

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **OLDFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Cheshire

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique reference number: 111230

Headteacher: Mr Brian Gilbert

Reporting inspector: Mrs Jane Morris  
18270

Dates of inspection: 3<sup>rd</sup> July – 5<sup>th</sup> July 2000

Inspection number: 190146

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 4 to 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Green Lane  
Vicars Cross  
Chester

Postcode: CH3 5LB

Telephone number: 01244 341772

Fax number: 01244 321919

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Mark Johns

Date of previous inspection: 4<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> November 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Jane Morris	Registered inspector	Science Music	What sort of school is it? Special educational needs School improvement
John Halkes	Lay inspector		How well the school cares for its pupils? Partnership with parents Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
Alison Cogher	Team inspector	English Art Early years	How well pupils are taught?
Ken Sansom	Team inspector	Mathematics Information technology Religious education	The school's results and pupils' achievements Leadership and management
Terry Lister	Team inspector	History Geography Design and technology Physical education Equal opportunities	The curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils

The inspection contractor was:

Full Circle  
35 Trewartha Park  
Weston Super Mare  
North Somerset  
BS23 2RT

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The Office for Standards in Education  
Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Oldfield Primary School is situated in Vicars Cross on the outskirts of the city of Chester. It is housed in modern, very well presented buildings with extensive grounds. There are 215 full-time pupils between the ages of four and 11 on roll. This number is broadly in line with the size of most primary schools in the country and is almost identical to the number attending the school during the last inspection. Only one pupil is from a minority ethnic background. The majority of pupils come from owner occupied homes. Most have good attainment on entry and have attended the pre-school that is located on the school site. The number of pupils who take free school meals (eight per cent) and those who have been identified as having special educational needs (18 per cent) is below the national average. Pupils who have additional support for their identified needs, however, has gradually increased over the last four years and is now higher than at the time of the previous inspection.

The school has a falling roll. As a result of this the number of classes is reducing from eight to seven at the start of the next academic year. At present all classes have mixed age groups except the reception class.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This school provides a very stimulating learning environment for its pupils. It is a very orderly, happy community where all pupils and staff are respected and behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good. Pupils achieve good standards in English at the end of Key Stage 2. Although significant numbers of pupils achieve higher standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 2, able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged in the reception class and Key Stage 1. There are also particularly high standards in art and music.

Although aspects of leadership and management, including the monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching and learning in classrooms are underdeveloped, this school offers its pupils an all round, thorough education. Overall, the inspection team considers that the school provides satisfactory value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- The school creates a very positive ethos for learning.
- Pupils, particularly at Key Stage 2, have an enthusiasm for their learning. They show great interest, concentration and independence in their lessons.
- The school fosters very good attitudes, relationships, behaviour, values and personal development.
- Pupils are offered a very rich and broad-based curriculum, with very high standards achieved in art and music.
- Strong links are made between subjects and the good literacy skills at the end of Key Stage 2 support all subjects.
- Different cultures are very well represented.
- Older pupils enjoy stimulating science investigations.
- Display is excellent throughout the school.
- It has very effective links with parents who make a significant contribution to pupils' learning.

## What could be improved

- A clearer idea of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching across the school.
- The educational direction provided by members of the senior management team and subject co-ordinators.
- The management of pupils' learning, particularly of the able pupils, at the end of Key Stage 1.
- Marking and assessment procedures to improve pupils' and teachers' understanding of what pupils have learnt successfully and where they need to progress to next.
- Standards in and provision for information and communication technology throughout the school.
- Governors' attention to the detail of the school prospectus and annual reports to parents.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.*

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in November 1996. Progress has been made with the following issues:

- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is now satisfactory and education plans are effective.
- The library provides a focal point for learning and is used to develop reference skills, including use of a computer to allow independent research skills.
- The use of county and government produced schemes of work has helped to ensure that planning is structured across the school but planning for more able pupils still lacks challenge in some areas.

Progress with the action plan has not been as rapid as it should have been. For some areas of its work the school is dependent on national funding and funding for new initiatives in information and communication technology will not be available until next year. The school has already recognised and planned for the issues concerning the improvements needed in this area. The national strategies for literacy and numeracy have been introduced successfully. However, the school has still not got to grips with evaluating the overall impact that these strategies, along with the quality of teaching, have on standards for able pupils in Key Stage 1 and how these can be raised.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	A	B	B	B
Mathematics	B	B	D	D
Science	C	C	C	C

<b>Key</b>
well above average    A
above average        B
average                C
below average        D
well below average    E

At the end of Key Stage 2 standards in mathematics were unusually low in 1999, observations indicate they are now broadly in line with the national average and that of

similar schools. Early indications for 2000 show improvements over those for 1999, in line with the school's targets. A significant number of pupils achieved the higher level in English, mathematics and science. However, standards at the end of Key Stage 1 show low attainment in writing and for the more able pupils. The 2000 results show no pupils achieving the higher level. Overall, the rate of improvement at the end of both key stages over the last three years is not as high as that seen nationally. Although pupils are competent in elements such as word processing and desk-top publishing the standards, overall, in information and communication technology are unsatisfactory. Particularly high standards are achieved in art and music. Good literacy skills have a beneficial effect on standards in other subjects.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good: pupils are interested and involved in their work and enjoy school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good: in and around the school behaviour has a significant impact on the standards achieved and the life of the school generally.
Personal development and relationships	Very good: the great majority of pupils have very effective relationships with their teachers and are very supportive of one another.
Attendance	Good: although a number of pupils miss some schooling when family holidays take place in term time.

Pupils are eager and willing to learn. This aspect of the school is a great strength. In classrooms, during assemblies and around the school pupils are sensible, very well behaved and exhibit positive attitudes to each other and their work.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	satisfactory	satisfactory	good

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

Teaching is satisfactory or better in 91 per cent of the lessons, 13 per cent is very good or better. The quality of teaching is better at Key Stage 2 and, as a consequence, pupils make better progress. For children under five teaching is usually satisfactory and sometimes good. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make satisfactory progress. The quality of teaching in English and mathematics is variable. Some teachers make effective use of the national strategies to ensure high challenge, good motivation and, therefore, high attainment. In less successful lessons teachers talk for too long rather than getting pupils started on activities matched to their ability. This can lead to unsatisfactory attainment by some more able pupils. Pupils use their literacy and numeracy skills well to support their learning in other areas of the curriculum. Examples of very good teaching, leading to some very good standards, are evident in music and art throughout the school and science and physical education at Key Stage 2. No specific teaching of information technology skills was observed, the level of pupil competency is limited. Science investigations at Key Stage 1 are underdeveloped.





## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good: the school provides a broad, balanced and stimulating curriculum for all pupils especially at Key Stage 2. Pupils use their literacy skills well in all areas of the curriculum. Information and communication technology although used well for word processing is less than satisfactory in other areas of information and communication technology capability.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory: pupils are well supported in lessons. They have appropriate education plans. Tasks are well matched to their needs and guidance from the class teacher and special educational needs co-ordinator is available to them.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good: this is a strength of the school. This is a caring school where pupils are given many opportunities to foster and broaden all aspects of their personal development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good: the school does its very best to make sure every pupil feels safe and secure. There are, however, missed opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own learning and teachers do not always mark pupils' work effectively.

The school actively encourages parents to take an active part in the life of the school. The 'Story Sacks' working group and the after school reading and computer sessions led by the local college have a positive impact upon the education of the children at Oldfield School. The provision for art is a great strength of the school. Music is very good. The learning environment is extremely well presented with very high quality displays. Support for less able pupils is sound but there are missed opportunities for providing more able pupils with a challenge. The school rightly prides itself on the behaviour of its pupils. Excellent attitudes towards bullying, sexism and racism are evident.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Although the headteacher's overall leadership and management of the school are sound there are areas that require attention and are unsatisfactory. Roles and responsibilities of key staff are not yet clearly defined. Teaching and learning are not monitored effectively. There are missed opportunities to raise standards particularly at Key Stage 1.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory: governors are very supportive and keen to see the school perform well. However, some issues from the previous inspection action plan still require development. The detail of documents such as the prospectus and annual reports to parents need attention.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory: opportunities to monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning in all classes and across subjects are insufficient and lack rigour.

The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory: financial decisions and control are usually secure although the allocation of resources for subject spending are ad hoc and not planned in advance. The day to day running of the school's finances are well managed by the headteacher and the administrative assistant.
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Staffing levels are adequate and the accommodation is generous and very well presented. There is a lack of up to date computers but other subjects have satisfactory resources. Music, physical education, art and design and technology are especially well supported by good quality equipment and an ample supply of consumables. The school aims 'to give children direct experiences upon which to build their learning'. It does this successfully but it has not yet fully implemented strategies to ensure that all teaching is satisfactory and that all pupils, particularly the more able are challenged sufficiently. This results in some able pupils, especially at the end of Key Stage 1, not reaching the high standards of which they are capable. The governors are aware of the principles of 'best value' but do not always apply them effectively in relation to the raising of standards. They are aware of the need to set criteria for spending decisions so that they can evaluate them to improve this aspect.

### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents feel very comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.</li> <li>• Children like school.</li> <li>• Behaviour is very good.</li> <li>• Children are expected to work hard and achieve their best.</li> <li>• Children are helped to become mature and responsible individuals.</li> <li>• Children make good progress particularly in the older classes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homework needs common ground rules.</li> <li>• More out of school activities, especially for younger children.</li> <li>• Class organisation so there are no mixed age classes in the school.</li> <li>• Some parents are concerned that standards could be higher.</li> <li>• A few parents expressed concerns about the lack of structure for the teaching of reading.</li> </ul>

Inspectors' views support the parents' positive opinions about the school. The relationships and ethos of the school are very good. Inspectors also agree that the pupils make better progress in Key Stage 2. Homework is used well to support class work. The call for more out of school activities for younger children is recognised but it is felt that the school provides clubs and activities that are in line with the usual extra-curricular activities found in many primary schools. The school is undergoing class restructuring at the start of the next school year. In the meantime the inspection findings show that the school works very hard and is successful with its planning to ensure that the pupils in the mixed age classes are given similar opportunities and equal access to the curriculum according to their year group. Inspectors agree that standards could be higher particularly in mathematics throughout the school and in core subjects at the end of Key Stage 1. The inspection team also agree that the teaching of reading lacks a clear structure.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and achievements**

1. By the time pupils reach the end of their reception year most achieve standards that are in line with those expected. However, few pupils achieve high standards despite indications from baseline assessment that they are capable of doing so. On entry into school pupils have particularly well developed skills in speaking and listening, personal and social skills, fine motor control and creative work.
2. Standards in reading at the end of Key Stage 1 shown by the results of the 1999 national tests are above average for all schools. Standards in writing for the same group in 1999, however, are well below that expected. These standards are the same when compared to similar schools. Observations show that pupils achieve standards in both reading and writing broadly in line with those expected. Standards in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1, as shown by the 1999 national tests, are in line with the national average and similar schools. These standards were also reflected in observations. Results over the last three years indicate that they are dependent on the ability level of each group, with particularly low results in all subjects in 1998. Writing has remained low for the last two years. Early indications for the tests in 2000 show broadly the same percentage of pupils achieving the expected level as in 1999. However, in both writing and mathematics in 2000 no pupils achieved the higher level.
3. In the 1999 Key Stage 2 tests standards in English were above average, in mathematics they were below and science in line when compared to standards found both nationally and in similar schools. Classroom observations show standards to be good in English and science, whilst in mathematics they are in line with those expected. Results have not matched improvements seen nationally over the last three years, with a particular drop in mathematics for 1999. Early indications from the 2000 national tests in all three subjects show improvement and the results are close to the challenging targets set by the school. In each subject over a third of pupils achieve the higher level.
4. The standards achieved in music at the end of Key Stage 2 and in art at the end of both key stages are very good. Examples of art can be seen all around the school and they include a wide variety of media. Standards in religious education, history, geography and physical education are satisfactory at the end of Key Stage 1 and for religious education they are also sound at the end of Key Stage 2. Good standards are achieved at the end of Key Stage 2 in design and technology and physical education. Effective use of literacy and numeracy skills ensures good standards in history and geography by the end of Key Stage 2. Design and technology and music are also good at the end of Key Stage 1. Standards in information and communication technology are unsatisfactory.
5. Pupils in Key Stage 2 build upon the foundations laid in Key Stage 1 and they make good progress. The progress made by more able pupils is slow in the early part of their education as teachers miss opportunities to challenge them, although the progress of these pupils is much greater in Key Stage 2. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. There were some differences in the attainment of boys and girls over the last four years. Progress is dependent upon their prior attainment and the school is analysing data to monitor boys' achievement.

## **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

6. High standards in this area have been maintained since the previous inspection. At the meeting for parents and from the results of the questionnaire it is evident that a great majority of parents are very positive about pupils' attitudes to school. This is confirmed by the inspection findings.
7. The positive attitudes and behaviour of the pupils are real strengths of the school. Pupils come to school happily and get down to work purposefully without fuss. They are eager to tackle new work and participate well in whole class lessons based on the topic of the ancient Greeks. They are polite, trustworthy and courteous with all staff and with each other. The school provides equal opportunities for boys and girls and pupils with special educational or pastoral needs, although more able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged.
8. Behaviour is mostly very good and at times is excellent; this allows teachers to teach effectively. Any lack of concentration from the pupils is triggered by too long introductions to lessons. During the inspection the whole school gathered in the hall after lunch; over 200 pupils sat still and engrossed for 45 minutes as they watched a high quality but demanding dramatic performance by students from the local high school. This exemplary behaviour is rooted in the very good, mature relationships that permeate the school and by the example set by the headteacher and all the staff. Behaviour is self-regulating - and the school has little need of a system of rewards and sanctions. There are no exclusions. It is also noticeable that in group work pupils collaborate well and support each other. This is a feature of the work in science when pupils undertake investigations to find out more about forces and friction.
9. The work of the behaviour policy co-ordinator, particularly in involving pupils and the midday supervisory assistants with the planning of playground management and resources, is most beneficial in enhancing enjoyable play-times. The pupils appreciate this. As a result of the very good relationships and management there are no incidences of rough play or bullying.
10. Tolerance and respect for other people and their values are further reinforced through teaching of religious education and in assemblies and collective worship. A Year 6 camp is thoughtfully planned for the autumn term in order to encourage team building, co-operation and a sense of responsibility. Throughout their final year senior pupils help the staff to care for younger pupils especially at lunch-times. They handle the school equipment very capably and monitor the library, gardens and grounds.
11. Classroom teachers monitor daily attendance. Inspection of the registers showed that a number of parents withdraw their children for holidays during the summer term. Some of the holidays extend beyond the discretionary limit. The headteacher is monitoring the effect and has raised the issue with parents and the educational welfare officer who visits the school regularly.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

12. Teaching across the school is satisfactory overall. The standard of teaching has been maintained since the last inspection and is usually effective across all subjects. It has many good, and some very good features such as subject knowledge in music and art throughout the school and science at Key Stage 2.

When unsatisfactory teaching is observed, lessons lack pace, and often have long introductions. Some unsatisfactory management of pupils' time impedes effective learning when they are not appropriately challenged or started on their tasks soon enough.

13. The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is variable but satisfactory overall. Lessons are particularly effective when teachers share learning objectives with pupils and clarify how the work links with other lessons. Teachers assess what pupils are learning during lessons but do not systematically record pupil progress when marking their work. As a result pupils have little idea of how well they are achieving and the progress they are making. Some activities lack challenge, particularly for the more able. Pupils are generally well managed, particularly at Key Stage 2, and relationships are very good. Resources are well prepared, equipment is accessible and expectations of behaviour in most classes are clear. Teachers encourage pupils to respond to their lessons very well. Homework is effectively used in both key stages to support literacy and to encourage independent research skills. Teachers make good use of adult help. The support for pupils with special educational needs is effective and they make satisfactory progress.
14. Teaching in the under-fives class is satisfactory with some good features. Planning, however, although thorough, does not always help all children to reach their full potential. This is particularly apparent in writing and mathematics. The teacher has a good knowledge of the Desirable Learning Outcomes and the expected progression over time is identified. Links to the Key Stage 1 curriculum are not always clear or sufficient. A wide range of stimulating activities is provided to support children's learning. These are well linked to the literacy topic theme. For example, the reading of a 'big book' about life in Africa was supported by good quality creative and mathematical activities. Too long sessions spent sitting on the carpet results in some children losing interest, and time being wasted. The classroom is well laid out and resourced. Children are able to access equipment for themselves. The classroom assistant is well deployed and makes a significant contribution to children's learning. Children regularly take home books to read and have a very positive attitude to reading. They are well supported by their parents in this area of their learning although parents express concern about the lack of a clear policy for the school and them to follow.
15. In Key Stage 1, teaching is variable. Overall, teachers have satisfactory subject knowledge. There is a need for improvement in information and communication technology and science. In music, art, religious education, history and physical education it is good. The teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory as is the teaching of phonics. There is a lack of structure to the development of reading and writing and this has a significant impact on the standards achieved by the more able at the end of this key stage.
16. Planning through topic themes is effective and successfully enables pupils to link and develop their learning and understanding in many subjects. Also pupils use literacy skills in other subjects. For example, in a history lesson pupils used research materials to extend their understanding of the language used to describe Greek architecture. Resources are used well in a music lesson to make good links between aspects of history and science.
17. Teaching in Key Stage 2 is better and often it is good. Teachers have satisfactory knowledge and teach all areas of the curriculum effectively especially music, religious education, art, history, physical education and science. The teaching of the basic skills in literacy and numeracy is good. Teachers use a range of strategies and styles and have high expectations of pupil behaviour. Teachers

manage their classrooms well and have very good relationships with their pupils. Pupils make good progress overall. It is particularly rapid in the lower Key Stage 2 classes. Pupils concentrate well and apply themselves fully to the task in hand. They are very productive and work together well both individually and in groups in all areas of learning.

18. Teachers plan closely together to ensure that pupils who are of similar age and ability are given the same curriculum opportunities. In the best lessons teachers share learning objectives with pupils and plenary sessions are productive. In lessons where introductions are over long, pupil concentration wanes and learning opportunities are lost.
19. Marking of pupils' recorded work is inconsistent. There is no agreed system that informs teachers about how to recognise pupil progress and attainment so that pupils can become involved in setting targets for improvement for themselves. Homework is effectively used to support all subjects. Much of it is used to encourage pupils to undertake independent research and develop specific literacy skills. Pupils talk enthusiastically about homework. Many enjoy visiting the local library and make use of home computers to gather information to support their work at school. The use of information and communication technology as a support for learning is at an early stage of development. Pupils use listening centres productively in note taking sessions.

#### **HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?**

20. The school's broad curriculum includes all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. There is sufficient time allocated to all subjects except science in Key Stage 1 and information and communication technology throughout the school. The provision of adequate equipment for information and communication technology is in its early stages. The quality and range of learning opportunities throughout the school are good with some very good work in the foundation subjects, especially in Key Stage 2. This is particularly evident in music, art and history topics where research skills are highly developed and literacy skills are having a positive impact on written work. A high standard of display enhances and enriches the learning environment throughout the school.
21. The organisation of the curriculum for under-fives is satisfactory. In Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 the introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, together with a four-year rolling programme of topics, ensure that pupils in mixed-age classes are not disadvantaged. Boys and girls have equal access to all areas of the curriculum and, overall, to learning activities appropriate for their age. However, a greater degree of whole-school planning is needed to facilitate more effective continuity from early years to Key Stage 1 and through into Key Stage 2.
22. Provision and planning for pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory throughout the school. Appropriate targets are identified and reviewed in the individual education plans. Pupils with special educational needs participate fully in the curriculum. Those pupils who are more able are less likely to be identified and are insufficiently challenged in some areas.
23. The school's provision for extra-curricular activities is good. There is a range of activities including athletics, dance, football, netball, rounders and violin tuition. The staff commitment is good and these activities serve to enrich the curriculum for Key Stage 2 pupils. To extend the activities for Key Stage 1 pupils, as desired by some

- parents, would put excessive demands on an already fully committed staff. The school makes good use of educational visits to further enhance the curriculum, particularly in topic work and projects linked to the community, such as the Chester City Council Mural Project and the Millennium Pilgrimage.
24. The provision for pupils' health education is satisfactory. There is a policy for sex education. However the provision for drugs awareness lacks a specific structure and is not yet fully effective. The school has given parents the opportunity to find out more about drugs during an information sharing evening.
  25. Arrangements for promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are a great strength of the school. Pupils' spiritual and cultural awareness is encouraged through music, art, topic work, religious education and visits to places such as the cathedral and local churches. The school's aims underline the importance of good relationships, tolerance and personal responsibility. These are borne out in the school's 'Golden Rules'. The pupils' behaviour is, in the main, of a very high standard. They co-operate well in group activities and understand the concept of fairness, evident in team games. Pupils are encouraged to take on responsibility and do so to great effect at lunch-times where older pupils help to supervise younger ones in the dining hall. Pupils also consider a range of issues including equal opportunities. In history there are very high quality examples of letters to Aristotle offering well-reasoned alternatives to his own view on the role of women. Pupils' social development and awareness are also actively promoted through charity work including a 'Bring and Buy' sale for the Alder Hey Rocking Horse Appeal. The Year 6 residential trip in September is purposely aimed to develop team-building skills.
  26. The school makes good use of the community to support pupils' learning. Visits by a sculptor, an author and a visiting theatre group enhance events including the 'Millennium Pilgrimage'. Pupils are also involved in environmental projects, tree planting and the Canal SEEN project. There are good links with other schools in the area. The pre-school group use the school hall for fund-raising and social events. There is a well established system for liaison with Christleton High School whose pupils enacted their 'Millennium Pilgrimage' Performance during the inspection. There are also strong links with the West Cheshire College, which runs reading workshops and courses on computers and 'Story Sacks' as part of the Cheshire Family Education Programme.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

27. Oldfield is a caring school. The warm staff relationships and the stimulating and purposeful atmosphere create an environment in which pupils feel secure and where they may flourish spiritually and emotionally. The provision for and progress of pupils with special educational needs are watched carefully. All parents have ample opportunity to discuss their children's progress both informally and formally. They value the fact that teachers are available to them. The school successfully monitors pupil progress in Records of Achievement and there is a termly update of the curriculum coverage in individual pupil record booklets. However, marking of work is inconsistent. The school has yet to fully develop an effective approach to assessing pupils' attainment and progress to ensure that more capable pupils are stretched and pupils are guided in their own target setting. This sometimes leads to lack of challenge and pace, particularly in the early years and Key Stage 1.
28. Pupils and staff have mutually respectful and open relationships, which are reflected in the extremely good behaviour of the pupils and in the fact that there is no rough play or bullying. Attendance is closely monitored and an issue about term time



- holidays is under review at present. It is noticeable how friendly the pupils are with each other and how well the older ones look after the younger. During the inspection an infant, distressed by a play-time nosebleed, was taken in hand by two Year 6 girls and taken to the first aid point. Later they saw him back to his classroom. A member of staff was overheard saying to some other concerned pupils, "It's alright. He's with two Year 6 girls and is in good hands."
29. Excellent displays around the school encourage pupils to understand and participate in high artistic endeavour. Their achievements in art, academic progress and sporting prowess are celebrated on Fridays in whole school 'sharing assemblies'. Parents are appreciative of these occasions when pupils' successes are recognised. The school continues to care well for its pupils as was acknowledged in the previous inspection report.
  30. Security at Oldfield is effective and the provision for the health and safety of pupils is good. The caretaker is the staff health & safety representative and is also a staff governor. The governing body also appoints a health and safety governor with specialist expertise. The modern school building is very well kept, in good repair and is very clean. The extensive grounds are immaculate. Fire drills are regularly carried out and a fire brigade officer inspects annually. The school has adequate cover of trained first aiders but the two first aid points need more distinctive emergency signs and better labelling of resources. A few minor points of health and safety concern were discussed with the staff and the headteacher during the inspection.
  31. A statutory child protection policy is in place but is due for revision. The headteacher is the designated person for child protection. All staff lack the benefit of regular up dating on current child protection issues and procedures. Pupils receive information on safe and healthy living. The school is shortly extending its syllabus for personal health and social education to encompass citizenship. This will also include a more systematic approach to drugs awareness.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

32. Parents and carers have a very positive view of the school which has been maintained since the previous inspection. They are particularly pleased with the effective 'open door' policy, which gives them prompt access to their child's class teacher at either end of the school day. This openness begins at reception class where parents and carers are able to bring their children into school at the start of the day and help to get them settled before registers are taken. The flexible and pastoral approach continues, where appropriate, into Key Stage 1 classes and beyond.
33. Some parents help in classrooms listening to readers, supporting science investigations and preparing special resources such as 'Story Sacks'. They make a significant contribution to their children's learning. Parents and carers see the school as positive and caring. For instance a parent commented "It amazes me that the teachers know my child's name so quickly!" They also view the school as a place where there is provision for a creative, well rounded education based on a broad curriculum. Parents and carers appreciate the effort teachers put into extra-curricular activities, especially at Key Stage 2. The school has neither staff nor additional time to provide extra-curricular activities at Key Stage 1 as suggested by parents at their meeting but welcomes parental input.
34. The commitment of the headteacher and the governors to parental involvement in education is demonstrated by the productive course for parents and carers, 'Helping

Your Child to Learn', which the school has set up using West Cheshire College as a provider. This initiative has been most successful. A group of parents are now learning about information and communication technology so that they can help their children on their computers at home. Parents have also had drugs and substance abuse briefing evenings at the school with input from the community police and a local drugs awareness agency called INSIGHT.

35. The Parent Teachers' Association (PTA) is active and makes a substantial contribution – both financial and social – to the life of the school. In the current year parents have also participated well in the drawing up of home school agreements.

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

36. The aims of the school are met through the educational direction created by the headteacher. However, these aims are primarily concerned with creating an effective learning environment without reviewing its impact in promoting high standards in the core skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. The development of positive attitudes and promotion of good behaviour enhance the work of the school. The educational direction of the school is primarily the result of the leadership of the headteacher, with effective support from the deputy headteacher and members of the governing body.
37. Effective delegation of responsibility to other senior members of staff and subject co-ordinators is underdeveloped. As a consequence high standards are not always achieved. Whilst the school has addressed many aspects of the key issue relating to subject co-ordination from the last inspection further improvements are necessary. A structured programme to rigorously monitor the quality of teaching and learning and offer points for development has begun within English and mathematics but has not been fully developed to ensure good practice is shared and action taken to improve weaknesses where they occur.
38. The school development plan sets out appropriate priorities for the school to focus upon. However, the means whereby the staff and governors are able to measure the effectiveness of their actions still require further development. This was an area for development at the last inspection and still remains so. The commitment to succeed is shared by everyone: there is a desire to ensure that the good standards achieved in many of the foundation subjects do not suffer as the school strives to further improve standards in the core skills.
39. The procedures for managing the performance of staff currently await updating, following the introduction of new guidelines from national government.
40. The governing body has a wide range of expertise that is used to support the school. Working alongside the headteacher and deputy headteacher they have a reasonable understanding of the strengths and weaknesses as outlined in the school development plan. They undertake their roles through a committee structure. There are, however, areas for further consideration. For example, one governor takes on the dual role of both literacy and numeracy governor but he is not a member of the curriculum committee.
41. The budget is set using the previous year's experience. The links between the budget and the school development plan are not always fully expressed: an increase in the supply teacher budget intended to help in the development of a policy to monitor teaching and learning has not been translated onto the school development plan. The chair of governors and chair of finance bring considerable expertise to the governing body. They are aware of the need to apply the principles of 'best value' to all their work.

42. Information technology is absorbed into the work of many members of the school community. The computer in the office effectively supports the administration of the school. Teachers use computers to enhance their displays and photographs taken using the digital camera help explain the work undertaken in a number of subjects.
43. Sufficient teachers are employed at the school, although science and mathematics are under-represented in their initial training qualifications. At present there is only one classroom assistant, employed in the reception class. There are plans to have another working with older pupils from September. The school regularly plays host to students undertaking their initial teacher training, although their impact is not fully evaluated.
44. A strong feature of the management of the school is the expertise of a well-qualified administrative assistant who provides calm and efficient support to the school and the staff. She confidently handles the budget on a day to day basis working closely and effectively with the headteacher and the local education authority. Her work also enables her to liaise with the subject co-ordinators to look for 'best value' in terms of requisition orders.
45. The school benefits from very spacious accommodation. The learning environment is considerably enhanced through stimulating displays and neat, tidy storage facilities. Resources in most subjects are sound. In art and music resources are, at least, good. However, although the number of computers is adequate many are out of date and do not always provide a range of programs. The school intends to use funds from the National Grid for Learning to improve this situation next term.

#### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

46. To further raise standards in the core skills of literacy, numeracy, science and information and communication technology the headteacher, staff and governors should continue to develop:
  - i a system that rigorously monitors the quality of teaching and learning across the school so that it clearly identifies and addresses any weaknesses; (paras 1, 2, 5, 12, 18, 21, 38, 60, 67, 70, 77, 85, 88, 104, 108, 109)
  - ii a system for the strategic management of the school that exploits the strengths of all the key staff and governors; (paras 37, 40, 41)
  - iii the use of information by both staff and the pupils on what pupils know, understand and can do in order to ensure that the progress made by all pupils, and in particular the more able, is fully realised. (paras 7, 13, 19, 22, 27, 49, 52, 68, 79, 82).

#### **OTHER ISSUES WHICH SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE SCHOOL**

47. Define the structure used for the development and teaching of reading for the younger pupils. (paras 14, 15, 53, 63)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	53
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	51

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	13	32	46	9	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	0	215
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	18

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	38

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	21
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	19

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.3
National comparative data	5.4

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	18	20	38

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	11	16
	Girls	20	20	20
	Total	31	31	36
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	82 (69)	82 (75)	95 (75)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	16	16
	Girls	20	20	20
	Total	31	36	36
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	82 (75)	95 (72)	95 (91)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	17	17	34

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	8	13
	Girls	16	14	16
	Total	28	22	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	82 (82)	65 (64)	85 (75)
	National	70 (65)	68 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	9	8	10
	Girls	14	11	13
	Total	23	19	23
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	68 (89)	56 (79)	68 (96)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (72)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	187
Any other minority ethnic group	0

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

*This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.*

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24
Average class size	27

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	32

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1998/99
	£
Total income	361,798
Total expenditure	373,840
Expenditure per pupil	1,612
Balance brought forward from previous year	29,157
Balance carried forward to next year	17,115

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	215
Number of questionnaires returned	81

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	58	35	6	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	43	53	2	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	44	52	2	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	35	43	21	0	1
The teaching is good.	41	53	4	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	58	9	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	77	20	2	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	48	49	1	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	42	51	6	0	1
The school is well led and managed.	43	49	7	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	48	49	1	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	38	47	10	1	4

### Other issues raised by parents

- Some parents feel the school does not put sufficient emphasis on high standards.
- Parents have concerns about the mixed age group classes.
- Some parents feel that there is a lack of structure to the teaching of reading.

## **CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

### **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

48. Children under five enter the reception class at the beginning of the year in which they are five. At the time of the inspection the majority of children are already five. Prior to starting school most children attend the pre-school group situated on the school site. Links with this group ensure that children make a smooth transition into school. Children are assessed on entry to school using the local authority's baseline assessment scheme. The results of these assessments show that in many areas of development, a large number of children already achieve the desirable outcomes. Their skills are particularly well developed in the areas of speaking and listening, personal and social development, fine motor control and creative work. All, but a very small minority of pupils reach the expected outcomes in all areas by the age of five. The environment created for these children is positive and caring.
49. Teaching is satisfactory and occasionally good. In good lessons pace is brisk and children's interest is maintained. All children make progress but that made by the more able pupils is, on some occasions, slower than it should be. The baseline scheme is not always used successfully to target and challenge children's individual learning. The teachers' planning covers all areas of learning and progression is identifiable, but links to the Key Stage 1 curriculum are not always clear and this inhibits the development of skills. Some links to the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are made in lessons, and a wide range of activities are provided to support these areas of learning.
50. The classroom is well organised and effectively resourced to support the learning of children at this stage. The teacher is supported by a classroom assistant whose energy, knowledge of this age group and skilful use of questioning makes a significant contribution to children's learning.

### **Personal and social development**

51. Initial assessments indicate that the majority of children have well-developed personal and social skills. The school ethos and environment encourages all children to develop these skills further. Most behave well and take responsibility for their actions. They are able to listen to each other and to take turns. They work well individually and in small groups. Opportunities for role play encourage co-operation. For example, the creation of a hot air balloon, complete with a basket big enough to hold four children, provides an exciting and creative environment in which children demonstrate their ability to play constructively and co-operatively. Children concentrate well for extended periods of time but the lack of pace in some literacy sessions results in a significant minority of children losing interest, even so children do not become disruptive. Children are enthusiastic about their learning and communicate their feelings and opinions articulately to each other and adults.

### **Language and literacy**

52. Overall the children's attainment in this aspect of their work is satisfactory. However, the attainment of the above average children can be unsatisfactory when they are insufficiently challenged particularly in aspects of writing. The majority of children are articulate and confidently use an extensive vocabulary in a wide range of situations. For example, they are able to make comparisons between the contrasting life of a child living in a part of Africa and their own. They listen attentively to each other and respect each other's views.



53. When reading, children can identify their own names and some recognise many simple words and can use their phonic knowledge to build simple words orally. Most children know the letters of the alphabet by shape and sound. They are beginning to associate sounds with patterns and rhymes but the teaching of reading has insufficient structure for the less able children who lack the confidence and strategies to read unfamiliar text and know very few common words. In spite of this most children are enthusiastic about reading and have access to a wide range of books. They know how to handle books and understand the difference between fiction and non-fiction. The more able children read confidently and use a range of simple strategies to work out unfamiliar words. Children choose their own books to read and are very well supported by their parents.
54. For the majority of pupils, writing is at an early stage of development. Opportunities for writing are provided in a range of situations. For example, children write out tickets for trips in the hot air balloon in the role play area. However, the development of writing and handwriting skills lacks sufficient structure. Opportunities for the teacher to model writing, particularly for the more able, are not pursued. Work seen in books does not reflect the oral ability of some of these children.

### **Mathematics**

55. Children's attainment is satisfactory as they have regular access to a wide range of mathematical experiences. A variety of activities support the development of counting, comparing, matching and patterning skills. For example, they confidently make repeating pattern necklaces from coloured straws. Children use simple mathematical vocabulary accurately. They are able to compare material snakes, made by the teacher, in terms of their length, width and size. Children count confidently to 20 and are aware of minus numbers. They can say what a number one more than any given number under ten would be. Children engage enthusiastically in all mathematical activities and most complete them with ease. Some more able children are insufficiently challenged and opportunities to develop their reasoning and number skills are missed.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

56. Children experience a good range of activities to support their learning in this area and they achieve satisfactorily. Links to developing literacy, mathematical and creative skills are well planned. Good use of a whole class text enables children to explore and contrast the similarities and differences between a child living in a part of Africa, and their own lives. Their understanding of cultural differences is developed through skilful questioning by both the teacher and the classroom assistant. Play activities in sand and water further develop children's understanding of natural and man-made materials and different environments in the world. Technology is used to support children's learning. For example, children use a computer drawing program to make pictures of African animals, and African music is available for them to listen to on a listening centre. Good use of the hot air balloon role play area and a globe allows children to take fantasy trips to countries all over the world.

### **Creative development**

57. Attainment in this aspect is above average and children make good progress. They enjoy musical activities and have access to a wide range of instruments including some from Africa. Children's creative art work is of a very good standard. They work skilfully and confidently with a wide range of materials, paints, crayons and

tools and produce pieces of high quality work. Their observational skills develop well. This is clearly demonstrated in the progress seen in drawings made of themselves in September, compared to those at the time of the inspection. Children study and respond to the work of artists. A whole class project in response to the work of David Hockney is particularly impressive. Activities that encourage creativity are well planned and effectively linked to other areas of learning. Good use is made of role play to improve their ability to use their imagination. The classroom assistant considerably enhances these learning opportunities.

### **Physical development**

58. Children meet expectations and make satisfactory progress in this area of learning. They move confidently in physical education sessions and are able to move in a variety of ways. For example they can run, skip, hop and jump, and change pace and direction at a given signal. Their manipulative skills are well developed. They use scissors carefully and hold pencils and paintbrushes appropriately. They skilfully use a wide range of large and small construction materials.

## **SUBJECTS OF THE CURRICULUM**

### **ENGLISH**

59. The 1999 end of Key Stage 2 results show that standards of attainment in English are above average both nationally and in comparison with similar schools. The number of pupils achieving higher levels was close to the national average and in line with the results of similar schools. Early indications from the results for 2000 show that the school has met the target it set last year and that the school's results have risen for two consecutive years suggesting that an improving trend has been established. Significant improvement has been made this year in the proportion of pupils attaining higher levels. The last inspection concluded that standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 were satisfactory, they are now good.
60. In 1999 standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 show that reading was above average and writing well below average. These results are also reflected in the comparisons made with similar schools. Early indications for 2000 show achievement to be broadly similar compared to the 1999 results. However, the attainment of higher achieving pupils has dropped in reading. Standards in writing show no marked improvement. It should also be noted that boys' attainment remains below that of girls.
61. Evidence gained from the inspection confirms that standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are generally satisfactory, and at the end of Key Stage 2 they are good. The work carried out in Key Stage 1 ensures that all pupils have a thorough grounding in basic skills and these are successfully developed in Key Stage 2. The introduction of the National Literacy Strategy has helped teachers to focus their teaching. In the most successful lessons observed, teachers managed the structure well in order to meet the particular needs of their pupils. However, through its literacy audit the school recognises the need to take steps to improve the performance of boys and the more able pupils, particularly at Key Stage 1.
62. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are above average at the end of both key stages. Pupils enter the school with good skills and they make satisfactory progress. Pupils are articulate and talk confidently in a range of different settings. They are able to contribute to discussion and debate with adults and other pupils. For example, pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 engaged in a discussion on moral

- issues and willingly contributed their views and opinions. Pupils generally listen well to teachers and each other. Most teachers manage pupils effectively in these situations and use skilful questioning to ensure pupils understand the language being used and develop it further. However, in a very small number of lessons pupils become inattentive during overlong introductions.
63. Overall standards and progress in reading are satisfactory even though the teaching of reading lacks a structure. This was an issue raised by parents at their meeting and through the questionnaires. Pupils read well during literacy lessons from whole class texts, and in group-reading sessions. The majority of pupils are enthusiastic readers, particularly the more able. Less able pupils are insufficiently supported and choose books that do not match their ability. Some pupils are members of the local library and talk with enthusiasm about the kind of book they like to read. They read a wide variety of texts for pleasure. Pupils read with increasing fluency and expression throughout both key stages. By the end of Key Stage 2 the majority use a range of strategies for reading unfamiliar words. However, the teaching of these strategies is underdeveloped throughout the school. This impacts on the progress made by pupils, particularly the less able. Parents make a significant contribution to their children's reading ability by reading with them at home. Pupils' research skills develop effectively. By the end of Year 6 pupils can use reference books, dictionaries and a thesaurus. Pupils use the school library to support their work in all subject areas. They know how to locate information in books, and from computer reference programs. They make good use of independent research opportunities.
64. Pupils write for a range of purposes, and teachers plan effectively to encourage the use of writing in all subject areas. At the end of Key Stage 1 the standard of writing and the progress made by pupils is satisfactory. Pupils take time and effort to make beautiful special books. However, the content and presentation of these are not reflected in their everyday writing. The introduction of a handwriting scheme is having a positive impact, particularly in Key Stage 2. The majority of Year 2 pupils can write simple sentences and use basic punctuation. Pupils spell a range of simple words correctly but their spelling of more complex words is less accurate. An increased emphasis on the teaching of phonics has improved spelling levels at the end of Key Stage 1.
65. Pupils make rapid progress in all aspects of writing at the beginning of Key Stage 2 and good progress is maintained. Pupils are taught to write in different styles and for a range of purposes. They study the work of a variety of authors to gain an understanding of how to create different moods in writing. They become competent at structuring sentences, using punctuation, ordering ideas and communicating clearly. Presentation is very good. Pupils develop a cursive, neat style of handwriting. The story books made for younger readers by some of the older pupils are of a very high standard. In addition to a well-written story the high quality illustrations are brought to life by the use of flaps, pop-up and slide mechanisms.
66. Across the school pupils generally have positive attitudes to their work. At Key Stage 1, most pupils work confidently with increasing independence. At Key Stage 2, their attitudes are generally very good. The majority of pupils are able to concentrate well on their work and they are able to work independently.
67. The quality of teaching during the inspection was variable. In lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory, the introductory session is too long and the pace is slow. This allows pupils' concentration to slip, and in some cases these pupils become restless. In lessons that are good or very good, teachers' management and organisation of the lesson are appropriate for pupils' age and ability, learning objectives are made clear, the pace is brisk and expectations are high.

68. All teachers' planning is thorough. The majority use the National Literacy Strategy framework to successfully deliver topic work and the English curriculum. This is clearly demonstrated in a lesson where the Greek legend of Perseus is used to investigate synonyms and word roots. Teachers use resources appropriately and effectively and this has a positive impact on pupils' learning. Where teaching is good and expectations are high the work is demanding. However in a minority of lessons more able pupils are insufficiently challenged. Relationships and behaviour are very good. Marking of pupils' work is inconsistent throughout the school. Where marking does occur, it praises pupil effort but gives no indication of what pupils need to do next to improve. Pupils do not know how well they are doing and are not involved in setting targets for themselves. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported through differentiated activities often directly linked to their individual education plans.
69. The school has successfully developed its library since the last inspection and this is no longer a key issue. The library is an attractive comfortable area which pupils enjoy being in. Pupils use it on a daily basis to support their learning in all subjects. It is well stocked with a good range of non-fiction books. The books accommodate the needs of pupils of all ages and are in good condition. All pupils are given lessons on how to locate information in the library and can use the codebuster system confidently. A computer that is located in the library is used for research purposes.
70. The English co-ordinator is aware of the areas within the subject that need to be developed. The underachievement of more able pupils in Key Stage 1 is being targeted along with the achievement of boys. Her role is underdeveloped as she has very limited opportunity to monitor and evaluate the quality and effectiveness of teaching, and pupil standards. Planning using the National Literacy Strategy has helped define a structure for English teaching. Further developments in the teaching of reading, writing, particularly spelling, and the use of ongoing assessment are required. There are many missed opportunities for the use of information and communication technology in lessons. Inspection findings confirm parents' views that pupils attain relatively higher standards in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1. A lack of structure in elements of English teaching, from the time pupils are admitted to the school, results in a lack of challenge for many pupils. However, by the end of Key Stage 1 they do have a good basic grounding, from which to make rapid progress. The school has successfully raised parents' awareness of the National Literacy Strategy through information evenings. Parents involved in the 'Story Sacks' project are making a practical contribution to the school's ability to deliver an exciting English curriculum, whilst developing their own knowledge and understanding.

## **MATHEMATICS**

71. By the time pupils leave the reception class many achieve standards that are in line with pupils of a similar age. Few pupils, who are capable, are given the opportunity to achieve higher standards. These young pupils count to 20, on occasions starting at minus one. During group activities they thread sections of coloured straws to make repeating patterns and they sort material snakes according to pattern and shape.
72. Standards in mathematics at the end of both key stages are broadly in line with those expected for similar pupils, the same as during the last inspection. The results of the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 in 1999 showed standards were below the national average and that of similar schools. However, the results for 2000 are an improvement on 1999. In particular, one third of pupils achieved

higher than the expected level and the results for boys are considerably better than 1999. The attainment of boys had been declining since 1996.

73. At the end of Key Stage 1, the results of the national tests in 1999 were in line with the national average. In 2000 the percentage of pupils achieving the expected level was the same as in 1999. However, no pupils achieved the higher level.
74. The standards observed at the end of both key stages reflect the results of these tests. In Key Stage 1 pupils develop their mental recall of number bonds through simple games. Pupils in Year 1 use non-standard measures to measure various objects around the classroom. In Year 2 they measure in centimetres. Other Year 2 pupils double and treble tens and units using a variety of strategies. More able pupils develop sophisticated number skills: one Year 2 knew that three times 26 is three less than three times 27 and three times 28 is three more. However, many of the more able pupils are insufficiently challenged to enable them to make good progress.
75. In Key Stage 2 pupils understand the links between fractions and division, multiply tens and units by tens and units, count in nines and solve word problems involving time. In both key stages the examples of work in the pupils' books show that they are able to carry out a variety of mathematical processes, including data handling and shape. Work is always well presented. The school has successfully implemented the National Numeracy Strategy.
76. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. It is satisfactory in the reception class and Key Stage 1. In Key Stage 2 it varies from unsatisfactory to good. In Key Stages 1 and 2 teachers match the tasks for each group well. The preparation and planning of all teachers is good. They clearly identify the activities to be carried out and the learning intention of the lesson. In the best lessons teachers maintain a brisk pace to the introductory sessions, challenging pupils to use their skills in computation. On these occasions pupils respond with enthusiasm.
77. In some lessons the teachers keep pupils listening to explanations for too long and do not use this part of the lesson effectively. At the end of lessons some teachers miss opportunities to review learning and assess understanding. Within all lessons pupils are well motivated and they have good concentration. They are particularly well focused in the group activities, where they produce work of a good quality and quantity.
78. In some classes effective use is made of computers; in a Year 3 class a pupil uses a program to reinforce basic number skills. These opportunities are limited.
79. The mathematics co-ordinator carries out her role effectively. She has monitored the quality of teaching in each classroom. The results of the national tests at the end of each key stage have been analysed, as have the optional tests in Years 3, 4 and 5. Weaknesses in pupil performance in these tests have been identified so teachers can modify future planning. As yet the school has not developed a programme to analyse the progress made by each pupil to ensure that it is as good as it should be. Future developments for the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy have been identified. Plans are in hand to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy and make further improvements. The governor with responsibility for numeracy is also responsible for literacy, but is not a member of the curriculum committee.

## SCIENCE

80. Results of the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 show that the proportion of pupils achieving or exceeding expectations is in line with the national average. When drawing comparisons with similar schools this school's results are also close to the average. Early indications drawn from the 2000 results show that the number of pupils at or above the national expectation is very slightly improved and that nearly a third of pupils have exceeded the expected level. The number of boys achieving higher standards has risen.
81. At Key Stage 1 teacher assessments indicate that the number of pupils achieving the national expectation is above average when compared with all schools and similar schools. However, the number of pupils exceeding the expected level is well below average when compared with all schools and similar schools.
82. Observations made during the inspection, the scrutiny of work, and talking to pupils show standards in science that are average at the end of Key Stage 1 and above average at the end of Key Stage 2. In Key Stage 1 standards are lower due to less emphasis being placed upon the development of investigative skills and the lack of depth given to the coverage of the subject, particularly physical processes. More able pupils are not sufficiently challenged to enable them to make better progress. These findings indicate that science has not made any significant progress since the previous inspection. Key Stage 1, although satisfactory overall, still has some shortcomings that need to be addressed.
83. Good standards have been maintained since the previous inspection at Key Stage 2. This is because teachers have good subject knowledge and place greater emphasis on pupils having opportunities to explore and investigate for themselves. Pupils are challenged to devise their own investigations, predict the outcomes, undertake the experiment and evaluate their findings. They can plan and organise fair tests. They are able to talk knowledgeably about forces and they use Newton meters with confidence and to good effect when measuring the amount of friction created between their shoes and different surfaces.
84. At the end of Key Stage 2 they are very clear about which factors they need to keep constant and the one they are going to change when devising a test to compare the strength of different shaped columns. This aspect of their work linked very successfully to the topic on the ancient Greeks. Less able pupils are well supported and can achieve alongside their classmates as the teachers skilfully encourage working together in groups. Homework also contributes well to science.
85. Teaching at Key Stage 1 is variable. Subject knowledge is less secure. Unsatisfactory teaching gives pupils recording tasks to do which are more literacy orientated than helpful in developing scientific knowledge and skills. When teaching is satisfactory pupils are engaged in useful discussion with the teacher to clarify their understanding about which foods are healthy and good for you to eat. The whole school healthy eating project successfully impacts on the pupils' understanding through discussion. However, there are missed opportunities for practical work.
86. At Key Stage 2 teaching is always good or very good. This is because teachers display thorough subject knowledge, are well prepared and resourced. They support pupils in their investigations, giving them opportunities to research, access equipment for themselves and develop independence within their investigations. More able pupils are challenged and encouraged to develop their enquiry skills as observed when younger Key Stage 2 pupils explore electricity and magnetism in very practical group activities. Adult support is well used and pupils make good

progress as they make new discoveries about electro-magnets and then share their findings with the rest of the class.

87. Pupils are almost always enthusiastic about their science work. They are able to concentrate and there is no fuss or commotion during the practical activities. Working partnerships are successfully established and girls and boys work well together. They quietly organise themselves in their groups, take turns, discuss and record the outcomes of their plans, predictions and results, for example, in the Greek pillars investigation. When the youngest pupils are not so actively involved in a practical 'finding out' activity relating to healthy diets they become restless.
88. The recently appointed co-ordinator has begun to analyse the available data and is aware of where the school needs to focus its attention. Teachers' planning is looked at by the co-ordinator but this is not tracked through to evaluate the outcomes achieved in the classroom. Insufficient monitoring of the effectiveness of teaching, particularly in Key Stage 1, has led to only unstructured support and unsatisfactory development of learning in some areas, notably physical processes and scientific investigations.
89. Adequate resources, including equipment and published teacher documents, are centrally stored and easily accessible. A recent audit of resources has been undertaken. Budget implications for purchasing science resources are ad hoc and not integrated into the school development plan. Evaluation of the standards of pupils' work is lacking and there is no school strategy to encourage teachers to moderate and agree the standards that pupils achieve.
90. Science is enhanced by the topic-based approach to learning. Pupils enjoy their science activities including those that contribute to environmental awareness such as when they have been planting trees. Opportunities to use information technology for data handling and sensor work are missed.

## **ART**

91. Art is a great strength of the school. Attainment is very good at the end of both key stages. All pupils, including the less able, make good progress. Their efforts are recognised and they are well supported as illustrated by the effective use of sketchbooks that help to record pupils' skills' development. These findings are similar to those of the last inspection.
92. The teaching of art is never less than satisfactory. Well planned lessons with clear intentions successfully link art activities to other subjects. For example, in a Key Stage 2 class the appreciation of Greek architecture led to a science investigation on the strength of pillars. Teachers use photographs effectively, to record the stages and processes involved in completing large, complicated pieces of work. Pupils are able to study the photographs, and use them to explain to others how a particular piece of work was created. A comprehensive and effective display policy ensures that teachers present pupils' work very well. They make good use of drapes and artefacts to add an extra dimension to valuing and celebrating pupils' work.
93. At both key stages pupils study and respond to the work of artists from a wide range of countries and eras. This makes a significant contribution to their cultural awareness. For example, pictures created in a Key Stage 2 class in response to the work of Rosina Wachtmeister demonstrated the pupils' skills very clearly. The construction of the pictures, the use of texture, different papers, and the techniques of applying paint and ink were successfully combined and resulted in a very high

quality final product. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of art are well developed. They are encouraged from the time they enter the school to observe a wide range of natural and man-made objects carefully. They work in two and three dimensions with an extensive variety of media and tools. They become skilled and proficient in their use and application. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their art activities. They respond positively, behave well and use their initiative and imagination to good effect.

94. The school has adopted the local authority scheme of work and uses it very well. The school recognises that it could improve its provision for art even further, by developing the skills of pupils in critically evaluating their own work and the work of others. It uses the Friday 'sharing assemblies' as one effective way of looking at pupils' art work and reflecting on the work of other artists. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable and supports staff well in improving their knowledge and skills. This has a positive effect on the quality of teaching of art throughout the school. Teachers are committed to using art to support all other subject areas. Stunning displays of pupils' work in corridors and classrooms help to create a very positive learning environment of which both the pupils and staff are justifiably proud.
95. The school makes good use of visits and visitors as stimuli for art. These provide very stimulating activities that explore the values of others and raise the pupils' understanding of art from different cultures. The whole school millennium sculpture project enabled all the pupils to work with a wood carver on a large-scale piece of work. Pupils were able to learn directly from an expert. Work with West Cheshire College, and a visit to Liverpool Cathedral also resulted in some superb work being produced. Resources for art are excellent. They are easily accessible and kept in very good condition.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

96. Pupils' standards of achievement in design and technology are good at the end of both key stages with some examples of high quality work. This represents an improvement in design and technology since the last inspection.
97. In Key Stage 1 pupils draw on their own experience of using materials and simple techniques to design and make sandals as part of their Greek topic. They investigate materials by looking at textures in buildings. Pupils begin to communicate and develop their ideas by drawing and discussing their own intentions. They begin to evaluate their designs - "The trickiest bit was ...".
98. In Key Stage 2 designing and making skills progress in work linked to a topic on weather. Different materials are tested to see if they are waterproof and heat-retentive in designing and making a coat. Information and communication technology is used to explain working procedures and tools and materials are selected and used accurately to make coats to fit a wooden doll. By the end of the key stage pupils use a field trip to Llandudno to inspire the design and making of fair-ground rides for marbles. Pupils choose a variety of materials and joining techniques. They discuss their ideas and work collaboratively to produce working models. They use knowledge gained in science to work out how to power them. Pupils can identify why their models work and how they could be improved.
99. Teaching in design and technology is satisfactory or better in all lessons. The subject co-ordinator supports colleagues by offering ideas for development based on schemes of work which draw on a variety of guidelines. There was no evidence of food technology during the inspection. Consumable resources are stored in a central resource room while each work base has an appropriate set of tools.



100. Pupils' attitudes are very positive, they work well together, sharing and developing their ideas. High quality examples of their work are effectively displayed throughout the school. Sharing assemblies are used as an additional way of evaluating designs and products.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

101. Only one geography lesson in Key Stage 1 was observed during the inspection. Scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with pupils and staff indicate that standards are generally appropriate for pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 and slightly above expectations at the end of Key Stage 2.
102. In Key Stage 1 good use is made of the locality through the story of Leeper Leopard who visits the school and buildings in the vicinity. Pupils recognise the characteristics of buildings as Leeper visits the dentist, library and shops, some with flats above. Links are made with literacy as pupils compose letters describing local features to Leeper's parents in Africa. In work related to the whole school topic on ancient Greece pupils recognise symbols on a simple map and use appropriate vocabulary to discuss Barnaby Bear's, (as featured in the government produced scheme of work) journey to Manchester airport to fly to Greece. They begin to understand the relationships between places and recognise contrasts by comparing the temperatures in Chester and Athens and the clothes needed in each location.
103. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils use different kinds of maps and resources to investigate Greece. Pupils know how the weather, landscape and human activities differ between rural and urban localities. They use signs and symbols to locate buildings and places when studying Chester and in a sequential story "Kangaroo Escape". Pupils use a range of maps dating back to 1577 to study how places change and grow. Presentational skills are good and effective use is made of annotated maps, photographs and text in topic books.
104. The school has a policy based on the Cheshire scheme of work and there are adequate resources available. Good use is made of the school grounds and surrounding area for orienteering, fieldwork and the study of buildings and land-use. Monitoring of the subject is underdeveloped. There is no planned evaluation of the work the pupils achieve. However, satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection.

## **HISTORY**

105. Pupils' standards of achievement in history are in line with expectations for their age at the end of Key Stage 1 and above expectations at the end of Key Stage 2. Lesson observations, mainly in Key Stage 2, a scrutiny of work and wall displays throughout the school provide evidence of continuity and progression through a whole school topic on ancient Greece. At Key Stage 1 pupils link the story of Odysseus in their literacy lesson with their topic work. Pupils begin to develop research skills, some using the local library, and understand the value of archaeology as a source of evidence. They investigate aspects of life in ancient Greece by asking - "What did they wear? Did boys go to school?" Pupils discuss Greek architecture and check their knowledge using an encyclopaedia.
106. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils investigate all aspects of life in another era using a range of books and artefacts. Pupils can describe and discuss similarities and differences between ancient Greek and modern times. Pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 understand why, through the ideas of Hippocrates, there is a greater use of

medicines and less dependence on gods to cure illness. In Year 5 and Year 6 pupils can select and combine information from more than one source. The resultant written work is well organised and presented using factual, persuasive and narrative styles. The National Literacy Strategy is having a positive impact on written work in history.

107. Pupils' attitudes towards the subject are good. Pupils are well behaved, show interest and enjoy lessons. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils are self-motivated, maintain concentration, work collaboratively and make good progress as they undertake their enquiries into the life of the ancient Greeks. The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers plan lessons effectively. They interact well with pupils, asking challenging questions to take learning forward.
108. Teaching and standards of work are not yet monitored regularly and the school's marking policy is not implemented consistently. Resources to support history are adequate and good use is made of the locality in other topics. An audit of resources is planned before the adoption of government schemes of work in September 2000. Satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

109. Standards in information and communication technology are below those expected at the end of both key stages. This indicates a decline since the last inspection.
110. The quality of work in word processing and desk-top publishing is at least satisfactory with some good examples. Pupils can enter and modify text, formatting to produce well presented and visually pleasing pieces of work. They add graphics, including photographs taken with the digital camera. Examples of this work are seen on displays throughout the school.
111. Pupils access information from the Internet and encyclopaedias on CD. This enhances pupil achievements in history, geography, English and religious education. In a Year 3 and 4 class pupils asked to carry out homework on the ancient Greeks and the Olympics brought pages downloaded from the Internet. The computer in the library is regularly used by older pupils to access the Internet to extend their research skills.
112. The opportunities to extend this work into other areas of information and communication technology are limited. Few examples were seen of data handling, modelling or control technology. Teachers have yet to fully exploit the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum as a means of raising standards.
113. No direct teaching was observed during the inspection. Pupils were observed using computers effectively. They are able to load software and support each other in its use. It is common practice to use a system of cascading skills, whereby pupils teach each other how to carry out specific functions on the computer. They are confident in their use of computers but the opportunities to develop their skills are limited.
114. Currently there are ten computers in school, most with inkjet or laser printers. Many of these machines are old and need replacing. There are plans for specific government grants to be used to buy a number of new, higher specification computers in the autumn, along with Internet connections in each classroom.
115. Examples of pupils' work are kept by the co-ordinator so that she is able to monitor standards. The co-ordinator has identified where there are weaknesses and has clear plans for the future development of information and communication technology.

## **MUSIC**

116. Only a small number of lessons in music were observed during the inspection. Inspection findings are also based upon a scrutiny of teachers' planning, pupils' work and discussion with pupils and staff.
117. Standards in lessons are high. They are particularly good at Key Stage 2. The very good choice of the 'Whale's Song' enables pupils at the middle of Key Stage 2 to respond to differences in character and mood. They can explain how the music evokes different feelings and sensations in a very expressive way. They are very skilful in appraising the effect of silences and timbre. They are articulate when describing dynamics, pitch and duration.

118. At the time of the last inspection standards were good. Pupils' knowledge in all aspects of music shows they are still at least as good if not better than before. Pupils in both key stages are encouraged to perform and they respond well. They discuss their music with above average understanding and ability. Pupils who are less able are very well supported and take part and perform confidently.
119. Teachers teach music to their own classes throughout the school. They display good subject knowledge. Younger pupils are very effectively encouraged to select an appropriate instrument to replicate different sounds such as the traffic, the sea or a monster approaching. These pupils are able to perform confidently in front of the class and can explain how vibrations create the varied sounds they wish to produce. Productive learning lays secure foundations that are successfully developed in Key Stage 2. Pupils of all ages demonstrate responsibility and can access their chosen instruments without teacher involvement. They display enthusiasm for music and are always positive and well behaved.
120. There is a very wide selection of instruments available in the music room. The display and storage of these instruments creates a very stimulating learning environment. Available instruments very effectively reflect a multi-cultural dimension to this subject. Examples of younger pupils' high quality art work also enhance the music room.
121. Teachers are very well supported by the co-ordinator who is a music specialist. Recent purchases include a wide selection of CDs to enhance music lessons. The co-ordinator does not have a specific monitoring role in evaluating the effectiveness of lessons but does play a significant part in the planning process.
122. Assemblies encourage tuneful singing although there are missed chances to explore the music of the composers chosen for the start of collective worship. There are many additional opportunities for pupils to have high quality musical experiences such as performing with visiting experts from the advisory service and a visiting theatre group. During lunch-times violin tuition is also available for pupils whose parents wish to fund this activity.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

123. Inspection findings are based on five lesson observations and discussions with subject co-ordinators and pupils.
124. In dance lessons in reception and Key Stage 1 pupils explore moods and feelings in response to music and prose. When portraying animals, reception children change speed, direction and shape in contrasting the movements of elephants and monkeys. The Year 1 and Year 2 pupils work well alone and with a partner in dance linked to the Creation Story. They practise movements related to the turn of the Earth and the darkness of night. Pupils work in pairs to perform a short sequence of movements and are happy to describe what they have done. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are satisfactory.
125. In games lessons at Key Stage 2, pupils practise bowling and fielding skills in 'Kwik Cricket' and striking and returning skills in tennis. Pupils take part with enthusiasm, listen well to instructions and closely observe demonstrations. Pupils work hard, make good progress and apply improved skills in games situations. Pupils' behaviour is very good, they share equipment fairly and co-operate and encourage each other well.
126. Teaching is satisfactory or better in all lessons and very good in one Key Stage 2 games lesson. Explanations of technique and use of space and resources are

good, activities purposeful. Teachers emphasise good skills and positively encourage sporting behaviour and working together as a team. Some opportunities to develop more effective fielding strategies are missed.

127. Extra-curricular activities provided by the school include athletics, dance, football, netball and rounders and the school teams take part successfully in local tournaments and competitions. A small number of boys are linked to football league clubs. All pupils have equal access to the subject including pupils with special educational needs.
128. Resources and facilities for physical education and games are good and have been enhanced by the recent acquisition of new, lighter large apparatus for use in the hall. Pupils in Year 4, Year 5 and Year 6 each have a term with swimming. Pupils in Year 6 enjoy a week's residential experience in September where team and leadership skills are encouraged. Since the previous inspection the provision for physical education has been maintained.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

129. Standards in religious education are at least in line with those expected for pupils of the same age and sometimes good as in the previous report. Pupils are introduced to stories from the Old and New Testaments. Older pupils discuss moral and social issues as part of their understanding of rules.
130. The teaching of religious education is satisfactory in both key stages. Teachers find stimulating ways to encourage pupils to learn and present their work. In one Year 3 and 4 class pupils are told the story of Adam and Eve and are then asked to make attractive 'story books' in which to write the story. Literacy skills usefully support this work. Standards are enhanced by teachers' good subject knowledge and questioning that draws on a variety of styles and language. On a few occasions pupils do not listen attentively.
131. The co-ordinator leads the subject effectively. Many topics are covered by the whole school. Plans ensure that pupils cover Christianity in both key stages with one other religion in Key Stage 1 and two in Key Stage 2. Multi-faith resources from the local education authority resource centre are borrowed to support the work in non-Christian religions.