessons are satisfactorily prepared. Planning outlines the structure and main activities of lessons, opportunities for the assessment of pupils' work and an evaluation of teaching and learning. In this way, teachers use assessment satisfactorily from day-to-day in their lesson planning. Learning objectives are included in planning, but these are often general and do not precisely state what groups of pupils, or individuals, will learn in each lesson. This sometimes means that pupils, especially those capable of higher attainment, are not given sufficiently challenging work in some lessons. Although the marking of pupils' work is good, this means that the use of day-to-day assessment is only satisfactory overall.
36. Teachers' methods and organisation are good and often very good at Key Stage 2 and are appropriate to what is being taught and what pupils are intended to learn. Teachers use exposition well and conduct discussions effectively. In the best lessons, introductions are lively, engage pupils' interest are of appropriate length and leave an appropriate amount of time for

pupils' main learning activities. Activities are well managed and the use of resources to effectively support teaching and learning is good overall. The best lessons move at a brisk pace and efficient use is generally made of time. Lessons start promptly and there is no time wasted. Homework is used satisfactorily and provides sound support for learning.

37. Teachers manage their pupils very well, and classrooms are purposeful and orderly. Relationships are very good and teachers generally establish and maintain very high standards of behaviour in their lessons. All of this creates a good climate for learning to take place. However, on the very rare occasions when teaching is less than satisfactory, pupils who become unsettled are not satisfactorily dealt with and the pace of the lesson is often too slow. Teachers use homework satisfactorily to consolidate pupils learning and for pupils to research in preparation for lessons.

The curriculum and assessment

38. The curriculum of the school is good and is suitably broad and balanced in all core and foundation subjects of the National Curriculum. Religious Education, using the locally agreed syllabus, is satisfactory. Extra- curricular provision is very good and a positive strength of the school. Overall, the quality of the curriculum has been maintained since the last inspection and rates of progress are good, influenced by the range of learning opportunities that arise from the wide range of experiences provided.
39. The school's provision for the under fives is very good, covering all of the desirable outcomes fully and leading towards and often into, the subjects of the National Curriculum with clear continuity and progression of learning skills. The curriculum for this age group includes very good provision for children's personal and social development, carefully planned language work, enriched mathematical opportunities and development of knowledge and understanding of the world from personal experience, and a full range of creative opportunities. The curriculum is well balanced and takes careful account of children's above average attainment on entry. The curriculum provision for children under five is of a very high quality.
40. Statutory requirements are met in all subjects. There is good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education including sex education and drugs awareness and provides good preparation for the next stage of education. The requirement for collective worship is observed in daily class and whole school assemblies.
41. Not all pupils have full access to a balanced curriculum. For example, higher attaining pupils do not always receive work which is challenging enough to help them expand on what they already know, pupils with differing abilities often working from the same worksheet with no additional or challenging work to undertake when tasks have been completed. This issue was raised during the previous inspection and has yet to be addressed by the school. With the exception of higher attaining pupils, the balance of curriculum supports issues of equal opportunity. Display and books reflect a multi-cultural society.
42. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the National Curriculum. Individual curriculum targets are set out in pupils' individual education plans and are met well. All recommendations of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice are in place and known to all staff and parents. Parents are informed termly and at annual reviews of the stage that their child is at. Good assessment procedures are in place and pupil records are up to date. Day-to-day assessment is less well developed when pupils with special educational needs are being taught in class.

43. Curriculum planning is satisfactory at both key stages. Although most National Curriculum subjects have policy statements, schemes of work to support planning have yet to be completed in geography and physical education to show how the school guarantees that, as pupils move through the school they are taught to build upon what they already know. This area of weakness relating to the lack of subject schemes of work indicated in the previous inspection remains unsatisfactory.
44. Planning of the curriculum is based upon yearly, half termly and weekly subject overviews. In science and the foundation subjects, such as history and geography planning takes place on a two-year and four-year rolling programme, which allows good cross-curricular links between subjects. The monitoring of medium-term planning to ensure continuity and progression by subject co-ordinators is unsatisfactory. Weekly plans are monitored by the headteacher to ensure full curriculum coverage. The effective implementation of the national Literacy Strategy is providing an added structure to teacher planning, which is benefiting pupils in raising progress. Curriculum planning is occasionally inconsistent in building on knowledge in a systematic way throughout the school, especially in the development of skills in science to higher levels. Teaching objectives in lesson plans are not always sharply defined and levels of challenge for the higher attaining pupils are not always consistent.
45. Integral to the curriculum is an extensive range of educational visits that enrich and extend pupils' class work. Most staff and visitors organise and run a very good range of extra-curricular activities such as choir, orchestra performances, dance/drama clubs, science club, French club, football, netball, cricket, book lovers, infant technology, gardening and literacy groups. Parents offer their skills and expertise that are well recognised and positively used by the school.
46. The school has recently developed satisfactory procedures for assessment. However, these current approaches to assessment are inconsistently applied at both key stages. Teachers keep records of what pupils have covered in their subjects, but not what pupils have learnt as an outcome of their experiences. There is no coherent system in place that supports teachers in recording and monitoring pupils' progress closely. Teachers' evaluations in their short-term plans do not provide sufficiently detailed information to help plan further work which is based accurately on pupils' prior attainment. School portfolios of assessed work are in place in English, mathematics and science.
47. There is a school policy for marking and the overall standard is satisfactory with the best marking placing emphasis on what pupils need to do next to improve their work. There are a limited number of examples of how information gathered from assessment is used to inform planning and set targets for further achievement. Across the school assessment information is neither effectively, nor consistently, used by teachers, to set clear targets for learning and influence planning. Individual target setting, using data based on a pupil's prior attainment as well as standardised scores and value added scores, is at an early stage of development. This information will be used at every stage throughout the school to inform planning and reports, and set targets for each pupil. At the end of Year 6 it will provide entry data for the receiving secondary school. The new procedures are now in place and are intended to support higher school attainment over the next years.
48. The school monitors information about pupils' standards from statutory tests but detailed evaluation to identify significant trends is unsatisfactory. For example, strategies to raise attainment in science at Key Stage 2 Level 5 are unsatisfactory. The weaknesses regarding the use of assessment as a basis for planning what pupils should learn identified at the last inspection have not been improved in many subjects, including English, mathematics and science.

49. Annual reports to parents fail to provide individual teacher comments on pupils' attainment in information technology and geography and therefore do not meet statutory requirements. There are parents' evenings during which parents have the opportunity to discuss their children's progress and there are more informal opportunities throughout the year.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

50. The school makes very good provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development and excellent provision for their social development. The school's aims, as they relate to the pupils' development in these areas, are strong and are very well supported by the values which permeate the daily running of the school. This contributes very effectively to creating a climate where pupils develop as confident, eager learners and responsible young adults.
51. Spiritual development is very effectively promoted by opportunities for pupils to reflect upon the dimension in their lives, which transcends the purely material. They have regular opportunities for reflecting upon significant events in the lives of people or upon the wonders and beauty of nature. Observing the growth of plants, or the life cycle of insects promotes a level of awe and wonder which is conducive to reflection. Works of art and music feature in the curriculum so pupils may develop an appreciation of the beauty of form, colour and sound. High expectations of pupils are matched by many expressions of praise and other more tangible rewards, which develop their self-esteem and impact positively on their desire to learn. A good example is the way pupils' writing is valued, attractively displayed and often retained in artistically produced bound books. Good links with local churches contribute to the quality of worship, which is an important ingredient in the development of pupils' spiritual growth.
52. The pupils' moral development is consistently and strongly fostered through the school's views about, and promotion of, good behaviour. Through its aims and policies the school sets a high value upon understanding the difference between right and wrong and fostering an awareness of the fact that individual behaviour impacts upon others. Through literature, through reading the parables of the New Testament, through work on life in other countries, pupils are provided with rich opportunities for discussing a variety of issues, which raise moral questions. While reading a class novel older pupils had an opportunity to discuss the appropriate response to finding a "stray" ten pound note. A sense of fair play is fostered in the playground and during games lessons.
53. The school promotes an excellent sense of social awareness. Adults provide exemplary role models of responsible, supportive relationships. Pupils, in their turn, develop an attitude of responsibility towards other members of the community and their school environment. There is a house system where the members are encouraged to be mutually supportive in striving for good standards of work and other attainments. The many positions of responsibility develop in pupils a pride in contributing to others. Excellent opportunities for pupils to participate in sporting and musical events outside school provide a breadth of experience in mixing with others and responding appropriately in competitive situations. The school is notably successful in the excellence of its musical achievements. The commitment to contributing to local good causes as well as to national and global causes further develops pupils' awareness of their social responsibility. In particular adults have enabled older pupils to become aware of aspects of life in Namibia and how young people lead their lives there.
54. There is rich provision for pupils' cultural development, both through the taught curriculum and through extra-curricular opportunities, including visits and visitors. The art and music curricula include many opportunities for pupils to appreciate a wide range of achievement from many

cultures including that of this country and others such as Europe, the USA and Africa. The quality of literature, including stories and poems from many countries, is brought to the attention of pupils and raises their awareness of the rich heritage of cultural achievement across the world. They have been enabled to work with an African artist to produce painted wooden tiles to form a whole “tree of life” reflecting the mellow beauty of muted autumnal colours. An attractive woven panel compliments the display of pastel drawings of the universe. Displays include fabrics and sculptures from Namibia reflecting the natural environment of that country. Throughout the school, there are attractive displays of natural forms emanating from a variety of cultures and which also provide areas for reflection. Many classrooms display artefacts from the Victorian period and representations of items such as illustrated papyrus and small figures from Ancient Egypt. In book stocks in classrooms and shared library areas, information about a wide range of cultures is readily at hand and promoted. Many visitors, including artists, story tellers and political representatives, further enrich the pupils’ awareness of their own culture and the cultural heritage of other countries.

55. Through the numeracy project, work in science and the increasing focus on technology as a means of communication, pupils are satisfactorily gaining an insight into the impact of science and technology. The school recognises the potential for developing work in this area, for example, by improving the availability of CD-ROM for information retrieval by individual pupils. Equally, plans are being made to raise pupils’ awareness of the range of religions, places of worship and cultural traditions not too distant from their own community.

56. **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

56. The school has maintained the good provision for the welfare of its pupils identified at the last inspection. Staff new to the school already know the pupils in their care well and all pupils are receiving good support and guidance for their personal needs and social development. Individual records of achievement are passed from one teacher to the next and useful discussion are held between staff to inform this process. Procedures for monitoring pupils’ progress are good overall, although at this point in the term more assessment and monitoring work is needed to ensure that pupils’ academic development, particularly that of high attaining pupils, is effectively promoted across the curriculum.

57. The procedures for induction into the Reception class are good, with a helpful pack of information designed to involve parents from the start. Pupils with special educational needs are initially identified in the reception class. Pupils are given support and guidance enabling them to be fully involved in the life of the school. There is very good liaison with a range of social, educational and medical services to support pupils’ effective learning. Suitable arrangements for child protection are in place. Aspects of social, personal and health education, including sex and drugs education, are appropriately covered in teachers’ planning.

58. Procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour are low key, but effective. All classes display the “Golden Rules” which are consistently promoted by staff and responded to positively by pupils. There is currently no recorded instance of bullying and parents are confident that the school would take swift and effective action if it did arise. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are effective and rely heavily on good communication with parents, who support the school’s attendance policy. Provision for welfare, health and safety is good overall. Pupils are taught safe practice during lessons, especially those with a practical component. Staff and governors are vigilant in their assessment of risks. Arrangements for dealing with accidents and first aid are effective. The school is doing all it reasonably can to provide a safe and secure place in which effective teaching and learning may take place.

59. **Partnership with parents and the community**

59. The school has maintained its very good relationships with parents and community and pupils benefit from the increased support for their education that these provide. The quality of communication with parents is successful overall, but written documents, such as the prospectus, governors annual report to parents and pupils' reports, all miss out important aspects of required information and the school is not meeting its legal obligations in this respect.
60. There are effective strategies in place to encourage parents to be full partners in their children's education. These include regular meetings about curriculum matters, teacher/ parents consultation meetings, invitations to assembly, sports day, concerts and the home-school reading scheme. A number of parents are very active as "class representatives" in organising social and fund-raising events in support of school development. The school values and seeks the views of parents on a variety of issues, including their input to the drafting of the forthcoming home-school agreement. Parents, although very positive about the way in which the school is approachable, do have concerns that occasionally too short notice is given about events. Additionally, some parents would like more detailed information about the policy on homework. The inspection team agrees that this would be useful.
61. Informing parents of pupils with special educational needs is a strong feature within the school. Parents' involvement with the implementation of individual education plans is consistently applied to all stages of the Code of Practice.
62. Community links are very well fostered and enrich pupils' learning experiences in many ways. For example, local elderly people come into school to talk about their war-time experiences, ministers from churches in the neighbourhood regularly take assembly, a pre-school play group and after-school care club are both located within the school site and many pupils have benefited from both. There are links with the wider community through a well conceived programme of educational visits to such places as Brereton Country Park, Chester Zoo and Macclesfield Heritage Centre. In Years 3, 4 and 6, pupils are offered the opportunity for a residential experience which have included stays in Menai, Conwy and Windermere for example. New last year, Year 5 pupils visited a South Cheshire College for a week of activities ranging from "beauty therapy to brick-laying" as a way of giving them a taster of the world at work. All of these experiences provide good opportunities for developing confidence and young citizenship.

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Leadership and management

63. A newly appointed acting headteacher for the Autumn Term 1999 is in post. The previous headteacher resigned her post in July 1999 and the headteacher designate will take up the post of headship in January 2000. The present leadership of the school is good. The acting headteacher has a firm vision for the school and since her appointment has continued to accomplish some of the issues contained in the previous inspection report. The staff is a hardworking team, which is very supportive in providing good quality education for all pupils. All the key issues contained in the previous inspection report have been tackled, but not all of them have been thoroughly implemented throughout the school and are therefore not embedded in current practice.

64. Each subject has a co-ordinator, but changes in staffing have meant that some subjects have not received the attention planned over the current year. Co-ordinators are capable, enthusiastic subject managers. They support other staff well and have developing systems in place for ensuring there is sound cross-phase liaison. The system of shadow co-ordinators in the opposite key stage works well and is a developing positive feature. Few staff have planned time to review pupils' work alongside medium-term planning. The use of regular non-contact teaching time for subject managers to observe the quality of teaching and learning in the subjects they co-ordinate, and to assess whether subject targets are being appropriately met, is unsatisfactory. All staff are ready to assume greater responsibility for all aspects of school management and the team spirit is good. The senior management team, which normally consists of three staff, but currently has two members has good insight into the strengths and areas for development for their own subjects and aspects, but very limited involvement in the monitoring of whole school standards.
65. The support for pupils with special educational needs is well co-ordinated by a newly appointed co-ordinator. There is efficient and effective management of resources. A well informed designated special needs governor visits school on a regular basis. However, the school is aware of the need to develop a greater strategic role in monitoring the progress of pupils with special educational needs.
66. The governing body is well informed and very supportive. Governors have looked very carefully at their involvement in the school and have established committees with clear terms of reference to deal with specific areas of the school's life. Individual governors are involved in overseeing the work undertaken by pupils, for example, special needs. There is also a literacy and numeracy governor in place. Governors are now fully involved in the financial direction of the school and the finance committee has command of the budget. Most governors see the school at work throughout the year and therefore have useful insights into how the curriculum is taught throughout the school. However, the governing body is aware of the need to further develop systems to enable them to assess how decisions which they make have an effect upon the quality of education offered to all pupils specifically, higher attaining pupils. The governing body fulfils their statutory duties very well with the exception of some aspects of reporting to parents.
67. The school development plan is a very detailed document, which itemises staff responsible for certain initiatives, the resource and financial implications, the expected timescales and also success criteria. The present school development plan is based upon the recommendations indicated in the previous inspection report and was prepared by the previous headteacher in consultation with all the staff and governors. Currently the school plans for one year at a time and does not identify initiatives for the following three years. This does not allow the school to effectively spread the initiatives required and consolidate practice before moving on to the next target. The aims of the school are met in general, but in relation to enabling each individual to progress towards the realisation of their potential, the lack of challenge for the higher attainers means that this is not fulfilled. There is an appropriate balance of curriculum achievement and ethos related activities. Parents strongly support the committed, hardworking staff and their caring attitude that enriches the good ethos in the school.
68. The school has good systems in place to secure further improvement, but the implementation of these is dependent on a period of consolidation particularly in the area of the re-establishment of the management team. Good attention has been paid to implementation of the National Literacy Strategy, and preparations for developing information communicative technology and the National Numeracy Strategy are progressing well.

69. **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

69. Good levels of staffing, good quality resources and very good accommodation positively support the good quality of education being provided. The strengths identified in respect of these areas at the time of the previous inspection have all been maintained. Of particular mention is the very high quality of display in all areas of the school, which both celebrate pupils' individual achievements and also inspires and stimulates their interest and curiosity about the culturally rich world in which they live.
70. Teachers and classroom assistants work very effectively together as a strong team. The very good quality of relationships between adults has a tangible impact on the good standards pupils achieve. New staff are given good support to enable them to get to know the school and induction arrangements are effective. The arrangements for appraisal are satisfactory and on schedule. The Acting Headteacher is aware that individual professional development needs will require review in light of staff changes and the re-allocation of subject co-ordination responsibilities. A key issue of enabling subject co-ordinators to monitor and evaluate the quality and standards in their subject, raised in the previous report, has not been satisfactorily addressed and remains as a key issue for the school to address. All staff are sensitive to the needs of special educational needs pupils. The school has good levels of trained support staff. Resources for special educational needs are satisfactory. However, without a recent audit of availability, staff are insufficiently aware of the range of resources available.
71. The school administrative officer is very efficient and gives unobtrusive support which assists the smooth running of daily routines. The caretaker and his staff provide good quality support in maintaining a clean, safe and very attractive environment. Kitchen and lunch time staff make valued contributions.
72. The quality of accommodation is very good. Classes are large, bright and airy and appropriate for both the age and number of pupils using them. A rolling programme of maintenance and decoration is effective in ensuring high quality. Of current concern to school managers is a leaking roof, but this is receiving attention. The school's grounds are well tended and extremely attractive. They support positively pupils' physical and environmental education.
73. Learning resources are good overall. Very good use is made of visits, visitors and the Local Education Authority's loan service to enhance what is available in school. The quality and quantity of those resources in place to support information communications technology and the Literacy Hour are good. The range of resources to support geography, religious education and physical education are just adequate. Not all subject co-ordinators have yet undertaken an audit of resources. School managers are aware of the need to give attention to this.

74. **The efficiency of the school**

74. The school finances are in very good order and have been carefully maintained by the school management and the governors. There is very good financial management, the budget is systematically monitored and there are effective procedures for ensuring that projects provide value for money. The Governing Body establishes the school's annual priorities for spending and these are linked effectively to the school development plan. Committees of governors then form their own budgets, within set constraints, and present these to the finance committee, consisting of members of all governors' committees, which combine these into the overall school budget. This is then presented to the full Governing Body. There are long-term contingency plans in place to take account of predicted changes in the nature of the school, such

as large numbers of pupils in some year groups. Pupils with statements of special educational need attract some funding, but other pupils on the school's register of special needs are well supported by the school's main funds. Careful budgeting by the curriculum committee ensures good quality support is available. Additional resourcing for curriculum areas is also funded from the school's central budget upon request from the Special Needs Co-ordinator. The arrangement is beneficial to pupils with special needs and provides good provision for their individual needs.

75. The deployment of teaching staff within the school is good and they are used effectively. Support staff are used well and their time is used efficiently. All support staff make a valuable contribution to the work of the school and this has a positive impact on the standards pupils attain. This is apparent in the good progress made by pupils with special educational needs.
76. The school makes overall good use of its resources. They are well cared for and used to good effect to support teaching and learning. The school has recently purchased a large number of new computers and has created a computer suite for pupils in addition to computers available in classrooms. Block timetabling of the numeracy and literacy hours across the school each morning means that the computer suite is left unused for much of the morning and there is undue pressure on its use in the afternoon session. This is also the case for use of the school hall for drama and physical education lessons. Less than efficient use is made of these two facilities. The school is aware of this short-coming and plans to address the issue. Otherwise, the accommodation and grounds of the school are used efficiently.
77. The school administration officer provides an excellent level of efficiency with school administration and bursary matters. She single-handedly deals competently with a wide range of business matters, allowing the headteacher and other staff to perform their educational duties effectively.
78. Given the standards achieved, the overall good progress made by pupils, the good quality of education provided, its below average spending for each pupil and its continuing commitment to improvement, the school is judged to give good value for money.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

79. AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN UNDER FIVE

79. At the time of the inspection all of the children admitted in September had been in the school for less than a week and were being educated in the reception class. Base line evidence indicates that attainment on entry covers the full range, but that the majority start school with levels of attainment which are higher than average. This is supported by inspection evidence.

80. Personal and Social Development

80. The standards the children attain are above those expected nationally. The majority of children attain the desirable learning outcomes by the age of five and a good proportion exceed them. The attainment of children with special educational needs is appropriate and often good for their abilities. Children are already settling very well into school routines and are establishing very positive relationships with the adults who teach them and with their classmates. They share equipment and take turns fairly. For instance, when using construction equipment, they take turns to add components.

81. They are sensitive to each others feelings. For example, at this early stage, a very small minority were tearful on leaving their parents and were comforted, not only by the adults, but by other children. When they played outside, no-one was seen to be left alone. They often help each other with clothing or fetching book bags for reading sessions. They recognise the need to listen to instructions and go about their tasks in an orderly way.

82. Already many children are beginning to show signs of increasing independence, although a small minority need a high degree of adult help to change for physical activities. They already make choices during activity periods and can select brushes, paints and other materials for art activities. The majority can access the toilet area independently and need no reminding to wash their hands. A number of children have integrated well with older pupils at playtimes. Many of the children are making very good progress in their abilities to investigate, for example, during sand and water play.

83. The teaching is very good. All the staff provide very good role models for the children and are consistent in their approach. They have observed their children closely during this initial period and are very skilful at designing and pacing activities to match the stage they are at. They clearly explain activities to the children. This increases the confidence with which children undertake less familiar tasks, such as the acquisition of early writing skills. A strength of the teaching is the insistence placed on good manners while working or playing. Careful records of the children's developmental progress are kept and are regularly discussed by the adults.

84. Language and Literacy

84. By the age of five, children's standards of attainment are good and generally higher than expected nationally. Most of the children engage in speaking and listening situations confidently and have a well developed vocabulary for expressing their thoughts and conveying their ideas. Many already appreciate that print carries meaning, that it is read from left to right and that illustrations provide vital clues for understanding the text of stories. They can re-tell stories and describe characters such as that of the wolf in the story of the Three Little Pigs. An increasing number of children can write their own name and can recognise letters in text which match those in their name.

85. The teaching of language and literacy has a high priority and the quality of teaching in this area

is very good. The staff are very skilful at building on the children's pre-school experiences so that they make rapid progress. They provide a variety of opportunities for speaking and listening including role-play and taped stories. The adults use their reading skills very effectively to capture the children's interest in listening to stories. There is a keen awareness of the rate of progress of individual children which results in the provision of suitable early reading and writing activities. The beginnings of reading are very well taught through the sharing of stories in big books and the early identification of the sounds linked to letters. Many items in the classroom are labelled. Children are encouraged daily to write and read their names and those of others in the class on a flip chart outside their cloakroom area. Book areas, both in class and in corridors are well resourced and the book displays are inviting. Writing skills are carefully fostered. The staff have a good understanding of the sequential stages of early writing development. From an early stage, the children are helped to understand that there are different purposes for writing, for example birthday invitations as well as writing "stories". Correct pencil control is taught and there are ample opportunities for practising the basic shapes which are the foundation for later neat, well-formed writing.

86. The children respond well to writing activities. They enjoy being read to and equally show considerable eagerness in sharing books with each other and with adults. They are very enthusiastic when sharing their experiences with class mates. The curriculum for this area is carefully constructed and delivered with thoroughness and imagination.

87. **Mathematics**

87. By the time children reach the age of five, their standards of attainment in this area are above average. The children build on the repertoire of songs and counting rhymes they have learned prior to starting school. They can count to five and recognise the number symbols. A few children can count to ten. They can match numbers to five to a set of objects and, in some cases recognise one less or one more, for example, when counting spots on ladybirds. A proportion of children recognise attributes such as colour or shape by which objects can be sorted. Many children are increasingly learning to recognise and sort patterns with beads or blocks, and can describe how construction material can be fitted together.

88. The quality of teaching in mathematics is very high. The planning demonstrates that there is provision to develop the children's numeracy skills across a number of areas. The more formal aspects of learning are skilfully underpinned through the use of number games or role play situations such as shopping or home corners where children can lay the table or set out food corresponding to a given number of people. The activities are very well managed. The staff expect the children to be purposefully engaged and, where necessary, provide adult help, for example, to develop mathematical opportunities through role play. The children are enthusiastic and use mathematical games and equipment sensibly.

89. **Knowledge and Understanding of the World**

89. The overall attainment in this area of learning is above average by the time children are five. They show an awareness of some of the features of their new environment and can orientate themselves to visit the various areas of the school and grounds. They recognise that between babyhood and becoming elderly, there is a passage of time and that the past is different from the present. They recognise and can talk about the feelings of characters in stories such as the various "bear" stories and can relate them to some of the things they themselves feel. They satisfactorily cut and stick materials and can make constructions from a range of equipment including building bricks. A number of children know that the computer screen can be by a "mouse", but their experiences are limited at this early stage.

90. The teaching in this area is good. By the time they enter Year 1 children have engaged in a range of scientific, design and technological activities which are detailed in the curriculum plans. Provision is made for problem solving activities and also for raising the children's awareness of the wonders of the natural world through activities in science. They are able to observe weather changes and recognise that affect the way people dress.

91.

91. **Physical Development**

91. The standards reached by the time the children are five are satisfactory. Most of the children use space confidently and move around safely. They learn the co-ordination skills necessary to catch and throw small balls or to throw bean bags to each other or into a pre-determined space. They learn to travel confidently by running, rolling or sliding on various parts of their bodies. The children learn to control a range of small equipment such as pens, brushes and pairs of scissors. They develop a good pencil grip at an early stage. There are currently insufficient opportunities for them to develop skills of negotiating space by directing a range of large, mobile equipment.

92. The teaching is of good quality, particularly where it applies to teaching the skills of handling small equipment. The hall is used well for teaching, but its availability is somewhat limited due to timetable decisions. Equally, the enclosed play area is too small to permit the safe use of wheeled vehicles. There is a good emphasis upon teaching the skills of taking turns, awareness of the safety of others and the overall concept of fair play in games.

93. **Creative Development**

93. The children generally attain above average standards by the time they are five. They are confident in handling materials and equipment and develop skills which enable them to make imaginative choices, for example, in their use of colour or materials. They sing with enthusiasm and are developing a good sense of rhythm. They can beat simple time using untuned percussion instruments such as claves. Their skills in playing together to produce a corporate sound are progressing well.

94. The quality of teaching in this area is good. Valuable opportunities are provided to experiment with paint and to organise a range of materials through cutting and sticking activities. The music is taught by a specialist. This ensures that clear objectives are set for these young children and a very good variety of interesting activities which develop their skills and confidence are organised. Role play areas provide good opportunities for imaginative play. The dance component within the physical education curriculum is a further area of enrichment to develop the children's creative response to music.

95. The children show a high level of participation in creative activities. They generally use their imagination well. Their delight in looking at pictures and in hearing the sounds made by the good range of instruments available, is very infectious.

96. **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS, SCIENCE,**

96. **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

English

96. In the statutory assessment tests in 1998, the percentage of pupils achieving level 2 or above in both reading and writing, was above the national average. The percentage of pupils achieving the higher level 3, was close to the national average in both aspects. In 1999, the percentage of pupils achieving level 2 or above was below that in 1998 but at the time of the inspection, no national comparative figures were available. Over a period of three years, there has been a slight fall in performance at Key Stage 1. This is due to disruption in teaching at the end of the key stage and the large proportion of pupils with special needs in Year 2 last year. Inspection evidence suggests that although attainment is still average for the majority of the pupils there are some strengths. Standards in both reading and writing are beginning to rise. This is consistent with the attainment at the last inspection. The pupils generally attain above average standards in speaking and listening. Pupils make satisfactory progress in reading and writing and good progress in speaking and listening. There is evidence of recent, more rapid progress in developing the pupils' writing and reading skills. This can be attributed to the good links made between reading and the development of the pupils' writing skills during literacy hour. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress as the result of additional help and tasks which are well matched to their needs.
97. At Key Stage 1, a good proportion of the pupils are developing confidence in applying phonic knowledge to reading an increasing number of less familiar words. In addition, they apply their phonic skills to their writing, where there is evidence of recent improvement in the accuracy of their spelling. By the end of the key stage, most pupils form their letters well and orientate them appropriately, resulting in the neat presentation of their work. The level of talk is above average. Many pupils are fluent when sharing their experiences or talking about their work. They speak clearly when re-telling stories or commenting on books they are reading. Pupils generally listen well and are prepared to respond to each other's observations during discussion. A minority of pupils whose diction is not clear at the early stages, make good progress. This is a result of the effective additional help provided and the range of strategies employed to improve speaking skills.
98. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils attain above average levels in English. The results of the 1998 national tests demonstrate that this trend has been maintained over time. When compared with national averages and those of other similar schools, standards are good. There is evidence of a further rise in attainment during 1999. The good, and often very good progress, is a direct consequence of the skilful teaching which stimulates the pupils' interest in a range of literature and develops their ability to use their reading experiences to undertake a wide range of writing.
99. Standards in reading by the age of 11 are above average. Progress is particularly noticeable at the upper end of Key Stage 2 where pupils rapidly acquire greater fluency and expression. A good proportion of the pupils pay good attention to punctuation when reading and can discuss text with a commendable degree of insight. The pupils' writing shows an increasing level of technical accuracy. This is evident in their spelling, sentence construction, punctuation and, among the oldest pupils, the different structures used appropriately for writing dialogue, poetry, narrative or non-fiction prose.
100. Their writing skills are well applied when recording work in other subjects, such as commentaries on graphical representations in mathematics and, in particular, work in history. Here, many pupils demonstrate the range of vocabulary at their disposal to write sensitive, empathetic accounts of life and events in the past. Many pupils have above average speaking skills. They sequence their ideas logically in discussion and employ a good range of persuasive vocabulary, for example, when arguing their preferences for certain books or characters within them. They often use their speaking skills very effectively during lessons in drama. Written work is well organised and neatly presented.

101. Pupils demonstrate an enjoyment of literature. They respond positively to the strong reading culture promoted in the school, both through the range of books available and events such as visiting book fairs and sessions led by visiting authors, including some who introduce stories and poems with a multicultural flavour. The youngest pupils are eager to learn to write and enjoy experimenting with writing simple stories, captions to illustrations and simple rhyming verses which they proudly contribute to their class anthologies. There is a high level of concentration as these pupils carefully form their letters and strive to recall their teacher's guidance to use capital letters and insert full stops. The good relationships impact favourably on the pupils' willingness to concentrate well and sustain their work until it is completed.
102. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 1. Some strong features are emerging in the teaching of writing as teachers' confidence in using the literacy guidance grows. An increasing level of consistency is being achieved in planning for the literacy hour and achieving a balance between different aspects of literacy. The long and medium-term objectives for teaching are appropriate but there is a lack of clarity about short-term objectives for different groups of pupils and the expectations of pupils. This sometimes detracts from the precision with which tasks are matched to the needs of various pupils. At Key Stage 1, pupils' reading skills are fostered with increasing consistency resulting in pupils employing an increasing range of strategies such as using picture clues or applying their phonic knowledge to recognise new words. Appropriate attention is applied to developing accurate sentence structure early in the school. Equally, teachers are becoming increasingly skilful in identifying opportunities for writing in order to stimulate the pupils' desire to write. The pride of young pupils in their work is considerably enhanced through the very attractive hand made books, where work is collected for display and used as a record of attainment and progress.
103. The quality of teaching is good overall and particularly for older pupils at Key Stage 2. This impacts well on progress as an above average proportion of the pupils leave the school having attained higher than average standards in English. The quality of teaching has been maintained since the previous inspection. However, although teaching is good overall, some teachers show a lack of confidence in exploiting reading texts for the purposes of writing. Equally, there is some lack of precision about records which are handed on year on year so that, for example, there is more information to support decisions about the levels of reading books the pupils require on transfer from year to year. There is a consistency in which the agreed systems used by the pupils for checking spelling, are monitored. This then becomes a well established practice when pupils reach the top of the school. Work is regularly marked and there are good examples of comments which help the pupils to improve the quality of their work. However, this is not consistent and does not match the good quality observations which the majority of teachers make as the pupils work. The teachers' expectations of neat, legible handwriting are commendably high. Homework is progressively being established as a regular feature in all year groups. This impacts particularly well on the progress the pupils make with reading and spelling. Parents play a very active part in partnering the school in this aspect of the pupils' learning.
104. Since the previous inspection, the school has improved aspects of the way the pupils' work is assessed. A range of testing has been introduced. There is a portfolio of pupils' work which is moderated by teachers to match National Curriculum levels. Spelling and reading are tested regularly. Group tasks are assessed during Literacy Hour and there is a careful tracking of pupils with special educational needs. However, the knowledge acquired through assessment is not always applied to planning work for individual pupils. It does not, for example, frequently enough, result in the provision of sufficiently extended writing opportunities for very able writers in lessons. However this weakness is addressed through the "Able Writers' Club". The variety and range of literature made available to pupils, together with the insight and sensitivity with which it is handled in many classes, contributes very positively to the pupils' broader

development.

105. The subject is very well managed by two very committed co-ordinators, one for each key stage, who view literacy as an essential skill to foster. There is a strong commitment to supporting colleagues through the provision of training and informal advice. However, the time for them to monitor planning or teaching is currently inadequate. A very useful development to compile and moderate work as a whole-school portfolio is contributing well to raising awareness of standards in English. Resources are of good quality. There are attractive book displays which invite the pupils to browse and read.

106. **Mathematics**

106. At the age of seven, pupils' attainment is in line with the national average and with that achieved in similar schools. However, there are some strengths in pupils' performance, such as their skills in investigating mathematics and solving problems. The progress of pupils at Key Stage 1 is satisfactory overall. This is consistent with the findings of the previous report. The latest published national test results in 1998, indicate that the percentage of pupils attaining level 2 or above was above the national average, but for those attaining the higher level 3, was below average. Although standards have remained above the national average, there has been a steady fall in the school's average level each year since 1996. This is due to disruption in teaching at the end of the key stage, which the school has addressed, and to the high proportion of pupils with special needs in Year 2 last year. Although there is not yet a national comparative figure for the latest test results, the percentage of pupils gaining level 2 or above has fallen from 89 per cent in 1998 to 70 per cent in 1999. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.

107. By the time pupils leave the school, their attainment is above the national average and their progress is good at Key Stage 2. This is an improvement on the last inspection, when attainment at 11 was average. The percentage of pupils reaching the recommended level 4 or above was well above the national average, and was above the national average for those achieving the higher level 5. Standards of attainment have risen since 1996, peaking in 1997 and falling back in 1998. The percentage of pupils attaining level 4 or above is about the same in 1999 as in 1998. Again, there is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. Pupils' performance in mathematics tests is well above average compared to schools with pupils from a similar background. Standards of attainment are above those found at the time of the last inspection. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good at both key stages.

108. The effectiveness of the school's strategy for the implementation of the numeracy strategy is good and standards of numeracy are good, especially at Key Stage 2. Pupils show confidence with numbers. They regularly practice number bonds and tables. A significant feature is pupils' ability to apply problem-solving methods in different situations and across a range of subjects and in general situations. They are well aware of, for example, the methods of rounding numbers up and down. They effectively apply these rules to different problems such as rounding to the nearest year when the critical figure changes from five to six. Year 6 pupils show a good understanding of mathematical language.

109. Younger pupils at Key Stage 1 are able to read, recognise and order numbers to 20, in both numbers and figures. They accurately match numbers to quantity and count confidently. They are steadily building their knowledge of shape and know the names of an appropriate range of two-dimensional shapes. By the end of the key stage, pupils confidently add and subtract numbers up to ten and some pupils understand the significance of the digits in numbers up to a hundred. They are able to make up sums of money and some add amounts in written form

using two places of decimal. Most pupils are familiar with all four rules of number, knowing some simple multiplication bonds and most are developing early ideas of division. They identify halves and quarters of shapes, accurately shading in the appropriate fractional part of diagrams. They recognise odd and even numbers. Pupils develop appropriate measuring skills and accurately measure lengths of lines to the nearest centimetre. They tell the time to the nearest five minutes and know the names of the days, months and seasons. They know the names of some solids and some accurately identify corners, edges and faces. Higher attaining pupils use tally marks when collecting data, and draw and read simple charts and graphs.

110. At Key Stage 2, pupils manipulate numbers with confidence and have a good knowledge of place value. They use this well to round numbers to the nearest ten, hundred or thousand. Most have rapid recall of number facts and quickly and accurately can give a number that makes 57 up to a hundred, for example. They demonstrate and clearly explain a range of strategies by which they calculate their answers. They work confidently with numbers up to, and sometimes in excess of, a million, showing a clear understanding of place value to this level. Pupils work confidently with fractions, accurately comparing the sizes of different fractions. They have a quick and accurate recall of multiplication facts to a hundred and confidently use all four rules of number when solving problems. They use co-ordinates well, with positive numbers, placing points and giving co-ordinates accurately. They know the names and the properties of a good range of two and three-dimensional shapes, accurately describing their properties. Pupils develop previous knowledge of faces, edges and vertices well. They know that some shapes are rigid and others are not, and that this fact has an impact on the practical uses of the shape. Pupils work well with reflective and rotational symmetry, showing secure understanding of these topics. They understand what parallel lines are and some of the resulting properties of shapes in respect to sides and angles. Higher attaining pupils have developed some of the basic ideas of bearings and understand about angles to 360 degrees.
111. Throughout both key stages, pupils develop their investigative skills well and they look carefully at the information given and investigate a range of mathematical situations well. They investigate shapes and their properties for example, recording their findings in simple tables. They are proficient at reading charts and tables and use the information gained to good effect. Levels of attainment in using and applying mathematics are good by the end of the Key Stage 2.
112. Pupils' response is good and occasionally excellent. This has a positive impact on their learning. They are keen learners and willing to answer questions during class mental maths sessions and listen carefully to their teachers. They respond quickly to the teachers' instructions and waste little time at the change of activities. They work well as groups, with some good examples of collaborative work seen during the period of inspection, when pupils share and compare their methods of solving mathematical problems for example. Pupils exchange ideas with each other to good effect and stay on task during these periods and during individual work sessions. Behaviour is good and pupils show good levels of motivation and confidence.
113. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 1 and good at Key Stage 2, with some very good teaching seen at this key stage. In better lessons, teachers make their high expectations clear at the beginning of the lesson and make clear what the pupils are to learn during each lesson. This has a good impact on pupils' understanding and standards achieved. Their understanding of mathematics is good and this enables teachers to give clear explanations and to pose searching and meaningful questions. Planning is satisfactory and lessons mostly follow the recommended structure of the National Numeracy Strategy well. Teachers' methods and organisation are good and teachers mostly devise work at an appropriate level for different groups of pupils, although sometimes work is not sufficiently challenging for more able pupils. Teachers' relationships with pupils are good and their good management of pupils enables them to establish and maintain good levels of behaviour. Lessons generally proceed at a quick pace

and the interest of pupils is sustained well. Teachers use day-to-day assessment satisfactorily and the marking of pupils' books is sometimes helpful in pointing out what to do to improve standards, but this is not consistently applied throughout the school. Teachers use information technology well to support work in mathematics and there is, for example, a good assessment and practice program for level 4 maths.

114. The co-ordination of mathematics is good. Two enthusiastic co-ordinators, one from each key stage, successfully lead the staff in implementing the scheme. The school's strategy for implementing the numeracy lessons is good and is making a significant contribution to the standards of numeracy. There are good procedures for the assessment of standards, but the school has yet to refine ways to use assessment data to ensure teachers' lesson planning results in activities that are always appropriate to individual pupils' needs. Resources are satisfactory, and the subject managers have completed an audit of resources, ensuring that the school has sufficient to successfully implement the numeracy strategy. A further audit is planned and as a result, more resources will be purchased. Available resources are used efficiently.

115. **Science**

115. At the end of Key Stage 1, attainment in science as judged by teacher assessment 1998, indicates that pupils were reaching standards above those expected nationally. However, when comparing the percentage of pupils who reached Level 3 and above with other schools, the school is broadly in line, with the exception of experimental and investigative science. Attainment in this area of the subject is below the national average. Inspection evidence confirms that pupils are attaining levels above those expected for their age and that an emphasis on experimentation and investigation over the past year has brought attainment in that aspect of the science curriculum in line with other schools. This is an improvement on the last inspection, when overall standards of attainment were in line with the national average and progress was satisfactory.

116. The 1998 tests in science indicated that, at the end of Key Stage 2, pupils were attaining well above the national average for those reaching Level 4 or above. However, when comparing the percentage of pupils attaining Level 5 and above the school percentage was 5 per cent as compared with the national average of 16 per cent. In 1999, this rose to 23 per cent. Assessment data indicates that pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 attain standards in science which are above the national average and close to the level found in similar schools. Inspection findings indicate that standards in science are above average at the end of Key Stage 2. This is better than the findings of the last inspection.

117. Statutory assessments over recent years have indicated that whilst the school is doing well in its attainment generally, higher attaining pupils are not making as much progress as might be expected. Inspection evidence indicates that work is not consistently matched to pupils' prior attainment, especially for higher attaining pupils at both key stages.

118. The majority of pupils at both key stages have a good understanding of experimental and investigative science, a very secure knowledge of life and living processes and a developing understanding of materials and their properties and physical processes.

119. Pupils at Key Stage 1 know that different materials have certain properties. Pupils are able to sort and group a wide range of man made and natural materials giving good reason for their choice. Pupils understand the scientific vocabulary 'transparent', 'translucent' and 'opaque' when relating this to certain materials. As observed in Year 2, pupils are able to construct a

simple electrical circuit using a battery, a bulb and a buzzer. Most pupils can make accurate predictions and explain their conclusions in terms of a developing scientific vocabulary. Pupils confidently use the correct terminology for the major bones and organs of the human body. Pupils know the life cycle of a butterfly and can relate that different animals are found in different habitats with a strong emphasis on conservation.

120. At Key Stage 2, most pupils understand how plants grow and the need for water, light and warmth to germinate seeds. Pupils benefit from the good use that is made of the extensive school grounds to support a wide variety of work across all the areas studied in science. They confidently understand the difference between conductors and insulators as observed in a lesson in Year 4 involving a completed electrical circuit and the passage of electricity through certain materials to light a bulb. Pupils have a very good knowledge of how light travels and why day and night occur, as indicated in evidence from a lecture given by pupils at a Royal Institution of Science meeting. Pupils confidently identify a wide range of materials, devising their own way of classification. Most pupils' writing accurately records simple facts and experimental occurrences in accurate detail. Scientific explanations about why events occur are less well developed. In addition, pupils draw upon a good general knowledge to suggest lines of investigation and carry out detailed observations at regular intervals. However, methods of recording are usually indicated by the class teacher, which restricts the development of individual recording skills. The previous inspection report indicated that pupils needed to plan and explore their own investigations. Progress in this area has not been addressed consistently at both key stages. Pupils seldom devise their own experiments as a development away from the prescribed format of listing apparatus, drawing and conclusion or in the form of labels for observations ready to be filled in. Communicating information in the form of graphs and diagrams develops soundly as pupils move through the school. However, the consistent use of information technology to support the handling of data is unsatisfactory. Pupils' science books contain a wide variety of well presented work and the quality of presentation, particularly of their drawings, is generally very good at both key stages.
121. For the majority of pupils progress is good in the acquisition of scientific knowledge, suitable appropriate vocabulary and knowledge relating to experimentation. Progress is more rapid in classes where more work is provided and levels of challenge are more suitably matched to prior attainment. Boys and girls make similar rates of progress in relation to their prior attainment. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their prior attainment, but pupils with higher attainment do not consistently make rapid progress, except in lessons where teaching is challenging as observed in the extra-curriculum science club involving pupils in upper Key Stage 2.
122. Pupils' responses are very good and they have positive attitudes to working individually or in groups. Behaviour is always very good in lessons and pupils are polite and friendly to visitors and classroom support assistants. Pupils respect the need for safety and use resources well. The majority concentrate for suitable amounts of time and endeavour to complete tasks within the lesson. Pupils' opportunity to supplement their work by their scientific research is limited. The organisation of pupils working co-operatively in pairs and groups is a regular feature of all lessons, and this has a very positive impact on attainment and their personal development.
123. The teaching of science is good overall and is sometimes very good. Characteristics of better lessons include work that is highly challenging and teachers' good subject expertise. Teaching is often enhanced by a sense of fun as observed in Years 4 and 6. Most teachers have a good understanding of the subject, particularly in the aspects of life and living processes; less secure is some teachers' knowledge in physical processes and materials and their properties at Key Stage 2. There is developing confidence in understanding experiment and investigation work as

observed in the medium term planning. Teaching is very good when learning objectives are specific and shared with the pupils and where the revisiting of lesson aims at the end of the lesson consolidates the knowledge gained. Where teachers subject knowledge is less secure, pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to change suggestion into a form of their own investigation and all preparation, including experimental procedures, is undertaken by the class teacher. Planning is satisfactory throughout the school. However the overall progression of skills is less well developed. In better lessons, the organisation of resources and learning matched the needs of the subject and levels of attainment reached. Very good challenging questioning stimulates pupils to think for themselves, generate ideas and use scientific terms in their work as observed in a lesson relating to electrical circuits in Year 4. Most teachers and supporting adults interact with pupils well as observed during a Key Stage 2 class involving experimentation with magnets. The quality of marking varies in quality and vigour, consequently some pupils do not receive sufficiently detailed advice about how to improve their work to raise attainment. The curriculum is enriched by the very good use made of the school grounds.

124. The curriculum is well balanced and fully meets statutory requirements. Schemes of work have been devised for each respective year group and they focus on a two-year rolling programme developing knowledge and understanding in specific scientific topics. Procedures for the use of consistent assessment data in planning are unsatisfactory. In better lessons the learning objectives for the lesson are clear and are shared with the class. Evaluation sessions with all pupils at the end of lessons, enable teachers to establish the gain in scientific knowledge and understanding of pupils. In other lessons, this is not so well managed and there are few clear links between planning and assessment to inform future teaching targets. Records of progress indicating pupils' individual levels of attainment are generally well maintained in pupils' Records of Achievement.
125. The subject is well managed by enthusiastic co-ordinators who work hard to support teaching throughout the school. Since the last inspection time has been allocated for the co-ordinators to moderate levels of pupils' work against national expectations. There is no effective monitoring of teachers' planning intentions against completed work in order to avoid repetition. Co-ordinators are not well informed about national standards and the need to use test results to target future subject improvement in both key stages. The quality and range of scientific displays in most classes supports the subject's ethos. The quality, range and accessibility of resources are satisfactory.

126.

Information technology

126. Standards in information technology are above national expectations at the end of both key stages. Pupils make good progress throughout the school. This is similar to the findings of the last report, when attainment and progress were judged to be good at both key stages.
127. At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils can name and identify parts of the computer, using correct vocabulary. Most are able to access a program and they confidently work with those programs with which they are familiar and they quickly become familiar with new ones. They use simple word processing to record their work and are developing good skills with an art package to enrich their work in other subjects. This was noticeable in art-work, when pupils in Year 2 produced some impressive wallpaper designs using the computer to produce repeating patterns in the style of William Morris and Laura Ashley. They have some experience of using data handling programs and they represent data appropriately as graphs. Pupils program a floor

turtle with simple instructions to follow a prescribed path.

128. At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils can switch computers on, load and access programs and work with a suitably wide range of software. They save their work to disc, and use appropriate instructions to print their work. Once finished, pupils close down computers correctly. Pupils use word processing and the publishing package effectively to present work of a good quality. "Clip art" programs are used well to design covers for topics such as The Ancient Egyptians. Whilst designing their topic covers, pupils use desk top publishing techniques well to adapt pictures to suit their own purpose. They are very familiar with the icons in these programs and, using these effectively, change the scale or delete parts of pictures to suit their particular purpose. Pupils are competent at word processing. They edit their own work and adapt the style to show that they are aware of different audiences by using different typefaces and layouts. Pupils enter information into data bases and some examples of graph work were seen where pupils represented data in different forms such as 2 and 3-D graphs and pie charts. In control technology, pupils program apparatus to travel pathways as required. They use CD-ROM successfully to find out information in other subjects such as history and science. Older pupils use a Level 4 mathematics programme effectively to assess their progress. They access their own file within the program and work competently at their own pace. Although no work on monitoring and using simulation exercises was seen during the inspection, there is evidence that pupils achieve sound standards in these two areas of information technology.
129. Pupils' response when working with information technology is good and this has a positive impact upon their attainment. They take their work seriously, sustain their concentration well and stay on task. They are well motivated and show pride in their achievements. Pupils work well independently inside or outside of the classroom and mostly, without the direct supervision of the teacher. When working in pairs or individually in the computer suite, they willingly help each other. Some good examples of collaborative group work were seen.
130. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers select activities that are appropriate to the main classroom activity and which effectively support and enhance learning across a wide range of subjects. Teachers generally show a sound knowledge of information technology and are able to support pupils competently when required. Good organisation and the effective recording of pupils experiences means that all pupils have the same opportunities and equal access to computers, either in class or in the newly created suite. High expectations of attainment and behaviour, and the need to be able to trust pupils to work independently of the teacher, are evident.
131. At the time of the inspection, two enthusiastic and knowledgeable co-ordinators, one from each key stage were taking over the management of the subject. They have clear ideas of how to develop information technology in school and have already identified areas for development, such as some weaknesses in specific areas of staff knowledge and gaps in software. Plans are laid to address these issues. The provision of resources is very good, although the computer in the reception class is somewhat outdated and is not up to the high quality provided throughout the rest of the school. There is a networked suite of eight computers, with a good range of software and pupils also have access to computers in or adjacent to classrooms. The good quality resources and their organisation have a direct impact on pupils attitudes to learning and hence to quality and standards. The organisation of the literacy and numeracy hours in the morning sessions means that the computer suite is often unused during this time and the school does not get an appropriate return on its investment at these times. It also results in excessive pressure on its use in the afternoon. The school is aware of this and has plans to address this weakness.

132. **Religious Education**

132. At both key stages, the pupils attain standards in line with those expected by the locally agreed syllabus. This is similar to judgements made at the time of the last inspection. They make steady progress over time, and but the recent introduction of a more comprehensive scheme of work is beginning to improve pupils' attainment and the progress they make.
133. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils are acquiring an increasing knowledge of stories from the Bible and are developing an appropriate insight into how people feel in certain situations. The very youngest pupils, for example, are developing a sound recognition of what causes people to be sad or happy, to feel confident or be frightened, to trust or mistrust people. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils reflect on the significance of the Creation and the concept of a higher being. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils acquire knowledge of many stories from the Old and New Testaments, and increasingly understand the messages behind them, an example being that of various parables. They progressively extend their knowledge and understanding to recognising that there are world faiths other than Christianity. They know that these faiths have their own characteristics, beliefs and festivals which influence the lives of believers. The oldest pupils, for example, know that the Jewish Sabbath demands a certain style of celebration which is significant to the Jewish people.
134. At both key stages, the pupils are interested in the areas of discussion which are raised and in learning both about Christianity and some other of the major religions. They show an appropriate attitude of respect towards different religious practices, life styles and beliefs imparted by the teachers. Their response supports their progress satisfactorily.
135. The teaching is satisfactory at both key stages and has a direct impact on the satisfactory progress that pupils make. There are indications of stronger features emerging in the devising of activities arising from the more coherent and helpful scheme of work which has recently been developed. The teachers' knowledge of different faiths is growing, together with the sensitivity and imagination with which they teach about these religions. Discussions with pupils are carefully prepared and well managed. An increasing range of artefacts and other resources are being provided to support teaching and learning.
136. There are promising indications that the profile of religious education is being raised and that the management of the subject reflects its status as a core subject. The opportunity to recognise religious education as having an important contribution to make to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is being grasped. Pupils' progress is currently assessed informally but attainment targets are now in place upon which assessment may be based.

OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

137. **Art**

137. The progress that pupils make in art is good at both key stages. This level has been maintained since the last inspection. At Key Stage 1 pupils record their observations well and their drawings are of a large scale, accurate in shape with well formed structure. Colours are well reproduced in their art work and pupils experiment effectively with colour mixing to create tones to a good degree of accuracy. Older Key Stage 1 pupils produce some original and creative designs when making their tiles for press printing. Their designing and technical skills are good and the final pieces of work show care, thought and precision. At Key Stage 2, pupils understand about colour, tone and the effect that light and shadow have on the depth of a colour. They are able to observe this effect in practise, such as on their clothes. They draw

some difficult, complex shapes such as plants, shells and pine cones. Pupils' understanding of the effect of light and shadow on line, shape and tone is evident in their work. Pupils at Key Stage 2 develop their skills in press printing and produce cards in the style of John Muafangejo. Although they are emulating the style of this artist, their designs are original and interesting, whilst reflecting his style. They confidently choose colours that combine well to produce a desired effect and interesting designs. Pupils use water-colour crayons well to record their observations from a recent field trip into Alsager. They initially use pencils to draw detailed pictures of features of a Victorian house and then colour these effectively. Scale and proportion are well preserved in their sketches. Older pupils have mastered the skill of using pencils to create tone and shade and different kinds of lines to be used in subsequent work. They explore well the pencil as an instrument for drawing. Once the skill is successfully learned, they apply this to good effect in their drawings from observation. They appreciate the work of a wide range of artists and produce good quality pieces of art work in the styles of artists such as Kandinsky, Matisse, William Morris or Van Gogh, to name a few. Three dimensional work is evident and of a good quality.

138. Pupils' response in lessons is good and often very good. They show positive attitudes to their work and have high levels of concentration, both during teachers' demonstrations and whilst at work, sustaining interest over long periods of time. This has a positive impact on the standards the pupils achieve. Pupils invariably listen carefully to their teachers and are enthusiastic when answering questions. Most are able to work without the direct supervision of the teacher. They respond well to tasks that are challenging and persevere to good effect.
139. The quality of teaching is good, with some very good teaching at both key stages. Teachers' planning is good. They teach skills that are necessary for the production of good quality work and then provide interesting activities, often through links with other subjects that stimulate pupils and enable them to practise the skills that they have learned and achieve high standards. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of art is good and they are able to give good demonstrations, with both confidence and skill, setting good examples of standards and methods for pupils to follow. The methods used in lessons match well what pupils are intended to learn and lessons are well organised and resourced. Good relationships with pupils encourage good behaviour. Pupils are introduced to the work of other artists from a wide range of other cultures. This makes a significant contribution to their social, cultural and personal development of the pupils.
140. **Design and technology**
140. It was not possible to see design and technology being taught during the period of the inspection. Samples of work were available, photographic evidence provided and teachers' planning was seen. Progress in design and technology is satisfactory throughout the school, and pupils generally work at levels that are appropriate for their age. This is similar to the findings at the time of the last inspection.
141. At Key Stage 1, pupils produce pieces of work using a range of materials, such as boxes, fabrics, simple axles and wheels. In these samples, a satisfactory level of the design process was evident, making skills are sound and pupils confirm that they are encouraged to consider their work and to try to improve where possible. By the time pupils are eleven, they are planning projects to a satisfactory level, using planning booklets to record their choice of materials, methods and their evaluations. Pupils are able to identify what they think is good and where they can improve their models. Much of the work in design and technology is linked to topic work, such as the American Indians, and effectively enriches their work in these subjects.

Pupils do have satisfactory skills in designing and making. They cut, join and finish their products well.

142. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Although no teaching was seen, planning shows that teachers plan according to the school's satisfactory scheme of work. Pupils are taught skills of designing and making and then they are given good opportunities to practice these in other subjects. Evidence shows that they satisfactorily use a satisfactory range of consumable materials that give pupils suitable experiences.

143. **Geography**

143. Pupils make satisfactory progress at both key stages. This is not as good as the last inspection, when pupils were judged to make good progress. Only three lessons were observed during the inspection. Other evidence was gained from scrutiny of displays of pupils' work and talking to pupils. Overall, in both key stages pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their prior attainment.

144. At Key Stage 1, pupils make satisfactory progress overall. They appreciate the topography in the local area in which they reside and have strong views about the spacious school grounds and the need to protect the environment. Through well planned visits out of school, pupils begin to observe similarities and differences between their own locality and places further afield. They are gaining an understanding of simple maps and routes, as observed in a Year 1 class relating to the journey of the Little Wooden Farmer and his visit to an imaginary seaside resort. Pupils are able to use symbols with growing confidence to represent certain features. In Year 2, pupils draw an outline of Moss Wood with confidence and locate with growing accuracy boundaries and footpaths, developing a sense of scale. Pupils are confident in their use of maps and can locate major cities and rivers in the United Kingdom.

145. In Key Stage 2, progress is also satisfactory. Pupils in lower Key Stage 2 are able with confidence to locate Namibia on a map of Africa and confidently make telling comparisons between the two environments. Pupils are aware how different weather conditions can affect our lives. In upper Key Stage 2, pupils are able to locate the position of their school on an Ordnance Survey map, certain landmark features of Alsager and the location of their homes. Pupils use simple co-ordinates to locate given features with accuracy and are aware of major industrial areas surrounding Alsager.

146. Pupils enjoy their work in geography and responses to learning are good. Pupils maintain high levels of class discussion through being presented with many interesting resources that excite and stimulate them. For example, in a Key Stage 2 lesson, after watching a video relating to village life in Africa, pupils were very responsive when the class teacher related her first hand experiences and produced a wide range of cultural artefacts including grain ground by hand. These resources stimulated a great interest in the lesson, acting as a high motivating feature. Most pupils take pride in the presentation of their work and record their findings of investigations and field trips – for example, the trip to Conway. Pupils work well collaboratively. Pupils show initiative and enjoy working on their own or in small groups. Behaviour is very good. Pupils use resources with care and older pupils show a mature approach to their learning and are keen to succeed.

147. The quality of teaching in the lessons observed ranged from very good to satisfactory, and overall it is satisfactory. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject is good and, in better lessons, the methods employed stimulate pupils' interest through the imaginative ways of presenting the material to be studied. Teachers' planning is good where learning objectives are

precise. This gives teachers a clear focus on what pupils are to learn within the lesson with activities planned in an appropriate sequence, which builds upon pupils' previous experiences and skills. The time taken at the end of the lesson to discuss the learning that has taken place is sometimes too short to be effective. There is appropriate coverage of the National Curriculum. There are good links with other subjects to support the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. For example, the plotting of a river flow and scaled drawing of a section of a river. The development of information technology skills is at present unsystematic and unsatisfactory in its support of geographical skills. There are very good relationships between teachers and pupils and very effective use is made of planned fieldwork in and around the locality of Alsager. Presentation of pupils' work is good, and all work is marked and dated by the respective class teachers. The effective use of displays in the corridors and folders celebrates pupils' achievements throughout the school. The controlled nature of most tasks given to class groups in upper Key Stage 2 does not provide sufficient opportunity for higher attaining pupils to progress at an appropriate speed.

148. **History**

148. Most pupils attain a standard in history above that expected for their ages and make good progress in the development of historical skills. This is consistent with the last inspection report when pupils were judged to make good progress.
149. At Key Stage 1 pupils show a good understanding of life now and in the past. Pupils in Year 1 learn about famous people of the past, including Florence Nightingale, Louis Braille and Queen Victoria. From a visit from a grandparent, pupils know that life sixty years ago is different from life now. In Year 2, pupils develop a good understanding of life in Ancient Egypt with direct links into geography and the building and siting of the Aswan Dam. Pupils can sequence historical artefacts, discussing correct chronological order.
150. At Key Stage 2, pupils develop an empathy with life in Victorian Britain. The writing of accounts relating to Victorian school life using a range of photographic material and artefacts and very appropriate literature has a very positive impact on attainment. Discussion with pupils show that, in upper Key Stage 2, pupils are developing a good sense of chronology and can communicate confidently using appropriate dates and historical terminology. A particular strength is their knowledge and understanding of periods in time and their effect on life today. For example, the study of life in Britain since 1950, music, fashion and the conquest of space travel.
151. Overall pupils' responses in history are very good. The majority of pupils listen carefully to their teachers. For example when upper Key Stage 2 pupils undertook a range of historical enquiry relating to Tutankhamun's tomb and life in Ancient Egypt in preparation for a visit to a Macclesfield museum. Behaviour is very good and this promotes a hardworking atmosphere in lessons. Pupils listen with great interest and enthusiasm to their teachers' and other pupils' comments in a very positive manner. Pupils make very good use of library resources and photographic evidence. Very good links have been established with literacy to provide a coherent framework which has a positive impact on attainment. A strength of the subject is the way pupils co-operate effectively to use resource material to access information. However, independent study for higher attaining pupils in a planned, systematic manner to support historical enquiry is underdeveloped.
152. The quality of teaching is good overall. Many teachers have an enthusiasm for the subject and a secure knowledge of it. Teachers' planning is good and objectives, although not specific, generally match work appropriately to the needs of all pupils, including those with special

educational needs. However, in many lessons common tasks are given so that higher attaining pupils do not work at appropriate levels. Very good use is made of planned educational visits to Hanley and Brampton Museum to enhance pupils' first hand experience. Where teaching is most effective and provides successfully for the National Curriculum requirements, planned activities are paced well and artefacts are used effectively to support teaching and promote learning.

153. **Music**

153. Standards of attainment in music at Key Stage 1 are above expectations and pupils make good progress. This is maintained since its identification during the last inspection. They sing tunefully and with enthusiasm. They have a well developed confidence in using a range of instruments for composition and performance. At Key Stage 2, the attainment of the majority of pupils is very high. This judgement is also consistent with those made at the last inspection. Pupils have a very good knowledge of notation and employ a progressively wider repertoire of strategies for composing and performing musical tasks in groups. Taped evidence provided a very good picture of the range of tasks and ingenuity of interpretation within the grasp of the older pupils. Attainment in competitive musical events provides further evidence of the high quality of performance of many of the pupils.
154. The pupils at Key Stage 1 successfully use an increasing range of percussion instruments to accompany singing or for the purposes of demonstrating different rhythms. They can sing songs from memory, singing softly or loudly as appropriate. They make good progress to enable them to sing in rounds. At Key Stage 2, the pupils make very good progress in introducing a much wider variety of instruments into their composition and performance work. Often, pupils who receive very valuable additional instrumental tuition, bring their own instruments to classes.. They have a very well developed awareness of the suitability of various instruments to convey certain moods. They sing with expression and many can read conventional notation and follow a sung score. They make very good progress in developing their composition work imaginatively and singing a wide repertoire of songs with increasing expression.
155. The pupils eagerly approach the variety of activities devised to develop their skills in and appreciation of music. The youngest pupils are fascinated by the good range of often unusual instruments available in school. They delight in opportunities to accompany singing by many of the multicultural gongs, bells and shakers which are available. The older pupils respond responsively to opportunities to perform together and to work collaboratively to compose pieces of music. Pupils' response has a positive impact upon the good and very good progress made by pupils.
156. The teaching at both key stages is undertaken by a specialist and is of very high quality. The enthusiasm, together with the very good knowledge of the range of work which is possible, provides all the pupils with a rich diet of music. Equally, the very committed musicians are suitably challenged by the high expectations placed upon them both in class and during extra-curricular activities. Lessons are very well planned and well organised. The tasks are very well pitched to enthuse and develop the skills of a range of pupils.

158. Classroom music is enhanced by the very good quality extra-curricular music and the additional instrumental teaching. Visiting musicians and opportunities to perform in school music and drama productions provide rich opportunities for broadening the scope of what pupils experience. Music is an important ingredient in the spiritual, cultural and creative development of the pupils.

158.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

157. Overall progress in physical education is sound for the majority of pupils and they attain standards that are appropriate for pupils' ages. This is similar to judgements made at the time of the last inspection.

158. At Key Stage 1, pupils are able to perform a series of linked actions with appropriate control in response to a variety of musical rhythms. Pupils use space with growing confidence, as observed in a lesson in Year 1 where pupils imitate a range of animals by displaying size and speed using rotating, balancing and rocking movements, usually with satisfactory levels of control. At Key Stage 2 pupils develop good levels of skill when catching or throwing, aiming with good levels of accuracy. There is firm evidence of the success, which the school sporting teams have in competitive sports and this is generally supportive of the standards in games as a whole. A large majority of pupils at Key Stage 2 are confident in the water in their swimming lessons and achieve 25 metres using a recognisable swimming stroke. Progress in swimming is good, with pupils showing clear improvements in water confidence and stroke development as indicated by talking to pupils. This is further developed in Year 6, when pupils attend an outdoor pursuit activity in Conway during which they experience sailing and canoeing.

159. Pupils enjoy lessons. They show good attitudes to the subject and their response has a positive impact on their progress. Pupils listen well to their teachers and interpret instructions carefully with due regard to their safety and the safety of others. Pupils concentrate well and work together giving good support and encouragement. During team games pupils display very good levels of fairness, abiding by the rules of the game. Pupils select equipment sensibly, putting it away in a careful manner.

160. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and occasionally it is very good as observed during an extra-curricular dance session. Where teaching is good, or very good, teachers have a good level of subject confidence and expertise and clear, concise explanations and demonstration support these good standards. For example, in Year 2 the teacher used a deflating balloon with good effect to demonstrate pathways and directions clearly to the pupils. Most teachers manage their classes well and lessons are well planned with suitable opportunities to warm up at the beginning and cool down at the end of lessons. Pupils with special educational needs are given good support and make good progress against their prior levels of attainment. All teachers are good role models for their pupils, for example, all teachers change for physical education. Although teachers often inform pupils how to improve their performances, they do not give sufficient opportunities for pupils to analyse their own and each other's performance.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

162. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

161. A team of four inspectors completed a total of 14 inspector days in the school over a period of four days. For the majority of their time, the inspectors visited classes, talked to individuals and groups of pupils and evaluated their work, including listening to 21 pupils read. Inspectors observed 61 lessons. A total of 55 hours was spent on these activities. In addition, interviews were held with the head teacher, curriculum co-ordinators, all staff, governors and parents.

162. In addition:

- a range of work from a representative sample of pupils from each year group was examined, together with their records;
- in addition to the 21 pupils who were formally heard to read, others were heard informally;
- pupils were interviewed, to establish a view of life in the school and to gain an understanding of
- relative levels of academic progress and attainment;
- informal discussions took place with many pupils as part of lesson observations;
- the documentation provided by the school, including teachers' planning, was carefully analysed;
- attendance registers and the school's discipline records were examined;
- 14 parents attended parents' meeting. Completed questionnaires were received from 82 parents. The issues raised at the meeting and in the questionnaires helped to inform the inspection;
- The previous inspection report was examined.

1. DATA AND INDICATORS

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	206	1	28	21

165. Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers (YR – Y6)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	8.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	27

Education support staff (YR – Y6)

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked each week	63

Financial data

Financial year:	98/99
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	£
Total Income	331,971
Total Expenditure	326,994
Expenditure per pupil	1,480
Balance brought forward from previous year	11,473
Balance carried forward to next year	16,450

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:

2
2
0

Number of questionnaires returned:

8
2

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	A g r e e	N e i t h e r	Di s a g r e e	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	67	27	4	2	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	50	44	2	4	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	27	45	23	5	0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	22	52	18	8	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	29	62	5	4	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	35	62	2	1	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	54	40	2	4	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	34	45	16	5	0
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	46	42	6	5	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	41	52	5	2	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	56	41	3	0	0

Other issues raised by parents

Written responses were supportive of the school and expressed confidence that the school promotes

learning and good behaviour. Parents express satisfaction with the progress that their children are making. They feel that the school is supportive of pupils who have difficulties, either emotional or special needs. In this respect they are successful. Parents are pleased with the range and amount of extra-curricular activities. Many parent responses state that their children are thriving at Excalibur.