

INSPECTION REPORT

Our Lady's Catholic Primary School

Warrington

LEA area: Warrington

Unique Reference Number: 111305

Headteacher: Mrs J M Johnson

Reporting Inspector: Mr Graham R Sims

Registered Inspector Number: 28899

Dates of Inspection: 1st – 4th November 1999

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary School with Nursery
Type of control:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Our Lady's Catholic Primary School Wash Lane Latchford WARRINGTON WA4 1JD
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Rev Stephen Dwyer
Date of the previous inspection:	16 - 18 April 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr G R Sims Registered Inspector	Areas of learning for children under five Science Information technology	Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Attainment and progress Teaching Leadership and management
Mrs S Wood Lay Inspector		Attendance Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Partnership with parents and the community Staffing, accommodation and learning resources Equal opportunities
Mr J Royle	English Art Design and technology Music	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development The efficiency of the school
Mr P Thrussell	Mathematics Geography History Physical education	The curriculum and assessment Special educational needs

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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- Standards in English are above average, and in mathematics and science they are well above average by the time pupils leave school.
- The pupils make very good progress in Year 6 because of their positive response to the consistently high standard of teaching in this class.
- The pupils' behaviour is good and their relationships with their peers and adults are very good.
- The pupils, and staff, cope very well with the inadequacies of the school's accommodation.
- The level of attendance, reflecting supportive parental attitudes, is very good.
- The staff provide a caring and supportive environment for the pupils, and make very good provision for the pupils' moral development.

· **Where the school has weaknesses**

- | |
|---|
| <p>I. The lack of classrooms imposes severe restrictions on how the teaching is organised, and results in two very large classes for lessons in the afternoon.¹</p> <p>II. Standards of attainment in information technology are not high enough.</p> <p>III. Procedures for monitoring the curriculum, teaching and pupils' work are inadequate, and this also affects the usefulness of the school's development planning.</p> <p>IV. Ten per cent of the teaching is unsatisfactory.</p> <p>V. Insufficient attention is given to long-term financial planning.</p> |
|---|

The school is giving the pupils a sound education and has more strengths than weaknesses. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection are to be tackled. The plan will be sent to all parents or guardians of pupils at the school.

· **How the school has improved since the last inspection**

The school has endeavoured to address the key issues from the last inspection. There has been satisfactory improvement, although some aspects still require further attention. The school now receives greater and more effective clerical support. Security arrangements, particularly those for the reception of visitors to the school and nursery class, have improved and better office accommodation has been provided for the headteacher and school secretary. Opportunities are provided for coordinators to be released occasionally from teaching duties, but they are still not monitoring planning, teaching and learning effectively. Schemes of work have now been produced for all subjects of the National Curriculum. Some thought has gone into improving the quality of marking, but pupils are still given insufficient guidance as to how they might improve their work. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science have improved. Further opportunities have been provided for the professional development of teachers, although there are still insufficient opportunities for staff to share existing expertise.

The most significant improvement has been the continuing increase in the percentage of pupils achieving and exceeding the nationally expected levels in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 2. The school has already exceeded its own target for mathematics for the Year 2000. The vision of the headteacher, some high quality teaching, the appointment of one member of staff as an advanced skills teacher, and a positive response to change from the staff, indicate that the school is well placed to make further improvements.

¹ A new classroom is to be built shortly after the inspection. This will solve the unsatisfactory accommodation for pupils in Year 2, but will not relieve the problems for pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6.

• **Standards in subjects**

The table shows the standards achieved by 11-year-olds in 1999 based on the National Curriculum tests.

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

The results of the 1999 National Curriculum assessments at the end of Key Stage 2 show, for example, that the pupils' attainment in English is similar to the national average and the average for schools whose pupils come from similar backgrounds. The pupils' overall attainment in English, mathematics and science is above the national average, and the average for similar schools. Since the last inspection, the pupils have made greatest progress in mathematics. Inspection findings show that there has been further improvement; the attainment of pupils currently in Year 6 is above average in English and well above average in science. Progress in these three subjects is good throughout the school.

Children under five make good progress in the nursery and the reception. They enter with levels of attainment which are just below average, and improve to just above average by the age of five.

Progress in information technology is unsatisfactory at Key Stages 1 and 2, and pupils do not achieve the national expectations by the age of seven or by the age of 11. Progress in information technology is hindered by constraints imposed by accommodation and resources, and not by unsatisfactory teaching. The pupils make satisfactory progress in all other subjects.

• **Quality of teaching**

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

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

* *Religious education is to be inspected separately at a later date by a diocesan inspector.*

The teaching is at least satisfactory in 90 per cent of lessons. In 19 per cent it is very good, but it is less than satisfactory in 10 per cent. The quality varies between classes. It is good in the nursery, reception and Year 2. The teaching in Year 3 is unsatisfactory. The teaching in Year 6 is of a consistently high quality. The pupils in this year make very good progress as a result of challenging work, high expectations, the brisk pace of lessons and good use of homework.

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Good. The pupils are well behaved in most lessons and around the school. They are helpful and courteous.
Attendance	Very good. The level of attendance is well above the national average. There is hardly any unauthorised absence.
Ethos*	Good. The pupils have very positive attitudes to their work. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good. The commitment to achieving high academic standards is very good in Year 6, and good in Year 2 and for children under five.
Leadership and management	Satisfactory overall. The new headteacher has a clear vision for the school. The school's aims, values and policies are implemented consistently, and the headteacher and staff have established a good learning environment. The governors' procedures for long-term financial planning are unsatisfactory. Insufficient attention is given to monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and curriculum development.
Curriculum	Satisfactory. The planning of the curriculum and assessment procedures have improved. The curriculum for children under five is appropriate. Pupils receive a broad and balanced curriculum, except in music and physical education. Appropriate emphasis is given to the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills. Insufficient time is devoted to information technology.
Pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Teachers ensure that appropriate work is planned for pupils with special educational needs, and good attention to individual needs is given when pupils are withdrawn from classes and taught in small groups.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Good overall. Opportunities for prayer and reflection during the school day promote spiritual development well. Provision for moral development is very good. The staff provide very good role models. There are good opportunities to undertake positions of responsibility and participate in residential visits. There are few opportunities to develop awareness of other cultures.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Staffing is appropriate. The range of learning resources is generally satisfactory, although there are too few information books in the library. There are insufficient resources for information technology. The shortage of classroom space imposes restrictions on the teaching of many subjects, and results in very large classes for pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 in the afternoons. The new classroom, which is shortly to be built, will not alleviate these problems, although it will provide a significant improvement for pupils in Year 2.
Value for money	Overall standards of attainment are above average. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. The overall quality of the teaching is satisfactory and much of it is good or very good. Expenditure per pupil is above the national average. The school provides satisfactory 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
<p>VI. The school promotes good attitudes and values and is always welcoming.</p> <p>VII. The school develops pupils' characters and social skills alongside their academic progress and achieves high standards of behaviour.</p> <p>VIII. The school has developed good relationships between pupils and staff.</p> <p>IX. Parents feel well informed about their children's progress and, through regular newsletters, about events in the school.</p> <p>X. Parents are very happy with the attainment and progress of their children.</p> <p>XI. Their children enjoy coming to school.</p>	<p>XII. They feel there is an inconsistent approach to the</p> <p>XIII. They would like to see more opportunities for</p> <p>XIV. Some parents are concerned at the way pupils learn in Years 5/6.</p>

Inspectors' judgements support the parents' positive views and endorse parents' concerns about homework and opportunities to develop information technology skills. Arrangements for homework are very good in the class for the oldest pupils, but the setting of homework is not always consistent in other classes. There are too few opportunities for pupils to develop information technology skills. The school has done its best to overcome the shortage of classrooms by using the school hall to teach pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 in separate year groups. These arrangements are not possible in the afternoon, and the resulting classes are very large. The school has allocated pupils to classes in the best interests of all, and has provided additional teaching help for Year 5 pupils who are taught with pupils from Year 4. These problems will only be satisfactorily solved when the school has sufficient classrooms for each year group to have its own base.

• **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

The governors, headteacher and staff should raise standards of attainment in information technology [paragraphs 13, 124, 125] by:

ensuring that there are sufficient resources to allow regular access to computers for all pupils in order to cover all aspects of the National Curriculum in sufficient depth [paragraphs 13, 67, 77, 123, 130];

ensuring that all teachers devote sufficient time to teaching the subject [paragraphs 13, 123, 128];

providing more opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology as a tool for learning in other subjects [paragraphs 13, 36, 39, 121, 123, 126, 128, 130].

The governors, headteacher and subject coordinators should improve their procedures for monitoring the appropriateness of teachers' planning, the quality of teaching and the standard of pupils' work [paragraphs 30, 44, 63, 64, 66, 68, 69, 122, 142, 146]. The results of this monitoring should be used to devise clear targets for improvement to:

improve the quality of teaching where it is weak and raise pupils' attainment [paragraphs 9, 19, 25, 27, 32, 34, 101, 103, 109, 111, 118];

provide a clearer focus for the school development plan [paragraphs 69].

The governors should improve procedures for long-term financial planning, taking into consideration the implications and limitations of its current admissions policy, the inadequacies of the school's current accommodation and the shortage of resources for information technology and the school's library [paragraphs 67, 79].

The governing body should work with the local authority and the diocese to ensure that an adequate number of classrooms is provided to meet the needs of the number of pupils on roll and to ensure that:

each year group has its own classroom of adequate size [paragraphs 19, 31, 35, 73, 75, 80];

the size of classes for pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 is reduced to manageable proportions throughout the day [paragraphs 19, 31, 35, 73, 75, 80];

sufficient space is provided to enable pupils to undertake a full range of activities in practical subjects such as art, design and technology and science [paragraphs 35, 75, 119, 120, 122, 139];

the hall is freed for use for activities which require large indoor space, such as physical education, drama and music [paragraphs 15, 42, 75, 156];

the storage of equipment and resources can be relocated from its current hazardous location in the hall [paragraphs 56, 75];

more appropriate accommodation can be found to house the school's library [paragraphs 75];

more space can be found for locating equipment and teaching information technology [paragraphs 13, 28, 31, 75, 123, 126, 128, 130].

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan. These are indicated in the main body of the report as follows: use of

worksheets [paragraphs 10, 36, 101, 112, 118, 121, 122]; investigative work in science [paragraphs 12, 26, 33, 117, 120, 122]; breadth of the curriculum for music [paragraphs 15, 151]; opportunities for physical education [paragraphs 15, 156]; swimming [paragraphs 15, 158]; marking of pupils' work [paragraphs 26, 37, 39, 64, 101, 103, 112, 121, 122]; consistency in setting homework [paragraphs 26, 38]; assessment in foundation subjects and information technology [paragraphs 46, 64, 129]; multi-cultural development [paragraphs 51, 151]; governors' annual report to parents [paragraphs 59, 67]; library resources [paragraphs 77, 104]; knowledge of library system [paragraph 99]; opportunities for creative writing [paragraph 100].

- **INTRODUCTION**

- **Characteristics of the school**

1. The school is situated in the suburb of Latchford, just over a mile from the centre of Warrington. It is a voluntary-aided Catholic school. The school admits pupils between the ages of 4 and 11. There are currently 188 full-time pupils on roll, 89 boys and 99 girls. In addition, 39 three and four-year old children attend either the morning or the afternoon session in the nursery. The school is slightly smaller than the average for primary schools. Pupils are taught in 6 mixed-ability classes. The top two classes, for pupils in Years 4 and 5, and Years 5 and 6, are very large, containing 39 and 40 pupils respectively. Class sizes are reduced for literacy and numeracy sessions by teaching pupils from Year 5 separately in the school hall.
- 2. The governors operate a strict admissions policy in accordance with guidelines issued by the Diocese of Shrewsbury, reserving 90 per cent of the places for Catholic children. Strict adherence to this policy means that some year groups are not full to capacity, even though the school refuses entry to non-Catholic children when the quota of 10 per cent has been reached. The school admits pupils into the reception class at the beginning of the school year in which they reach their fifth birthday. At the time of the inspection there were 60 children under the age of five. Of these, 39 were in the nursery and 21 in the reception class. Numbers in the nursery increase gradually during the winter term, and the nursery is expected to be full to capacity by Christmas. The school roll has increased by over 40 pupils in the main part of the school and by over 20 children in the nursery since the school's last inspection which took place in April 1996. Other significant changes have been the arrival of a new chair of governors two years ago, the retirement in April 1998 of the previous long-serving headteacher, and the appointment of a new headteacher who had been in post for just over a year at the time of the inspection. The long-term absence of the regular teacher for Year 3, which started in June, was being covered by a teacher on temporary contract at the time of the inspection.
- 3. Nearly all pupils are of a white ethnic background, and only one comes from a home where English is not the main spoken language. The socio-economic background of the pupils is mixed, but is generally average. Pupils come from a wide geographical area. The immediate vicinity of the school is urban, with some new housing developments and some more established homes. Around 14 per cent of the pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals; this figure is similar to the national average. Some 15 per cent of the pupils have been identified by the school as having special educational needs, which is similar to the national average. Of these, 12 pupils are at stage 2 or above on the register of pupils with special educational needs, and two of these pupils have a statement of special educational need. Most pupils have attended the school's nursery before starting full-time education. The results of the school's baseline assessments show that the attainment of pupils on entry to the nursery is slightly below average. On entry to the reception class, their attainment spans the full ability range, and is broadly average.
- 4. The school's main educational aim is to affirm and apply the principles of the Roman Catholic faith, whilst providing a purposeful and balanced curriculum, and fostering positive attitudes to work, self-discipline and a sense of personal responsibility. The school's key financial priorities lie in improving the school's accommodation and maintaining the number of teachers to become a one-form entry school, as well as continuing to resource the key curriculum area of mathematics. The school's targets are for 87 per cent of the pupils to achieve level 4 or above in English and 83 per cent in mathematics by the end of the year 2000. Over the next year, the school's development targets are to raise attainment in English, with the priority on raising standards in writing, the development of information technology, the introduction of the numeracy lesson and the development of the foundation subject of art.

- **Key indicators**

- **Attainment at Key Stage 1**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	14	16	30

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Number of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	Boys	13	13	14
	Girls	16	16	16
	Total	29	29	30
Percentage at NC Level 2 or above	School	97	97	100
	National	82	83	87

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	Boys	13	14	14
	Girls	16	16	16
	Total	29	30	30
Percentage at NC Level 2 or above	School	97	100	100
	National	82	86	87

- **Attainment at Key Stage 2**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	8	10	18

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	Boys	6	7	7
	Girls	8	10	10
	Total	14	17	17
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	78	94	94
	National	70	69	78

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	Boys	6	7	7
	Girls	8	9	9
	Total	14	16	16
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	78	89	89
	National	68	69	75

- **Attendance**

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year (1997/98):	Authorised Absence	School	%
		National comparative data	3.8
	Unauthorised absence	School	5.7
		National comparative data	0
			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	19
	Satisfactory or better	90
	Less than satisfactory	10

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and progress

5. Children enter the nursery with levels of attainment which are slightly below average. Although the rate at which the pupils progress varies between different year groups, their overall progress is good. By the time they leave the school at the age of 11, their overall attainment in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is above average. The pupils' performance in the National Curriculum assessment tests has improved significantly since the last inspection.
6. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 1, the pupils' results were well above both the national average and the average for similar schools¹ in reading, writing and mathematics. These results were much better than those of the previous three years. The inspection findings show that the attainment of the oldest pupils in Key Stage 1 is not quite as high, but is still above average in English, mathematics and science.
7. At the end of Key Stage 2, the 1999 results were similar to the national average and the average for similar schools in English. In science, the results were above average and in mathematics they were well above average, both in comparison to all schools nationally and to the results of similar schools. The school's results have improved each year for the last five years and are now much higher than they were at the time of the last inspection. The inspection findings show that standards are still improving; they are above average in English and well above average in mathematics and science.
8. Children make good progress in the nursery and in the reception and, by the age of five, nearly all of them achieve the expected goals for children entering compulsory education in the areas of physical and creative development and their knowledge and understanding of the world. In language and literacy and in mathematics, about half of the children have progressed beyond this stage and are working towards level 1 of the National Curriculum. A calm and friendly working environment helps the youngest children to settle well in the nursery, and the older children adapt well to the more formal lessons in the reception class. Good relationships with teachers and other adults and a well-planned programme of activities helps the children to develop personally and socially, particularly those whose range of social skills is weak when they start school. The children are given a good basis for starting work on the National Curriculum.
9. A similar pattern to pupils' progress is evident in English, mathematics and science. Progress is generally satisfactory in Year 1, but improves significantly in Year 2. Based on the evidence of work completed during the previous academic year and on the lessons observed during the inspection, progress in Year 3 is unsatisfactory, and the pupils are not given the opportunity to

² The school's results are compared both to the national average (ie the average of the results of all schools in England, where pupils took National Curriculum assessment tests at the end of Key Stage 2) and to the average for similar schools (ie the average of the results for all schools whose pupils come from similar socio-economic backgrounds, determined by the eligibility of pupils within the school to receive free school meals).

build sufficiently on their previously acquired knowledge and skills. Progress improves in Years 4 and 5, and becomes very good in Year 6, where pupils respond extremely well to the high expectations and level of challenge offered by consistently high quality teaching.

- 10. In English, the pupils make good progress overall. Attainment in speaking and listening is above average at the end of both key stages. Although the younger pupils generally listen carefully to others, they do not always wait for their turn to speak. Many pupils, however, speak clearly and are eager to contribute to discussions. By the end of key stages, pupils listen carefully and respond thoughtfully. Standards in reading are good at Key Stage 1 and very good at Key Stage 2. Younger pupils are enthusiastic about reading and have good methods to work out how to read unfamiliar words. Older pupils read well independently and describe events and characters with accuracy. The pupils are not yet familiar with library classification systems. Standards in writing and spelling are above average at the end of both key stages. The pupils write well for a range of purposes. By the end of Key Stage 1, they write in sentences, using well-formed handwriting. By the end of Key Stage 2, they show good awareness of paragraphing, punctuation and the need to use varied vocabulary. In most classes, pupils' writing skills are developed further through written work undertaken in other subjects but, in a few classes, the use of poor quality worksheets discourages the development of good writing skills. By the time pupils leave school, they have well-developed literacy skills.
- 11. The pupils make good progress in developing their mathematical skills. By the end of Key Stage 1, they have developed sound number concepts, and have good understanding of work in shape, space and measure. By the end of Key Stage 2, the pupils have good computational skills and well-established concepts of the four rules of number. They have a good variety of strategies for carrying out mental calculations and a very sound understanding of other areas of mathematics, for example, handling data. The pupils use their numeracy skills well in other areas of the curriculum.
- 12. The pupils make good progress in science, and their attainment is above average by the end of Key Stage 1. The pupils have good breadth and depth of understanding of all aspects of the science curriculum. They record the results of their investigative work well, through their own writing and illustration. By the end of Key Stage 2, the pupils have a very clear and detailed understanding of science. They talk knowledgeably about what they have studied and record what they have learnt and discovered in detail. The pupils have difficulty in devising and organising investigative work on their own and without the teacher's assistance.
- 13. Although there have been recent improvements in the provision for information technology, the pupils' progress throughout the school is unsatisfactory. Their attainment is below the national expectations at the end of both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. The lack of equipment and restrictions imposed by the accommodation make it very difficult to organise enough teaching and practice time for the pupils. By the end of Key Stage 1, most pupils understand the basic features of a word processor, and are developing a reasonable degree of confidence in using a computer. Some pupils, however, still have difficulty controlling the mouse with accuracy. By the end of Key Stage 2, the pupils are confident in using a narrow range of software. In aspects of the curriculum which have been taught, they show a good level of competence. For example, pupils in Year 6 understand how to enter data and formulae into a spreadsheet. The pupils do not make enough use of information and communication technology to support their learning in other subjects.
- 14. The pupils make satisfactory progress and achieve standards which are appropriate for their age in art, design and technology, history and geography. In art, the pupils learn a variety of techniques and skills. Older pupils' still-life paintings of the Menai Straits show detail and an understanding of colour blending. In design and technology, the pupils acquire making skills from an early age. By the end of Key Stage 2, they have a satisfactory understanding of the design

process, shown, for example, in the detailed and clearly labelled designs for shelters produced by pupils in Year 6. In geography, pupils in Year 2 have a sound geographical understanding of the local area and are able to draw comparisons with contrasting localities in the West Indies and Scotland. The oldest pupils have a satisfactory understanding of maps and the use of symbols and coordinates, but mapping skills are not developed sufficiently in the early part of Key Stage 2. In history, pupils at Key Stage 1 develop a sound awareness of the past through investigating the changing nature of homes and holidays. Practical visits, for example, to investigate industry and canals in the locality, help pupils at Key Stage 2 to develop a good understanding of life in Victorian Britain.

- 15. In music, the pupils make satisfactory progress in singing, listening and appreciation at both key stages, but progress in the creative and composing element of music is unsatisfactory because these aspects are not given sufficient attention in the teaching programme. Pupils who learn the recorder or sing in the school choir make good progress. There was insufficient evidence during the inspection to make a judgement on the pupils' progress in physical education. In the few lessons observed, standards of attainment were appropriate for their age. The amount of time devoted to teaching physical education, however, is severely restricted because of the lack of availability of the school hall. Most pupils have reached the minimum expected standard in swimming by the end of Key Stage 2, but the current provision for swimming is very meagre, and almost half of the pupils in Year 5 who have already received their scheduled swimming lessons, have yet to reach the required standard in swimming.
- 16. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is similar to the progress of other pupils. There are clear procedures to enable pupils to move between the different stages on the register of pupils with special educational need and to be entirely removed from it. Higher-attaining pupils receive ample challenge through the demanding work given to them in Year 6. Although there is some difference in the performance of boys and girls, these differences are not significant.
- **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**
- 17. The positive attitudes of the pupils to their work, the good standards of behaviour and good relationships, which were noted during the previous inspection, have been maintained. Parents are, justifiably, pleased with the overall standard of behaviour and the attitudes demonstrated in school. As pupils move through the school, there is a noticeable improvement in their behaviour and attitudes to work, and relationships with each other and with their teachers become more mature. These factors help to establish a very good learning environment in the upper part of the school, and play a significant role in enabling the pupils to achieve high standards in their work.
- 18. Children under five show very positive attitudes to school. They enjoy both the more informal learning opportunities and whole-class sessions in the nursery. In the reception class, they enjoy their lessons, participating with interest and enthusiasm; at times this causes them to call out, rather than awaiting their turn to speak. They are developing a good interest in their language and mathematical work, and all want to respond to the teacher's questions. Their behaviour is very good, apart from the occasional minor indiscretion, but they respond very well when corrected by an adult for these. The children relate well to each other and to the adults who teach or help in the nursery and the reception. They are learning to share resources and take turns. When working in small groups, they collaborate well with each other. Although their concentration wavers when they are asked to work on their own, they are starting to acquire sound habits for independent learning.
- 19. The pupils' attitudes to work are good at Key Stage 1 and, with the exception of Year 3, are very good at Key Stage 2. Throughout the school, the pupils show an interest in their work. In the lower part of the school, this sometimes results in over-enthusiasm and the tendency to call out answers, rather than await the turn to speak. In some classes, this tendency is not checked

sufficiently by the teacher, and the resulting interruptions impede progress. When they are corrected, however, the pupils respond positively. Generally, the pupils settle quickly to their tasks, maintain their concentration well and are keen to contribute their ideas. In Year 3, the pupils' response is frequently unsatisfactory. Although initially interested, they are slow to settle to their work, lose concentration easily and work very slowly. Noise levels are far too high, but express the pupils' frustration at not being given sufficient guidance or clear enough instructions about what they are required to do. In Years 4, 5 and 6, the pupils respond in a very mature way during lessons, coping admirably with the difficulties of moving between the hall and classroom for some lessons, and having to endure overcrowded classes in the afternoon. In some lessons, they show an amazing ability to concentrate on their own work, whilst totally unrelated teaching takes place in another part of the room. When the teaching is at its most stimulating in Year 6, the pupils are alive, interested, involved and eager to participate. They respond positively to challenges, take on extra work willingly and show very good commitment towards the completion of homework. Many pupils in Year 6 participate willingly in extra lessons which are provided during some lunch hours. Most pupils take care over their written work, but the standard of presentation when using worksheets is frequently scruffy. Residential trips and visits to places of interest are important parts of the curriculum, and viewed very favourably by the pupils.

- 20. The pupils' behaviour is generally good. Although there are a few minor incidents of less acceptable behaviour amongst pupils in the lower half of the school, the pupils know what is expected of them and have a clear understanding of right and wrong. In the upper half of the school, the teachers do not have to spend time seeking to establish discipline and maintain order. Although behaviour in the playground is occasionally boisterous, it is nearly always good-natured. Aggressive behaviour and bullying are not features of school life and the pupils feel secure within the school environment. No pupil has been excluded from the school for some years. The behaviour is good at lunchtimes and when the whole school is gathered together. The pupils are courteous and polite and show respect for property and the school buildings and grounds.
- 21. The pupils' relationships with each other and with adults are very good. Whenever required, they work well together and cooperate with their teachers, which allows lessons to progress smoothly. The older pupils listen well when others are speaking, and respect different points of view. There is no evidence of racial intolerance. Older pupils treat younger pupils in a kindly manner. In the cramped working conditions of some classrooms, the pupils show great consideration towards each other in the way they move around. They share resources amicably. At the top end of the school, the pupils show particular respect for the challenging nature of the teaching and feel themselves fortunate to be in a position to learn.
- 22. The pupils' personal development is good, and improves as they move through the school. They acquire good work habits, responding positively to the tasks they are given, working diligently and giving extra commitment in their own time. These good habits are seen particularly clearly in the oldest pupils' response to their work, which is a significant contributory factor to the good standards they achieve. The pupils are helpful and cooperative. Tidying up at the end of a lesson is undertaken quickly and sensibly in most classes. Some pupils voluntarily carry out helpful tasks in their breaks, for example, by sorting and counting tokens for school equipment, or collecting litter to tidy the school grounds. Most pupils show a good degree of self-confidence and, by the time they leave the school, are well-prepared to enter the next stage of their education.
- **Attendance**
- 23. The school's attendance figures are very good and are above the national averages. There was no recorded unauthorised absence last year. Registers are completed quickly at the start of sessions while pupils carry out short tasks.

- 24. The great majority of pupils arrive at school on time, although a very small number of pupils arrive late on occasions. Lessons start punctually throughout the school.
- **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**
- **Teaching**
- 25. The overall quality of the teaching is satisfactory, although it ranges from very good to poor. During the inspection, one in five lessons was very good, and one in ten was either unsatisfactory or poor. Just over a third of the lessons was good and the remaining third was satisfactory. The quality is good for children under five and is the main contributory factor to the good progress made by the children before they start compulsory education. The teaching in Year 2 is good and the high expectations set in this year lead to above average standards by the end of Key Stage 1. A scrutiny of written work from the previous year shows that the teaching in Year 3 has previously been unsatisfactory; observation of lessons during the inspection shows that this continues to be the case. The progress of pupils in Year 3 is unsatisfactory, as the teaching does not set high enough standards and does not build on previously acquired knowledge and skills. The teaching is satisfactory and, at times good, in Years 1, 4 and 5. The teaching in Year 6 is of a consistently high quality, and accounts for the very good progress made by pupils at the end of Key Stage 2.
- 26. Although the quality of teaching was reported as good at the time of the last inspection, there have been improvements in some aspects of teaching. The teachers' planning has improved where the school has produced helpful schemes of work and as a result of the introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. The teachers are now more conscious of the need to cater for different levels of ability, although some of the work provided still does not take their differing needs into consideration. There has been some improvement in the development of independent learning skills, although more could still be done to improve the pupils' investigative skills. The marking of pupils' work was highlighted as a weakness during the last inspection, and this aspect still remains weak. The concerns of parents from the last inspection about homework have been addressed at the end of Key Stage 2, but current concerns indicate that there is inconsistency in the setting of homework in some classes.
- 27. With the exception of Year 3, the teaching is far more effective than it was at the time of the last inspection, as the pupils, particularly those at the end of Key Stage 2, are now achieving much higher standards. This is largely due to the very determined effort at the end of Key Stage 2 to raise standards by providing pupils with plenty of challenge, expecting them to work hard during lessons and at home, and by providing additional booster or extension sessions during the lunch break.
- 28. The school has placed greatest emphasis on the teaching of English, mathematics and science, and the overall quality of the teaching in these subjects is good. There are no subjects in which the teaching is weak. In the subject of greatest concern to the teachers, that of information technology, half of the staff have undertaken prolonged courses of study to improve their own skills. Unsatisfactory accommodation and lack of resources, however, prevent the full use of these newly acquired skills.
- 29. The quality of the teaching for children under five is good. The planning of a wide range of learning opportunities in the nursery is meticulous in its detail and provides ample coverage of all aspects of children's learning. Lessons are also well planned in the reception. The teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the children's needs, which enables them to plan appropriate activities. Tasks are appropriate and the children are provided with a constant stream of new experiences. A particularly good feature is the range of visits provided for the children, which widen their knowledge and understanding of the world. The teachers explain tasks clearly and make particularly good use of interesting and colourful resources. Although very different in style,

the teachers relate well to the children and provide them with a secure learning environment which contributes to their progress. Time is used efficiently and well, except when shortage of accommodation makes it impossible for the nursery children to carry out their physical activities at the same time. The pace of lessons and activity sessions is generally brisk and the teachers have a good awareness of how long the children can maintain their concentration. Nursery nurses and parent helpers make a significant contribution to the children's progress in both the nursery and the reception. The assistants show a good degree of initiative, spotting where help is needed, and there is a good partnership between the teacher and assistant in both classes. Good records of assessment are kept for all children, and these are frequently used to plan appropriate activities, which help the children to make progress.

- 30. The teachers' overall knowledge and understanding of the subjects of the National Curriculum is sound and, in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science it is good. The teachers' own enthusiasms and specialist knowledge contribute additional insights in some areas of the curriculum. For example, a teacher's own visit to the Caribbean and the island of St Lucia enlivens the study of geography in Year 2. A good understanding of computer spreadsheets equipped the teacher to provide very clear explanations in a Year 6 lesson, and enabled the pupils to make very good progress. At present, insufficient use is made of existing expertise amongst the staff to support other teachers, for example, through observation of lessons and the provision of constructive criticism and help. The Year 6 teacher has recently been designated as an 'advanced skills teacher', which promises to provide this sort of benefit over the next two years.
- 31. The teachers' expectations vary considerably, and are a key factor in determining how much progress the pupils make. It is very evident that the greater the challenge and the higher the demands of the teacher, the greater the progress and the better the enjoyment and sense of achievement of the pupils. This is seen particularly clearly in Year 6, where the pupils work very hard, but improve their level of attainment significantly. Expectations with regard to the presentation of pupils' work are not always high enough. As a result of the overcrowding, it is possible to teach only part of the class for some activities, such as information technology. The tasks given to the remainder of the class during these sessions are sometimes very mundane. For example, whilst half of the class was being taught at the computer, the other half was asked to match words to pictures of computer hardware. The task was completed quickly and easily, and time was then wasted colouring-in. In another class, prolonged handwriting exercises kept the pupils occupied, but did little to improve the quality of handwriting. With one exception, the teachers expect and obtain high standards of behaviour.
- 32. In almost all classes, the teachers' planning is good in English, mathematics and science and is sound in all other subjects. Tasks are suitably matched to the needs of the pupils, and clear and explicit learning objectives are indicated for each lesson. The school has made good use of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies to improve planning in English and mathematics. One of the causes of the unsatisfactory lessons observed during the inspection was poor planning.
- 33. The teachers strike an appropriate balance between whole-class teaching, group-work and individual tasks. Imaginative methods are sometimes used to capture the pupils' interest and understanding, with good effect. In a lesson to introduce the topic of light, pupils in Year 1 were intrigued by shadows cast on the wall when light from the overhead project was blocked. In Year 6, pupils were taken into the playground for a physical demonstration of the movement of particles in solids, liquids and gases. In all of the good lessons, teachers use very good questioning skills to probe pupils' understanding and cause them to think. Quick-fire questions are also used effectively to reinforce work which has been taught previously. Although there is an element of practical work in science in all classes, insufficient opportunity is given to pupils to devise and conduct their own investigative work.

- 34. Apart from in Year 3, the teachers' classroom management skills are good. They have established clear expectations for behaviour, so that intervention to solve disciplinary matters is rarely necessary. Minor incidents are solved quickly and effectively. Whilst maintaining high standards of discipline, the teachers are friendly and have very good relationships with the pupils. A very good working atmosphere has been established in the top class, in particular; the ethos of hard work contributes to the progress of all pupils in this class. The insistence on high standards of discipline extends to movement around the school, for example when pupils are moving to the hall for assembly, or when coming into the building after break. This is particularly important, given the cramped corridor space for pupils in Key Stage 2. The balance of control, reprimand and praise is very good. The classroom management in Year 3 is poor. Too much noise is permitted and the pupils waste significant amounts of time in off-task activities. The lack of control has a detrimental effect on the pupils' progress.
- 35. The teachers' use of time varies between very good and poor, but overall it is satisfactory. The best lessons are characterised by a brisk pace, and a sense of purpose and energy. Pupils are given a clear indication of what is expected of them in the time available. In a very good science lesson, for example, the teacher managed to revise what had been taught in the previous lesson, give a practical demonstration of scientific concepts, deepen the pupils' understanding, and still leave time for them to complete some written work with the instruction "You've got five minutes in which to do it!" The pupils responded positively and completed their writing within the time available. Similarly, crisp, quick mental mathematics sessions focus the pupils' attention and lead to good consolidation of numeracy skills. Occasionally, the teacher takes too long over the introductory session; the cramped working conditions do not help the pupils to sustain their concentration when this happens.
- 36. Resources are generally used effectively. In most classes, they are carefully prepared in advance of the lesson and help to achieve the objectives of the lesson, although this is not always the case. Computers are not used as effectively as they could be, and the school has not yet found a solution to maximise the use of the low number of machines to allow all pupils to have sufficient access to them. Voluntary helpers are used very effectively in some classes, especially when they are well briefed. Some support assistants use their time very effectively, using their own initiative well during class-taught sessions and helping constructively when pupils are working individually or in groups. On some occasions, the support assistant's time is wasted during the whole-class sessions. Worksheets are used too frequently in some classes, to the extent of impeding progress in acquiring independent work habits, stifling pupils' own initiative and causing emerging writing skills to regress.
- 37. The quality of the teachers' day-to-day assessment is satisfactory, but there are examples of good use of ongoing assessment. Effective revision of previous lessons is built into the best lessons. Some of the teachers make perceptive evaluations of the week's work, noting weaknesses which need to be covered in the following week or revised later in the term. There is effective discussion and recapitulation at the end of most lessons which reinforces the objectives of the lesson. The quality of marking was noted as a weakness during the previous inspection, and this weakness continues. There are few comments in the pupils' books on how their work could be improved, and there is little evidence of pupils correcting their work in the light of teachers' comments.
- 38. Although parents are pleased with the amount of homework set for the oldest pupils, some concern was expressed about the amount and consistency of setting homework in other classes. The positive contribution which homework makes to pupils' learning is very evident in Year 6, where pupils are given regular, challenging tasks to complete at home. However, the school has not reviewed how homework is implemented in other classes; although homework is set, it is not always consistent.

- 39. Basic skills of literacy and numeracy are consolidated and extended very effectively in some classes through work in other subjects, although opportunities to improve literacy skills are frequently missed on these occasions, as the teachers' marking does not show pupils how to improve their writing skills. The over-use of poor quality worksheets in some classes actively inhibits the acquisition of good writing skills. Information and communication technology is greatly under-used as a tool for learning throughout the school, and very little work undertaken in other subjects contributes to the acquisition of information technology skills. An exception to this was seen in the teaching of spreadsheets in Year 6.
- 40. All staff understand the stages of the Code of Practice and take care to monitor the performance of pupils with special educational needs. Due attention is given to the needs of these pupils when lessons are planned. Closer focus is given to pupils' specific targets when they are taught in withdrawal groups and, during these sessions, the pupils make good progress.
- **The curriculum and assessment**
- 41. The curriculum for children under five is well planned within the six areas of learning of language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative, physical, and personal and social development. As the children get older and make progress, activities in the reception have a greater focus on the National Curriculum subjects in preparation for work in Key Stage 1. Children's attainment and progress, particularly in core subjects, are regularly assessed, and these assessments and observations are used effectively to ensure children are making appropriate progress, and to support planning in the next stage in their learning.
- 42. The curriculum for Key Stages 1 and 2 is broad and reasonably balanced. Priority is given to the development of literacy and numeracy, and opportunities to draw on these aspects are identified within other curriculum areas. With the exception of music and physical education, there is adequate breadth and balance in the programmes offered for foundation subjects¹. The limited availability of the hall, in particular, places restraints on the time allocated to these areas. The time allocated to religious education is high, but reflects the recommendations of the Catholic Diocese. Personal and social education is addressed well, although the approach is often informal, pupils' development being a product of the positive ethos of the school. Appropriate provision is made for sex education and drugs' awareness. The school has a commitment to providing equality of opportunity; it is successful in integrating pupils with special educational needs into classroom and extra-curricular activities.
- 43. Pupils with special educational needs are mainly identified through concerns raised by class teachers, including nursery staff. Provision to enable pupils with special educational needs to reach their targets is adequate, and is made either within the classroom or through withdrawal groups. There are clear procedures which enable pupils to move between stages of the register and to be removed from it. All pupils on stage 2 or above of the special educational needs register have individual education plans containing appropriate targets which are reviewed termly by the coordinator and class teacher. Targets are renewed or updated as necessary.
- 44. The planning of the curriculum is generally satisfactory, and there are now schemes of work for all subjects, which help teachers with their planning. Subject coordinators look at teachers' medium-term planning, but do not monitor it rigorously to check that prior attainment is taken into account. Years 4, 5 and 6 form two mixed-age classes for the afternoon sessions and careful consideration is now given to ensure that topic cycles in science and foundation subjects are

³ The foundation subjects are: art, design and technology, history, geography, music, physical education.

planned so that pupils in these classes do not repeat work from one year to the next. Although planning provides for continuity of learning, subject coordinators do not monitor the outcome of pupils' work to ensure greater consistency of work between classes and more consistent progress.

- 45. The school offers an adequate range of out-of-school activities for Key Stage 2 pupils. These include choir and sporting activities, such as football, netball and cross-country. Mathematics and English clubs are held at lunchtimes for Year 6 pupils to help lower-attainers and to challenge high-attainers.
- 46. The school now has an assessment coordinator. Assessment procedures for English, mathematics and science have improved since the last inspection, but there has been little improvement in the procedures used for assessing pupils' attainment in foundation subjects. A computer programme is being used to store and analyse results throughout the school. A baseline assessment is made of children coming into the reception, and planned activities within the areas of learning take account of this assessment. There are good procedures for the continuing assessment of these children. There are good procedures for assessment in English and mathematics. The results from national and school testing are carefully recorded and analysed to identify areas of strength and weakness, and so inform future planning. The progress of individual pupils is carefully monitored in literacy and numeracy. In all core subjects, a weekly evaluation is made linked to planned learning objectives, and particular strengths and weaknesses are noted on an individual, group or class basis, which need to be taken account of in future planning. Some tasks are set specifically to generate assessment evidence at the end of topics in science and some foundation subjects. As reported in the last inspection, work is often not dated and therefore does not easily enable progress to be monitored.
- **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**
- 47. The school's provision for the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This judgement is similar to that of the previous inspection.
- 48. The provision for the pupils' spiritual development is good. Pupils are given the opportunity to reflect on their own and other people's lives. Assemblies are planned to cover predominantly moral issues and are linked to the teachings of the Gospel. The school takes advantage of visitors to enhance pupils' spiritual development, with visits from the parish priest to celebrate Mass for Holy Days. Pupils have the opportunity to appreciate other religions. For example, in a junior assembly, texts about heaven were read from the viewpoint of other religions. In lessons and in assemblies there is time to reflect on wider issues. Festivals from other religions are not celebrated, but they are discussed. Prayers are said in class before lessons, at dinnertime and at the end of the day.
- 49. Provision for the pupils' moral development is very good, with pupils of all ages demonstrating that they know the difference between right and wrong and unacceptable behaviour in their every-day school life. The school has a framework to regulate the personal behaviour of pupils. Examples of this are the 'golden rules' for the whole school and class rules, set up by each group that are predominantly displayed in each classroom. An additional framework to regulate personal behaviour is the 'house tree' situated in the main hall where leaves are added for pupils' good behaviour, hard work and academic success. Pupils talk enthusiastically about this system. All members of staff set a good example and are good role models. The isolated instances of misbehaviour observed during the inspection were dealt with quietly and capably by teachers and support staff. Parents comment favourably about the standards of behaviour and express the view that this contributes positively to their children's learning.
- 50. The school makes good provision for the pupils' social development. Social skills such

as sharing and participating in class activities are promoted in the younger classes and this provides a firm basis for pupils' social development as they progress through the school. This development is evident in the sensible way pupils use the playground and when Year 5 pupils re-join their classes at the end of the morning sessions, with a minimum of disruption and a consideration for other pupils. There are opportunities for pupils to participate in residential school visits where they are able to experience a variety of activities that promote their personal development and social skills. The provision of extra-curricular activities provides opportunities for pupils to participate in sporting, musical and curriculum extension clubs. Older pupils undertake a variety of responsibilities, for example, acting as monitors and helpers for assemblies and selling snacks at breaktimes. Pupils are encouraged to contribute to charities. The school intends a series of fund-raising activities to develop its strong links with Kenya and has supported the Bishop's request to collect for the third world countries.

- 51. The development of the pupils' cultural awareness and experience is satisfactory. Opportunities are provided for pupils to appreciate their own cultural awareness in some areas of the curriculum, including a study of Western artists and their work on the Victorians. Pupils make visits to the local area as part of their studies in history and religious education. The school choir takes part in a local music festival with neighbouring schools and also has performed at the Hallelujah Christmas Concert. Pupils have the opportunity to listen to music in music lessons and assemblies. There are few opportunities for pupils to appreciate cultures other than their own and Western ones. This weakness was noted in the previous inspection and has not been fully addressed.
- 52. The teachers provide good opportunities for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of children under five. Children in the nursery have time for reflection and learn to say prayers together. The teachers and helpers are good at encouraging the children to share with others and to be polite. For example, a birthday cake was brought in to the nursery to be shared. The occasion was used to remind the children of the importance of sharing and of saying thank you. The youngest pupils also have opportunities to develop an understanding and awareness of the needs of others, for example, when dressing up to raise money for charity.
- **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**
- 53. The school provides a caring environment that helps support pupils in their learning. The teachers carefully monitor the pupils' academic progress through their established assessment procedures, regular work sampling in pupils' profiles and scrutiny of test results. The teachers know all their pupils well and regular discussion takes place regarding individuals' personal development and needs. Behaviour is monitored through the consistent use of rewards and sanctions throughout the school and pupils clearly know what is expected of them and understand the need for action to be taken if they do not abide by the rules. The class teachers inform the headteacher if there are any irregular patterns in pupils' attendance and these are then followed up appropriately. The educational welfare officer visits the school to check attendance on a regular basis.
- 54. The school successfully promotes good behaviour through clear rules that pupils are involved in producing. Rewards are consistently given and pupils appreciate them when they are received. Procedures are carefully followed when behaviour is inappropriate and often a first warning is sufficient to overcome the problem. The school has a clear policy to deal with bullying and this is understood by pupils, and is rare in the school. The school employs a suitable range of outside agencies to provide support when it is required.
- 55. The school supports pupils very sensitively as they enter the school and sufficient guidance is provided as they prepare for their next stage in education. The ethos of the school is supportive of the individual needs of pupils and this is appreciated by the parents.

- 56. The school has relevant documentation and procedures to promote health and safety, although aspects, such as fire safety procedures, have not been well documented in the past. An effective sex education and an anti-drugs programme, which is delivered through the science and religious education curriculum, contributes to pupils' learning and personal development. The school has effective child protection procedures with a senior teacher responsible for this area. The child protection policy is currently in draft as the school is waiting for guidance from the local education authority. The health and safety policy is in line with local authority guidance and all accidents are correctly recorded and reported. The considerable amount of equipment stored in the hall drastically reduce the space available for physical education and poses safety hazards for the pupils.
- **Partnership with parents and the community**
- 57. Parents are supportive of the school and are made to feel welcome by the staff. Regular letters keep them informed about daily routines and events in the school, and parents are invited to join the pupils for their Harvest celebrations and Christmas activities. A recent improvement has been to send information home about the topics and curriculum coverage throughout the school. The prospectus is a well-presented document, although it fails to meet the statutory requirements by providing the rates of authorised and unauthorised absence.
- 58. Pupils take home reading and spellings on a regular basis, although other tasks vary from year group. The school holds curriculum evenings to enable parents to become more involved in their children's learning. A small group of parents regularly helps in classes and this is much appreciated and valued by the school. The majority of parents attend the parent teacher consultations throughout the school year and all receive the written report in the summer term. Opportunity is given to parents to discuss this report in more detail. The written reports are informative and provide targets for the pupils to work towards during the next school year.
- 59. The annual governors' report to parents does not meet the statutory reporting requirements as it fails to include information about school security; attendance; the progress made with the previous inspection action plan or information on the arrangements for admission of children with disabilities.
- 60. The school makes good use of the local environment and community for local studies to build pupils' awareness of the area where they live. The links with the parish are good. The school has developed links with local businesses and industry to support pupils in their learning and experiences of the wider world. This includes work with local builders on planting a time capsule in the school grounds. A range of visits and visitors helps to raise pupils' awareness of times past and the world in which they live.
- 61. Parents are kept well informed of concerns that teachers have about pupils. When individual education plans are reviewed, parents are given the opportunity to discuss targets set with the class teacher, and receive a copy of the revised plan. The special needs governor has until recently spent one day per week in school; she speaks with parents of pupils with special educational needs and reassures them if they have concerns about their children.
- 62. The liaison between parents and the nursery is very good. An informative letter is posted on the parents' notice-board each week, to inform parents of what will be happening during the week. Parents are given guidance as to how they can help their children and are encouraged to help them write their name when they enter the nursery at the start of the session. In the reception, individual targets for the children are shown to parents each term. Occasionally, parents are asked to work on a small project with their child, and the work undertaken is celebrated by compiling a book of the children's work.

- **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

- **Leadership and management**

63. The overall quality of the leadership and management within the school is satisfactory. Since the last inspection, changes of headteacher and chair of the governing body have led to different styles of leadership. Although there are some weaknesses in the way the school is run, the governors and headteacher generally provide sound leadership. The role of the subject coordinator has assumed greater importance, although there are still weaknesses in the way this role is carried out.
- 64. The leadership's response to the key issues highlighted in the last inspection has been satisfactory, although some of the issues still require further attention. An increase in the time allocated to secretarial help and the provision of a separate office for the school secretary have improved clerical support for the headteacher and staff, resulting in more efficient administration. Security arrangements have improved, and the entrances to the main school and the nursery are more secure. Improvements to the main reception area have also resulted in the provision of a separate office and more appropriate accommodation for the headteacher. Attention has been given to providing time for subject coordinators to be freed occasionally from class teaching responsibilities in order to undertake their coordination role. Whilst this has proved to be helpful for all coordinators, and has resulted in improvement to schemes of work in many subject, the time is currently spent on routine tasks, rather than effective monitoring of teachers' planning, the quality of teaching and standards of learning. Some thought has gone into improving the quality of marking, resulting in a new policy for marking. However, the policy and the practice still do not concentrate sufficiently on the prime purpose of improving the standard of pupils' work. The way in which pupils' work is marked still gives them insufficient guidance as to how they might improve their work. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science have improved, but there has been little progress in the improvement of assessment procedures for other subjects. Further opportunities have been provided for the professional development of teachers, although insufficient use is made of expertise which exists amongst the staff to provide further training, support and guidance in areas where there are known weaknesses.
 - 65. The most significant improvement since the last inspection has been the continuing increase in the percentage of pupils achieving and exceeding the nationally expected levels in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 2. Results have improved each year for the last five years, and are now very much better than they were at the time of the last inspection.
 - 66. In many respects, the new headteacher provides good leadership and clear educational direction for the school. She provides a good example to other staff through her own professional expertise, her commitment to achieving high standards of attainment, and her very good and caring relationships with the pupils. She has a clear vision of what she wishes to achieve, but has not been entirely successful in communicating this to all staff and moving them all in the same direction. Whilst the headteacher has devoted some time to monitoring the quality of curricular planning, teaching and pupils' work, insufficient emphasis has been given to identifying areas for improvement through rigorous monitoring. There is also a reticence to tackle some of the more difficult issues, for fear of hurting other people's feelings. Yet some issues, such as the inadequate quality of marking, some unsatisfactory teaching and the inconsistency of pupils' progress through the school, need to be tackled firmly if improvement is to result. Although staff are cooperative and helpful towards each other, and provide high levels of commitment to the school, they are not totally united in their approach to improving the quality of education and raising of standards.
 - 67. Apart from complying with guidance on the information to be included in the governors' annual report to parents and the school prospectus, and the fulfilment of some aspects of the information technology curriculum, the governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities. The involvement of the governing body in the management and strategic direction of the school has

improved since the last inspection. The governors ensure that there is equality of opportunity for all pupils, and have improved arrangements for meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs since the last inspection. Individually, some of the governors provide a good level of individual support for the school. The governors show a strong commitment to the school's links with the Church and the Diocese. Although long-term financial projections are difficult to make with accuracy, the governors have not given sufficient thought to long-term financial planning or to the implications of rigid adherence to the school's admissions policy. Although the imminent addition of a new classroom will significantly improve the school's accommodation, the governing body has not properly addressed the long-term implications of insufficient classroom space in which to teach the pupils.

- 68. With the exception of English, procedures for the monitoring and support of teaching, learning and curriculum development are unsatisfactory. Whilst the headteacher maintains a general oversight of standards as a result of the support which she gives within the classroom, there is not a planned programme for monitoring what happens within the classroom or for ensuring that standards of work are consistent throughout the school. As part of the school's plans for implementing the National Literacy Strategy, the English coordinator has undertaken a series of lesson observations, and these have been helpful in raising the quality of teaching. Expectations as to how curriculum coordinators should use their planned non-contact time are not entirely clear. Coordinators do not have sufficient grasp of what is happening within their subject in other classes or whether each teacher's planning builds appropriately on what pupils have already learnt. Coordinators do not yet look at samples of work throughout the school in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching and ensure that the pupils' learning is developing systematically.
- 69. A good start has been made in improving the school's development planning and the current procedures are satisfactory. The development plan considers most aspects of the school, and coordinators have drawn up their own subject action plans. However, because there has been insufficient monitoring to identify areas of weakness, the action plans are largely a statement of tasks to be carried out, and do not focus sufficiently on improvement. Subject coordinators are not critically aware of how their own subjects can be developed and are, therefore, not acting as agents for change and improvement. The school has paid due regard to governmental initiatives, such as the introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, and the implementation of these strategies has been effective.
- 70. Provision for special educational needs is satisfactorily organised and led by the special needs coordinator, and adequate support is given to pupils with special educational needs. The coordinator has non-contact time each term to meet with class teachers; this time is used effectively to discuss individual pupils, to agree on targets and to write up individual education plans. The special needs governor gives strong support within school and is fully aware of the provision that the school makes for pupils with special educational needs.
- 71. Despite the weaknesses in monitoring, the ethos of the school is good. The life of the school is strongly, but not obtrusively influenced by its affiliation to the Catholic Church. The school is successful in fulfilling its aims, and the comprehensive set of school policies is generally implemented appropriately. Although the expectations of a few staff are not as high as they could be, the school, overall, shows a strong commitment to attaining high academic standards and pays due importance to the pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. The school is a caring place which promotes appropriate values, attitudes and relationships and ensures equality of opportunity for all pupils. Parents support the school, and the pupils feel happy and secure within its community. The vision of the headteacher, some high quality teaching, the appointment of one member of staff as an advanced skills teacher, and the positive response to change from the staff, indicate that the school is well placed to make further improvements.

• **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

72. The school's staffing level is satisfactory. The school has addressed the issue from the previous report with regard to professional development, and courses are now linked to the priorities in the school development plan. The accommodation is poor, as the school has not sufficient space to provide a class base for each year group. The accommodation for the nursery is satisfactory. The school has a satisfactory range of learning resources with the exception of computer hardware and software and information books in the library.
- 73. The school has an adequate number of staff to meet the needs of the curriculum. There is a range of experience and expertise amongst them that can be drawn on. Currently, the school's organisation is such that the Year 5 class is split and this means that the teacher is able to provide additional support and non-contact time to other classes during the week. Staffing for children under five is appropriate. The teachers are assisted by capable assistants who have qualifications as nursery nurses. The administrative staff and non-teaching staff have clear roles that they carry out efficiently. Support is given to pupils with special educational needs at stage 3 or above by the Warrington Education Support Team, and pupils with statements have one hour of support each day. A Key Stage 2 teacher takes withdrawal groups, focussing on specific targets.
- 74. Arrangements for the professional development of staff are satisfactory. The school supports new staff as they join the school with suitable documentation, help and advice, although there is no formal induction structure or mentor currently in place. The staff handbook contains relevant information to help them understand the running of the school. Staff are encouraged to attend courses to help further develop their knowledge and understanding and these are linked to the priorities in the school development plan. Opportunity is given in staff meetings for dissemination of ideas and staff are encouraged to distribute any handouts that they receive from courses. The school is currently waiting for further guidance from the local education authority on the procedures for appraisal.
- 75. The school is housed in a generally well-maintained brick building which stands in its own secure grounds. There are insufficient classroom bases for each year group to have its own room. Year 5 uses the hall as its classroom in the morning for literacy and numeracy lessons, but half of the class joins Year 4 and the other half joins Year 6 for the afternoon lessons. Year 2 is situated in a corridor which is cramped and does not provide sufficient space for teaching. The lack of classrooms has an impact on the breadth of the curriculum and imposes many restrictions on the way the pupils are taught. The school library is currently under-used and not timetabled for each class group. Plans are in place and work is due to commence shortly to add one extra classroom to the school, but this will still leave one year group without a classroom base. The hall is under-used for its designated purposes because it is used for classroom teaching in the morning. The class which is based here has to move twenty minutes before lunch to enable the supervisors to set up the lunch tables. The hall can only be timetabled for physical education and other activities requiring large indoor space during the afternoon. The hall has many resources stored in it and this restricts the area available for gymnastics and other physical education activities, as well as posing safety hazards. There is insufficient room to teach information technology adequately. The staff work very hard to deal with the limitations of the accommodation, but the current arrangements impose considerable stress on both staff and pupils, and limit the opportunities which can be provided. The use of display does not always enhance the areas for learning, although there are some very good displays celebrating pupils' work. These include impressive batik work done in conjunction with a resident artist in school. There are ample outside play areas for the Key Stage 1 and 2 pupils. The surface of the playground is uneven and some of the flagstones on the pathways are uneven. The school has a grassed playing field. The school is used out of hours by the community for reunions and public meetings.

- 76. The accommodation for children in both the nursery and the reception is satisfactory. Children in the nursery have a small, but securely fenced outdoor play area. The lack of availability of the school hall limits opportunities for physical development and deprives children of a large indoor space for physical activities.
- 77. Learning resources overall are sufficient to enable teachers to deliver all areas of the curriculum. They are of a satisfactory quality. There is, however, insufficient computer hardware and software to support the teaching of the information technology curriculum and the library has a shortage of information books. The level of resources for children under five is adequate. Resources for pupils with special educational needs are adequate and tend to be classroom based.
- **The efficiency of the school**
- 78. The overall efficiency of the school is satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, the nursery is now fully used and the working hours of clerical and caretaking staff have been increased. Security arrangements have been reviewed and are now satisfactory.
- 79. The arrangements for financial planning are unsatisfactory. Although the short-term projections and the day-to-day financial arrangements are satisfactory, projections are confined to one year. The lack of a long-term financial plan linked to the school development plan is a significant weakness, especially given the insufficient number of classrooms, fluctuations in the number of pupils admitted to the school each year because of the school's admissions policy, uncertainty over future staffing levels and inadequate resources for information technology, The school's finances and financial procedures have not been audited since the last inspection. The school relies heavily on the support from the local finance officer, but recent local authority re-organisation has caused difficulties. The funding of pupils with special needs is included in the budget but some costs are met directly by the school. The specific grant for in-service training is used effectively and linked to the school development plan. Procedures for ordering and making payments are well organised and records are properly kept. The school had built up a substantial financial reserve, but this has been reduced considerably through the provision this year of additional staffing.
- 80. The staff are appropriately deployed. Consideration is taken of the qualifications and past experience when allocating classes. However, this has led to a static situation with staff continuing to teach the same year group over a long period. The school spends an average amount of its budget on education support staff and receives satisfactory value for this money. Support staff and nursery nurses are deployed well and are mostly effective in their roles. The recent initiative to employ an extra teacher to reduce the size of classes for pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 for literacy and numeracy sessions is having a positive effect on raising standards, although the lack of a classroom base means that this teacher's time cannot always be used to maximum effect. The caretaker is effectively deployed: he is efficient and carries out routine maintenance. The school's administrative staff provide good support for teachers, dealing competently with pupils, parents and visitors.
- 81. Although the accommodation of the school has serious deficiencies, the accommodation available is used as efficiently and effectively as possible. Because of restrictions imposed by its location, the use of the library is inefficient. Access is restricted and does not promote pupils' independent study and research skills. The use of other resources is generally satisfactory.
- 82. Pupils are attaining standards which, overall, are above average in English, mathematics and science. The pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory, much of it is good and some is very good. Expenditure per pupil is above average. Taking these factors into consideration, the school offers satisfactory value for money

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN UNDER FIVE

Personal and Social Development

83. The children make good progress in both the nursery and the reception in their personal and social development. The range of personal and social skills exhibited by the children when they enter the school is much wider than their attainment in language and mathematics. Some children have quite poorly developed social skills, whilst others already exhibit great confidence and good social interaction. By the age of five, nearly all children achieve the desirable learning outcomes for personal and social development, and many show quite well-developed skills. Despite some minor incidents of squabbling, they relate well to other children and to adults. They speak confidently in front of others and are not afraid to ask questions.
84. The nursery environment is well ordered and the children have a clear understanding of the rules of behaviour. They play amicably together in the home corner and share resources and equipment well. They show a good ability to choose their own activities and persevere with these for an appropriate length of time before moving on. They learn important rules of hygiene, for example, washing their hands before they have their snack. When necessary, they sit quietly and wait for their turn. A good number of children manage to change independently for physical education. Children in the reception class have adapted quickly and well to a more formal teaching environment. Although they work quite well without direct supervision, they sometimes quickly forget the main purpose of the task they have been set. They learn to take turns, for example when using the computer, but find it difficult not to call out during whole-class discussions. They relate well to each other; one child, for example, was observed helping another child put on an apron before painting. They answer politely when the register is called.
85. The quality of teaching for the children's personal and social development is good. The teachers know the children well and respond to their individual needs, encouraging those who are shy or have low self-esteem. The teaching assistants and voluntary helpers play a particularly important role, encouraging the children to try different activities in the nursery, focussing children's attention in the reception, dealing with problems, and explaining to children how they should behave and respond. Incidents of unacceptable behaviour are dealt with promptly and effectively, and all of the adults help the children to develop clear ideas of right and wrong. In the reception, not enough attention is given to correcting the tendency to shout out answers, a habit which is discouraged more effectively in the nursery, for example, as the teacher tells the children to "zip up your mouth, then put your hand up".

· **Language and Literacy**

86. The children's English skills are slightly below average when they enter the nursery. They make good progress in both the nursery and the reception class and, by the time they start compulsory education, most children achieve all of the desirable learning outcomes for this area of learning, and many are already working towards level 1 of the National Curriculum. In the nursery, children are starting to recognise letters of the alphabet by shape and sound. With the help of their parents, they practise writing their own name on the register board at the start of the day; some children manage to do this skilfully. They greatly enjoy listening to stories and reciting nursery rhymes. In the reception class, most children recognise all of the letters of the alphabet, identify the initial sounds of words, and identify the letters of the alphabet with which words start. They listen carefully when stories are read, and show a good ability to talk about events and characters. They are keen to contribute to discussions, but have not yet learnt to await their turn. They know how a book is organised and that print carries meaning. They recognise familiar words and write their own names.

87. The quality of teaching is good in both the nursery and the reception. In the nursery, the children are provided with a good range of activities, many of which help them to develop early literacy skills. Areas are provided for children to look at books. Whole-class sessions are used well to introduce new letters, develop speaking and listening skills and to acquire an enjoyment of books. The nursery teacher, assistant and parent helpers use their time productively working with small groups of children, encouraging them to talk about what they are doing. The teaching methods are more formal in the reception class, with hour-long English lessons which follow the structure of the literacy hour. The preparation the children have received in the nursery, the supportive and encouraging style of teaching and appropriately chosen texts and activities enable the children to manage the transition well. Big books are used effectively to promote the children's interest in reading and their understanding of words. Resources are well organised and used well to reinforce early reading skills. In addition to whole-class sessions, the reception teacher and assistant provide many opportunities during the day to develop speaking and listening skills when children are working together in groups. For example, in a science activity, children were encouraged to discuss similarities and differences between different types of bottled water.

· **Mathematics**

88. The children's mathematical understanding is slightly below average when they enter the nursery. They make good progress in both the nursery and the reception and, by the age of five, nearly all children achieve the desirable learning outcomes for mathematics, and many are working towards level 1 of the National Curriculum. In the nursery, the children manage numbers to five with confidence and are beginning to develop an awareness of larger numbers, for example, counting to 21 when the register is called. They are developing an awareness of mathematical vocabulary. For example, they use the terms 'full' and 'empty' when playing in the sand, and classify different types of umbrella according to size and colour. In the reception class, three-quarters of the children have a secure understanding of the concept of 'less than' and 'more than', correctly identifying, for example, that 6 is less than 7. The more able pupils play a game with dice, identifying which of two numbers thrown is the larger, and counting on the correct number of spaces to find where to place their counter. By the age of five, all children show a good understanding of numbers up to ten, most work comfortably with numbers up to 20, and a few show awareness of larger numbers. Most children write numbers accurately, and are starting to show an awareness of number operations such as addition and subtraction.

89. The quality of teaching is good in both the nursery and reception. In the nursery, activities are carefully planned to ensure that children have the opportunity to develop their mathematical understanding. A computer program not only introduces them to the control of the mouse, but reinforces counting skills. The teacher and assistant use available opportunities to

reinforce counting skills, for example, through reciting counting rhymes or counting the number of umbrellas on a chart which indicates the children's favourite types. In the reception class, lessons are well structured, following the guidelines of the National Numeracy Strategy. The teacher makes good use of a range of colourful and attractive resources, such as a large number line, soft toys, large dice, coloured counters and blocks to help the children count forwards and backwards. Lessons evaluations are used well to plan further work where weaknesses in children's understanding are observed.

· **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

90. By the age of five, the children achieve the desirable learning outcomes for knowledge and understanding of the world. They make good progress in this area of learning. In both the nursery and the reception class, the children use the computers with confidence, showing an appropriate level of control when using the mouse, for example, to turn pages or select text when listening to a talking book. In the nursery, the children learn to describe what the weather is like. In the reception class, the children show an emerging understanding of chronology, as they classify toys into those which are old, and those which are new. They have a clear understanding of the different human senses. They recognise and identify objects which are found on a beach, and classify objects according to whether they float or sink. They are starting to develop powers of observation and analysis as they taste and describe different types of water.

· 91. The quality of teaching is good in both the nursery and the reception. The teachers provide good opportunities for the children to widen their experience through carefully planned visits. Children in the nursery, for example, have visited a farm and observed new-born lambs. Following a visit to a garden centre, they have created their own garden in the nursery and observed how plants grow. During the week of the inspection, children in the reception had a successful and interesting visit to a local museum. In the reception class, the transition from the largely activity-based programme of the nursery to a more subject-based approach is managed successfully. However, in some of the afternoon sessions, when working in a group without direct adult supervision, the children are not always aware of the real purpose of what they are doing. However, they make good progress when the teacher or assistant provides clearly focused teaching, and the rotation of groups ensures that all children receive helpful teaching input during the lessons.

· **Creative development**

92. The children make satisfactory progress in their creative development and, by the time they are five, they achieve the desirable learning outcomes for this aspect of their education. In the nursery, the children create pictures using straws to blow colours into patterns. The drawings of the more able children show good observation of detail. They know the words of a number of songs which they sing with enthusiasm, showing awareness of pulse. In the reception class, the children are able to maintain a steady beat. Progress in previous lessons is evident as they sing a number of songs which they have learnt previously and perform appropriate actions in time with the pulse. The children handle tools and equipment competently and safely, and use a range of construction apparatus to build models, describing clearly what they are doing.

· 93. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. In the nursery, the children are given a wide variety of activities, many of which stimulate the imagination and help to develop their creative talents. Although children in the nursery have the opportunity to use the role-play corner, set up as a café during the inspection, there is not always sufficient guidance in using this facility in an imaginative way or of developing realistic and helpful role-play situations.

- **Physical development**

94. The children make satisfactory progress in their physical development in the nursery. They develop their fine motor skills through activities such as cutting, sticking and other manipulative activities. They learn to coordinate their movements through controlling wheeled toys in the outdoor area or throwing bean bags into a target. In physical education, some pupils show the ability to follow instructions, for example, by walking quietly on tiptoe or tumbling like leaves. Others do not yet listen carefully enough to the teacher's instructions. No physical education lessons were scheduled in the reception class during the inspection, but general observation of the pupils' movements and their coordination when undertaking activities within the classroom indicates that, by the time they are five, the children's level of attainment is appropriate for their age.

- 95. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. The planning of activities to improve the children's physical development in the nursery is good. However, the lack of availability of the school hall imposes restrictions on the programme of physical education for both the nursery and reception. Children in the morning session in the nursery had to undertake their physical activity within the nursery classroom, where the confines of the space and proximity of other resources made it impossible for all of the children to undertake their activities at the same time. In the reception, the children receive too little opportunity for physical development.

- **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS, SCIENCE AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

- **English**

96. The results of the 1999 National Curriculum assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 in both reading and writing were well above the national average and the average for similar schools. Almost all of the pupils achieved the national expectation of level 2. In writing, 13 per cent of pupils achieved the higher level 3, and over half of the pupils achieved this level in reading. Over the previous three years, results were consistently above the national average. The most recent results showed a significant improvement. The inspection findings show that standards of the pupils currently approaching the end of Key Stage 1 are not quite as high as the previous year, but are still above average.

- 97. The results of the 1999 National Curriculum assessments in English at the end of Key Stage 2 were in line with the national average, and the average for similar schools. Just over three-quarters of the pupils achieved the national expectation of level 4 and almost a quarter achieved the higher level 5. The trend over the past five years has been one of continual improvement, rising from 39 per cent of pupils achieving level 4 or above in 1996 to 78 per cent in 1999. The inspection findings show that there is continuing improvement, and that standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are now above average.

- 98. Attainment in speaking and listening is above average at the end of both key stages. Many of the younger pupils speak clearly and are eager to tell their news. Although they generally listen carefully to others, they do not always wait for their turn to contribute. The literacy hour plenary session is used well to develop pupils' skills; the pupils report clearly on what they have achieved during the session. In the shared reading sessions, pupils listen carefully to the teacher and answer questions carefully. Older pupils listen carefully to others, they respond thoughtfully to comments from the teacher and use appropriate language in their answers. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to speak to a wider audience. An example of this was during a junior assembly. Although lacking in volume, pupils displayed confidence when reading texts about heaven.

- 99. Standards in reading are good at Key Stage 1 and very good at Key Stage 2. At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils use a variety of strategies to read unfamiliar words. They work out how to say words by breaking them into syllables or infer meaning from the context of the word or by

looking at the illustrations. They are enthusiastic about books and, by the end of the key stage, are reading with increasing fluency and accuracy. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to practise their reading, including the home-school programme and daily reading sessions. By the end of Key Stage 2, nearly all pupils are independent readers. They read confidently and with expression and self correct when necessary. Pupils are familiar with authors such as Roald Dahl and J Wilson and can describe events and characters with accuracy. Although pupils are able to retrieve and select information from non-fiction books, they are unfamiliar with the Dewey system in the library.

- 100. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils achieve above the national expectations in writing. Pupils are able to write in sentences with correct use of commas, capital letters and full stops. Higher-attaining pupils know how to use speech marks. Pupils write for a range of purposes. For example, they explain how to make things, use the correct layout for a letter and are beginning to create stories. Most pupils take care with their work, and their handwriting is usually well formed. Spelling is of a good standard. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment is above average. Pupils structure sentences correctly and use clear joined-up writing. They write with increasing confidence and use paragraphs appropriately. They punctuate their work correctly and know how to use the apostrophe to indicate possession or contraction. They use adjectives and adverbs well in their descriptive work. The standard of spelling is good. Pupils show the ability to plan their writing. The range of writing for different audiences is well developed and interesting; it includes persuasive writing, play-scripts, character description and diary writing, although there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their creative writing.
- 101. Progress in the development of speaking and listening skills is good at both key stages. As pupils progress through the school, they gain in confidence and express themselves clearly in a variety of different situations. Good progress is also made with reading. By the time pupils reach Year 6, they are reading a wide range of books with fluency and understanding and, with the benefit of regular reading sessions and earlier learned phonetic skills, display the ability to tackle difficult words. The pupils make good progress in writing at Key Stage 1. Work in the earlier years provides a good foundation for handwriting, spelling and punctuation. These skills are further developed in Year 2. Overall progress in writing at Key Stage 2 is satisfactory, although it is unsatisfactory in Year 3 and, at times, in Year 4. Some of the work is poorly presented and previously learned literacy skills are not developed sufficiently. Progress improves significantly in Years 5 and 6 and, by the time the pupils leave the school, they have acquired good literacy skills. Extra literacy sessions, held during the lunch hour for pupils in Year 6, are having a positive effect on their progress. In most year groups, the teachers make good use of opportunities to develop writing skills through other subjects, for example, by writing about investigative work in science. In a few classes, however, the use of poor quality worksheets detracts from the development of writing skills. Insufficient attention is given to the correction and improvement of written work, especially when the writing is undertaken in the context of other subjects.
- 102. The pupils' attitudes to English are good. They are keen to participate in discussions and respond well to teachers' questions. Relationships are very good and pupils collaborate well, for example in the shared reading groups. The pupils' behaviour is generally good throughout the school, but there are occasions with the younger pupils when there is too much chatter, which slows progress. Most pupils are anxious to complete and produce work of good quality. When they have finished their designated tasks, they show independence by either completing previous work or carrying on with extension work without being asked to do so by the teacher. This is particularly good feature in Year 6.
- 103. The overall quality of the teaching in English is good. During the inspection, 40 per cent of the lessons observed were satisfactory and a similar percentage was good. One very good and one unsatisfactory lesson were observed. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and lessons

are generally well planned, following the structures and the learning objectives of the National Literacy Strategy. There are, however, occasions when the introductory section of lessons is too long, particularly when pupils have to sit close together in restricted areas, resulting in them becoming restless and losing attention. Characteristics of the good teaching are: clear learning objectives, with work well planned to meet the needs of the pupils, appropriate activities and good use of resources which interest and challenge pupils. The good teaching is also underpinned by effective questioning during both the introduction and plenary sessions. In a good lesson on the use of adverbs, for example, questions were used well before pupils started their assignment in order to ensure that the task had been fully understood; the pupils were then able to make good progress at a brisk pace. The teachers demonstrate good management skills, but there are occasions when calling out is not checked, and this slows the pace of the lesson and pupils' progress. The teachers' expectations are generally high, but there are occasions when pupils are given work that lacks challenge and rigour. Work is marked regularly, but there are few comments on how pupils can improve their work, and there is little evidence of pupils correcting their work once it has been returned. Learning support assistants provide good support for teachers and pupils, but there are times when pupils are over-reliant on extra help, which slows their independent development. Where teaching is less effective, introductions to lessons are unclear, leaving pupils unsure of the task, plenary sessions are too brief to assess pupils' understanding, and resources are poorly organised, resulting in an inefficient use of time.

- 104. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. The scheme of work for English provides clear guidance for the teachers' planning. There are good procedures for assessment. Pupils' progress and achievement are regularly reviewed and individual targets are identified on a termly basis for all pupils, contributing to their improvement. A portfolio of assessed samples of pupils' writing provides good support for teachers in their assessments. The subject makes a good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, in particular through the development of pupils' listening skills and teaching them to read with understanding. Leadership of the subject is sound, and the coordinator has undertaken a useful series of classroom observations as part of the school's procedures for implementing the National Literacy Strategy. These have been helpful in identifying areas of weakness, and have led to improvement. The school has a satisfactory range of reading material, but the quality of the library as a learning resource is unsatisfactory. It is situated in the school hall, which restricts access during lessons and does not encourage pupils to develop their literacy skills through research, either in English or in other subjects. The range and quality of books is inadequate.

- **Mathematics**

- 105. The pupils' attainments in the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 1 were well above the national average. When compared with similar schools, the results were very high. All pupils reached the nationally expected level 2 and almost half of the pupils achieved the higher level three. Standards have risen since the last inspection and the most recent results showed a significant improvement over those of the previous three years. The inspection findings show that standards of the pupils currently in Year 2 are not quite as high as the previous year, but are still above average.
- 106. The National Curriculum results at the end of Key Stage 2 were well above the national average and the average for similar schools. Almost all of the pupils achieved the nationally expected level 4, and over a third achieved the higher level 5. There has been a significant improvement in standards since the last inspection; standards have risen each year over the last five years, with only 33 per cent of pupils achieving level 4 or above in 1995, compared with 94 per cent who achieved this level in 1999. Inspection findings show that attainment by the end of Key Stage 2 is well above the national average, with a significant number of pupils currently in Year 6 working above the expected level for their age.

- 107. By the end of Key Stage 1, the pupils have developed sound number concepts. Well-paced mental maths sessions at the start of each lesson help pupils to develop their knowledge of addition and subtraction facts, using numbers to twenty. The pupils' written work shows there is much consolidation of basic number work during the course of the year. They learn to add two-digit numbers and can identify hundreds, tens and units in three-digit numbers. They have a clear understanding of odd and even numbers. Pupils can identify two and three-dimensional shapes and describe their properties, for example the sides, edges and faces of a cube or cuboid. They understand reflective symmetry and can show the lines of symmetry on a two-dimensional shape; they tell the time correctly and use appropriate standard and non-standard measures. Bar charts are drawn from given information, sometimes collected by pupils using tally charts, and pupils write about these charts and what they show.
- 108. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have good computational skills and well-established concepts of the four rules of number. They have a clear understanding of decimals and percentages and can multiply and divide numbers by ten, a hundred and one thousand by moving digits across columns. Some use and understand negative numbers. They have a variety of strategies for carrying out mental calculations, and describe their methods verbally. Multiplication tables are practised regularly and most pupils are familiar with multiplication facts up to 10x10. They can transform two-dimensional shapes by translation, reflection and rotation. They find the area of simple shapes and some know the metric equivalent of imperial measures. They can collect data, record a frequency table and understand the terms 'median', 'mean' and 'mode'. Some can interpret graphs and diagrams, giving reasons for variation in data.
- 109. Overall, the pupils make good progress in mathematics. The mathematical attainment of children entering the reception class is average, but they make good progress through Key Stage 1 to achieve levels higher than national expectations by the age of seven. However, progress in Year 3 is poor, and the high standards of attainment demonstrated in Year 2 are not being properly extended. In Year 4, the pupils make satisfactory progress, but it is not until Years 5 and 6, more recently Year 6, that pupils make the very good progress which enables them to achieve their high levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2. The improvement in pupils' attainment has been due to the continuing development of number work throughout both key stages, along with the further development of weaker areas identified through careful analysis of the school's test results. Towards the end of both key stages, the teachers have higher expectations of pupils, resulting in the pupils moving forward at a greater pace and so raising their levels of attainment. With the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy, lessons have clear learning objectives, and teachers make an evaluation of whether these objectives have been met or exceeded, so informing their future planning. Planning follows the numeracy session structure and gives pupils opportunities to practise mental recall and to work in ability groups at their own level of learning and understanding. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well by classroom assistants and teachers; this good level of support is instrumental in helping them to make good progress.
- 110. Numeracy skills are developed well in other areas of the curriculum. Computer programmes are used, for example, to consolidate number work and to gather information for analysis. The use and application of mathematical techniques is evident in science, history and geography. Rainfall is recorded and charted in geography, and in history a pie chart records the time spent on different activities during a Victorian day. There is a good emphasis on the acquisition of mathematical vocabulary in oral work, with teachers expecting pupils to use the correct terms when answering questions.
- 111. The pupils' attitudes to mathematics are good. They enjoy the mental sessions at the start of each lesson; the faster the pace and the greater the challenge, the more the pupils enjoy it. In most classes, pupils listen well when tasks are being explained, and they settle well to these tasks with high levels of concentration. Sometimes, the explanation of the group task, although well

thought out, takes too long and some pupils lose concentration. Their behaviour is generally good, especially in those lessons which are well planned, with high expectations and good pace and variety. However, in one lesson where learning objectives were unclear and expectation was at a level of 'anything will do', pupils wandered around, were off-task for much of the time and behaved badly. Pupils work well in pairs and in groups, sharing ideas and equipment, and there is often a working 'buzz' in the classroom. They also show a good level of responsibility when collecting resources and tidying away at the end of a lesson. This was particularly evident in Year 5 who at the end of maths lessons have to vacate the hall area where they work during the morning sessions. The last report mentioned poor standards of presentation and dating of work, particularly at Key Stage 2. This has improved, particularly where pupils are working in exercise books, but when filling in worksheets the date is still often missing and the standard of presentation is sometimes unsatisfactory. Pupils are encouraged to take some responsibility for their own learning through individual targets, which they discuss with their teachers and record on their personal record cards.

112. The quality of teaching is good overall. Two of the lessons observed were good; two were very good and one lesson was poor. The teachers' weekly plans are generally well prepared, with learning objectives being taken from the Numeracy Strategy. These plans are sometimes amended during the week to take account of the rates of progress being made by pupils. A weekly evaluation is made which informs future planning. Teachers demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of the subject and give pupils clear explanations. Lessons are well structured and follow the numeracy hour pattern. Mental recall sessions are often brisk and challenging, but do not always fully involve all pupils or ensure that all have the opportunity to make a response, for example, by using individual sets of digit cards. The main teaching activities are introduced clearly, and pupils' activities are usually well prepared. However, a scrutiny of the previous year's work shows an over-reliance on commercially produced worksheets, which do not always give clear evidence of how pupils are performing. In one very good lesson on odd and even numbers, activities were very well prepared, allowing a challenge for the more able pupils and a more practical activity for the less able, who broke lengths of multi-link cubes into two pieces to check whether numbers were odd or even. In another very good lesson, well thought-out activities, involving previously collected data stored on a computer disk, 'homes for sale' pages from a range of newspapers and a text book exercise, provided the resources for finding out average prices. In both of these lessons, the quality of teaching, with pace, variety and high expectations, was clearly linked to the very good progress made. The poor lesson observed clearly demonstrated that where planning is vague, pupils are unsure about what they are doing and are off-task, then little or no progress is made. Teachers make day-to-day assessments often by focussing on the work of one group. Most work is marked regularly, but the comments made are often cursory and do not identify what a pupil has to do to improve. Where there is an over-reliance on worksheets, these sheets sometimes remain unmarked and unfinished. In Year 6, class lessons are augmented by regular lunchtime sessions which improve the attainment of the less able in mathematics and provide further challenge for the more able pupils. A progressive amount of homework is given on a weekly basis, and has an increasingly beneficial impact on pupils' progress.

113. The subject is led by an enthusiastic coordinator whose role is developing along with other subject coordinators. She has been involved in introducing the Numeracy Strategy into the school, organising training, ordering new resources and setting up systems for planning and evaluating numeracy. Medium-term planning is monitored by the coordinator and some lessons have been observed by the headteacher. However, there is still insufficient careful monitoring of teaching and the work produced by pupils in order to ensure consistent progress. The numeracy governor gives good support. Resources for teaching mathematics are adequate and are mostly stored and used in individual classrooms.

• **Science**

114. In the 1999 teacher assessed tests at the end of Key Stage 1, all pupils achieved the national expectation of level 2, which was well above the national average. However, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher level three was similar to the national average. The 1999 results at Key Stage 1 showed an improvement on the results for the previous three years, which had remained fairly consistent. Inspection findings confirm that the overall level of attainment by the end of Key Stage 1 is above average.
- 115. The overall results of the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 2 were above the national average and above the average for similar schools. Almost all of the pupils achieved the national expectation of level 4, which was well above the national average, and a third of the pupils achieved the higher level 5. The results at Key Stage 2 have improved each year for the last five years and are now significantly higher than at the time of the last inspection. Inspection findings show that standards by the end of Key Stage 2 are well above average. This judgement, which is better than the previous year's National Curriculum results, reflects continuing improvement and the fact that the pupils who are currently in Year 6 have had two years of consistently high quality teaching.
- 116. By the end of Key Stage 1, the pupils have good breadth and depth of understanding of all aspects of the programmes of study of the National Curriculum. They are starting to think and work scientifically, posing questions, making predictions and testing hypotheses. They are developing the concept of a fair test. Their understanding of electricity is above average for their age. They identify different sources of electricity, are aware of the dangers of mains electricity, and construct simple circuits with switches. They sort and classify objects and living creatures correctly. For example, they classify animals into amphibians, mammals, birds, fish and reptiles, and identify similarities in different animals. They illustrate their understanding of senses by comparing the relative importance of the different senses of humans and rabbits. A particular strength of the work in Year 2 is the way pupils develop their ability to record the results of their investigations, either in writing or through illustration.
- 117. By the end of Key Stage 2, the pupils' written work reveals a very clear and detailed understanding of all aspects of the National Curriculum for science. Within the area of life processes and living things, they have a very detailed knowledge of the human body and the functions of the main organs. They describe food chains and life cycles in some detail. In work on materials and their properties, they have a very good understanding of solids, liquids and gases and of reversible and irreversible changes. Within the area of physical processes, they have a very good understanding of forces. Higher-attaining pupils give clear explanations in their own words of terms like 'gravity', 'up-thrust' and 'air resistance', and explain the difference between balanced and unbalanced forces. Lower-attaining pupils show sound understanding of these terms, although their written explanations are less detailed and precise. Within the classroom, the pupils understand and use scientific terms, and relate knowledge gained from one area of study to another. For example, when discussing differences between solids, liquids and gases, the pupils mention quite confidently that humans emit the gas carbon dioxide when they breathe out. Whilst the pupils carry out directed investigations and experiments with confidence, they are not sufficiently independent to devise and carry out their own investigative work.
- 118. The progress of pupils, including those with special educational needs, is good overall, but it varies considerably throughout the school. The quality of oral work with pupils in Year 1 helps to develop their understanding. However, some of their recorded work, for example, the completion of word searches or dot-to-dot tasks on worksheets, makes little contribution to their understanding or progress. In contrast, hardly any worksheets are used in Year 2, and pupils record the results of investigations in their own words. Very good progress is evident through the year, as

the pupils become more confident in writing for themselves. Much of the work in this year is practically based, which helps to increase their understanding. Progress in Year 3 is poor. Almost all of the previous year's work involved the completion of poor quality worksheets, many of which were pitched at a lower level than work undertaken in Year 2. Hardly any of the work was marked, presentation reflected the unchallenging nature of the tasks, and pupils were given no opportunity to improve the scientific writing skills which had been developed in the previous year. A different approach to teaching science to pupils currently in Year 3 is much more positive, but poor classroom management, lack of clarity in planning and failure to complete pieces of written work still lead to unsatisfactory progress. Progress in Years 4 and 5 is good. The pupils' own written accounts of investigative work reveal a good level of understanding. In contrast, progress is hindered when pupils spend time copying notes verbatim from the board or completing the occasional poor quality worksheet. Progress for half of the pupils in Year 5 and those in Year 6 is very good. The quantity, quality and depth of work which these pupils have completed is impressive. Fast-paced lessons, continual challenge, the teacher's very good subject knowledge and teaching methods which captivate the pupils' interest all contribute to the fast pace of learning, which is reflected in the very high standards achieved by these pupils.

- 119. The pupils' attitudes to learning in science are good, and the attitudes of the oldest pupils are very good. Throughout the school, the pupils enjoy taking part in discussion, and contribute their ideas willingly and enthusiastically. When given the opportunity, they communicate their interest through detailed written work, although the quantity sometimes leads to a deterioration in the quality of their presentation. The completion of worksheets is generally scruffy, reflecting the lack of challenge which these present. The motivation shown by the oldest pupils is very good indeed. They respond extremely positively to the constantly demanding workload, but also have evident pride in their achievements and the understanding they acquire. The pupils' behaviour throughout the school is good. Even in a poorly controlled lesson, the pupils continued to show interest in what they were doing, although the level of noise and lack of concentration on the task at hand resulted in poor progress. The pupils work sensibly, share resources with each other and are responsible in the way they handle materials and equipment. Pupils in Year 2, for example, responded well within the cramped confines of their 'classroom', and enjoyed the different types of investigative activity into sources of electricity. The older pupils respond in a very mature way to the difficulties imposed by the restricted accommodation. Their very good behaviour in classes of 39 or 40 pupils enables the teachers to concentrate on providing good learning experiences and is a significant contributory factor to the pupils' progress.
- 120. The overall quality of teaching is good, although it varies from very good to poor. Of the lessons observed during the inspection, two were very good, three were good, one was satisfactory and one was poor. Features of the very good teaching were: very good subject knowledge, which enabled the teacher to ask perceptive and probing questions and extend pupils' knowledge and understanding; high expectations, in terms of pupils' response, the challenge of the work and the amount pupils were expected to do; lively pace, with a great deal of work covered in each lesson; and interesting methods. For example, in order to explain the differences between solids, liquids and gases, pupils became particles in the playground and had to respond by forming a tightly-knit structure with little particle movement to represent a solid or having the greater freedom of movement associated with particles in a gas. The understanding gained through this activity was consolidated by a good demonstration in a subsequent lesson in which solids, liquids and gases were placed on plates and into bottles. The planning for the poor lesson gave no indication of what pupils were expected to do or learn, pupils were unclear about what was required of them, and there was inadequate control so that noise levels rose, pupils quickly went off-task and little progress was made. In some classes, there is too little investigative and experimental work, and throughout the school there is insufficient opportunity for pupils to devise and carry out their own investigative work. The very large class sizes in Years 4, 5 and 6 and the cramped working conditions for Year 2 also make it very difficult to organise this type of work successfully.

- 121. The teaching of science helps pupils to acquire basic skills of literacy and numeracy, although more could be done to further progress in these aspects. Where the teaching is at its best, the pupils are required to record work in their own words, and evident progress is made in improving writing skills. However, little indication is given, when work is marked, as to how the quality of their writing could be improved. In some classes, the frequent use of poor quality worksheets actively hinders the development of good writing skills. Numeracy skills are promoted through the collection and handling of data and activities which involve measurement. Insufficient use is made of information and communication technology, particularly the aspects of control technology, the use of sensing equipment to monitor sound or light, or to the present results of their investigative work.
- 122. The overall structure of the curriculum for science is sound. The teachers receive ample guidance and support through a very comprehensive scheme of work, which seeks to combine the best of a number of published or commercially produced schemes. However, the selection of the support material which is included in the scheme has not been rigorous enough, and some of the resources are not conducive to helping pupils achieve the highest standards. Good use is made of analyses of test results to identify weaknesses within the curriculum. Procedures for monitoring what happens in science throughout the school are weak. There are no formal procedures which would help to identify, for example, that the progress in some classes is restricted because of poorly chosen worksheets; that there is not a uniform approach to investigative work throughout the school; or that the marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. There is considerable expertise in science within the school, which is not yet being used to its full potential to ensure that practice throughout the school lives up to the high standards of the best teaching. The school has attempted to alleviate the problem of having 40 pupils in one class by employing an additional teacher to help out in the afternoons. However, because of lack of accommodation, some science lessons take place in a room with two teachers teaching two different groups of pupils and, in other sessions, Year 5 pupils move across to the nursery, where the accommodation is entirely inappropriate. These factors hinder pupils' progress, particularly the acquisition of skills for investigative work.
- Information Technology**
- 123. There have been a number of improvements in the school's provision for information technology since the last inspection, but they have not been sufficient to enable the school to keep pace with developments in technology over the last few years or to provide pupils with sufficient opportunity to develop the necessary skills. Pupils' attainment is below the national expectations at the end of both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 and progress throughout the school is unsatisfactory for all pupils, including those with special educational needs. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and curricular planning has improved, as has the teachers' own knowledge of information technology. The main reasons for the unsatisfactory progress are the restrictions imposed by the poor accommodation and the low number of computers which severely limit the opportunities which are available for pupils, particularly in Years 2, 4, 5 and 6.
- 124. By the end of Key Stage 1, most pupils demonstrate confidence in using the computer, although their lack of opportunity to practise means that some pupils still have difficulty controlling the mouse with accuracy or locating letters on the keyboard. They have not yet had the chance to develop sufficient independence in opening programs, saving, retrieving and printing their work. They are developing a sound understanding of features of a word processor. They know, for example, how to change the size, colour and style of the text, and print out attractive name labels. They are developing an appreciation of how different styles are used in everyday life, for example, by finding examples of different styles of text in use on everyday objects. However, there is not enough time for pupils to write at length using the word processor or to draft and redraft pieces of work. They have some familiarity with a graphics program, and are able to combine and manipulate shapes to make a picture. In the completed work for the previous year, there was no evidence of work involving data handling, modelling or control.

- 125. By the end of Key Stage 2, the pupils have the confidence to use computers when given the opportunity, but they have only experienced a limited range of software and have not covered all aspects of the programmes of study for information technology. Because of the cumulative effect of the last few years, there are significant gaps in the skills which are expected by the time they leave school. For example, they have had little experience of handling data and little opportunity to construct, use and interrogate a database. The school has not had the necessary equipment for pupils to gain an understanding of how information technology can be used to monitor external events. Whilst they are competent in using a word processor, they have had little opportunity to use a page layout program to present text for a specific audience. Where opportunities have been provided, the pupils show a good level of competence and easily reach the level expected for 11-year-olds. Pupils in Years 5 and 6, for example, were being taught during the inspection how to use a spreadsheet. They showed a very good understanding of the principles of the spreadsheet, knew how to enter data into cells, and then enter a formula to calculate the areas and perimeters of a rectangle. After being shown how to use a function to calculate the average length, they could work out how to use other functions to calculate the range and mean. The pupils are being shown gradually how to use the Internet and send email and readily pick up the skills required.
- 126. Although the school has a scheme of work which covers all aspects of the programmes of study, the restricted accommodation and lack of computers makes it very difficult for the scheme of work to be covered adequately. In most classes, it is impossible for the whole class to be taught new skills at the same time. The small cubby-hole in which the computer for Years 4 and 5 is situated, allows access to a maximum of six pupils at a time, and having 40 pupils in the class makes it very difficult to rearrange furniture to allow other teaching arrangements. The computer connected to the Internet situated in the library in the school hall can only be used to teach small groups because of other lessons taking place at the same time. The teachers endeavour to teach part of the class at the same time, and to repeat the teaching session later in the week for other groups of pupils. These arrangements are, however, inefficient, and there is insufficient opportunity for pupils to consolidate the skills which have been taught at other times during the week. Because of limited access, information and communication technology is greatly under-used as a tool for learning in other subjects. For example, there is very little use of word-processing in English, no exploration of music software, and little research conducted using CD-ROMs. However, the contexts within which information technology skills are taught do make a limited contribution to pupils' progress in other subjects, for example through the use of spreadsheets in mathematics, and the discussion of style in English. The pupils' books contain very few examples of work produced using information technology.
- 127. The pupils have a positive and enthusiastic attitude to information technology, which manifests itself clearly when they are asked to work on the classroom computer. Their attitudes during taught class sessions are generally good. They pay attention to the teacher's explanations and are willing to try out new skills. When working on their own or in pairs, their behaviour is very good. They collaborate well, take turns and help each other when necessary. They treat equipment with respect and, throughout the school, they can be trusted to work on their own in a mature and sensible manner.
- 128. The quality of the teaching is satisfactory, although it varied during the inspection from very good to poor. The teachers' understanding of information technology has improved, as over half of the staff have undertaken prolonged training courses to improve their own level of expertise. Clearer guidance through an adopted scheme of work has been provided by the subject coordinator. In most classes, the teachers' half-termly planning provides a clear outline of the learning objectives, which are linked to the overall scheme of work. In some classes, there is insufficient teaching of skills, and not enough use is made of short teaching slots to introduce a new teaching point or to deal with problems which the pupils are facing. In Years 5 and 6, longer teaching sessions are arranged to deal with more complex new work. However, because of the disruption

which would be caused to learning in other subjects, the pupils do not have such regular access to the computer to practise and consolidate the skills which have been taught. Throughout Key Stage 2, the amount of time which is made available for pupils to use a computer is insufficient to enable them to make the required progress. Some good strategies are used in an effort to overcome these problems, for example, by using overhead transparencies of different screen shots overlaid with cut-out transparencies of different pull down menus, so that the teacher can explain to the whole class what to do.

- 129. Checklists of which pupils have used the computer are kept in most classes, but these are not used in a developmental way. In some classes, pupils are assessed to see whether they have met the criteria for the current piece of work, but there are no procedures for assessing how much pupils already know and whether the planned work is appropriate for their needs. The scheme of work contains a good framework against which pupils' skills could be assessed, or which pupils could use for self-assessment purposes. There is no collection of work which pupils have accomplished in information technology, which could serve as an illustration of levels of attainment or as a celebration of pupils' achievements, although a recent improvement in some classes is the use of an exercise book into which pupils paste work which they have accomplished using information technology.
- 130. The acquisition of a number of new computers has improved the level of resources, so that nearly all classes have a well-specified machine, capable of running good software. However, the ratio of computers to pupils is still low. Accommodation for many of the computers is cramped. Many of the computer screens are tilted at the wrong angle which makes it awkward for pupils to see. Lack of space within the building makes it impossible to move machines from the classrooms to group them together, so that larger groups of pupils can carry out work at the same time. Classes are thus restricted to using the computers within the classroom at certain times of the day only, which is insufficient for pupils in Key Stage 2 to undertake work of any complexity. It also greatly restricts the use of information and communication technology as a tool for learning in other subjects. The school now possesses the necessary software to teach all aspects of the National Curriculum, but the stock of software to assist learning in other subjects is inadequate. The school needs to resolve these difficulties in some way, if pupils are to be given the opportunity to reach the nationally expected levels in all aspects of the information technology curriculum and make full use of the subject as a tool for learning in other areas of the curriculum.

• **OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES**

• **Art**

131. The pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress in art and achieve standards which are appropriate for their age. At Key Stage 1, pupils express their ideas and record their observations in a range of media. Pupils mix their own paints from an early age. By the end of the key stage, pupils can use a variety of techniques in two and three dimensions. As part of their Caribbean topic in Year 2, for example, the pupils made good three-dimensional head-dresses and decorated them well, using pastel colours from original designs in their sketchbooks.
- 132. In Key Stage 2, pupils gain confidence and develop their skills in a variety of techniques. Pupils in Year 3, using a topic on Romans as a stimulus and using artefacts as a guide, create pencil drawings which display an understanding of shading and improved pencil control. Painting skills are developed in Year 4. Using water colours, they learn techniques of colour blending to create mood in their paintings. By the age of eleven, these skills are used to create designs based on the work of artists. The still-life paintings of views from the Menai Straits produced during a residential week show detail and an understanding of colour blending.
 - 133. Pupils respond well to the subject. They enjoy the lessons and persevere with their tasks.

Pupils are keen to discuss their work and their previous experience. They behave well in lessons and are sensible when sharing resources. Tasks set in lessons enable pupils to take initiatives in their work and make artistic decisions; this was noticeable, for example, when pupils were discussing the best way to shade the eyes on their masks.

- 134. The quality of the teaching is satisfactory. The teachers have secure knowledge of the subject and appropriate expectations of the pupils. Lessons are well paced and have clear aims. The teachers manage pupils well, set tasks to challenge and interest pupils and make good use of evaluative questions. Although the subject co-ordinator has not had the opportunity to monitor teaching, good support is provided for teachers through the recently introduced scheme of work. Art makes a good contribution to the pupils' cultural development, not only through the celebration of pupils' achievement, but through the display of their work. The Batik wall hangings produced by the pupils, portraying the life of Mary, a Caribbean and Victorian scene are particularly good.
- **Design and Technology**
- 135. Only one lesson of design and technology was seen during the inspection. However, evidence from this lesson, a scrutiny of pupils' work, and discussion with pupils and teachers indicates that pupils make satisfactory progress at both key stages. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated into lessons and make appropriate progress. Design and technology is taught as a separate subject and where possible linked with a current topic.
- 136. From the earliest stages in the school, pupils begin to develop making skills, for example, undertaking sewing tasks for a glove puppet, examining how they are made, and assembling construction kits from a diagram. Pupils in Year 1 develop their skills by making models using junk material, folding, cutting and sticking pieces together and examining levers and structures. Most of the pupils begin to evaluate their products and make suggestions as to how to improve their work.
- 137. At Key Stage 2, the pupils demonstrate a better understanding of the design process. Their designs have detail and are clearly labelled. This was noticeable in a display of shelters produced by pupils in Years 5 and 6. In this topic, the pupils designed a shelter for a toy, chose an appropriate material, evaluated and altered their construction to make the structure more stable. Pupils have designed and made a bridge using art-straws and examined mechanisms using Lego to build a pulley system. As pupils get older, they are more aware of the suitability of the materials they select for their models.
- 138. Pupils respond well to their work. They show interest and use appropriate vocabulary to discuss methods they have used. Pupils talked enthusiastically about the design project at the Conway Educational Centre, the tools that they used and the need for safety. They take pride in their constructions and suggest ways that they could improve them.
- 139. The quality of teaching overall is satisfactory. However, some topics covered lack suitable challenge. A contributory reason for this is the lack of space for pupils to be able to work safely when using a range of tools, particularly when classes in Years 4, 5 and 6 are combined during the afternoon sessions,. This problem has been partially remedied by taking groups of pupils to recreational centres. Teachers maintain records of the work covered but there is no formalised procedure for assessing pupils' work. Resources are good and easily accessible for pupils. There is an adequate range of books and materials.

• **Geography**

140. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress, and develop appropriate geographical skills, knowledge and understanding throughout the school. At Key Stage 1, pupils have a sound geographical understanding of the local area, their homes and routes to school, often through comparison with other parts of the world. Through their study of islands such as St Lucia in the West Indies and Struay in Scotland, they make comparisons with their own locality, considering human and physical characteristics and the implications of living on a small island. Pupils and teachers are encouraged to report back to school on places they have visited throughout the world, and these are recorded on a world map. At Key Stage 2, pupils develop a sound understanding of maps and mapping skills when looking at the local area; they start to understand symbols on maps and locate places using coordinates. They have a satisfactory understanding of weather and climate, making comparisons with other countries. They have sound understanding of the nature of rivers, and link this with their studies of Europe.

• 141. Pupils' attitudes to geography are good and they enjoy the lessons. When independent group work is fostered, the pupils respond well, organising themselves and setting tasks for each member of the group.

• 142. The quality of teaching in geography is satisfactory overall, but varies between very good and poor. In the best lessons, the teachers plan well and organise work for different ability groups. They have high expectations and explain the tasks well. A lesson for pupils in Years 5 and 6 involved them organising themselves into groups, each of which had to seek out information on a given European country and create a poster with facts about the country. Reference books and the CD-ROM encyclopaedia were used effectively. Good progress was made in gaining facts about Europe prior to studying European rivers and climates. In a poor lesson on mapping symbols, the pupils made very little progress because the lesson did not have clear learning objectives and tasks were not explained clearly. A new scheme of work has recently been introduced which provides teachers with a sound basis for planning how pupils will acquire geographical knowledge and learn new skills. At present, however, skills, such as mapping skills, are not developed systematically, and pupils' work is not monitored to ensure a steadier progression in learning throughout the school. Resources for the subject are adequate, although more atlases for different ages and ability levels are required. Pupils in Key Stage 2 go on residential visits each year, which provide good opportunities for further geographical studies.

• **History**

143. The pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress overall in acquiring historical facts and developing the skills of historical investigation. In Key Stage 1, pupils develop an awareness of the past through activities such as comparing old and new toys and the changing nature of homes and holidays. They learn about important events in history such as the Great Fire of London, and famous historical characters such as Florence Nightingale. Pupils in Key Stage 2 develop a satisfactory understanding of chronology; they show the dates on time lines whilst studying the invaders and settlers of Britain, for example the Romans, and of ancient civilisations such as the Greeks and the Egyptians. They investigate the more recent history of Warrington and the impact of nineteenth century industry and World War II.

• 144. Pupils' attitudes to history are mainly good; most listen well and concentrate on tasks set. Despite the length of the session, their strong interest was demonstrated through the questions which they put to a visitor who came to talk about his experiences in World War Two. When pupils in Years 5 and 6 went on a walk along the linear park and heard about industry and canals in Victorian times, their interest was reflected in the quality of information recorded in their written notes.

- 145. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. In Year 3, the teaching was poor in a lesson where pupils watched a video about the Romans. There were no clear learning objectives and pupils were unsure about what they should be finding out from the video. In Years 5 and 6, the teaching was very good where pupils compared their notes from a recent visit and worked on a piece of extended writing about the canals of Warrington, their links with local industry and the reasons for their decline. All pupils, including those with special educational needs made very good progress in acquiring facts about local history and the impact of recent history on the environment.
- 146. The subject coordinator has introduced a new scheme of work, setting out a two-year cycle of work for mixed age classes in Years 4, 5 and 6, which ensures that pupils do not repeat topics. She looks at teachers' medium-term planning, but a careful monitoring of teaching and the work pupils produce to ensure that pupils' progress is in line with their ability, as suggested in the last inspection report, is still not carried out. Displays in classrooms containing artefacts, posters, books and pupils' writing, for example, the displays on World War II in Year 4 and the Romans in Year 3, provide a good stimulus for learning. The subject is further enhanced by visits to such places as the Warrington Museum and local linear park, and by visitors talking about local history and their experiences growing up in Warrington. School-based resources for history are adequate.
- **Music**
- 147. The pupils make satisfactory progress at both key stages. The progress of pupils in the choir and the recorder group is good. Pupils with special educational needs are integrated well into lessons and make satisfactory progress.
- 148. Younger pupils sing songs from memory, add appropriate actions to the music and maintain steady rhythm. At Key Stage 1, pupils sing a variety of songs tunefully and rhythmically. They listen to music with interest and share their feelings about the piece, using appropriate vocabulary. Older pupils have a sound understanding about duration and pitch. They sing with accurate pitch but with a limited range. Although pupils' singing is rhythmically correct, they are unable to keep a steady pulse when adding a percussive accompaniment. Pupils learning the recorder have good knowledge. They are able to play a series of tunes from memory and are beginning to read formal notation. The school choir is of a good standard. They rapidly learn new repertoire and quickly master songs that are rhythmically complex.
- 149. The pupils' response and behaviour are usually good in lessons. They listen and follow instructions carefully. Their response in the singing sessions is less enthusiastic. Although they start with enthusiasm, they lose attention towards the end. The instrumentalists and choir members are improving their personal development skills through practising to improve their performance.
- 150. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Where teachers have specialist knowledge, lessons are satisfactorily planned to extend pupils' appreciation. In the group singing sessions, the choice of songs is appropriate, but the lack of a suitable 'warm up' at the beginning of the session means that the range and pitch do not improve, resulting in slow progress. The quality of teaching in the extra-curricular groups is better. These sessions have pace and are well planned, with good use of resources to enhance the mood of the music. The teachers have good discipline.
- 151. Planning is guided by a policy and a scheme of work derived from a commercial programme, providing good support for the non-specialist. However, the shorter-term plans do not identify clearly the skills to be covered, in particular, the creative and composing element that is under-developed in the curriculum. There are adequate resources for the subject, with a range of tuned and untuned percussion instruments, but there is a limited range of instruments from other cultures. Music in the school contributes to the pupils' cultural development, with opportunities to perform at school productions. Pupils also benefit from visits from local musicians.

- **Physical Education**

152. During the course of the inspection, it was not possible to view all aspects of physical education or to make a judgement on the quality of teaching at Key Stage 2, as only one lesson was taught during the inspection. At Key Stage 1, games and gymnastics lessons were observed. Pupils perform basic actions of travelling with running, jumping, landing, turning and stopping, with a full awareness of others around them, in preparation for using apparatus. They develop games skills of handling, sending and receiving a ball with accuracy. At Key Stage 2, pupils perform movements from existing dance traditions with vigour and enthusiasm, dancing in time to the music and showing sound knowledge of the steps and sequences required.

- 153. Pupils' attitudes to physical education are good. They respond most positively in their physical education lessons. In Year 2, pupils were very well behaved and paid very close attention to instructions. In Year 6, despite a large class size, pupils worked extremely well together in performing European folk dances.

- 154. The quality of the teaching at Key Stage 1 is satisfactory. Of the two lessons observed, one was satisfactory and the other was very good. In the very good games lesson, the skills being taught were broken down into achievable stages and carefully demonstrated by the teacher before being practised by the pupils. They discussed where they made mistakes and how skills could be improved, enabling very good progress to be made.

- 155. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory; there is a clear policy and scheme of work. A regular programme of extra-curricular activities enhances the provision for physical education. Pupils in Key Stage 2 have the opportunity to participate in football, netball and cross-country, and to take part in competitive football and cross-country. Visitors to the school have taken a series of half-termly sessions for rugby and football, and all pupils have been involved in a Cheshire Dance Workshop. All pupils in Key Stage 2 take part in residential visits each year, which contain an element of outdoor and adventurous activity.

- 156. Although the scheme of work covers the main elements of physical education, the time allocated to the subject allows very little coverage of these elements. The hall is only available during some of the afternoon sessions, but its use is not monitored sufficiently to enable a reasonable allocation of time to physical education for all classes. The library shelves, storage boxes, tables and other equipment drastically reduce the space available in the hall and pose safety hazards for the pupils, whether they are doing floor work or using apparatus. This situation is unacceptable. There are adequate resources for physical education; although carefully stored, access to equipment is very restricted. The good outdoor facilities are not used to their full potential.

- **Swimming**

157. The inspection of this school included a focussed view of swimming, which is reported below.

- 158. It was not possible to observe any swimming lessons, as these only take place during the summer term. Swimming is only provided for pupils in Year 4, who receive a course of ten swimming lessons, each of 30 minutes duration. The pupils travel by bus to a public pool, which is about two miles away from the school. They are taught by a qualified swimming instructor, with assistance from the class teacher and the headteacher, both of whom accompany the pupils to the baths and supervise changing arrangements. According to the school's records, all of the pupils who finished Key Stage 2 in 1999 reached the National Curriculum standard of swimming 25 metres unaided, and almost all of the pupils currently in Year 6 have achieved this standard. However, of the pupils currently in Year 5, only half of them were able to swim this distance after their course of swimming lessons with the school. Although the school plans to offer further opportunities to pupils in Years 5 and 6 who have not reached the required standard, the current

arrangements are inadequate to ensure that all pupils receive sufficient tuition in swimming and have the opportunity within school time to reach the minimum standards required.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

159. The inspection was carried out by a team of four inspectors: three spent four days and the lay inspector spent two days in the school. A total of 14 inspection days was spent gathering first-hand evidence.
160. Before the inspection, 16 parents attended a meeting, at which their views on aspects of the school were heard by the registered inspector. Questionnaires were circulated to all parents, and responses representing 23 pupils were returned. The points raised at the parents' meeting and those made in the parents' questionnaires were considered during the inspection. Meetings were also held with the headteacher, the chair of governors and governing body, and members of the teaching staff, in order to discuss the nature and conduct of the inspection. Inspectors studied a wide range of documentation and information supplied by the school; this included policy documents, teachers' planning, the school development plan, governors' annual reports, newsletters, budgetary information and minutes of meetings. Close attention was given to the school's previous inspection report and its post-inspection action plan.
161. During the course of the inspection, 59 lessons or part-lessons were observed, covering work in all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. A total of almost 38 hours was spent in the classrooms. All teachers were observed teaching English and mathematics, as well as a wide range of other subjects. Discussions were held with the headteacher, all staff and the vice chair of the governing body. Assemblies, acts of collective worship, pupils' arrival at and departure from school, registration and break-times were also observed. Attendance records, teachers' planning documents and the records kept on individual pupils were examined.
162. Inspectors scrutinised the current and past work of a representative sample of pupils in each year group, and looked at the work of other pupils during their classroom visits. Classroom displays, pupils' portfolios, individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs and teachers' assessment records were examined. A representative sample of pupils were heard to read. Other groups of pupils were interviewed to find out what work they had covered in certain subjects. In addition, many informal conversations were held with pupils in the classroom and at break-times.

• **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	188	2	29	26
Nursery Unit/School	24	0	0	n/a

• **TEACHERS AND CLASSES**

Qualified teachers (YR – Y6)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24

• **Education support staff (YR – Y6)**

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked each week	81

• **Qualified teachers (Nursery class)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24

• **Education support staff (Nursery class)**

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked each week	33

Average class size:	27
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• **FINANCIAL DATA**

Financial year:	1998/1999
Total income	£320,560
Total expenditure	£316,890
Expenditure per pupil	£1,685
Balance brought forward from previous year	£29,294
Balance carried forward to next year	£32,965

• **PARENTAL SURVEY**

Number of questionnaires sent out:	188
Number of questionnaires returned:	23

• **Responses (percentage¹ of answers in each category):**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	44	48	9	0	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	78	22	0	0	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	35	52	13	0	0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	52	39	4	4	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	61	35	4	0	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	65	30	4	0	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	57	39	4	0	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	30	70	0	0	0
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	52	38	0	10	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	46	46	0	9	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	57	44	0	0	0

• **Other issues raised by parents**

163. In addition to replies from the questionnaires, a number of parents submitted their views in writing and 16 parents expressed their opinions of the school at the parents' meeting.

• 164. Parents appreciate the fact that the school develops pupils' characters and social skills as well as enabling them to make academic progress. They feel that the school has developed good relationships between pupils and staff.

• 165. Whilst appreciating the consistency and amount of homework set for pupils at the end of Key Stage 2, they have some concern about the consistency with which homework is set in other

⁴ **Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding**

classes. Some parents are concerned at the way pupils are allocated to the mixed-age classes for Years 4/5 and Years 5/6. The parents would like to see more opportunities for pupils to develop their information technology skills.