

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **CASTLE VIEW PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Runcorn

LEA area: Halton

Unique reference number: 111116

Headteacher: Mrs L A Morris

Reporting inspector: Mrs J Thomas  
17711

Dates of inspection: 3 – 5 December 2001

Inspection number: 192945

Full 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:	3 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Mead Way Halton Brook Runcorn Cheshire
Postcode:	WA7 2DZ
Telephone number:	01928 563970
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Keith Robinson
Date of previous inspection:	17/03/97

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
17711	Mrs J Thomas	Registered inspector	English History	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
19344	Mr D Jones	Lay inspector		Attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
16041	Mr O L Thomas	Team inspector	Science Art and design Physical education	How well are pupils taught? English as an additional language Special educational needs
22578	Mr G Jones	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Design and technology Music	How well does the school care for its pupils? Equal opportunities
30651	Mrs M Entwistle	Team inspector	Geography Religious education	How good are curricular and other opportunities? Foundation Stage

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The school roll has declined significantly since the last inspection. There are 156 pupils on roll making Castle View smaller than other primary schools. There is a 26 place nursery and currently 20 children attend on a part-time basis, some of whom are beginning to join in the full day. The attainment of most pupils on entry to the nursery is well below what is usually found; a significant number have speech and language difficulties.

The area the school serves is challenging both socially and economically. The accommodation in the area is mainly housing association, with 97 per cent of pupils living in rented accommodation. There is a high incidence of one parent families, a high unemployment rate 10.4 per cent. The school was rebuilt in 1994, following vandalism by fire. There are 52 per cent of pupils in receipt of free school meals, (excluding five children looked after by the local authority). The rate at which pupils move into and out of the school other than at the normal time of admission is higher than usually found. There are 52 pupils on the school's register of special educational needs, 50 are in Years R-6, with 42 of these being at Stage 2 or above; two children are in the nursery class. Both the free school meals and special educational needs figures are well above national averages. The school and inspection recognise that although only four pupils are identified at Stage 3 or above the number requiring higher levels of support is greater than this. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is less than one per cent and this is well below the national average. The school does not currently serve any pupils from traveller, refugees or asylum seekers' families. There have been three exclusions for fixed periods in the last year.

In January 2002, the school will become part of a Mini Education Action Zone with some additional resources available. It is also part of a local authority scheme to reduce surplus places; this may mean changes to the accommodation for nursery children in the future with them moving into the main school building. The school has recently achieved a DfES achievement award in March 2001 for improvement to its test results. Significant staffing, recruitment or retention difficulties are not a feature of the school's history.

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

Castle View Primary School is a successful school, which very effectively secures rapid achievements for its pupils within a positive, well-disciplined climate of high expectations for learning. The impressive leadership and management given by the Headteacher and the effective quality of teaching provided are fundamental to the school's continual drive for high achievement. The school gives very good value for money. The areas for improvement are aspects which time has not yet allowed for in depth improvement or those which require a sharpening of focus.

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

- Pupils attain standards in the national tests well ahead of similar schools in all subjects, and in mathematics and science against national averages.
- Due to the strong emphasis placed on the teaching of basic skills in literacy and numeracy, many achieve very well in their daily work given their prior attainment.
- Young children under five receive a good start to their school careers and their progress is swift, especially in personal, social and emotional skill development.
- The excellent leadership and educational direction given by the Headteacher are the foundation of the school's success.
- Good teaching, which is based on high expectations and teachers who know their pupils' needs

well. Pastoral care by all staff is excellent.

- The school's procedures for assessment and their use are very effective to support pupils' progress.
- The quality of information to parents is very good.
- There are excellent procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' attendance and for pupils' behaviour, which are vigilantly applied.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development is very good and moral development is excellent.
- The governing body is well led and has a wholehearted commitment to supporting the school.
- The school's priorities and its planning are firmly focused on raising standards. Funding is used keenly to support learning.

### **What could be improved**

- Standards against national expectations in all subjects, but particularly English and mathematics. *Identified by the school in its improvement planning.*
- The quality of teaching to consistently high levels. *Identified by the school through monitoring.*
- The integration of the curriculum provision for children under five. *Identified by the school in its forward planning.*

*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 March 1997 when the Headteacher and assistant Headteacher were relatively new to their posts. The inspection report recorded many weaknesses, some significant, in key areas of the school's work, not least, standards, progress, assessment and curriculum. Since that report the school has moved forward in leaps and bounds in relation to all of the above issues. The Headteacher has grasped the need to place standards first. Planning is significantly improved. The school has rightly focused on improving standards in the core subjects; it has implemented the national strategies for literacy and numeracy very well overall. It has used funding effectively to ensure class sizes are small and to enable initiatives such as the successful, 'Reading Recovery' skills work to help boost pupils' progress. The emphasis on scientific investigational work has improved pupils' achievements very well; this cannot yet be said of mathematical investigational work. Developments in some non-core subjects have not been so detailed for example, in design and technology, history and geography. Subject action plans are in place and set realistic timescales for improvement. There are excellent procedures for monitoring behaviour and attendance, which are impacting very well on pupils' achievements and their personal and social skills.

Castle View Primary School has the key ingredients to flourish. It is well supported by the Governors and teaching staff who are highly committed to the pupils' needs. All factors, including the parental support for the school's aims, indicate a ring of confidence and even greater success for the future under the Headteacher's exceptional leadership.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	A	A	C	A
Mathematics	B	A	A	A*
Science	A*	A	A*	A*

Key	
Top five per cent	A*
Well above average	A
Above average	B
Average	C
Below average	D
Well below average	E

The results are impressive, especially when the pupils' very low starting point on entry to the school is taken into account. When all subjects are taken together the school's results at age 11 are in the top five per cent nationally when compared to similar schools. The results for seven year old pupils in the national tests were also mainly good given the time they have had in school. In relation to national averages they were average in reading and writing but well below in mathematics. When compared with similar schools they were well above average in reading and writing and average in mathematics. To acknowledge this very positive picture of improvement the school has been awarded a DfES achievement award. The trend of improvement is upward for both key stages. The school exceeded its targets in 2001. In the work seen during the inspection about half of the pupils are attaining at nationally expected levels by the ages of seven and 11. Given the high quality teaching they are receiving and the school's planned booster support in the New Year, it is reasonable to expect that its targets for May 2002 are realistic and will be met. Pupils, of all abilities, do very well overall in this school although there are some inconsistencies for the school to address to achieve maximum progression. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress but do not attain standards expected for their age except in personal, social and emotional skills.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	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.*

The quality of teaching is good overall. The best teaching is in Years R, 2 and 6. The impact of specialist teaching in music, dance, art, science and special educational needs are strong features. In the Foundation Stage teaching knowledge, management of pupils and expectations are consistently very good. Planning is not yet consistently in line with the recommendations of the Early Learning Goals although never less than reasonable. In all classes, the use of assessments to plan suitable work and behaviour management are key strengths. General points for further improvements in teaching are in the improvement and use of: writing skills across the curriculum; planning for investigational mathematics; the avoidance of lost opportunities to intervene and show pupils how they can improve for themselves; the use and time given to the ends of lessons to check on what pupils know and to share the next steps of learning and that targets are in words which pupils understand.



## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Most pupils are willing to join in because the staff encourages them to do so. They like school and many value highly the security it offers them.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good because of the vigilance of staff and high expectations upon them.
Personal development and relationships	Good because of the speed with which the school instills in them the need to care and cooperate.
Attendance	In line with national averages. The tenacity in securing pupils' attendance significantly helps achievement.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall. The basic curriculum meets pupils' needs well but elements of the non-core subjects not yet fully developed. The planned curriculum substantially meets requirements. The Foundation Stage curriculum is good but not yet coherently planned. Outdoor play provision is not yet of good enough quality.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good overall. Pupils have equal access and opportunity to the learning. The special educational needs coordinator gives very effective support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. Spiritual and cultural development are good, social is very good and provision for moral development is excellent.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well indeed. Procedures for monitoring attendance and promoting good behaviour are excellent. Oppressive behaviour is not tolerated. Pupils' personal and academic needs are effectively tracked.

The school makes every effort to include and inform parents but their efforts are diminished by poor response from too many in contributing to pupils' learning and giving direct support to the school. It is fair to say that response to pre-inspection information gathering suggests that the school has engendered the trust of most parents to do the best for their children.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the Headteacher and other key staff	Excellent educational direction given by the Headteacher and ably supported by the Deputy Headteacher who acts as an exemplar of good practice in the classroom. Coordinators conscientiously fulfil their roles but the time is right to extend the use of their skills to further impact on teaching and learning.
How well the governors fulfill their responsibilities	Governors meet their responsibilities well. They understand the challenges facing the school and are suitably involved in shaping its work.

The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. All work is focused on raising standards for pupils and improving teaching, learning and leadership and management. The school knows itself very well. Finer detail about how to measure success could support evaluation more sharply to feed into future planning.
The strategic use of resources	Very effective use of funding concentrated on standards raising. Staffing, resources and accommodation are good overall but as the school's roll is in decline further focus on formalising 'what if' scenarios is needed to safeguard its good work. The school gives very good value for money.

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

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The teaching quality.</li> <li>• The leadership and management of the school.</li> <li>• That the school expects the children to work hard and the progress they make.</li> <li>• Information on their children's progress.</li> <li>• The behaviour of the children.</li> <li>• The approachability of the school when problems arise.</li> <li>• That the children like school.</li> <li>• That the school is helping the children to become mature and responsible.</li> <li>• The amount of homework given.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistency of homework provision.</li> </ul>

Almost half of the parents responded to the questionnaire and most were very positive about the school's work. The inspection agrees with the positive points raised by parents. In relation to homework provision, the school provides a suitable amount but often pupils receive too little support at home especially with reading. Subject specific homework is discussed with the class but not marked individually.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. When the children start school in the nursery their attainment is well below what is expected for their age. A significant number have speech difficulties on entry. They do very well in improving their personal, language, early literacy and creative skills. Mathematical skills progress is good. Physical skills development is acceptable but hindered by limited outdoor play provision. This good progress in the nursery is built upon well in the reception class and here they often, but not always, make very good progress because of the high quality teaching by the classteacher. By the end of the Foundation Stage children who were well below average on entry to school have progressed well towards the Early Learning Goals but still attain below by the age of five. The children attain standards expected for their age in personal, social and emotional development. The children's low level speaking skills hinder them in reading and writing.
2. The nursery class teacher and the nursery nurse establish routines to make the children feel safe and secure. They have high but realistic expectations and understand that the children need extensive practical experiences, language reinforcement and repetition to support their knowledge and understanding. Children's achievements improve very quickly especially in literacy and numeracy during their time in the reception class. At times, depending on the teaching they receive, their progress slows to satisfactory.
3. By the age of seven, pupils' performance in the national tests were mainly good given the time they have had in school. In relation to national averages they were average in reading and writing but well below in mathematics. When compared with similar schools they were well above average in reading and writing and average in mathematics.
4. By the age of 11, the pupils' performance in the national tests is impressive especially when their very low starting point on entry to the school is taken into account. The school has unlocked pupils' potential and moved them from well below average attainment at age four to attaining at national averages, with good numbers of pupils attaining at the higher Level 5 in all core subjects. When all subjects are taken together the school's results are in the top five per cent nationally when compared to similar schools. To acknowledge this very positive picture of improvement the school has been awarded a DfES achievement award.
5. The trend of improvement began some time after the last inspection and has been moving upward ever since. The school exceeded its targets in 2001. Although currently a good number of pupils are not attaining securely within the expected Level 4 given the high quality teaching they are receiving and the school's planned booster support in the New Year, it is reasonable to expect that its targets for May 2002 are realistic and will be met. Given the nature of the cohort there may well be fewer pupils who attain at the higher Level 5.
6. Pupils of all abilities do very well overall in this school although there are some inconsistencies in teaching for the school to address to achieve maximum progression. Speech and language difficulties hinder the youngest children and these impact adversely on learning in reading, writing and their other work. However,

effective support enables rapid progress in the Foundation Stage and whilst difficulties are not eliminated they are minimised; this largely continues in the infants. By the age of seven, pupils attain much better against their weaker prior attainment. Progress is good in the juniors and very good in Year 6.

7. The inspection focused on assessing standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. From the work seen in lessons and scrutiny of pupils' books, standards are moving closer to those expected nationally by the ages of seven and 11 in all three subjects at both key stages. The underlying lack of social skills, self-discipline and self-confidence of many pupils are stumbling blocks to achievement but overridden in time by the impact of teaching.
8. In English, pupils' progress is good in the infants and very good by the end of the juniors in moving pupils towards achieving as expected but elements of pupils' speaking and listening skills still fall short of expectations by the ages of seven and 11, whilst reading and writing show good and very good progress in improvements to pupils' technical competencies there are still gaps in their abilities to understand, deduce, record and use extended vocabulary. Standards in writing are still below average but moving ever closer.
9. In mathematics, pupils' progress is good towards attaining acceptable standards in mental arithmetic and numeracy by seven and 11 as is pupils' knowledge, understanding and use of shape, space and measures by 11. Progress is very good in Year 6. Standards in using and applying mathematical knowledge and skills and in data handling are below average.
10. In science, pupils attain acceptable standards in knowledge and understanding of natural and physical phenomena. By the age of seven, pupils know about the similarities and differences in materials and how they can change when cooled or heated. They are learning that predictions may change depending on early results of experiments. By the age of 11, pupils know about soluble and insoluble materials; they devise and plan fair tests, select the right equipment for the job and vary materials to ensure the best insulator is found in their experiments. The pupils have a good grasp of the investigative process and are confident in determining their own lines of enquiry. Older pupils make very good progress.
11. In information and communication technology, pupils attain as expected by the ages of seven or 11. The progress they make is good in the infants and very good as they move through the school. Some work seen in communication is above expectations. Enhanced resource provision has impacted very well on teaching and learning.
12. In religious education, pupils do as well as can be expected and some show strength in understanding.
13. In the other subjects, pupils attain as generally expected by the time they leave in singing, physical education and art, with some high quality work in art using a broad range of techniques. They are not yet on target to attain as expected in design and technology because although pupils' making skills are sound they have too little understanding of the design and evaluation process. In history and geography, they have a rudimentary knowledge of facts but little understanding of chronology and cause and effect in history. In geography, their knowledge of the wider world is very limited as are their mapping skills and understanding of themes.

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

14. The attitude of the pupils to their school is good and they enjoy particularly the security and routines of their school life. Their behaviour and personal development are also good whilst attendance is satisfactory. These findings accord with those of the previous report.
15. The school environment is a haven for many of the children, a place where they feel secure, have trusting relationships and enjoy their learning. This is achieved through the school's commitment to encourage pupils' learning, celebrate their achievement and applaud hard work. As a result, the pupils quickly develop positive attitudes and raised self-esteem. They cooperate with the school's expectations for hard work and good conduct despite that many start school lacking basic social skills, self-esteem or confidence. This ethos significantly supports the progress of learning and personal development. During a lesson in physical education for pupils in Year 1 to develop confidence and safety during exercise, the pupils were observed enjoying the activity and to be eager to improve their skills. Pupils in Year 3 were learning to note differences in style between fiction and non-fiction writing. They showed good levels of independence, demonstrated good levels of concentration and were helping one another with difficult words during a reading exercise. In a science lesson for Year 6 pupils the work ethos was very good. Their attitude and behaviour had a positive effect on the lesson progress and the quality of learning.
16. Despite the difficult backgrounds of many of the children the overall quality of their behaviour in school supports the learning environment. Their behaviour is strongly influenced by the high quality of their relationship with the teachers and other staff. The relationship is secure, trusting and respectful and is valued and appreciated by the pupils whose personal development is enhanced by this contact. During lessons and about the school the children are seen working and playing cooperatively and older pupils assist in looking after Reception pupils during lunch.
17. As a result of the school's thoughtful and caring procedures, levels of attendance are maintained at a satisfactory level. This is against a poor response from a significant number of parents who fail to ensure their child attends regularly and on time. Late attending is a persistent problem for the school, which makes excellent provision to support parents and pupils on this aspect. The levels of pupil attendance compare with those found on the previous inspection.

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

18. The quality of teaching is good overall and it is regularly very good in the reception class, Year 2 and Year 6. Eighty per cent of teaching was good or better. Although no unsatisfactory teaching was observed there were some recurring weaknesses, which require attention. This is an even more positive picture than at the time of the last inspection. Teaching is a strength.
19. When each key stage is considered separately the Foundation Stage reveals effective teaching where children, including those with special educational needs make good and at times very good progress towards their Early Learning Goals. Teachers and qualified support staff have a good knowledge and understanding of early learning and child development. They focus well on the children's personal development, use language well and directly teach skills within an effective social setting. Clear procedures, routines and expectations are established to create opportunities for the development of independence and initiative. The freedom of

choice children have is well balanced with focused and systematic learning, particularly within the reception class. In the infants, teaching overall is good, it varied from generally satisfactory teaching in Year 1 to very good and excellent teaching in Year 2. In the satisfactory lessons, work is not always well matched to the needs of individual pupils and at times lessons lost their impetus as the pace and level of challenge were inappropriate, causing pupils to waste time and make slower progress than expected. In the juniors, teaching is good overall, with very good teaching occurring in Year 3 and Year 6, where subject coordinators enthusiasm, knowledge and quality of direct teaching impacted well on the pupils' attainment and progress.

20. The teachers' management of pupils, particularly behavioural management is exemplary throughout the school and is a key factor in determining the progress pupils make throughout the school. Their subject knowledge is secure for most subjects and the particular attention given to subject vocabulary is good. Clear objectives are set for most lessons, but they are sometimes too general and not particular to the needs of individual pupils. Planning for literacy and numeracy follows the structure of the recommended frameworks and is generally well adapted to meet the needs of the pupils.
21. However, many of the plenary sessions are unsatisfactory in not allowing sufficient time for work to be shared, teaching points to be made and future targets determined by the level of pupils' knowledge and understanding to be discussed. In science, teachers are working to an agreed structured scheme of work in a systematic and highly productive way, which supports pupils well and helped standards to improve dramatically since the last inspection. Pupils are being taught more effectively, particularly in developing their investigative skills, leading to greater understanding, productivity and firmer acquisition of subject skills. However, in mathematics, design and technology, geography and history these skills have yet to receive the same level of focus and determined use and standards are not enhanced as they could be.
22. Teachers generally expect pupils to pay attention and behave well, which most of them do. They encourage them to concentrate on their work and to persevere with tasks. Accordingly most pupils respond very well and their attitudes to learning and behaviour in lessons are almost always very good. For example, when Year 6 pupils were expected to work together in groups to investigate the effect various solutions had on the melting of an ice cube, they responded with maturity, were sensible, cooperative and worked well in agreeing outcomes and presentation of their findings. This has much to do with the training they receive from an early age and the teacher's vigilance and the high expectations throughout the school. However, there are a very small number on the special educational needs register who have a poor work ethic, are very immature and have a low level of self-discipline.
23. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, benefitting from the skilled staff who are committed to their welfare and academic needs, and the relatively small numbers in the classes. Tasks are generally well matched to their needs and reflect the targets in their individual educational plans, particularly in English and mathematics. The programme of 'Reading Recovery', reported as a strength in the previous inspections continues to make an effective impact on the pupils' progress.
24. The use of assessment to drive planning, deemed to be a weakness at the time of the previous inspection is now a strength. Planning has significantly improved and has a direct impact on the pupils' attainment and progress. Teachers generally use

the resources available to them, and the accommodation efficiently and to best advantage. The pupils benefiting from the overall work ethic produced by the team of teachers working to the common goal of providing an effective learning environment in which all the pupils whatever their needs have equal access to all aspects of the curriculum being offered.

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

25. The curriculum has been greatly improved since the last inspection when there was no whole-school overview of the curriculum. The school has adopted clear schemes of work for all subjects, including religious education (RE), and this ensures that the range of subjects taught, and the balance between them, is satisfactory. The adoption of the Foundation Stage curriculum for children in the Reception class means that they now experience a well-rounded curriculum that takes full account of their age and how they learn. Across the school the needs of the pupils are carefully judged and met effectively by the present focus upon teaching the basic skills well through good quality, relevant learning experiences. These significant improvements place the school in a position to enrich the learning in subjects such as history, geography and RE through a broader programme of outside visits and out-of-school activities.
26. The school spends over 50 per cent of lesson time in the development of literacy and numeracy skills and makes good use of this time. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are well understood and carefully tailored to suit the particular learning needs of the pupils and have helped to raise standards in reading, writing and in number. The time allocation to other subjects is appropriate and subject coordinators have made good use of national guidance to create up-to-date schemes of work for staff to follow. This means that teachers are very clear about what to teach and ensure that content is not repeated. However, in some subjects pupils have a disjointed experience that slows down skill development. History and geography are taught in block units in Years 2 to 5, which make it more difficult to show pupils how the subjects inter-relate and to improve pupils' reading, writing, speaking, and mathematical and ICT skills through the subjects. In the same way links to personal, social, health and emotional development are not consistently made explicit in lessons.
27. The school provides a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities especially given the many challenges that have been so successfully met since the last inspection. There are successful netball and football clubs and teams play with spirit and success in matches against local schools. There are drama, art and recorder clubs and also a homework and computer club that give additional opportunities for all pupils to have the chance to practise skills in school. A choir from the school has recently been involved in singing in a 'Voices together' Remembrance Day concert at a local secondary school. Some older pupils take up the opportunity of learning a brass instrument.
28. The school aims to encourage each child to achieve their full potential. They do this by creating a positive ethos in which all children are encouraged to aspire highly and to succeed as well as they can. There is an interest in gender issues amongst key staff and clubs and activities are open to boys and girls alike. In an area where there are few opportunities to meet with people of minority ethnic group origin, the school attempts to tackle racism and prejudice and is to develop a racist incident book. RE teaching has recently been re-planned to show pupils how to respect and understand

different religious beliefs and there is evidence from completed work that positive attitudes are developing. There is a variety of multicultural books and artefacts in school but teachers do not use examples from black and Asian cultures as often as they might when teaching about events, places and peoples in history and geography, or in art and music.

29. Personal, social and health education, including drugs education, is delivered mostly through RE and science lessons. Each class has a weekly 'circle time' for pupils to share ideas and talk about their experiences which helps them to listen to and respect each other's opinions but the school has not yet developed a formalised personal and social education programme that also includes citizenship. The governors' policy is that sex education is not taught.
30. To complement work in different subjects the staff organise some visits out of school. The school provides a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities that extend and enhance the pupils' learning. In school, the pupils enjoy a range of opportunities, in some cases supported by outside visitors. These include artistic subjects such as drama, recorders and brass instruments as well as sport activities for example, football and netball, open equally to boys and girls. Visitors have included a dance teacher, a teacher for African drum music and a poet. Visits to outside venues have been for both recreational and educational purpose and have included pantomime, Chester Zoo, and the Roman walls of Chester, Manchester science museum, Daresbury laboratory, the Liverpool maritime museum and an experience of Victorian life at Erdigg Hall in Wales. To encourage attendance for Year 6 pupils they are rewarded with ten pin bowling activities.
31. The new town setting means that the school has more difficulty than most is enticing in parents and grandparents to contribute to lessons such as history, geography or personal and social education. The school lost its community status in 1990 but as from 2002 the school will be part of a Mini Education Action Zone, which should restore some lost benefits. There are sound links with the feeder secondary schools and with the support agencies for care and welfare and links with local agencies and businesses have enabled the school to develop a quiet play area and to equip and network the new networked computer suite.
32. Special educational needs provision is good. Individual educational plans are well written and mainly focus on literacy and numeracy skills. The Reading Recovery scheme is supporting pupils' early reading and spelling skills very well.
33. The provision made by the school for the development of pupils' personal values is overall very good. Within this aspect provision for their moral development is excellent, for their social development it is very good and in respect of their spiritual and cultural development, good. No definitive judgements were made in the previous report except for cultural which was unsatisfactory.
34. The range and quality of their curriculum work support the development of the pupils' spiritual values. Pupils have completed artwork following the styles of artists such as Mondrian, Chagall and Miro. Their work is complemented by the imaginative celebration of their paintings in collage displays around the school. These are a delightful illustration to the pupils of awe and wonder. Also, following the work they have done in science experiments with electricity and with sound to make music they recount their enjoyment of the experience. Their hard work and good behaviour are celebrated during collective worship with certificates and the applause of their school friends.



35. The development of pupils' moral values is consistent and well balanced. The provision has the approval and support of the children and parents. Although many children start school with the disadvantage of limited personal values and poor self-discipline, they enjoy the secure, firm and consistent environment of their school life. They recognise and respect the moral values expected by the school and cooperate with the sanctions imposed when necessary. The management of behaviour and of pupils' responses makes a major contribution to their progress and learning.
36. The pupils' social development is influenced by the role models provided by staff. They understand the need to respect the views and feelings of others. They are seen working together on projects and sharing their ideas in class. They have visited their local community and have learned about citizenship during talks from outside speakers. Older pupils are given responsibilities such as assisting reception pupils with their reading and promoting road safety campaigns.
37. The good provision for pupils' cultural development can be seen in the broad range of studies into their local environment and world religions. They have made visits in the immediate area, in which they live, and visited locations of cultural interest such as Chester, Erdigg Hall and Norton Priory. In lessons, they have studied some of the ancient civilisations such as Greece and Rome and made studies of some of the main world religions. Pupils in Year 3 and 4 have looked how people from the village of Chembakoli in India and African villagers live their lives. They know that there are many different beliefs and cultures but have limited direct experience of the multicultural world in which they will grow. The school recognises the challenge it faces to broaden the pupils' horizons in preparation for life in a culturally diverse world. Its provision in this respect is sound.

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

38. The school's provision for child protection and ensuring pupils welfare is very good having improved the overall quality since the last report. Within the various features of this aspect the quality of provision is consistently high and is promoted through the very committed and caring pastoral relationships that exist. The teachers care for their pupils and provide them with a level of trust and security that explains the eagerness with which pupils come to school. The school's procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour, monitoring and promoting good behaviour and monitoring and improving attendance are excellent. Procedures for monitoring pupils' academic performance and personal development, assessing their attainment and progress and using assessment to guide curricular planning are very good. The educational and personal support and guidance, monitoring and supporting their academic progress and personal development are good. The teachers know and understand child protection procedures and relationships are such that pupils are confident of support if they approach staff with concerns. Teachers receive the pupils into class 15 minutes before the start of the school day for registration and a range of activities to consolidate their basic skills including handwriting, mental arithmetic and spelling. Two members of staff are qualified in first aid. The school is a modern building providing a safe secure learning environment. There were no health and safety issues revealed during this inspection.
39. The school has made excellent progress, since the last inspection, in formulating further procedures for assessment and in putting them into effect. As a result, teachers are better informed about the standards their pupils reach and the progress

they are making. This helps them plan work, which is more challenging and relevant to individuals and groups of pupils.

40. The school analyses the results of tests, including the annual statutory tests for seven and 11 year olds and draws conclusions from the results, which help it, improve teaching and learning. The analysis in mathematics, for example, highlights the need for further work on data handling and highlights improvements in mental calculations.
41. In the Foundation Stage of learning, very good use is made of the initial information obtained from assessments carried out when pupils first join the school. This clearly shows weaknesses in many areas of learning, which the school then addresses very well and clearly provides added value to the children's learning when it is checked at the end of this stage.
42. Individual educational plans are well written and focus on the pupils' most pressing needs. Targets are regularly monitored for success and shared with parents as required. The wide range of tests administered for English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology, helps teachers to check on the standards pupils reach each half term. These results are analysed in order to see how successful teaching has been and how well pupils have been learning. Teachers use this to make some alterations to the setting of pupils for mathematics for example. At the present time, this in-depth testing and analysis process has not been extended further to other subjects.
43. Further very good use of the information helps teachers to track the progress pupils' make over the time they are with the individual teachers. In this way, it is possible to see if progress is being maintained or if questions need to be asked about apparent lack of progress. As a result of the tracking system, the school has recently moved towards target setting for aspects of English and mathematics. Based on the good quality assessment material, teachers are now increasingly able to say how well individual pupils might succeed whilst in their care. They can describe future standards in relation to the National Curriculum levels and check on progress towards those targets. Whilst this shows a very good use of the information gathered, currently the targets are not yet specific enough for small steps in progress to be checked. Equally the time scale of the targets is not always clearly noted. Finally, in order that pupils themselves have a part to play in reaching their targets, those targets may need to be written in more "child-friendly" terms. Currently pupils do not play a big enough part in their own assessment of their work. Clearer use of targets would certainly support this activity.
44. The recording of information gathered by the school is meticulous but time consuming. All teachers, when asked, feel that the amount of time spent on assessment is a great help to them and their pupils. The school is extending the use of information and communication technology, in order to speed up the process of recording and analysing results to all staff, beyond senior management.
45. Marking was not seen as being supportive enough at the last inspection. Since that time the school has produced a new marking policy, which is now beginning to have a better effect on pupils' progress as it is aimed more at pointing to how pupils can improve their work.
46. Whilst there are both informal and formal procedures for monitoring pupils' personal development, they are good, but not yet of the quality of other assessments. They are

dispersed through, speaking and listening assessments, behaviour files, attendance records and are discussed in assemblies and staff meetings. The school has yet to devise a system whereby this information can be as easily accessed and used in the same way as the academic information. The quality of school reports is good and 96 per cent of parents who answered the questionnaire agreed that this was the case.

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

47. The school has maintained the good quality of provision found during the previous inspection.
48. The school works hard to encourage parents to be involved in their children's education and to support the work of the school. Information is provided through general newsletters announcing school activities, and events and letters are sent with the children to advise parents of specific issues relating to academic or developmental activities. Formal reports of pupils' academic progress are issued annually and parents' evenings are held each term. Parents are invited to class assemblies when merit awards are given. They are welcome in school and have informal access to teachers at the start of the school day. The school continues to encourage parental support through help in the classroom and with activities but with limited success. A lack of parental support has meant that the school is not able to sustain an effective parent/teacher association.
49. Almost 50 per cent of parents responded to pre-inspection enquiry with almost total support for the school's provision of education for their children.

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

50. The Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher were appointed to post shortly before the last inspection which left the school to address many significant weaknesses and challenges. They have been successful but are aware of some further challenges in developing the Foundation Stage curriculum when the nursery becomes integrated into main school and in driving standards forward in the non core subjects in the same successful way that literacy and numeracy have been tackled. Since the last inspection the leadership and management of the school have made significant impact on the standards attained by pupils, the quality of the curriculum, education and the behaviour and attendance of pupils. All staff are committed to the future of the school even though its roll is in decline. The senior managers, including the Key Stage 1 coordinator, lead by example, promote a positive work ethic, make a very effective team and are equally dedicated to the school's success.
51. The leadership and management of the school, in providing clarity of educational vision are excellent and the impact of this is the key factor in the school's success and the good achievements of pupils. The Headteacher has the respect and confidence of the staff and the governors who are all resolute in their dedication to giving pupils the tools to raise their own expectations for self-improvement. This Headteacher knows her school outstandingly well and is ever present in all aspects of its work. The school's aims are focused on achievement and self worth, respect and care for individuals and a drive for high standards regardless of pupils' background or abilities. Aims are exceptionally well met and the ethos is one of high expectation. The school is very successful at being 'educationally inclusive' including not only embracing the challenge of a comprehensive intake but also in ensuring that pupils want to attend school and in promoting a climate that regular attendance is a

desirable and worthwhile goal. Attendance is in line with expectations. This has much to do with the excellent procedures for monitoring attendance and also behaviour.

52. Staff have been allocated responsibilities and they fulfil them well in respect of informal support, monitoring of planning, moderating outcomes of pupils' work. As yet staff have not time to monitor the quality of teaching and improve its impact on learning. Budgetary constraints do not help in this respect. There is scope for all staff to share their expertise further to enhance the good beginning made to working as a team to further support the continuity of pupils' education.
53. The school's analysis of needs and strategic planning is excellent. The plan is well structured, well-written and focuses on the most important priorities related to pupils' achievements and the raising of standards. Whilst the plan is necessarily wide ranging it does not lose its focus on peripherals. Success criteria are an area for minor adjustment. Governors and staff are well informed and encouraged to be involved in determining the strategic direction of the school.
54. The Headteacher has a well-informed view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school; in deed the inspection findings brought no surprises for the senior management team. The management has a positive view of the inspection process to confirm the direction it will take to further improve the quality of education for pupils.
55. The governing body is well led. The Chair of Governors is actively involved in daily activities and provides an excellent link between the school and community. Minutes of meetings show that Governors are appraised of the daily challenges facing staff and that they ask pertinent questions about the results of initiatives. They have a relevant structure of sub-committees and through these provide good support and outside expertise to the overall management of the school. Governors have begun to apply criteria for identifying best value and they show questioning, prudence and consultation in their decision-making. The Governors fulfill their statutory responsibilities effectively. As yet they have not formalised 'what if' scenarios in relation to declining rolls and possible future reduction of the budget.
56. The implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies has been very well managed but there is scope for the literacy coordinator to take a more active role in monitoring, analysing and being accountable for the teaching of English, particularly speaking and writing.
57. The special educational needs coordinator is experienced and has well-established administrative arrangements to make sure that reviews are held regularly and that pupils' individual needs are met. Pupils who have statements of special educational needs receive their entitlement to extra support and resources although some pupils are not yet identified at higher levels but this is out of the school's control. There is a satisfactory, clearly written policy for special educational needs and this is due to be reviewed in light of impending new legislation. The school provides a good level of staffing and resources to meet the needs of this group of pupils.
58. Accommodation, staffing and resources are good. The accommodation is well used and cleaned to a high standard. Some rearrangements to the accommodation are imminent due to the impending transfer of the nursery into the main building.
59. Financial control and management of resources are very good. The school development plan, in taking account of these demands, has made very good provision for its educational priorities. Specific grants have been very well directed to

ensure optimum return. The school seeks to achieve maximum benefit from its financial resources and governors and senior managers are fastidious in ensuring funding goes directly to pupil support.

60. Given its staffing, resources, accommodation and the effectiveness of their use along with the good progress and achievements of pupils, whose attainment on entry is low, the school gives very good value for money

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

61. **The governors, Headteacher and staff now need to:**

**Improve standards against national expectations in all subjects, but particularly English and mathematics by ensuring that:**

- skills in the non-core subjects are systematically developed;
- pupils have broad and challenging opportunities to talk about and communicate their ideas;
- the approach and allocation of time to teaching handwriting to aid spelling, fluency and speed in recording ideas are reviewed and monitored for success;
- opportunities for pupils to use their basic skills in the other subjects are planned for and extended;
- the planning for, and teaching of, investigational mathematics and data handling are improved.

*Reference to these matters can be found in paragraphs 8, 9, 13, 21, 86, 89, 91/2, 98 102/3, 119, 124/5 and 132*

**Raise all teaching to the highest levels to ensure continuity in pupils' learning by ensuring that:**

- the monitoring process is formalised and enables coordinators to impact directly on classroom delivery;
- marking and intervention by teachers consistently makes clear to pupils what is good and what needs to get better;
- subject expertise is used more widely in supporting learning across the school;
- at the end of lessons reasonable time is given to check on outcomes of learning and aid planning of the next steps.

*Reference to these matters can be found in paragraphs 19-21, 43, 52, 93/4 and 99*

**Improve the integration of the curriculum provision for children under five by ensuring that:**

- the school formalises its thoughts into a strategic plan in preparation for potential changes to the organisation of the Foundation Stage curriculum;
- plans are carefully costed;
- priority is given within the plan to coherence in planning and provision for the nursery and Reception children against the Early Learning Goals;
- the good practice in existence is safeguarded;
- the provision of outdoor facilities is improved to impact on the children's physical development;
- the transition is carefully managed to ensure children's learning is continuous and their confidence and security are maintained at the highest levels.

*Reference to these matters can be found in paragraphs 58, 63 and 64*

## 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	23

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	13	28	10	0	0	0
Percentage	4	28	49	19	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than two percentage points.

### 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)	10	156
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	82

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	2	50

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.5

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.4

National comparative data	5.6
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National comparative data	0.5
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*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 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	6	19	25

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	4	5	6
	Girls	16	18	15
	Total	20	23	21
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	80(70)	92(90)	84(90)
	National	84(83)	86(84)	91(90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	4	6	4
	Girls	18	15	16
	Total	22	21	20
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	88(90)	84(85)	80(80)
	National	85(84)	89(88)	89(88)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	16	13	29

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	15	16
	Girls	9	9	13
	Total	21	24	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	72(83)	83(78)	100(91)
	National	75(75)	71(72)	87(85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	11	15	16
	Girls	9	9	13
	Total	20	24	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	69(86)	83(78)	100(91)
	National	72(70)	74(72)	82(79)

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	0
White	134
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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

### **Teachers and classes**

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.4
Average class size	22.3

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

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	39

#### **Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	7
Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	32.5
Number of pupils per FTE adult	3.5

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2.5
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

### **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	3	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.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2001
	£
Total income	436,168
Total expenditure	464,406
Expenditure per pupil	2,716
Balance brought forward from previous year	23,093
Balance carried forward to next year	44,305

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## **Results of the survey of parents and carers**

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	177
Number of questionnaires returned	84

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	62	36	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	68	26	6	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	65	35	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	58	30	6	0	6
The teaching is good.	75	21	1	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	71	25	4	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	85	14	0	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	75	23	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	64	33	2	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	70	29	1	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	68	31	0	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	44	35	6	1	14

## **PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

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

62. There has been a significant improvement in the Foundation Stage since the last inspection when the curriculum of the reception class was not appropriate for the age and stage of development of the children. Provision is now good overall. Children enter the nursery with a very low level of skill and understanding in most areas of learning and particularly so in reading, writing and communication skills and in personal and social development. The teaching in the nursery class awakens and develops their interest in learning so that they then benefit from the high quality of provision in the reception class. All the children, including those with special educational needs, make good progress over their time in the Foundation Stage. This means that by the end of the reception year, standards have risen from well below to just below the standard expected for their age in most areas of learning (see below). A significant minority is on track to achieve and possibly exceed the Early Learning Goals for reading, writing, counting, and creative development.
63. The physical separation of the two classes has meant that the nursery has operated as a distinct unit and the school's Foundation Stage policy reveals that the Foundation Stage is not yet planned and managed as a cohesive single phase. The two teams are beginning to work together but anxiety about plans to move the nursery into the main building with the consequent loss of the outdoor play area is not helping this process. There is no joint planning in order to map out a clear progression through the 'stepping stones' (the three steps or stages that the national guidance sets out as significant markers along the way to attaining the Early Learning Goals) from the age of three to the start of Year 1. The nursery profiles of what individual children have achieved is useful but do not show in detail progress against each of the 'stepping stones'. Continuity into the reception class, is therefore, more difficult to achieve.
64. The quality of teaching is good overall. In the nursery, the teaching team shows creativity and flair in ideas and activities and a firm understanding of how young children learn. Also, the tasks and activities prepared for the children in large part match the content of the school's Foundation Stage policy. However, links to the national guidance need to be more explicit in order to focus the teaching even more sharply. In the reception class, there is some very good teaching, especially in literacy. The classroom environment is of very high quality and offers stimulus and teaching support in all areas of the curriculum.

### **Personal, social and emotional development**

65. Nearly all of the children enter the nursery class with very immature personal and social skills. By the time they are ready to leave the reception class, many will have achieved well in the area of dispositions and attitudes, self-care and behaviour and self control but have some way to go before achieving all of the learning goals in this area. The foundations of self-control and good behaviour are laid down very well in the early weeks of the nursery class. For instance, when they enter school in the morning, the children are expected to select their choice of activity and to persevere with it. The relatively small class size means that adults can remain with a group and encourage the children to persist to the end of a task. For instance, a girl was expected to complete the task of making and sending a Christmas card by sealing it into an envelope and posting it in the nursery post box. Snack time in the nursery is

used very well to teach the children how to sit and share food together. The teachers sit with the children conversing with them about their needs and teaching the social rules of eating together through modelling such questions as, 'Have you eaten enough now?' and 'Did you enjoy that?' The replacing of dishes and the getting a mug of juice to drink is skilfully used to reinforce colour names and colour matching.

66. Children in the reception class learn to concentrate during an hour of literacy teaching and a mathematics lesson of 50 minutes. Because the teachers ask questions and use many lively visual resources, the children stay attentive though the whole-class introduction to the lesson. When they are expected to work in small groups, they manage to do this independently because the teachers use games and very high quality resources to stimulate and keep their interest. They take turns beautifully even when longing to be chosen to bang the drum in the music lesson. They take care of their own personal needs such as pouring the milk for themselves or each other at snack time or deciding to wash hands before coming to read to an adult.

### **Communication, language and literacy**

67. The teaching in this area is good overall, especially for reading, and is very good in the reception class. All of the children achieve well bearing in mind the very low starting point on entry to the nursery. A number of children in the reception class have already surpassed the Early Learning Goals in this area. Many of the others are on track to achieve most of the goals in linking letters and sounds, reading and handwriting but not in the spoken aspects or in writing. The Reception class teacher builds upon the enjoyment of stories and books fostered by the nursery staff and quickly eases the children into a more structured approach to reading and writing. By the end of the autumn term the children are experiencing an hourly literacy lesson each day. Because the teacher is so skilled at involving the children with the text through sensitive questioning, and at varying the pace and the activity, the children are truly motivated and stay involved throughout the 30-minute session. The work for groups of children is extremely well planned and the immaculately prepared resources support them in doing the set tasks. All of this increases their confidence with print.
68. In the nursery, the children are developing a real enjoyment of stories books, poems and rhymes. The teachers develop a host of imaginative activities such as building Miss Maisie's house or visits to the nursery by characters in the story so that the children become immersed in the characters and events. Children handle books well. For example, in circle time all sat and 'read' their book, turning the pages and telling the story. Even the passenger in the role-play Green Bus was reading his book in his seat. The nursery teachers create realistic opportunities for children to write although these are less frequent than for reading and speaking. They learn to recognise their name and to write it for a real purpose such as putting their name on paper before they begin to paint, but only the most highly attaining children can write other recognisable words on leaving the nursery.
69. The children make good progress in writing in the first term of the reception class so that most children can attempt to write a recognisable sentence. They learn how to hear initial sounds and to link these with letters. For example, they used small dry-wipe boards to practise the letter 'f' after the teacher had shown them in the air how to form the letter. Then over half of the class manage to write the words 'f-a-n' and 'f-i-t' correctly after hearing each sound in the word. Good use is made of the role play area's veterinary surgery to encourage the children to use writing in their play. They keep appointment books, set up notices and write prescriptions. The children can recognise rhymes and learn to use rhyme to predict line endings with enthusiasm as

when they helped the teacher to read the story of 'Mr McGee went to Sea'. The classroom is full of print and of different work stations, charts, materials and resources to help with reading and writing, so that nothing is left to chance. The suitability and freshness of the children's home reading books reflect the high priority given to teaching literacy.

70. Although the children make good progress in listening attentively and appreciatively to stories and rhymes, they make slower progress in developing language for communication and language for thinking. Children's speech is often indistinct and they often reply in one word answers rather than in sentences. They do this in spite of the teachers' regular encouragement to explain what they mean. In the nursery and in the reception class, quality time is given to activities that will develop the children's vocabulary and use of speech. For instance, in circle time in the nursery, songs to teach positional language are used regularly. Role play is frequently used to help the children to develop their ideas such as in the very good adult-led session of re-telling the story sequence of when 'Mr McGee went to Sea'.

### **Mathematical development**

71. The children make satisfactory progress in the nursery and good progress in the reception class but a good number of them are not yet on track to the Early Learning Goals in all aspects. Most children are likely to reach the standard expected for their age in using numbers for counting but are less secure in the beginnings of calculation and using mathematical ideas. In both nursery and Reception classes, there is good visual support for the children. In the nursery the play 'bus seats' are numbered and in the reception class, numbers are hung on 'washing lines' and there are sets of hanging card coins and numbered pockets of digit cards for use in lessons. Sometimes teachers find it hard to stay long enough with groups in, say, the role-play area, to make use of its potential to teach mathematical awareness. In the nursery, the range of mathematical resources and activities for the children to work with independently of the teachers is not extensive.
72. In the nursery the teachers make the most of natural opportunities to count and to recognise numbers. For instance, the children admire but also count the number of Father Christmases that can fit one inside another; count the cherries that will go into the Christmas cake; and know that baking ingredients have to be measured. The teachers use register, snack and home-time situations to develop simple mathematical ideas such as shape and colour recognition.
73. The teaching of mathematics becomes much more focused in the reception class where a daily 40 minute numeracy session follows the structure of the national guidelines. Because this is meticulously planned, with imaginative and relevant practical activities for the children, they learn well. For instance, after the teacher introduced the concept of 'price' through a delightful selection of labelled soft toys, groups of children 'bought' real little biscuits with pence chosen from a personal dish of real penny coins. All of the children could read the price tags and count out the correct number of coins and some were beginning to develop the idea of 'change'. The teacher assesses and records what each child can do and not do extremely carefully and uses this information well to set a suitable level of challenge in the tasks. Occasionally the lessons are too ambitious and new learning is not given enough time to consolidate their understanding. Some opportunities are taken to develop mathematical skills through other activities but this does not happen as often as it might.

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

74. The teachers work hard to teach the children about the world around them and the children achieve well, particularly in designing and making and exploration in the nursery. They learn well about computers and also in developing a sense of place in the reception class. However, many children will still be working towards some of the Early Learning Goals by the end of the reception class. This is largely because on entry to the nursery the children have not had the opportunity to experience a wide range of places and events and it takes time for the nursery teachers develop and then build upon the children's latent curiosity. In the Reception class they continue to make good progress but by the end of the year many will struggle to meet the expected standards in exploring and investigating and asking questions about how things work. They also show a limited understanding of time, place and of cultures and beliefs.
75. In the nursery, the teachers stimulate interest in living things by bringing in small creatures such as tadpoles so that the children can find out more about them and note and draw how they change. Photographic evidence shows that there are trips out into the school grounds and picnics in the locality. The teaching of designing and making is a real strength because the children are always involved in creating the framework and the decoration of the role play structures. They work with big items, learning to fit together parts of doors and windows. They make decisions and find out how good these are by using the 'building' in their play. Because of the lively way in which the teachers present activities as 'very very interesting' they begin to observe more carefully even though they less often ask 'why'. For instance, in the Christmas cake baking session, one boy commented, 'The cherries are sinking' but did not say more about this in spite of suitable follow up by the nursery nurse.
76. The reception children are taught new skills in timetabled adult-led sessions and then have a chance to practice these further. The work is often related to a theme such as The Sea, which helps them to see how one area links to another. For instance, after looking at pictures and information books about the exotic patterns on some fish, one group learned more about magnets by 'fishing' with fishing rods ending in giant magnets.
77. Information and communication technology skills develop well. The computer is always switched on and children have regular experience in using it independently. They can use the mouse and can dress figures on the screen by clicking on and dragging items of clothing. Teachers give support when needed but the children are often confident enough to use the computer without support.

## **Physical development**

78. The quality of teaching in this area is satisfactory overall but there are some limitations in the use of outdoor space for the reception class children who do not have regular access to the nursery play area. There is a regular timetabled slot each afternoon when the reception children play outside with small equipment such as bats, balls and hoops and good use is made of this time. However, they do not often use the tricycles and pedal cars available to the nursery children and there is no fixed climbing apparatus or items for balancing and stepping and sliding for either class.
79. The children make satisfactory progress overall but do not attain all of the Early Learning Goals in this area. In the nursery, the pupils are mostly at stepping stone two at this stage although some pupils exceed this level. They control wheeled toys



such as tricycles and go-carts, successfully turning corners and adjusting the speed to create safe space for others to pedal in. Hand-eye coordination is developing and hitting and throwing skills gradually develop from the nursery onwards. Through singing games and rhymes, the children learn to move their body parts in a range of ways such as shaking, swaying, turning and bending. They mostly can manipulate their own clothing, fastening zips and toggles on their own.

80. In the reception class, hall-based sessions further develop movement and a sense of space, and health is taught through on-going talk and awareness raising throughout the day. The goals for using equipment tools and materials are promoted often through activities that are part of the work linked to the current theme. By the time they join the reception class the children show satisfactory control of pencils, crayons and paint brushes. For instance, as they made a sea collage they used scissors to cut round a fish shape, spread glue carefully and correctly and arranged items on a background to create a sea-like effect.

### **Creative development**

81. Most children will reach the Early Learning Goals in creative development because of the good emphasis given to imaginative play in the nursery, to carefully structured role play in the Reception class and to enjoyment of music and songs in both classes.
82. In the nursery class, the children learn to mix colours and textures and to build up layers of shapes to create three-dimensional effects. With adult guidance they have created large three-dimensional pictures and collages such as the members of Maisie's family sleeping in their quilted beds. In their play, they take on the parts of characters in the current story and play collaboratively. Four pupils joined in singing 'Twinkle, twinkle little star' and accompanied this with triangles and a shaker, beginning and ending at the right point and mostly held the beat.
83. In the Reception year, the stimulating environment and high quality of teacher questioning and interaction helps the children to talk about what they are trying to do and to express opinions and preferences. After Barney the dog visited school, they used drawings and paintings to show their feelings about their favourite pets. In the veterinary surgery they act out the roles of vet and anxious pet owner, cradling the sick animals and making second appointments with the 'bossy' receptionist. To some extent the teachers make the decisions about what the children should do in the creative activities, but within that framework the children are learning more about using tools such as fine paintbrushes, and explore colour and shape in pictures made from mathematical shapes. They manipulate materials carefully to create spiders from plastic tops tissue paper and pipe cleaners and have had experience of using clay to make a hedgehog. They have less experience of developing the large scale work begun so well in the nursery but overall the teaching is good.

### **ENGLISH**

84. When children enter Year 1, a small number are working within the National Curriculum Programmes of Study and many others are on track to achieve most of the goals in listening, linking and reading letters and sounds and in handwriting but not in other aspects of writing or speaking. They have made good progress since starting in the nursery.

85. In the 2001 national tests the performance of 11 year olds pupils was in line with national averages but well above similar schools. Pupils achieve very well given their low starting base. In 2000, the proportion of pupils attaining at the higher Level 5 was very high, it was lower in 2001 but still good and this reflects the differing abilities of cohorts from year to year. The school's trend of performance in the tests is above the national trend. The school exceeded its targets in 2001. Although currently a good number of pupils are not attaining securely within the expected Level 4, given the high quality teaching they are receiving and the school's planned booster support in the New Year, it is reasonable to expect that its targets for May 2002 are realistic and will be met. This will be because the teaching of English in Year 6 is excellent and not only improves pupils' knowledge and skills but also draws on them and assesses precisely strengths and weaknesses for improvement. Given the nature of the cohort there may well be fewer pupils who attain at the higher Level 5.
86. By the age of seven, pupils attain average standards in the national reading and writing tests and well above other pupils in similar schools. The school has used funding very well to provide additional staffing and allocating staff to year groups, to improve standards in English. For example, the highly skilled Reception class teacher is released to implement the 'Reading Recovery' scheme to boost pupils' achievements in reading and spelling, in Years 1 and 2. This is showing good results. It is planned she will work in the junior classes in the spring term. In addition the very well focused teaching of pupils in Year 2 reinforces and strengthens pupils' knowledge and skills. The school recognises an ever present need to focus on speaking and literacy skills.
87. The high quality of teaching, adherence to the principles of the National Literacy Strategy, the exemplar of good practice set by the coordinator and the Headteacher's 'hands on' approach to checking on progress are the main reasons for the good achievement. The very good analysis of test and assessment data at both key stages and the tracking of pupils' progress to identify targets for improvement and adds notably to the overall achievement. The rigour with which target setting takes place ensures good and some very progress. The monitoring by management means pupils make at least satisfactory progress even where teaching is adequate.
88. Pupils' language and communication skills are low when they enter the school and in spite of good work in the Foundation Stage the pupils are limited in both their vocabulary and experiences about which they can talk. In Year 1 pupils, when listening to the story of the 'Owl who lived in a Tree', are encouraged to talk to a toy owl, which asks them questions. They listened attentively and the strategy by the teacher engendered a good deal of speech. Whilst the pupils were eager to answer many used one word or short phrases as their answers. Only one higher attaining pupil used extended sentences. By the age of seven pupils' listening skills are strengthened as is their speech. For example, when they had to give instructions on 'How to wrap a Christmas present', they improved their use of relevant vocabulary because the teacher advised them good humouredly, to use 'bossy' words when giving instructions to make the meaning clear. By the age of seven pupils' listening skills are broadly in line with what is expected and whilst good progress is made in speaking about half are still below what is expected nationally at this one third way through the year.
89. By the age of 11, pupils speaking skills are better but only about half have adequate levels of skill. Listening skills are average by the age of 11. In the juniors, pupils improve their knowledge of technical subject vocabulary such as 'dialogue' and improve the expression they add to words when following the teacher's good role

model for reading aloud. Pupils listen well but some are still struggling to answer in sentences. In Year 4, listening is also attentive but responses are still in simple words or phrases. However, in a mathematics lesson on fractions the practical and cooperative games about equivalent fractions gave pupils little choice but to talk to each other using the subject vocabulary resulting in good progress being made. In Year 5, speaking and listening were encouraged during a science lesson on investigating materials when they had to listen carefully to the task, 'What will make the sound travel best?' Although pupils took some time to settle to purposeful activity the very fact they had to test out string telephones required them to talk each other. Some had difficulty in expressing their hypotheses and explaining results. In Year 6, pupils are in no doubt that they are expected to listen accurately and are challenged by the teacher's questioning of them following introductions. Pupils improve their vocabulary when describing illustrations from stories to create powerful imagery using complex sentences. In discussion with pupils many have a lazy attitude to using talk to explain their views. It is an ongoing challenge for the school to improve pupils' speaking skills and define the balance between the good modeling of speech pupils learn from most teachers, giving information and challenging and supporting pupils to speak clearly and more frequently in full sentences. Listening centers are regularly used but evidence of pupils' recording their talk and playing it back to improve what they have said was not a strategy planned for or used.

90. Standards in reading are satisfactory for about half of the current seven year old pupils because they have made good progress overall given their prior attainment. Progress is best in technical reading competency and this is supported by direct attention to phonics teaching and the additional support of 'Reading Recovery' teaching on a regular basis. In addition, paired reading with an older pupil mentor and guided reading sessions are all adding to their success. Many still have a long way to go in understanding. The school has organised numerous events over time including book fairs, a poet in school and increased staff training to enhance the teaching of reading and improve standards. There is a very good focus on pupils identifying ways to help them read new words. By the age of seven pupils know to look at the pictures for a clue, look at the size of print to help think how to read the word, ask a friend, say the sounds, stretch the word to break it up and read ahead. They recognize most high frequency words. Few self correct their errors when reading and often they replace actual words for similar ones. Considerable attention is paid by teachers to improving memory retention skills which is a key weakness for many pupils and hinders their progress because each lesson needs to start with a careful and detailed recap of the last. Pupils by the age of seven are receiving good role models for reading with expression but this is not readily transferred to how the pupils, themselves read, which broadly echoes their speech, and is often monotone and uninspiring. By the age of 11, most pupils can 'read' the words in the book they have chosen. The expression of most, including the higher attaining pupils, is somewhat lazy. Other than at school they say they are not read to and when asked, 'Who do you read to at home?' many said, 'Just myself'. Their analysis of characters is adequate and most can give a fairly accurate but brief summary of the story plot. Pupils enjoy reading as a group but lack confidence in reading aloud on their own. Year 6 pupils need to think carefully when asked how to find a book in the library and only about half talk about subject sections. The Dewey system is a mystery to them. They do not readily offer answers to questions about index, contents and glossaries until prompted. Discussions with them suggests more about their apathy to reading and less about the enormous efforts made by the school; encapsulated when pupils were asked 'If you had extra pocket money would you buy a book?' Their response was 'What for?' Few can name authors other than those studied in school.

91. Standards of pupils' work do not at this stage of the year reflect the most recent performance in the national tests by the ages of seven and 11. However, there is secure evidence that for many they are moving closer to the levels expected for their ages. Few show signs of attaining at the higher levels at this stage. It is quite likely given the high quality teaching and the booster support planned that many pupils will attain within Level 4 at age 11, but by the age of seven a good proportion are likely to be at the lower Level 2c. This, nevertheless, represents good progress given their prior attainment. All pupils in both the infants and juniors have targets for improvement and this is productive except where not enough consideration has been given to phrasing these in words understandable to the pupils. In Year 1, pupils are beginning to write in simple sequenced sentences. They complete simple questions, retell stories and some use descriptive words, for example, 'the sky is grey'. In the books, progress is clear although in lessons the intervention could drive the learning of individuals forward more quickly by prompting the children to check their own work and improve it. This is true across the school. By the age of seven pupils write for a broad range of reasons. They describe 'How to make toast' step by step and use lists to present the writing in an understandable way. They have used writing to describe their walk to 'The War Memorial' and this is of sound quality. In Year 6, the teacher uses 'broadsheets' pinned to the classroom walls as notes of pupils' ideas at different stages of learning. These are used actively in lessons, to say, 'Look, remember what you said, look at the words and phrases. Are there any clues or useful ideas?' This prompts the pupils to read and recall past learning and gives them a valuable bank of vocabulary to draw from. It also profitably aids assessment to track pupils' progress of what they know or do not as the case may be. Few pupils readily use paragraphs in their writing and need prompting to use speech but they are required to draft, re-draft and edit their work for improvement and this emphasis plays a strong part in improving quality and standards.
92. The key features for improving writing are to broaden the pupils' experiences, so that they have real reasons to write using other subjects as a stimulus and improve the role models for writing, linking to the work in reading and emulating how authors work to capture their audience's attention. Presentation of work is not consistently good and spelling needs improving. These are weaknesses across the school. Handwriting is an area for improvement and the time is right for a review of the purposes and approaches expected for handwriting, its link to spelling, fluency and speed writing and in enhancing the final piece of work, to ensure it is worthy of reading and that the reader does not have to struggle through it.
93. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is consistently very good in Year 2 and Year 6 and in the 'Reading Recovery' work that takes place. There is an inextricable link in this school between the quality of teaching and its impact on improving pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding of basic skills. The national strategy has been very well implemented but adapted to suit the pupils' challenging needs. The teaching of English in Year 6 is exceptional because of the teacher's own knowledge; he uses every trick to explore the subject in full. Resources and lessons are exceptionally well prepared and planned. Time is used well. Intervention is good and regular. The classroom environment is strongly supportive to the teaching enabling the pupils to use the displays to enhance their understanding. Some of these techniques are replicated well in Year 2 where teaching is also very good. The specialist reading teaching is highly structured and meets the needs of pupils with special educational needs very well. Pupils enjoy the highly well organised tasks, security of success and caring relationships established by most highly skilled teacher. In the other classes teaching was good overall but areas of fine tuning are needed in pace, quality of displays to directly support teaching and the use of ends of lesson to give sufficient

time to assess what pupils have learned, deal with misconceptions and share the next steps with pupils. Too few pupils offer intellectual, creative or physical effort to their learning and their own knowledge of what they have learned is hindered by poor recall skills and the inability to memorise information when not prompted by the teacher. The introductions to lessons support learning very well but caution is needed to ensure they do not dominate the opportunities for pupils to talk and show what they know. Marking of work lacks consistency. It does not always show pupils how to get better and correct errors.

94. The delivery of English has significantly improved since the last inspection and fully meets requirements. Its strengths lie in the very good range of assessments and their interpretation to drive learning forward. The coordinator is knowledgeable, supports planning by teachers and scrutinizes work for consistency. The time is right to use his teaching as a model for raising teaching quality to the highest standards and for him to monitor teaching and its outcomes more closely to point to improvement and evaluate success. The delivery of English is overall a strong feature of the school but there are areas for improvement outlined by the school, particularly in the use of writing in the other subjects.

## **MATHEMATICS**

95. Pupils in Year 6, at the most recent National Curriculum tests, attained standards, which were well above the national standards expected for their age. This shows excellent progress since the last inspection, at which time standards were said to be “significantly below national expectations”. The results were high when compared with similar schools. The results also showed a significant percentage of pupils, 38 per cent, achieving the higher than average Level 5 score. When compared with their results when in Key Stage 1, this indicates that the school provides these pupils with very high “value added” education in this subject.
96. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1, as shown in the National Curriculum tests this year, were low when compared with national standards, but broadly average when compared with similar schools. This is a slightly better picture than at the last inspection, but clearly shows that pupils come to Castle View with low levels of numeracy and the school is to be congratulated for the progress pupils make over their time at the school, in order to achieve so well by Year 6.
97. During the inspection, work in Key Stage 2 was close to national expectations and slightly below at Key Stage 1. Pupils are achieving well and the majority of pupils in Key Stage 2 are already working within the expected levels, for their age, of the National Curriculum. Good teaching and the planned use of Booster Classes and revision work suggests that pupils are on track to meet the school’s targets.
98. The scrutiny of previously completed work showed that the Numeracy Strategy has helped improve work in number and in aspects of shape, space and measuring. Work in data handling is beginning to improve alongside the further use of information and communication technology, while work in investigational mathematics is the weakest element of the overall work in the subject. Pupils have opportunities to interpret word problems into mathematical calculations, but there are too few opportunities for them to experiment or investigate with numbers where there is not necessarily a single correct answer.
99. The school has made improvements in a number of areas, which accounts for the progress seen. All staff have made effective use of the National Numeracy Strategy,

which has given good support to both planning and strategies for teaching. It is clear to see that in all lessons teachers keep to their plans, although the final parts of several lessons were not as strong as the introduction or development of the main teaching and learning points. The school is developing a “setting” system for mathematics in Key Stage 2, which allows the more able mathematicians to be taught in groups of similar pupils, even though there may be slight differences of age. These groups are flexible and pupils are assessed each half term to check their progress within their groups, in case pupils need to be promoted further.

100. As a result of this setting, together with teachers’ efforts to cater for all pupils, the complete range of pupils, including those with special educational needs, are provided with challenging work in line with their abilities. As a result, all pupils tend to make good progress in their lessons, although some find it hard to retain the information following the lesson. Many lessons, therefore, begin with a recap of previous learning, before pupils can move into new learning. Progress for pupils in Year 2 and in Year 6, is better still, as teaching here is of a higher quality and pupils respond very well to the challenges set for them.
101. By the age of seven, pupils have a sound understanding of place value to 100, but do not make enough use of this in problem solving work. They can measure using centimetres and metres and understand what quadrilaterals are. By the age of 11, pupils can carry out calculations in their heads quite quickly and understand equivalence in fractions. They can relate fractions to decimals and understand how both can be changed into a percentage. They recognise a wide range of both two and three-dimensional shapes and can calculate the perimeters and area of shapes. They know what a frequency table is and can create graphs from information they are given or which they gather themselves.
102. Teaching overall is good. In the seven lessons seen, one was satisfactory, four were good and two were very good. Good planning and subject knowledge were both evident in all lessons, with the management and control of classes being often excellent. However, the endings to lessons were generally weak. In the two very good lessons, the key differences were related to pace, questioning and high teacher expectations. These drove the lessons forward and pupils responded well to the pace and challenges set for them. As a result, their behaviour was good and sometimes very good and this had a very positive impact on the progress they made. Good behaviour was also a feature at the last inspection. Pupils in the Year 6 lesson responded well to the teacher’s measured calm approach and his very good teaching of basic skills. The work was clearly suited to their differing abilities and inspired them to work hard at their tasks in a quiet atmosphere. Equally, in a Year 2 lesson on “time”, the teacher’s use of questioning stretched pupils’ understanding of both analogue and digital time. Her introduction of new vocabulary was skilfully interwoven into the lesson and better still was the use of ongoing assessment in order to check pupils’ understanding at regular intervals.
103. A slight weakness in some of the other lessons seen was that too often teachers’ focused their teaching solely on the lesson objectives. Whilst they made progress in the teaching of the work, sometimes the learning lagged a little behind. This was not a question of the pace being too quick, rather more the teachers not always noticing that some pupils may not have understood everything in the lesson and may have required rather more revision or support during the activities. In a more general way, as there is little extra support for pupils who have special educational needs in mathematics lessons at both key stages, it is often the quite large percentage of

these pupils, found in all classes, who sometimes do not receive quite enough additional support, over and above what class teachers can provide.

104. Assessment of progress and academic standards in mathematics is well documented and gives teachers good support in preparing work for the different abilities within their classes.
105. Recent additional use of information and communication technology now ensures that each class has one lesson per week focused on the use of computers to support learning in mathematics. This is working well, with the two subjects giving each other good mutual support.

## **SCIENCE**

106. In the end of Key Stage 2 tests, for the year 2001, pupils' attainment was well above the national average and in comparison with similar schools' attainment was very high. This is a dramatic and significant improvement on the situation found at the time of the last inspection when the attainment of both 11 and seven year olds was judged to be poor. The school can be justly proud of the fact that 76 per cent of the cohort achieved at the higher Level 5 in the tests. Inspection evidence confirms that pupils' attainment is broadly in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages, with a significant number who will achieve above the national expectation for 11 year olds. An extremely well structured approach, which demands the precise use of scientific vocabulary, direct teaching of prescribed topics and investigate skills and the exemplary use of assessment to drive planning, has had a first rate effect on combating the pupils' poor language skills and limited prior knowledge and experience of the world around them. These weaknesses were previously reported as having a consistently adverse effect on the pupils' understanding and on the quality of their recorded work.
107. By the age of seven, pupils know about materials and how are similar and how they differ. Many can suggest how materials may change back to their original form after cooling. They know about their own growth and what they need to stay healthy. Pupils know about scientific principles and the investigative process because they learn at the earliest opportunity, through structured activities, which are practically based. Key Stage 1 pupils are able to use simple equipment, make predictions and are beginning to record and draw conclusions from their findings, using simple reports, diagrams and charts. Creative introductions, clear expositions, good resources and effective support is giving pupils the confidence to tackle and acquire the more difficult skills of asking their own questions in setting up investigations to explore their own ideas.
108. By the age of 11, pupils have a deeper grasp about how their bodies work. They know about forces and movement, sound and how it travels. They use their knowledge and skills to experiment about dissolving and investigate making effective parachutes. At Key Stage 2, pupils build on their knowledge and understanding well. Strengths in the teaching help pupils to acquire good habits in predicting, hypothesising, investigating, recording and checking their findings. By the end of Year 6 pupils have made good progress and understand and are capable of setting up a 'fair test' to satisfy their curiosity. They use what they know to make sensible predictions such as 'Which solids are soluble or insoluble?' but they are still less confident in talking at depth about the process.
109. As previously reported, the pupils continue to have good positive attitudes to science throughout the school. They are enthusiastic and have a keen interest in finding out

why. Relationships are good and pupil interaction has a positive effect on grouped activities. Most pupils are able to access resources effectively, and equipment is treated with respect. They are aware and sensitive to health and safety issues.

110. The overall quality of teaching is good, with very good teaching observed at the beginning and end of Key Stage 2. The teachers have a good subject knowledge and are confident in their teaching of science through an investigative approach. They motivate the pupils well and are creative in finding ways of broadening their limited knowledge and understanding of the world around them. Scrutiny of work in books and displays shows a good deal of evidence of such effective investigative work. For example, a display entitled 'Investigating Materials' reflected a whole spectrum of activities from the reception children working towards their Early Learning Goals to Year 6 pupils working in line with national expectations.
111. The quality of subject leadership and management is exemplary. The coordinator has compiled a detailed scheme of work, which covers all aspects of the subject, which safeguards continuity, and the developmental levels of the subject throughout the school. She is currently cross-referencing the document with the QCA scheme to ensure that staff may continue with total confidence. The main strength of her leadership is in the comprehensive assessment procedures introduced and the moderation of results, which is carried out on the completion of units of work, which helps teachers match their work to the needs of individual pupils.
112. Her determination and commitment to improving standards and quality of teaching are valued by her colleagues, who appreciate the support they are given. Resources and accommodation are well used, and the subject makes a good contribution to the pupils' personal development particularly their spirituality in the awe and wonder presented to them through the natural and physical phenomena.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

113. During the inspection it was possible to observe one art lesson. In addition discussions were held with the coordinator and pupils. Pupils' previous work was scrutinised. The evidence gained indicates that pupils' attainment is broadly in line with national expectations, with example of high quality work having been produced within both key stages. No judgement was made at the time of the last inspection.
114. In the lesson seen, Year 6 pupils involved themselves well in applying glue impregnated paper strips to their mask bases, concentrating on the task of fashioning the material to the relief of the plastic features.
115. Scrutiny of the many displays exhibited in the corridors and classrooms, sketch books and discussions with pupils show that they are offered a wide variety of opportunities to explore all aspects of art and design in an interesting and challenging way. For example, mixing colours and ink techniques used by Year 1 pupils in their miniatures (framed self portraits), the hugely successful paintings in the style of Mondrian produced by Year 2 pupils through to the magnificent Henry Moore sculptures which dominant the Year 6 teaching area. Work throughout the school shows a healthy progression in the pupils' ability to express their own ideas, to represent real objects and to express their feelings through the use of line, texture and tone.



116. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory with evidence that good direct teaching of subject skills has taken place for example; in the high quality weaving depicting the Victorian age and the clay tiles representing water scenes.
117. Teachers also use the subject well to capture the pupils' interest and to extend their knowledge and understanding within other curriculum areas. A striking example being the high quality work produced when their attention was focused on Portraits of the Tudors at The National Gallery London. History came alive through; the representation of characters and their dresses and costumes, including detailed work on necklines, the making of a range of jewellery and detailed tapestry work, by which the pupils used a wide range of techniques and media.
118. The programme of art topics and the use of the subject to support other curriculum areas, criticised in the previous inspection, are proving effective. Resources and accommodation are good and used well, including their use to produce and display three-dimensional work, which was deemed a weakness previously. The subject makes a valuable contribution to the pupils' personal development, particularly in their spiritual awareness and social skills.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

119. Standards are below average at the end of Key Stage 2. This is due to the lack of a systematic build up of skills and understanding over pupils' time in the juniors. Whilst many projects are carried out well, the underlying teaching and learning of designing and making, coupled with the ability to evaluate work, does not progress well from topic to topic.
120. At the last inspection, the school had only just started work in this area of the curriculum; therefore comments about the build up of skills over time would not have been appropriate.
121. No lessons were seen in the infants. However, in examining work on display in classes, it is evident that whilst pupils' abilities to make and build are adequate, their skills and understanding of design are not as expected by the age of seven. Work on display shows that they can cut and join different materials, for example when they cut out parts for a teddy bear model and join the parts together with string so that the models have limited movement. However, it is difficult to note any design element within this task.
122. In the juniors, planning shows the order of making, use of labelled diagrams but little evidence of any evaluation except in food technology. Pupils design sandwiches in Year 3, taking note of rules of hygiene and evaluating the success of the finished products. In Year 4 pupils design and make chairs for specific people in order to meet certain criteria. Musical instruments are made in Years 5 and 6.
123. In the lesson seen in Year 6, teaching was good, as it was overall at the last inspection. The lesson was well prepared and led smoothly from the previous work, which was recapped in order to remind pupils of what they had done. In working towards designing a slipper, pupils had looked at commercial products, disassembled some to see how they were constructed and then drew simple sketches of their own ideas. These had not been developed sufficiently through labelling materials, noting the tools they would use or through listing the order in which they would make the models. Whilst pupils talked about what they had done, there was no writing frame within which they might note ideas or evaluations. As a result, the topic failed to

support pupils' literacy skills. The good teaching did enthuse the pupils of all abilities, who carried out the work carefully, sharing resources well and discussing their slippers in their working pairs. Their good attitudes were also noted at the previous inspection.

124. As the school has only recently adopted a scheme of work for design and technology and there is little coordination of the subject throughout the school, there are gaps in both the development of skills and in the development of the various aspects of designing, making and evaluating products. Although the school development plan notes some of these issues, without intervention, which provides clear advice, it is difficult to see immediate improvements being made.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

125. Standards in geography are below those expected of pupils aged seven and 11 years. Although it was possible to see only one lesson during the inspection this judgement was evident from examining a sample of pupils' work and the displays on the walls, discussion with the coordinator and from talking with a group of Year 6 pupils. The school's action plan for geography shows that the staff are aware that the subject needs closer coordination and more attention than it has been given up to the start of this academic year. Already improvements have been made in order to 'raise the profile of geography' but these will take time to bring about standards fully in line with those of most schools nationally.
126. From looking at completed work in books and from discussion, there are plenty of examples of work of a satisfactory quality in itself. The weakness has been in ensuring full coverage of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. Linked with this has been an inconsistent pace and level of skill development as the pupils move up the school. Pupils study an appropriate range of locations in the locality and the wider world, but the skills of geographical enquiry and an understanding of the patterns and processes at work in the physical and human features of our world are underdeveloped. As a result, existing resources in and around the school have not been fully used. The recent adoption of a nationally approved scheme to be implemented by all the teachers should begin to make a difference.
127. During Years 1 and 2 pupils currently develop satisfactory mapping skills. By Year 2 they can draw simple maps of routes to school, with significant places and road names located and labelled. During this term, they visited the war memorial at the site of the local castle and in a good follow-up lesson, they were able to trace at least some of their route on an enlarged street map of the area and to position building upon it with adult help. They could distinguish between types of road such as an expressway, a bus way and a footpath, although many were uncertain about how the map represented these. In terms of geographical enquiry, they were able to select from their memories of the walk, places and buildings that they liked and disliked. There is much less evidence of the knowledge of location of places and environments and of an understanding that changes happen because of the actions of people and of physical processes. Continuous units of work to develop these aspects are now in place and if carried out as planned, should do much to improve the breadth of geographical knowledge and understanding.
128. In the Year 3 to Year 6 age group, the picture is very similar one of patchy provision with work of a satisfactory standard when undertaken. There is attention paid to ensuring the full range of locality as set out in the National Curriculum but by Years 5 and 6, understanding of why and how places change and a recognition of how places

fit into the wider region and therefore are interdependent, are largely missing. This helps to explain why Year 6 pupils had difficulty in naming features of the area apart from the Runcorn Bridge across the Mersey. Previous work of the current Year 6 pupils shows thoughtful comparisons between the life style of Runcorn. In Years 3 and 4, pupils have learned about the Indian village of Chembakoli. They wrote a mock diary to depict a typical day and made comparative lists of different life styles. Some pupils were able to explain in simple terms why the population was drifting away towards the towns. However, a sample group of these pupils now in Year 6 had a poor knowledge of places and environments in the UK or globally.

129. Because only one lesson was seen, it is not possible to make a judgement about the quality of teaching overall but in the Year 2 lesson observed, the teaching was good. The lesson was carefully structured and made good use of the recent visit to the local castle and memorial there. Photographic evidence was used appropriately and enlarged maps of the route helped the pupils to trace their route. The pupils learned well in this lesson. Scrutiny of work indicates that teachers look for interesting ways for pupils to record their understanding through diaries, field notes, comparison charts and diagrams. The subject is not intensively resourced but the adequate collection of maps charts videos and teaching books is centrally housed and is beginning to be more fully used.
130. Although standards have not risen since the last inspection the coordinator has a good grip upon what needs to be done as itemised in the subject's action plan. If the proposed monitoring of planning and improved use of resources take full effect then the school will be in better position to raise standards in all aspects of the subject.

## **HISTORY**

131. No lessons were seen at Key Stage 1 and it is not possible to form a judgement on standards or teaching at this key stage. The scrutiny of work and review of classroom displays showed some work on the pupils' visit to the nearby War Memorial. Its quality was sound.
132. Standards at Key Stage 2 are below expectations although all of the planned programmes are covered. Pupils have a limited knowledge of the past and their historical skills are under developed. Their sense of chronology by the age of 11 is poor. They snatch at facts they have acquired and relate them back to learning in certain year groups. Whilst some writing shows early skills of empathy, discussions with pupils reveal limited understanding. They have learned about but not from their studies. They have little notion of the impact of historical change on their own lives. In Year 3 and 4 they are learning about ancient Egypt and writing shows some understanding of the culture, customs and lifestyle of that era. Year 5 pupils are learning about ancient Greece. They have written about Theseus and the Minotaur. In Year 6 pupils made good progress in the lesson seen when they investigated how life was for Victorian children. The lesson was part of a series looking at the concept of the great change brought about in Victorian times. Other work shows they have made sound progress in writing about life as baker. Discussions reveal little recall of some of the facts they have written about.
133. There is no doubt that the pupils have been introduced, in Year 6, to historical skills about finding information from the past. They use an evidence framework which raises the questions, 'What do I know?' 'What would I like to know?' and 'What have I found out?' They know about topics 'in the moment' but over time their progress is weak because they lack memory retention skills. Few classrooms display timelines

and pupils are frequently unable to put their studies in a correct chronological sequence.

134. Attitudes in the lesson were mainly good and many pupils worked well in a cooperative manner, although a few were uninterested.
135. Teaching was good because work was very well planned and ensured pupils were required to collect information from a wide range of sources. The work was linked to a pending visit to Quarry Bank Hill.
136. The management of the subject is sound. Standards have not risen since the last inspection. A coordinator is in post but the subject has not been high profile for development as the school has concentrated on literacy and numeracy. The time is right for teachers to think about how the subject can be used effectively to use literacy skills to research, record and organise their findings. The planned curriculum covers all the National Curriculum Programmes of Study.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

137. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are satisfactory overall with some good features. Comments in the previous report about the satisfactory nature of standards, did not focus on all aspects of the subject, but were confined mainly to discussing word processing, data handling and art work. These three areas still show the best standards in the subject, but other required areas are now dealt with and standards in these are improving.
138. Improvements in the subject have been brought about by:-
  - Class teachers having much better subject knowledge as a result of training.
  - Much improved resources to support learning.
  - Clearer long-term plans which now incorporate all aspects of the statutory requirements for the subject.
  - More detailed short-term planning.
  - Good management of the subject by the coordinator.
139. All of the above have had significant impact on improving the breadth and depth of pupils' work and have set the subject on course for further improvements.
140. At Key Stage 1, where standards are sometimes above expectations, displays show how well pupils can access programs for drawing and "painting". It is clear that pupils in Year 1 can change their on-screen brushes, colour and the way they fill in areas of their paintings. In Year 2, there are good examples of pupils using word-processing skills to support their work in literacy, writing instructional text. In a Year 2 lesson, pupils were further developing their keyboard skills and knowledge as they used tool bars to select more advanced methods of painting, by selecting spray techniques. They put this to good effect as they tried to emulate the work of Mondrian. The class teacher showed her own good subject knowledge by accessing paintings by Mondrian from the Internet so that all pupils might see and discuss the images.
141. At Key Stage 2, once again, elements of the work were also above expectations. Work in Year 3 showed pupils combining text and graphics well as they write about "Waves". Images from a digital camera were also noted in connection with work carried out in design and technology. Pupils in Year 4 were able to use the cut and paste technique as they re-arranged text and correct punctuation. Mathematics is

supported well by ICT in Year 5 where pupils' work shows access to a spreadsheet program. Through this, pupils have learned to put in their own data, save, add more information, calculate results and display them.

142. By the end of Key Stage 2, Year 6 pupils have carried out their drafting work for English on the computer and have produced a report in the style of a newspaper, using a publishing program. They have used the Internet to research for an Egyptian topic, while in a Year 6 lesson pupils were seen creating a multi-media presentation. Good direct teaching of skills throughout the lesson improves pupils' skills and allows them to experiment and practise these skills in a worthwhile topic. They are producing a Victorian presentation and are seen experimenting in joining their slides together in a range of different ways. Here, the importance of having a good ratio of computers to pupils is clearly seen, with pupils having good quality time at their machines and consequently covering a good deal of work, at a high level.
143. Teaching was good in the four lessons seen. Teachers' own subject knowledge and their ability to use this in order to teach skills well, are a critical factor in the good and sometimes very good progress pupils make in their work. Although some teachers are still coming to grips with a very recently installed interactive whiteboard, used for class teaching, their current levels of knowledge is sufficient to take their own learning forward and to support their pupils well. As a result of this and the good management of lessons observed, pupils are excited by the work, have good attitudes towards it and make the most of their time in the new computer suite. Teachers work hard at ensuring that all pupils, irrespective of their abilities, have equal access to the computers and are supported well. As a result, all pupils tend to make similar good progress.
144. The recent introduction of ICT to support work in literacy and numeracy has been effective. Teachers are planning work in some of these lessons, which require them to use computers. Although the coordinator has not yet had opportunities to observe this work, she does see the plans for these lessons. It is to be hoped that this will develop in order to support other areas of the curriculum.
145. Since the last inspection, the school has adopted an assessment checklist, on which teachers can note pupils' progress and the standards they achieve. At the same time, pupils also keep diaries of their access to computers. This is a good move forward by the school, but it does not yet involve pupils in making evaluative comments about the standard of their own work in the same format.

## **MUSIC**

146. Standards at the last inspection were noted as being satisfactory at Key Stage 1, but unsatisfactory at Key Stage 2. The progress pupils made, at that time, was unsatisfactory throughout the school. Since that time, although no music coordinator has been employed by the school, the school has managed to secure the services of a specialist part time teacher who is now delivering good quality teaching to each class in the school. As a result of this, standards in singing have risen so that they are satisfactory throughout the school and slightly better in the lower junior classes.
147. As the current teacher does not have a school scheme of work to work from and has only had opportunities to work on a very small part of the overall music curriculum, standards in composition and in listening and appraising music are still unsatisfactory. Currently the fact that two classes are taught together throughout the school, means that access to instruments, small group work and a more

individualised approach to aspects of the teaching and learning of music are very difficult to put into effect. As a result, progress in these two areas is unsatisfactory.

148. In the singing lessons seen, the quality of teaching was good with some very good features. The specialist teacher made good use of her very good subject knowledge in order to engage pupils and keep them motivated. As a result, little time was lost during the lessons. All pupils benefited from the teachers' enthusiastic and lively approach. This ensured an inclusive approach to each lesson, with all pupils, including those with special educational needs, taking part. As a result, in Year 4 for example, all sang "Lord Longleat has a game reserve", with real enthusiasm, keeping in tune and having satisfactory diction and use of dynamics. Several pupils were given opportunities to accompany the singing using tuned percussion instruments. Whilst this involved only a small group of pupils, the remainder used simple untuned percussion to fulfil the same objective.
149. The lessons were well structured so that clapping, changing rhythms, following sung patterns and clapping to recorded tunes formed the basis of introductions to the work in music. Even the youngest pupils remembered songs they had previously sung, such as "The animals went in two by two", whilst older pupils were singing rounds and part work, as in "Praise ye the Lord - Alleluia". The specialist teacher was supported well by the class teachers, who helped with the management of the lessons and helped with any group work.
150. The current format of teaching groups of up to 50 pupils does not effectively address the requirements of the National Curriculum because the needs of the pupils to work in smaller groups, have more opportunities to experiment with instruments and compose are not met. The reported regular poor behaviour, noted at the last inspection, was not a feature of current lessons, due to the exciting and pacy approach of the teaching.
151. Specialist instrumental teaching, which takes place in the school, is also of high quality. A group of pupils receives good quality individual and small group teaching for brass instruments. As a result of the small group work, pupils make good progress and achieve good standards of competence. Although these pupils were not observed closely, the "Theme from Titanic" and Christmas melodies were regular tunes heard during the inspection.
152. There was little evidence of music supporting the wider multicultural development of pupils, although the school had engaged an African drummer to hold workshops in the school during a previous year.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

153. Standards of attainment, reported as satisfactory at the time of the previous inspection, are broadly in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages. A group of Year 4 pupils attained high standards in their dance lesson. In a Year 1 lesson, pupils moved confidently in a controlled way, changing direction and speed well. They made good progress in developing their 'bunny jumps' and predicted that the exercise would affect their heart beat and pulse rate. Their good behaviour had a positive effect on the quality of learning. Whilst Year 6 pupils demonstrated their increased knowledge and understanding through their successful performance of synchronised sequences of travelling movements and balances.

154. Pupils throughout the school respond well in physical education lessons. They wear suitable clothing and show their eagerness by changing quickly without any fuss. They try hard and show great concentration. For example, in creating a flow of arm movements when developing their ability to carry out 'canon' movements in dance. Pupils of all ages control their excitement and participate with enjoyment. They take pleasure in each other's achievements and have a watchful eye for their own and others, health and safety. Instructions, particularly to 'stop' are obeyed well.
155. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with very good teaching observed at Key Stage 2. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and good use is made of specialist input for example, in the teaching of dance. Teachers plan, prepare and deliver their lessons well, they are aware of what pupils can do and extend their skills through good teaching of basic skills. Appropriate emphasis is given to how apparatus is moved, set up and checked for safety.
156. Policy documentation gives effective guidance to teachers, who are well supported by the coordinator. Resources and accommodation are generally good, although the well equipped hall makes life a little difficult because of its poor acoustics. Outdoor games provision for team activities is good and well used. School teams are entered into a league and inter school games take place. The school continues to perform well in matches, individuals doing themselves and the school proud by their efforts. The subject makes a valuable contribution to the pupils' personal development.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

157. Standards are comparable to those in most schools for pupils aged seven and 11. Although it was possible only to observe two lessons, the judgement was based upon an examination of pupils' work, of the scheme of work and teachers' planning and also discussion with the coordinator.
158. Religious education lessons play a suitable part in setting the tone for the school and in developing social and moral behaviour. From Years 1 and 2 upward, pupils learn to understand what it means to live and work alongside others. This is because in many lessons teachers help the pupils to interpret religious beliefs in terms of what they may mean to them. For instance, Year 2 pupils wrote their own rules for living, as a 'good person' that included heartfelt statements such as, be kind and lovely to your neighbour. By the age of seven pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of the life of Jesus and of key stories from the Old and the New Testaments, and of the main Christian festivals. They have learned about Judaism and understand the importance of the Bible and of the Torah to believers and examine the celebrations of both faiths.
159. In Years 3 and 4, they learn more about Christian festivals and celebrations such as Easter. They also broaden their knowledge and understanding of other faiths by finding out about Hindu festivals such as Divali and Holi. They are able to name the Hindu gods and complete a comparison chart to show their key attributes. Year 4 pupils have completed a well presented class information book depicting signs and symbols of religious faiths with equal recognition given to those of Christianity Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism. By Years 5 and 6, pupils are reflecting more deeply about the insights gained in lessons. They research the lives and deeds of people who have been influenced by their religious beliefs such as Helen Keller and Martin Luther King and show understanding of what drove these people forward. They write their own versions of the Lord's Prayer and learn more about the Hindu faith and how belief is expressed through dance and drama.

160. Because it was only possible to see two lessons both of which were in Years 1 and 2, no overall judgement on teaching is made. The quality of teaching seen in the sample was good in one lesson and satisfactory with good features in the other. The newly adopted scheme of work follows national guidance and is in accord with the locally agreed syllabus. This is having a good impact upon the teaching because teachers feel more confident with its format and can clearly see what they should be teaching and when, and how this builds upon what has gone before. At present, pupils in Years 5 and 6 have not had the full benefit of this and their experience has been more disjointed than that of the younger pupils. However, this is a weakness that is now being addressed. A strength of the observed lessons the way that the teachers make the lesson as interesting and relevant as possible and use questioning effectively to help the pupils understand the deeper meaning of lessons. For instance, Year 1 and 2 pupils were able to suggest presents that they might bring to the baby Jesus such as 'a kiss' 'a hug' and 'to love him'. In Year 2, role play was used successfully to help the pupils appreciate the dangers faced by Mary and Joseph on their journey to Bethlehem and comparisons with present-day journeys were used well. The key ideas from units of work are reinforced by the titles and captions added to the pages of the class books of pupil work. These help them to value what has been achieved as a class, and act as a source of reference later. A present weakness is in the limited set of resources to support the teaching. There are some artefacts and information texts available but these are not plentiful enough to be used by the children to extend and develop the teacher's initial exposition. This means that follow-up activities often rely too much upon pupils writing and drawing about what they have been 'told' rather than finding out more for themselves.
161. The coordinator is developing the resource base and is advising on planning. As yet there is no monitoring of lessons or of planning, which if done, could help to ensure better continuity across the year groups.



