

INSPECTION REPORT

EASTWAY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Moreton

LEA area: Wirral

Unique reference number: 105001

Headteacher: Mr B. McNutt

Reporting inspector: Mrs C. Field

9479

Dates of inspection: 14th – 17th January 2002

Inspection number: 194232

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 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Eastway Moreton Wirral
Postcode:	L46 8SS
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr A. Bestwick
Date of previous inspection:	19 th – 22 nd May 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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9479	C. Field	Registered inspector		Information about the school The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further?
9428	J. Butler	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
1189	S. Brown	Team inspector	Science Geography History	
15414	D. Carrington	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Physical education	How well is the school led and managed?
2024	R. Hart	Team inspector	Provision for pupils with special educational needs The work of the special educational needs unit	
22841	P. M. Jackson	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology Music Areas of learning for children in the foundation stage Equality of opportunity Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	
23081	C. Waine	Team inspector	English Religious education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is situated in Moreton, a small town on the outskirts of Birkenhead and located in the centre of a large housing estate that comprises a mix of owner-occupied, council owned and rented accommodation. It is an area of recognised economic deprivation as reflected in the well above proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. There are 285 pupils on roll: 145 boys and 140 girls aged between three and eleven years. The number on the school's roll is falling dramatically due to a declining birth rate in the area. Pupils' attainment on entry to reception classes is below average. The vast majority of pupils are of White European heritage with a very small proportion from Black or Bangladeshi backgrounds. One pupil comes from a home where English is not the main spoken language but has sufficient command of English to access the full curriculum. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is well above average; four pupils have a statement of special educational needs in place and 3 more are awaiting statutory assessment. A very high proportion of pupils receives support from external agencies; however, they do not have a statement. The school has an additional unit provision for 30 pupils aged from 5-11 years with moderate learning difficulties to serve the needs of a wider area than the school's usual catchment. There were twenty-seven junior-age pupils with statements at the time of the inspection in the unit. These pupils are assessed as having special needs capabilities (SNC) and are referred to as pupils with SNC in the report.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Eastway Primary is an effective school. Pupils are helped to grow towards becoming responsible adults within a calm, supportive and happy environment. Standards of behaviour are very good and this is because of the school's very positive practices and strong focus on developing pupils' self-esteem and confidence. Academic standards are not quite as positive but are improving. The below average standards in part reflect the very high proportion of pupils who have special educational needs but also reflect some under-achievement, particularly by higher attaining pupils. Most pupils are making at least satisfactory progress because of effective teaching. Pupils in Years 1 and 6 and those with special educational needs throughout the school receive consistently good quality teaching and they are making good progress as a result. The headteacher provides clear educational direction for the work of the school and is well supported by a team of staff who are united in their determination to make improvements. The school has set challenging targets for raising standards that demonstrate its ambition. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils make good progress in English, art and design, religious education and physical education.
- Standards are above average in art and design and physical education because of consistently good quality teaching. Singing is of a good standard at all ages.
- A significant number of pupils are enabled to achieve well in reading because of highly effective strategies.
- Adults in school are very good role models for the pupils; they enjoy being with the pupils and form excellent relationships that underpin the successful learning.
- The school's strong pastoral system encourages good attitudes to work and high standards of behaviour and ensures that pupils develop a very good set of values and principles to live by.
- The good provision made for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is highly effective in preparing pupils to become responsible future citizens and take their place in a multicultural and ethnically diverse society.
- The school's very good provision for those pupils with special educational needs, including those with SNC ensures that they make good progress in meeting their individual academic, social or behavioural targets.

What could be improved

- Standards in English, mathematics, science, geography and history are not high enough, particularly for high attaining pupils.
- School assessment, monitoring and evaluation systems are not sufficiently rigorous in identifying strengths and weaknesses and in using findings to drive forward improvement at a quick pace.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

In 1997 the school's inspection reported on many strengths. Five key issues were identified for improvement that covered planning, assessment, monitoring and evaluation work, raising the attainment of more able pupils and raising standards in information technology. The school has made good progress since then in improving information technology and steady improvement elsewhere, more work remains to be done in all areas. The school's management systems are currently being reviewed. Considerable emphasis is placed on Performance Management systems that are seen to be the key tool for improving teaching and its impact on pupils' progress. Managers have yet to set out a programme that will ensure a wider perspective to monitoring and evaluation activities. The school is at a point where it has the capacity to press ahead with improvement.

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				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
English	E	C	D	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
mathematics	E	E	E	D	
science	D	E	E	D	

Eastway's performance in the 2001 National Curriculum tests for eleven-year-olds was above average in English and below average in science and mathematics when compared to similar schools. When set against all schools' results, Eastway's performance was below average in English and well below average in mathematics and science. Boys' performance was below that of the girls and significantly below boys nationally. It is a fact that more boys comprise lower sets, the majority of pupils with special educational needs are boys and SNC pupils in Year 6 were all boys. Data reveals that most pupils made expected progress from Year 2 to Year 6 in English and science but not in mathematics. Results at Key Stage 1 are not as positive and overall were well below average.

The school's rate of improvement is below the national trend. This in part reflects the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and the fact that those with SNC have to be counted in the data. The school has just begun to target those Year 6 pupils who are capable of achieving at the higher level 5 in English and mathematics and this is assisting these pupils in achieving well and in supporting the improved performance of the school's results. The school is not yet setting targets in science and this is a missed opportunity. Target setting is not used consistently in other years and this is limiting the school's potential to track how well different pupils are achieving over their time in school.

Inspection findings judge standards at the end of the Foundation Stage to be below average. At seven years, standards are well below average in English and mathematics and below average in science. Standards at eleven years are below average in English mathematics and science. The current Year 6 comprises fifty per cent of pupils with special educational needs, six of whom have specific statements and have SNC. This is a significant factor to be taken into account when judging standards. Standards are below average throughout the school in geography and history and average in information and communication technology (ICT), design and technology, music and religious education. Standards are above average in art and design and physical education. From reception to Year 6 most pupils, including those with English as an additional language, make satisfactory gains in knowledge, understanding and skills. Poor writing skills are hampering some pupils from recording fully their knowledge and understanding and this has a negative impact on the standards being achieved. The level of challenge in the work set for the highest attainers is not yet consistent in all lessons and as such is an area for improvement. Teachers' high expectations are enabling all pupils in Year 1 to make consistently good progress and in Year 6 setting arrangements are supporting positively higher level achievement. Pupils with special educational needs, including the very high proportion with statements make good progress against their individual targets.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are very enthusiastic about school and work hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Behaviour in class and at play is positive, pupils are polite and helpful. There has been one exclusion within the last four years.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils are confident, open-minded and compassionate. They have very respectful and harmonious relationships.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Punctuality has improved.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

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

Teaching is satisfactory overall and better than it was when the school was previously inspected. Teaching was 98 per cent satisfactory or better in the 102 lessons observed during this inspection, 36 per cent were good, 10 per cent very good and one per cent excellent. The skills of literacy and numeracy are taught effectively throughout the school. Good quality specialist teaching of SNC pupils is enabling these pupils to make good progress against their individual targets. Teaching is satisfactory in nursery and reception. It is more often good in Year 1 and Year 6. The setting arrangements in Years 5 and 6 are a positive feature in supporting successful teaching and learning in mathematics. Work in pupils' books from last September suggests a slightly less positive picture in Years 2 to 4. The progress that a significant proportion of potentially high-attaining pupils make is erratic in some years because not all teachers expect enough and because there is unsatisfactory use of assessment to inform the planning of lessons that would enable all pupils to make the best rates of progress possible. Too few opportunities for writing are holding back potentially better learning in geography and history.

Pupils at all stages try hard in lessons and work with sustained application. They show pride in their work and enjoy their studies. They show positive responses even when the work is undemanding. Pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements make just as much effort as their class-mates and are achieving well.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall. The curriculum is well planned and meets statutory requirements but lacks cohesion in the Foundation Stage. The quality of the curriculum is enriched by the additional experiences provided through the good quality visits and programme of invited visitors to school to share their experiences.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. These pupils are helped to learn effectively and make good progress against their individual targets. Inclusion of SNC pupils into junior classes is a strength of the school.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Pupils' moral development is particularly well fostered whilst their spiritual, social and cultural development is given good attention and enables most to become rounded and responsible young citizens.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good overall. The school is caring and responsive to pupils' special needs. Very good provision is made for the health, welfare and safety of pupils. Teachers work closely with parents in guiding pupils' personal development. However, the use of assessment to plan the next step in learning is unsatisfactory, particularly for children in the Foundation Stage and high attaining pupils from Year 2 upwards.
How well does the school work in partnership with parents	Good. Strategies to promote a productive home-school partnership are proving effective and are benefiting the pupils' education. Some of the written communication could be more interesting and attractive.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher provides clear educational direction. The ethos is supportive and consensual and successfully draws on people's particular strengths. The Performance Management team has a growing understanding of the part they need to play to support improving standards, teaching and learning. So far too few co-ordinators have become involved in looking analytically at the school's work and targeting improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governors are supportive and interested in the work of the school; they are immensely proud of its inclusive nature. They have yet to look critically at data to ensure that Best Value criteria are applied fully. Some publications do not meet legal requirements and this requires review.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The headteacher has undertaken an analysis of test results without SNC pupils so that a more accurate picture can be gained of the school's performance. There has been limited other analysis by gender, for example or across subjects. Assessment systems are over complex and do not enable an at a glance profile of how well different pupils are achieving, particularly high attainers.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Staffing levels, accommodation and learning resources are good. The use of new technologies is a developing area. SNC income is well spent. The school provides an effective education for all pupils despite the fact that standards in some subjects are not yet high enough. The school gives 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"> • Children like school, are happy and enabled to become mature and responsible. • Behaviour is good. • Parents are well informed about progress • The school works closely with parents • Teaching is good. • School is well managed and led 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of extra-curricular activities.

The team supports parents' views but flags up that the good and better teaching is not yet widespread enough. There is enrichment to the curriculum through the well-conceived programme of visits and visitors that take place in school time.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. To some extent the overall picture in standards reported at the time of the previous inspection was more positive than today. Based on present data, a clearer picture is now available in respect of comparison with national standards. The school has sustained good standards in art and design, religious education and physical education and made steady improvement to most other subjects even though some standards are below average. The school's good attention to basic skills, especially reading, is demonstrated by the broadly average standards being achieved by most pupils, many of whom started schools with well below average literacy skills. ICT which was a subject weakness at the time of the previous inspection, is in much better shape today, and standards, currently at average levels, have risen rapidly in the intervening years due to the school's good efforts.

2. The school's rate of improvement in raising standards is below the national trend and at first glance this is a worrying feature until the underlying reasons are explored further. Last year there were significantly high proportions of pupils with special educational needs in Years 2 and 6. National data does not reflect the high proportion of moderate learning difficulties catered for in the schools SNC classes. When the results are examined against those of similar schools without the SNC pupils the picture is much more positive at Year 6 and less so at Year 2. The school's performance in National Curriculum tests is appropriate when the special needs situation is fully explored. The next step is to give to potentially high achievers more consistent opportunities to reach the levels of which they are capable. Writing skills particularly handwriting and spelling, show up as a weakness, hampering pupils' recording their knowledge and understanding in subjects such as science, geography and history, for example. Pupils show secure knowledge and understanding in these subjects during their discussions and when answering the teacher's questions; in contrast their written work is at a much lower level. Insufficient attention is paid to providing pupils with a range of opportunities to record what they learn and develop writing skills. This is a crucial area for improvement as part of raising standards across the board.

3. The standards achieved by seven-year-olds in the 2001 tests were very low in reading, writing and mathematics. When compared to similar schools, they were below average in reading and mathematics and very low in writing. The schools results fell into the bottom five per cent of schools nationally. As indicated earlier a clearer picture of overall standards achieved by the school is obtained when the SNC pupils (some 38 per cent) are removed from the data. When these pupils' results are removed from the data, standards are below average overall.

4. The standards achieved by eleven-year-olds in the 2001 tests were below average in English and well below average in mathematics and science. Boys' performance was below that of the girls in school and significantly below boys' achievements nationally. Data reveals that most pupils made expected progress from Year 2 to Year 6 in English and science but not in mathematics. Standards were above average in English and below average in science and mathematics when compared to similar schools. When the ten per cent SNC pupils' results are removed from the analysis the picture is better. Standards overall are above those seen in similar schools.

5. Children in the reception class start school with below average knowledge, understanding and skills overall and generally make steady progress during their time in the Foundation Stage. By the time they enter Year 1 standards are still below average in

communication, language and literacy, mathematics and creative areas. Standards are broadly average in personal, social and physical areas and well below average in knowledge and understanding of the world. Satisfactory teaching enables the children to increase steadily the skills with which they handle numbers, to move and control their bodies, build good reading habits, to work creatively and to grow in their awareness of the world about them. The strong focus on enabling children to plan and manage appropriate aspects of their learning is supporting positively the good progress they make in developing confidence and self-esteem. The potential for some to develop more advanced communication skills is hampered by the lack of focus on purposeful talk. There is a shared curriculum for the nursery and reception classes but there is more to be done by management to ensure that the provision is fully cohesive.

6. Inspection findings judge standards at seven years to be well below average in English and mathematics and below average in science. Standards at eleven years are below average in English mathematics and science. The current Year 6 comprises fifty per cent of pupils with special educational needs, six of whom have specific statements. This is a significant factor to be taken into account when judging standards. Standards are below average throughout the school in geography and history and average in ICT, design and technology, music and religious education. Standards are above average in art and design and physical education.

7. In many classes there are more boys than girls and in the National Curriculum tests boys do not do as well girls. It is a fact that more boys comprise lower sets, the majority of pupils with special educational needs are boys and SNC pupils in Year 6 are all boys. During lesson observations in the current inspection boys and girls worked equally well, were just as well behaved and motivated as each other and showed the same levels of interest and enjoyment. Year 6 boys in particular show a refreshing maturity about their work.

8. From Year 1 to Year 6 most pupils, including those with English as an additional language make satisfactory gains in knowledge, understanding and skills but there are refinements in planning and assessment practice that could make these much better for some pupils. The level of challenge in the work set for the highest attainers is not yet consistent in all lessons and as such is an area for improvement. Teachers' high expectations are enabling all pupils in Years 1 and 6 to make consistently good progress. Setting arrangements in Years 5 and 6 in mathematics are supporting positively higher-level achievement. The boost given to pupils' learning in Year 6 has a positive impact on their performance in National Curriculum tests, but more could be done to enable learning to build up incrementally from the Foundation Stage onwards. Those pupils with special needs who benefit from well-conceived individual education plans which include precise and regularly reviewed targets are making consistently good progress. This good practice in target setting can usefully serve as a model to support improvement for other groups, particularly high attainers. There is some good use of target setting to support advancement in English and mathematics that has yet to extend to science, and this is a missed opportunity. The school has yet to draw together the whole school picture of target setting to check up on how well different pupils in school are doing, this too is a missed opportunity to evaluate the school's performance and take timely action as appropriate.

9. The standards pupils achieve in basic skills are sound overall. Pupils of all ages have good listening skills. They listen attentively to the teacher and follow instructions well. In all classes the pupils speak with confidence and are willing to respond when asked a question but few occasions were observed where pupils voiced their own opinions or put forward well-reasoned arguments. Reading skills are at a sound level and the pupils show real pleasure in sharing books and enjoying stories and poems. Pupils in Year 5 who read to inspectors were very keen on reading Greek myths and legends; a genre usefully adding to their cultural

awareness. Writing skills are poor overall. Pupils sequence their ideas well enough but choose from a narrow vocabulary to enliven writing. Spelling and handwriting are particularly weak aspects, however; spellings are too often inaccurate and the youngest pupils have yet to form a comfortable grip that gives them good pencil control. Older pupils often write with pencils that are not sharp enough and their presentation is untidy. Pupils have a reasonable recall of number facts, an appropriate understanding of shape, space and measures. By the age of eleven most can work quickly and accurately when working with numbers. The focus on mathematical problem solving and investigation is now much sharper than in 1997 and is good, particularly in later junior years.

10. In all classes, both literacy and numeracy strategies have been introduced with confidence and are supporting well-structured lessons that enable effective learning. The next step, to ensure that rates of progress are as good as they can be, is to promote more widely the very best practice seen in school, for example in Year 1 very good practice ensures that all pupils are given challenging work that they are expected to complete in the time allocated. Plenary sessions here were very useful times in which pupils shared their new learning and decided honestly whether they had met the clear expectations set by their teacher. The teachers' evaluations of how well different pupils are achieving is very much helped by this approach and can feed forward into the next day's lesson planning.

11. Skills in the use and application of ICT are developing well. There were several aspects of ICT that gave concern in 1997 and these have all been addressed. The new ICT suite is time-tabled intensively to enable pupils ample time to develop skills and knowledge steadily across all strands of the subject, including computer control and modelling and the use of the Internet. So far, class based computers have yet to be put to the same good impact to support cross-curricular use of ICT.

12. The school has set challenging targets for the end of Year 6 tests in English and mathematics this May. Managers predict that a much higher proportion of pupils than last year will achieve at the higher level 5 in English and mathematics. Relatively lower predictions have been set in science at levels 4 and 5 without good reason. The school has exceeded the targets set with the local education authority in previous years and would hope to do so following additional support work. Managers are aware that target setting work has yet to give an accurate or precise picture of pupils' expected performance in other year groups. The inspection team judges the school to have sound capacity to reach the targets set for May.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

13. Since the previous inspection the school has maintained this aspect of its work as a real strength. Parents say their children are happy to come to school and indeed a group of Year 6 pupils, if granted one wish, said they would wish to be younger so that they could enjoy more time at Eastway Primary school. Pupils have good attitudes to lessons, are eager to learn, and are particularly keen on practical activities, whether it be in art and design, technology or mathematics. They are developing an 'I can do it' approach to their work, and try very hard whatever the task. Even the youngest pupils have a well-developed sense of curiosity and inquiry, which was evident in their detailed examination of mealworms.

14. Behaviour is very good both in class and at play. In the lessons seen, attitudes and behaviour were good or better four times out of five, and never less than satisfactory. Pupils are polite and helpful, and they treat each other and learning resources with care and respect. They are quiet and sensible in class, and willingly follow class routines. The pupils with SNC, some of whom have particular behavioural problems, are generally indistinguishable from their peers. When they are included in whole class lessons,

harmonious and co-operative learning takes place. This was particularly noticeable in a Year 4 dance lesson where some of the best attitudes and achievements were from these pupils. There has been only one pupil excluded in the last four years, when the school had to demonstrate its refusal to accept violent aggressive behaviour for the protection of its pupils. No evidence of anti-social behaviour was seen during the inspection. At playtimes, when the age groups are to some extent segregated by the staggered times, pupils happily co-exist in a range of activities, some of which are pre-booked to maintain fairness and opportunities for all.

15. Relationships between pupils are good. The school is justifiably proud of the open-minded way pupils' respect, understand and help their class-mates with special educational needs. Pupils learn from the excellent relationships they experience with all the adults who teach and support them. This is a notable feature of their good personal development. They are able to reflect on their own values, and those of others, showing empathy and respect. Through poetry and art and design, for example the talking tapestries work based on the book 'Elidor', they can express themselves at a spiritual level. Indeed they responded with wonder and amazement when appreciating the beauty of ethnic artworks in lessons in Year 1. They are developing a good level of awareness of the values and contributions made by other races to modern British society. From their arrival in the nursery, they are helped to become independent, and this quality is developed through the school both in work and in the monitor duties they carry out. Some pupils in Year 6 demonstrate this well when they organise fund-raising events for the less fortunate, for example through Blue Peter appeals. Pupils' generous response to charitable giving indicates their compassion, and they clearly have a well developed sense of justice and fair-play. They are confident young people who are well-prepared for their next steps in life.

16. Attendance is broadly satisfactory and remains consistently just below the national average. Unauthorised absence is low. Punctuality has improved since a re-organisation of the school entrances but for some pupils, for instance young carers, social reasons create problems with full attendance and arrival on time.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

17. Teaching is better than it was when the school was previously inspected; the staff have built up a confidence and level of knowledge between them that enables the full range of subjects to be taught effectively. The impact of good quality training and support is very much apparent in the quality of teaching in ICT which four years ago was unsatisfactory and today is satisfactory. The strengths identified in teaching in English, religious education, art and design and physical education in the 1997 report have all been sustained. Some good teamwork and collaborative efforts apparent in the teaching of some subjects in 1997 are still in evidence. There are many talents amongst the staff; in some instances particular expertise is tapped into to good effect, for example in teaching singing, art and design and science. The management of behaviour is much improved; today it is one of the strengths in provision. This shows the capacity the school has to make concerted improvement elsewhere in the best interests of the pupils. The very best practice in teaching and learning in the school has yet to be sufficiently shared. A timetable of rigorous monitoring and evaluation has not yet been established and the next step is to involve more people in observing work in classrooms. These are important aspects for improvement.

18. Teaching quality observed during this inspection was satisfactory overall, with strengths leading to pupils making good progress in Year 1 and Year 6, especially in English and mathematics. Particular strengths of teaching are the management of pupils and the teaching of basic skills, though more attention is needed to promoting writing and recording skills. The teaching of SNC pupils is consistently good and this leads to them making good

progress against their individual targets. A range of very effective strategies is in place to support pupils' literacy development. For example, the reading support programmes are having a very positive impact on helping pupils achieve well in reading. The school has just begun the assessment of pupils who it hopes will benefit from a pilot scheme initiated by the local education authority to support progress in mathematics. The setting arrangements in Years 5 and 6 are a positive feature in supporting both teaching and learning. Teachers are able to focus the work on the needs of a narrower band of ability and to meet individual needs more successfully than in the mixed ability classes in the earlier part of the junior-phase. Further, in Year 6, teachers are now refining the work within the set to ensure that higher attaining pupils in particular are extended and challenged sufficiently by the work. The input that support staff make to assisting both teaching and learning is a positive feature. The number of adults in school in support of pupils' learning is much higher than in many schools; governors are keen to maintain this in the light of the favourable outcomes.

19. Of the 102 lessons observed, 52 were satisfactory, 37 good and eleven very good or excellent. Teaching is particularly successful in promoting positive working conditions; classes are nearly always happy, purposeful places. Adults in school are very good role models for the pupils; they enjoy being with the pupils and form excellent relationships that underpin the successful learning. Just two unsatisfactory lessons were seen in upper Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2. Here expectations were too low for potentially high attaining pupils who completed too little work of good quality. Because the work was undemanding pupils became fussy and not as "switched on to learning" as typically observed.

20. There are no serious weaknesses in the quality of teaching. Shortcomings in planning and assessment throughout the school are hampering some higher attaining pupils from learning to their full capacity; this is particularly apparent in Years 2 to 4. Work in books from last September highlights these shortcomings very clearly. Work from different pupils has a sameness about it and an over-reliance on work sheets is limiting potentially better standards of work in history and geography at all ages. Too little attention is being paid to enabling pupils a range of opportunities to record their work; writing is a weak aspect in many pupils' books where problems with spellings and poor presentation detract from the knowledge and understanding being shown. In Year 1 and 6 more consistently good teaching is compensating for these shortcomings. Marking in books is variable, where it is best, typically in English work, it shows exactly what the pupils need to do to reach the standards expected and where improvement lies. The setting of homework is satisfactory; pupils in Year 6 have produced some interesting topic folders completed at home.

21. Teaching overall is enabling willing and enthusiastic learners. Pupils work hard, concentrate well and become mature and sensible learners. Pupils enjoy their lessons and demonstrate that they can work independently and responsibly when required, though the opportunities to promote this are not consistent. During the great majority of lesson observations, boys and girls worked equally well, were just as well behaved and motivated as each other and showed the same levels of interest and enjoyment. Year 6 boys in particular, show good application in their work. The only pupil with English as an additional language, speaks English well and makes the same progress as other pupils. Pupils work very hard for success, including those with special educational needs and SNC pupils who are achieving well because of their desire to do well for themselves and their teachers.

22. Throughout the school there has been beneficial impact on the achievements of pupils from the successful implementation of both the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. The opening sessions are well structured, though more use could be made of support staff at this time to assess which pupils respond to the teacher's questions. It is usually the case that group activities are purposeful and productive times in which the majority of pupils get on well with their independent tasks. Plenary sessions were observed to

be rather rushed in both numeracy and literacy sessions and only occasionally did teachers return to the objectives they had set to assess what learning gains had been made. The good practice in setting targets for individual pupils in literacy and numeracy is not yet a feature of lesson planning or on-going assessment.

23. Relationships in classes are very good. Teachers want to do their best for the pupils and vice-versa. Most teachers have sound understanding of the needs of the range of pupils in their class but in planning there is insufficient reference to the actual levels pupils are working at that could usefully highlight what the next step should be to move up a level. This is especially relevant to the potentially highest achieving pupils, who need tightly focused work to ensure they reach rather than just miss the higher level they could achieve. In some of the lessons observed, the written lesson plans confused *learning objectives* with *teaching activities*, and some were very sketchy in the detail covered. In the better lessons, skilful teaching compensated for these shortcomings but this is one aspect that requires improvement to ensure consistently good practice from nursery to Year 6.

24. Teachers assess and chart pupils' achievements at regular intervals and there is an abundance of assessment data. There is less recording of more immediate learning gains following lessons and this is one aspect that the school is aware it needs to improve. When talking to inspectors, Year 6 pupils showed good levels of self-knowledge about what they were good at and where they needed to improve their work. The good practice in target setting and self-review has yet to be used to the full as part of on-going assessment. The school is not yet making the best use of the range of its assessment data to track how well different pupils or groups are doing in school and to seek improvement where necessary.

25. Children under five benefit from sound teaching and get off to a secure start in their education as a result. The staff in nursery and reception understand the needs of young children and generally provide a varied range of learning experiences that help children develop an all round education and get into productive work habits from an early age. The focus on enabling the children to make decisions about what activity to undertake is helpful in developing their independence and confidence. There is too little attention paid to promoting communication skills and there are missed opportunities to stimulate purposeful talk. There is a need for management to give greater attention to monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage across all areas of the curriculum so that improvement can be targeted more precisely.

26. The teaching provided for pupils with special educational needs, including SNC pupils is good overall and often is very good in one to one, and in small group situations. This good quality reflects the teamwork of the teachers and well-trained support staff who know the pupils they work with well. Individual education plans have a more useful structure and format and are used successfully to chart progress. This enables the necessary action to be taken during the learning process rather than at the end of the cycle. This good practice could serve well as a model for ensuring that the needs of the highest attaining pupils are as consistently well met.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?

27. The broadly based curriculum meets all the statutory requirements for the National Curriculum, the Foundation Stage and religious education, as it did at the time of the previous inspection, but it is a little out of balance. Whilst a very good amount of teaching time is allocated to English and mathematics, this results in limited time for some other subjects. This has an adverse effect on pupils' progress, particularly in science, geography and history where opportunities for pupils to record their work are insufficient for them to demonstrate the full extent of their knowledge and understanding. The difficulties of developing skills in the two-year rolling programme of work, noted in the previous inspection, has been rectified by the introduction of new policies and schemes of work. An equal opportunities policy is consistently implemented, with no significant difference in achievement because of gender, disability, race or culture. Teachers' questioning and allocation of jobs within the classroom shows no bias towards any group. Pupils with SNC have full access to the curriculum and work is well planned to meet their needs, both when working in the designated specialist classes in English and mathematics and when working alongside other pupils. As at the time of the previous inspection the inclusive nature of the school is a strength in provision.

28. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage is satisfactory, with a good emphasis on children's personal, social and emotional development so that they quickly settle into school routines and develop confidence and self esteem. There are some inconsistencies in planning between the nursery and reception classes; planning does not provide for a unified approach to teaching and limits the progressive development of skills and knowledge.

29. The curriculum for pupils in Years 1 to 6 provides well for the academic and personal needs and interests of most of its pupils, including those who have special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language. As at the time of the previous inspection, higher attaining pupils are not always challenged sufficiently because planning does not take sufficient account of what they already know and can do. Requirements for daily acts of collective worship are met, although there are too few opportunities for reflection in some class assemblies. Learning opportunities are good because the school provides a rich diet of educational visits and expert visitors to make learning real.

30. National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been implemented effectively since the previous inspection and are improving pupils' achievements. Their introduction has supported an improvement in curriculum planning since the last inspection. There are clear learning objectives, which are generally shared with pupils, so that they know what they are going to learn in lessons. However, these improvements are not carried over into all other subjects, where planning is inconsistent; lessons often lack clear learning objectives and focus more on teaching activities. Pupils know what they have to do but not what they are supposed to learn. There is no whole school system for evaluating lessons so that teachers take note of what is successful and what needs improvement and no system of monitoring how well the curriculum is being implemented. Whilst some teachers make good links between subjects to maximise the use of time and provide opportunities for pupils to practise

and extend their skills, there is no whole school approach to this. For example, whilst teachers use texts in literacy lessons which reflect work in other subjects, such as history, when planning other subjects they do not identify where they might develop literacy skills, such as subject specific vocabulary or particular writing skills like note taking. Whilst ICT is well taught in the computer suite it is not yet established in classrooms as an everyday tool for learning.

31. The school fully responds to the Code of Practice for the identification and assessment of pupils with special educational needs. Pupils' needs are identified early and individual education plans are clear and well focused. Record keeping is good. Classroom assistants are usually well deployed in supporting individuals and small groups of pupils.

32. The school has good links with the community that enrich learning. For example, pupils work with seashore rangers when study the coastline at New Brighton and local historians share their knowledge on a range of historical topics. There is a sound link with the local high school, which supports curriculum development, such as in ICT.

33. The programme for personal, social and health education, including sex education and guidance on the misuse of substances is good. Pupils have regular opportunities to discuss a variety of issues and accept personal responsibility for issues that arise in their lives, both in personal, social and health education and religious education lessons. This contributes well to the good provision for pupils' personal development that underpins the whole work of the school and is a strength.

34. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Pupils' spiritual development is good and there is a strong sense of purpose within the school that encourages all pupils to value themselves and fosters a respect for others. Many opportunities are taken for pupils to reflect on how what they learn affects their lives. For example, during a religious education lesson on Buddhism, pupils meditated, commented on how it helped them feel calm and then spoke of personal moments that had affected them, such as the death of a family member. Pupils often discuss and share what has been learned, developing an awareness of their own self worth through celebration of their efforts and successes. In public areas of the school, many effective displays of pupils' work inspire spirituality but some classrooms do not celebrate achievement sufficiently.

35. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. The positive code of conduct is well represented in displays, to remind pupils how to achieve success. Staff consistently, and successfully, encourage pupils to understand the consequences of their own actions, to be honest and to contribute to the welfare of others. For example, in a year group act of worship, the teacher discussed name-calling with pupils and asked them if they had ever been involved in any such incidents, praising the honesty of those who owned up. One pupil said that if you called somebody names, then it hurt you as well as them because you felt mean afterwards.

36. The provision for social development is good. Staff provide very good role models, consistently encouraging pupils to develop good social skills, which results in excellent relationships. Pupils happily take on responsibility and work together co-operatively. There are few regular clubs, but the school provides a very good range of extra-curricular visits, including an annual residential visit for Year 5. These not only extend academic learning but also give valuable opportunities for the development of social skills. Pupils show a responsibility to the wider community by contributing to a variety of charities, including Guide Dogs for the Blind. Work has begun on forming a school council to further extend pupils' citizenship skills.

37. The provision for cultural development is good and provides well for the understanding of life in modern multicultural Britain. Pupils study a wide range of art and design, local history and geography, and music, studies are very much enriched by visits to art galleries, museums, and places of worship, as well as into the local environment. Expert visitors, such as sculptors, poets and authors provide a very good contribution and inspire pupils' work. The religious education curriculum provides for an understanding of the importance of world faiths and cultural customs. For example, when learning about Islam, Year 6 pupils visited a mosque, learned about objects significant to Muslims and considered the difficulties faced by Muslims living in modern Britain.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

38. This is a caring school which places a high value on meeting individual needs. Strengths reported at the time of the previous inspection have all been sustained. The way in which all pupils are welcomed and integrated into school is a strength; the inclusion of SNC pupils into all aspects of school life is a very positive feature. Pupils experience a calm, supportive and happy environment in which very good provision is made for their health, welfare and safety. The staff are very vigilant in their monitoring of all aspects of health and safety and there are good arrangements for first aid. There is close contact with the school nursing service. The procedures for child protection are good and follow local area guidelines, but do not currently appear in the staff handbook.

39. Teachers work closely with parents in guiding pupils' personal development, which parents recognise and applaud. The school has a consistent, very positive approach to the promotion of good behaviour. The code of conduct is well known to pupils and underlines the high expectations which are quietly and discreetly enforced by the judicious use of rewards and consequences. Praise for success in work or behaviour is a feature of lessons, and pupils are shown good role models to follow. Occasional bullying or oppressive behaviour is dealt with by careful adherence to the school policy of hearing all sides of the disagreement before deciding on a solution. Most pupils said that they think the system is fair and even-handed, and that they are confident that reported incidents are fairly resolved.

40. There are no systems in place to positively promote good attendance. However absences are monitored carefully, with involvement by the educational welfare service when appropriate. The recording of authorised absence by class teachers is not sufficiently rigorous but overall attendance procedures are satisfactory.

41. Educational support and guidance is good overall but is hampered by some failings in the monitoring of the academic progress of individual pupils. Since the last inspection some progress has been made in developing a range of testing procedures which now ensure that pupils are tested in all subject areas. At the end of the year, and at parents' meetings, this information is shared with parents. However, the rather unwieldy collection of assessment data which results, is not used to good effect for tracking whether pupils are making the progress of which they are capable. For example in the nursery and reception classes, what pupils could do when they joined the school is not always considered when planning lessons, nor when measuring their attainment before they enter Year 1. This continues to be a problem in many classes, where teachers do not make sufficient use of assessment, whether from tests or their own informal observations, when planning the next steps in learning. The unsatisfactory use of assessment data is most marked with higher attaining pupils in Years 2 to 4, who are frequently not given enough challenge to enable them to progress to the higher levels of which they are capable. Despite this, the use of personal targets in English, and to a lesser extent in mathematics, does help pupils to know what they need to do to improve their standards.

42. The school's assessment and monitoring of the progress of pupils with special educational needs and those with SNC is good. Pupils are assessed for their attainment in literacy and numeracy and their progress is frequently monitored. The special educational needs co-ordinator meets with the class teacher twice a year to discuss progress. Pupils' records charting progress over time are comprehensive and of good quality.

43. When special educational need pupils require additional support and advice this is available from external agencies, such as the School Psychology Service or the Special Education Support Service. The school makes good use of a range of medical, educational and social support agencies to extend its provision to ensure that pupils' specific learning needs are met in full.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

44. The school continues to work hard to develop and maintain good, supportive links with parents and carers in much the same way as reported at the time of the previous inspection. Not all its efforts are rewarded however, as some parents are quietly supportive at a distance and do not seem to want an active partnership. This was demonstrated by the low number of responses to the inspection questionnaire, and occasional poor attendance at educational information meetings. Overall parents have good views of the school, and support its policies. Those who commented seem very happy with the way it provides for their children.

45. The effectiveness of strategies to promote a productive home-school partnership is good. They are based on good-quality information about the progress made by pupils. This begins with the good day-to-day contact with teachers in the early years, and is developed through parents' evenings and the detailed, written annual progress report which relates pupils' attainment to national expectations in English and mathematics. The parent-child 'PIRATE' and 'WHALE' clubs appeal to the parents by providing an active approach to learning which is not widely used in homework activities. The headteacher makes himself readily available to parents, should any problems arise, and the school is proactive in making contact with parents. The formal documentation of school prospectus and governors' annual report, while meeting most legal requirements, are not presented in a very attractive format and miss the opportunity to reach out to parents by celebrating pupils' contributions to the life of the school.

46. The contribution made by parents to the life and work of the school, and to their children's learning, is satisfactory. Most parents hear their children read at home and help them learn spellings. A small group of parents volunteer to help regularly, for instance in the nursery library, and particularly with school trips. Parents of some pupils with special educational needs are directly involved in the monitoring of their personal development.

47. There is generous support for charity fund-raising, and the school has an active Home School Association which holds social and fund-raising events. It has contributed a significant sum to the provision of ICT resources.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

48. The opening lines of the 1997 inspection report summarised the qualities of the school at that time: (it has a) "*justifiable reputation for providing quality education in a calm, safe and caring learning environment.*" This was identified as the product of efficient management and very good relationships. The procedures for monitoring and evaluating classroom practice and the resourcing and management of ICT were flagged up then as the main weaknesses in an otherwise positive picture.

49. Today, the strengths summarised above have been maintained and improvement has been made to ICT, though inconsistencies and a comparative lack of rigour in the school's monitoring and evaluation procedures are still at the heart of its bid to boost standards. Standards in English, mathematics, science, geography and history require continued work to improve them. However, the school has ensured that the management of main school and SNC special educational needs provision is very effective. As in 1997, subject co-ordinators do not have enough opportunities to monitor teaching and learning in other classes and this process is not set against clearly defined targets for improvement in specific subjects in the school's list of priorities. Indeed, the school improvement plan is unwieldy in that it contains far too many priorities with little to indicate just which are the few prime priorities that should be the focus of resource use and shared action to bring success.

50. Although school procedures tend to centre on the collection of data, rather than its rigorous interpretation, the school is well led and managed. The headteacher has ensured that pupils' pastoral needs are met very successfully, as other sections of this report indicate. He has a vision that encompasses orderly, calm learning in a happy, friendly and supportive environment. All staff subscribe to this mission and all work hard in the interests of the pupils. There is clear educational direction in school. The whole staff team share good commitment to improvement and there is sound capacity to succeed. The deputy headteacher and headteacher have a good partnership in the management of the school and both are regarded highly by staff, the governors and the pupils. Key managers take their responsibilities seriously and work hard to help the school advance.

51. The governors are supportive and are interested and involved in the school. Their pride in the school is immediately apparent and they are building ever-stronger links with staff in order to keep informed of the curriculum, teaching and standards. However, governors tend to rely on the views of others, chiefly the headteacher, in evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the school, rather than to look critically at the available indicators in a bid to make their own appraisals. In general, governors ensure that all statutory requirements are met, though some information is missing in the prospectus and their annual report to parents. Overall, governors fulfil their responsibilities satisfactorily and they ensure that the school upholds the principles of best value soundly.

52. In general, subject co-ordinators successfully meet the requirements of their role. They ensure that the level of resourcing for each subject is appropriate and give good assistance to colleagues in the development of the curriculum. However, not all have a full role in the monitoring and evaluation of standards, teaching and learning and so not everyone has complete knowledge of how well the pupils succeed as they progress through the school. The next step for management is to weld the existing procedures for monitoring and evaluation into a rigorous system that is tied to the school's ranked priorities and makes clear everyone's joint responsibility for standards from pupils' first days in school to their last.

53. Because of the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in school and the scope of the SNC support, the management of this provision is of utmost importance in school. The special educational needs co-ordinators and staff of the SNC unit are very

successful in this tasks. There are good procedures in place for monitoring the progress of pupils and supporting and training non-teaching assistants. The accommodation and resources are good.

54. Performance management systems are effective and these are tied strongly into the strategic management of the school. In some ways, this restricts the free-flow of information about school performance but overall, the school gives satisfactory attention to this element of its work. Currently there are very few lessons being observed that fall outside the confidential arena of Performance Management. The school is not yet bringing forward the generic issues identified by class monitoring that will support its bid to boost standards.

55. The overall National test results are analysed to show pupils' progress both when pupils from the SNC provision are included in the analysis and when they are not. Beyond this, there has been little analysis of results by gender and to show whether the achievement of higher attaining pupils is good enough. Assessment procedures are comprehensive and much data is collected, though its interpretation is more limited. Thus, checks can be made at the end of each year to evaluate whether pupils have met their targets, but the system does not lend itself to the continual monitoring of progress to ensure that this is always at best level. Early intervention to overcome slack progress is therefore inconsistent. This is in contrast to the special educational needs and SNC provision where pupils' individual education plans, which are of good quality, are used effectively to keep track of pupils' progress and to refine and amend individual targets as the pupils move closer to their goals.

56. There are no shortages of staff, learning resources or accommodation. Indeed, some of these things are in ample supply and of good quality. There is a good match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum. The pupils benefit from a very high ratio of adults to pupils and this helps those with special educational needs to make good progress. The programme of professional development is well structured and reflects school priorities. Teaching, non-teaching and all ancillary staff make a very good contribution to the school's ethos and provide good role models for the pupils.

57. There is an abundance of accommodation that has been improved recently to provide a variety of small teaching areas for support work. The corridors and several classrooms are attractively decorated with often inspirational displays in celebration of children's work, and of multi-cultural richness. The long-overdue plans to replace the dilapidated dining area are shortly to be realised, but in the short-term this is an under-utilised display area. Year 6 pupils told inspectors how depressing they find the environment here, especially when it rains as water trickles down the walls when they are eating. The external environment is also to be improved by replacing uneven surfaces and redesigning the play area for children in the Foundation Stage.

58. Learning resources are good generally, with particular strengths in history and ICT. Teachers plan the use of resources well, and in Year 1 particularly, enrich the pupils' experiences by introducing many of their own personal objects.

59. Finance is managed prudently and the additional funding to improve standards and to provide for specific groups of pupils, such as SNC, is used well. The school does not just use such funds to purchase more support time, but targets some of this funding to additional, individually targeted pastoral and academic support to ensure that the pupils involved are confident and happy learners. The impact of this support is to be seen not just in the specialist classes, but across the school, where learning is pursued willingly and with good commitment, for example in additional literacy classes and reading recovery sessions. Governors are alert to the impact that the falling birth-rate will have on income and are taking account of this in planned improvements and as opportunities arise to secure enhancements, for example by trialling a new recovery programme in mathematics for the local education authority.

60. The school has improved soundly since the previous inspection. In some cases, such as ICT, improvement has been good and the benefit for the pupils is very apparent. Such strengths of the school as the development of pupils into thoroughly pleasant, hard working and happy children, contribute much to the good learning ethos in classrooms. All staff are working well to bring improvement to standards and because many pupils, particularly those with special educational needs or those supported through SNC, make good progress to appropriate standards, the school gives good value for money. Its future prospects are positive.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

61. In their work to raise standards and improve the quality of education at the school, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- (1) Improve further the standards pupils attain in English, mathematics, science, geography and history, particularly high attaining pupils, by:
 - making the raising of academic standards the number one priority in the school's improvement plan;
 - ensuring that the best teaching practice that results in accelerated learning is shared and exchanged;
 - ensuring that all teachers pay sufficient attention to setting clear learning objectives in lesson planning for the range of pupils they teach;
 - evaluating how well different pupils achieve in their lessons and using this information consistently to set suitably challenging future work, especially for high attaining pupils;
 - promoting more widely opportunities and giving support where required for pupils to record their knowledge and write at length, with accuracy and of quality across the subjects they learn;
 - ensuring that consistent use is made of pupil's individual targets in on-going assessment, including marking of work, and they are referred to in the end of year reports to parents;
 - reviewing the quality and impact of planning and assessment through regular and systematic monitoring.

and, more specifically:

in English by:

- capitalising more on the opportunities for purposeful talk from the children's first day in school;
- working to improve pupils pencil grip and control so that writing is legible and better presented;
- practising spellings more frequently and insisting on accuracy in recorded work;
- widening opportunities for pupils to present information orally, to discuss, voice opinions and considered arguments
- targeting specific vocabulary and writing opportunities in other subjects.

In mathematics by:

- pressing ahead with the well-conceived mathematics action plan
- ensuring that marking is used sufficiently to indicate to pupils how well they are meeting their targets and what needs improvement and enabling the pupils themselves to evaluate their own learning at the ends of lessons.

In science by:

- setting targets for each pupil to assist the tracking of progress over time;
- devising recording frameworks that can support pupils in writing up their experiments to a good standard.

(Paragraphs: 2, 5, 8, 9, 12, 17, 19, 20, 22-25, 30, 41, 55, 71, 72, 92, 94, 96-98, 103, 105-107, 112, 113, 119, 134, 142, 143, 166, 169)

(2) Improve further school assessment, monitoring and evaluation systems by:

- defining roles and agreeing the tasks for monitoring and evaluation of those with leadership responsibilities;
- setting out a plan that explicitly shows the top priorities, what monitoring is to take place and what achievement is expected;
- giving staff the necessary skills, time and opportunity to undertake classroom observations to check on quality and standards in the aspects/subjects they co-ordinate so that they can play a full part in school improvement planning and action;
- analysing assessment data so that subject managers know how well pupils, especially potentially high attaining pupils are learning, and use findings to inform the planning and provision of human and physical resources to target a brisk pace of improvement.

(Paragraphs: 17, 19, 41, 49, 52, 54, 76, 109, 120, 127, 136, 141, 149, 153, 158, 165, 170)

THE WORK OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS UNIT

62. The school has maintained the high standard identified in the previous report. The standard of provision in the SNC unit is very good. Since the last inspection the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been introduced and these subjects are taught within the SNC class. This approach to teaching the basic skills curriculum to SNC pupils is good and ensures they make progress without detracting from their inclusion in the rest of the school.

63. It would be inappropriate to judge the attainment of SNC pupils against national expectations or norms. The SNC pupils have full access to the National Curriculum and, apart from literacy and numeracy, they follow subjects in the mainstream classes. Their overall progress is good. In a mainstream class, for example, SNC pupils work with the class pupils in investigating the concept of evaporation. SNC pupils made a full contribution to group work and in answering questions posed by the teacher. In literacy and numeracy, the pupils make good progress. Pupils are aware of their specific targets and work hard to achieve them. For example, in English, one of the targets for a pupil is to use full stops. The pupil is keen to achieve the goal and pleased when successful. In numeracy, for example, a pupil works hard to achieve the target of translating the time shown on an analogue clock into digital. Pupils make good progress in reading. A Year 3 class, for example, was constructing their own dictionary using ICT. In Year 6, a pupil was reading a Harry Potter novel.

64. Not only do SNC pupils progress in learning, but they also make progress in their growth in self-esteem and confidence; this is evident in their willingness to play a full part in class activities within the main school.

65. The attitude and behaviour of SNC pupils is good. They show an interest in their work and are prepared to work very hard to learn. Careful planning by their teachers and choice of teaching activities assist in maintaining the pupils' concentration and interest. For example, in a Year 3 mathematics lesson, the teacher provides a number of games and activities, all of which are directed at developing the pupils' knowledge of place value. The pupils' growth in confidence is obvious when they understand this difficult concept. When included in ordinary classes, the SNC pupils make a good contribution by being fully involved with the rest of the class and responding to the teachers' questions.

66. The teaching of SNC pupils is good. A strength of the teaching is the good knowledge the staff have of the strengths and weaknesses in the pupils' achievements. This knowledge ensures that, as pupils move through the school, new learning builds on previous knowledge. Teachers were observed to evaluate the actual learning outcomes more or less straight after a lesson was finished and record their findings to assist in planning the next lesson. The sampling of planning revealed that this is common practice. It is a very good feature. A characteristic of the good teaching is the detailed planning. In a Year 5/6 class, for example, pupils were learning to use adjectives. After an initial introduction by the teacher, pupils work in three groups on activities that are challenging but within their capabilities. The close working relationship between the non-teaching assistants and the teacher is a strength of the provision. This relationship has a positive impact on the pupils' learning and achievement. In the Year 3/4 class, for example, the non-teaching assistant will teach numeracy to a small group whilst the teacher is teaching literacy. This ensures that maximum use is made of time and that all pupils obtain specific teaching. In consequence they make good progress.

67. The SNC accommodation is good. The good range of resources and access to ICT is a strength of the provision. Record keeping and assessment is good and this enables the teaching to be focused on the pupils' learning needs. The management of SNC pupils and provision is good. The close co-operation between the two teaching staff gives a clear direction to the department. Together they make an effective management team which contributes to maintaining the school's very good provision. The provision made for SNC gives good value for money.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	102
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	42

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	10	37	52	2	0	0
Percentage	1	10	36	51	2	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 one percentage point.

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)	12	285
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A	135

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	4 + 30 in SNC Unit
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	2	108

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	22

Attendance

Authorised absence

%

Unauthorised absence

%

School data	6.1
National comparative data	5.6

School data	0.6
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	25	21	46

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	9	9	16
	Girls	18	15	18
	Total	27	24	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	59 (76)	52 (84)	74 (81)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	9	9	11
	Girls	17	15	16
	Total	26	24	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	57 (76)	52 (65)	59 (78)
	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	32	29	61

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	18	19	27
	Girls	24	14	24
	Total	42	33	51
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	69 (72)	54 (53)	84 (63)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	18	19	27
	Girls	23	20	24
	Total	41	39	51
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	67 (72)	64 (68)	84 (54)
	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	3
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	0
White	281
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	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.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	13.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.8
Average class size	25.2

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	240

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24
Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	25
Number of pupils per FTE adult	12

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	816 684
Total expenditure	812 366
Expenditure per pupil	2 244
Balance brought forward from previous year	34 000
Balance carried forward to next year	38 318

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2.4

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0.0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.5
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	285
Number of questionnaires returned	38

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	61	39	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	45	53	0	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	50	45	0	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	45	45	3	0	8
The teaching is good.	58	42	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	50	45	5	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	58	39	3	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	34	0	0	5
The school works closely with parents.	45	55	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	42	53	0	0	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	45	50	0	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	32	29	18	3	18

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

68. Since the previous inspection there has been a change in the education provided for nursery and reception children nationally. The Foundation Stage now provides for children in the nursery and reception classes and replaces the previous curriculum for the early years.

69. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Most children are admitted to the nursery in the year in which they are four and transfer to reception the following September. Some children have longer, that is four or five terms in the nursery. The warm, caring atmosphere with firmly established routines, into which the children are welcomed, helps them settle in quickly and happily. At the time of the inspection there were 24 children in the nursery, attending either a morning or an afternoon session and 30 children in the reception class all attending full time.

70. Children enter the nursery with below average attainment overall and well below average attainment in language communication and in their knowledge and understanding of the world around. Their physical development is broadly in line with what is expected for their age. By the time they reach the end of the reception year, although making satisfactory progress through the Foundation Stage, standards remain below average in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, and creative development. Standards remain well below in knowledge and understanding of the world. Their physical development continues to be broadly in line, but in personal, social and emotional development children make good progress and are broadly in line with what is expected for their age. This good progress is the result of the teachers' high expectations of behaviour and independence. Children who have special educational needs are quickly identified and given appropriate support, helping them make satisfactory progress. Most parents bring their children to school on time and confidently leave their off-spring knowing they are happy and well cared for.

71. The Foundation Stage curriculum is satisfactory and provides for all the six areas of learning. Most aspects are covered during each day but the reception timetable allows too much time for whole class teacher-led sessions, which are not always appropriate for all children. This means that some children sit for quite long periods and have little opportunity to actively participate, particularly in communication and language development. Planning in both the long and medium term, whilst being guided by the six areas of learning, does not sufficiently take into account the level of understanding of the children and in several areas makes the assumption that most of the children are capable of doing the same activity. This means that some children do not make as much progress as they could. The day to day planning is not specific enough to ensure that all activities are pitched at the right level, so for some children the tasks are too easy, whilst for others they are too difficult.

72. Assessment procedures are satisfactory. These include an early assessment of children as they enter nursery and the local education authority's 'Starting Points' assessment as they begin reception. Individual profiles of each child are started and regular observations are made and recorded of children's progress in mathematical development, language and literacy. However, insufficient account is taken of the 'stepping stones', which are part of the Foundation Stage curriculum, to assess individual progress in all areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum and ensure that work is at the right level and suitable for every child.

73. The quality of teaching in all areas of learning is satisfactory overall, and sometimes good, in both the nursery and reception classes. Relationships are very good throughout, which is reflected in the good progress children make in their personal, social and emotional development. Where teaching is too prescribed and teachers talk at the children, rather than engaging them in a two-way conversation to develop speaking skills, learning slows and children become passive listeners. Where teaching is more successful, work is provided at the right level giving the children the opportunity to respond and be fully involved, as seen in some of the group literacy and numeracy activities. Children are provided with good opportunities to make choices, but the activities provided are not always sufficiently exciting to stimulate the children's imaginative and creative development. Throughout the year home corners have been provided to include: house area, pirate ship, hospital, vets, baby clinic, fruit shop and McNutt's burger bar for example. However, in both classrooms, opportunities for role-play were not specifically planned for during the week of inspection and the home corners were not resourced to a good level.

74. The fenced outside area provides satisfactory opportunities for imaginative and adventurous play. There is sufficient room for the small groups of nursery children to ride bikes and use wheeled toys, but is too small to accommodate all the Foundation Stage pupils. Plans are in hand to extend this area, including improving the present uneven surface, and so provide better opportunities for all the children to have a rich, stimulating environment for physical, creative and social development.

75. Support staff provide valuable help to the teachers throughout the Foundation Stage. This enables children with special educational needs to generally have appropriate support and to make satisfactory progress. However at times, for instance in whole class sessions, insufficient use is made of the staff's expertise. An exception to this was in a reception class physical education lesson when good support was consistently provided for a child with specific needs.

76. Although the school recognises and values the importance of the Foundation Stage, currently the overall leadership is unsatisfactory. The school has experienced some difficulties in staffing the Foundation Stage due to the long term illness of the previous coordinator before her resignation quite recently. The present co-ordinator does not work in the Foundation Stage making it difficult, in terms of time and opportunity, to monitor and plan with the teachers. This lack of good leadership has meant that no clear, cohesive action plan has been in place to address all the necessary changes brought about by the implementation of the Foundation Stage curriculum. All the staff have worked hard, but there has been a lack of clear direction to drive the necessary changes and impact on standards.

Personal, social and emotional development

77. Teaching in this area of learning is good. Children have positive attitudes to learning and are happy to come to school. They learn to share and take turns, for example, when using the large toys in the outside area and during recall time. They are friendly to each other and behave well. The children enjoy good relationships with the adults who work with them, learning to listen carefully to instructions and carrying these out obediently. Although some children are eager to answer questions and engage in discussions, a significant minority remain passive in lessons. For example, in a literacy session, using the 'big book' story 'Ridiculous' it was left to a few older, more confident children to respond. Not enough attempt was made to engage other children in conversations. Although many lack confidence when they first start in the nursery, they demonstrate growing confidence and self-esteem as they progress through the Foundation Stage. They move confidently about the classrooms and outdoor area, line up sensibly and move to the hall or music room without fuss. When given the opportunity they select activities independently but not enough emphasis is given to

promoting such independence in the reception class as a result of over direction by the adults at times.

78. Children having special educational needs are identified early. They are given satisfactory support, helping them to gain confidence and participate fully in all of the activities. Most children make good progress in this area of development; with the majority achieving the expected level by the time they enter Year 1.

Communication, language and literacy

79. Children's communication skills are below average overall, with speaking skills at well below average levels. In spite of satisfactory teaching and learning, most children are unlikely to achieve all the 'stepping stones' towards the Early Learning Goals for this area of learning.

80. Most children listen attentively but a significant number have limited skills to explain themselves clearly, are reluctant to share news and several have speech problems which hinder their progress in developing effective communication skills. Not enough emphasis is placed on developing speaking skills, when planning, for example through well structured role-play both in the nursery and the reception class. The quality of such play is limited by the lack of planned teacher intervention to extend the learning, particularly through speaking.

81. Children develop positive attitudes to books and enjoy stories such as 'Ridiculous'. However, overlong periods sitting passively in literacy sessions in the reception class result in missed opportunities to engage children in discussion. Tasks are not always matched well enough to individual needs. In a literacy session, the teacher spent too long reading the whole book at speed at the expense of talking about illustrations at greater length and extending children's knowledge and understanding about the seasons and countryside which were the focus of the book. In these sessions in the reception class, support assistants are not always effectively deployed. They sit passively, making no observations or assessments to inform planning. A few children recall terms such as 'author', 'illustrator' and 'blurb' but their general knowledge is lacking. For example, when asked what kind of bird is this with a red breast?, one child replied 'red bird'. Two thirds of the children in the reception class write their first name independently.

82. Higher attainers know a good number of initial sounds and recognise several words in the text. Average-attaining children recognise and write a familiar word such as 'house'. Lower attainers sort letters by shapes but cannot name them or the sound made. Basic writing skills are carefully taught with attention given to pencil control. There are a range of writing materials for different purposes. Many children require a good deal of adult support in writing tasks. Parents are encouraged to support children with reading through a shared reading project. This is having a positive effect on reading standards, which are moving closer to the level expected in the Early Learning Goals for this area of learning.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

83. When children start school their knowledge and understanding of the world is well below the expected level and is still below by the time they enter Year 1. They make steady gains in their learning as a result of satisfactory teaching. In the nursery, children identify parts of a snowman through a dice game. The teacher uses the opportunity for counting two eyes, three buttons and for ensuring the correct names for body parts. Children talk about their environment, their family and where they live. They make dough biscuits for the pet shop; bake cakes, observing changes taking place. In the reception class the adults build on these early skills soundly. Children use magnifiers well to examine mealworms and show excitement when they say 'look, they've got legs!' They have a sense of curiosity, treat the mealworms with care and build a wormery to put them in.

84. A few children in the reception class name the seasons correctly but many do not yet understand the difference between months, seasons and times of year such as Christmas. Half the class recall the month of their birthday. They are at an early stage of awareness of the passage of time, developing language such as 'yesterday', 'today' and 'tomorrow' through daily reinforcement of the calendar. Scientific knowledge is gained as children explore ice cubes melting observing change. Similarly, they plant seeds, plants and flowers, explore the sand and water. Not enough use is made of technology. Most children are at an early stage of basic awareness when using the computer. Visitors to school, such as the policeman help children to understand the roles of people who help us. Through stories from the Bible, children develop their knowledge of Christianity, festivals and major events of the church calendar, satisfactorily.

85. The majority are unlikely to achieve the Early Learning Goals in this area by the time they start in Year 1 and attainment remains well below average, in spite of the steady progress made.

Mathematical development

86. Teaching is satisfactory and by the time they reach Year 1 a number of children will have achieved the expected Early Learning Goals, but the majority will still be below in several aspects of their mathematical development even though they make sound progress throughout the Foundation Stage.

87. Most children make good progress with number problems and about half of the reception class reliably count to 10 and a few to 20 and beyond. The more able, mostly the oldest, children recognise and match numbers to 10, but their understanding of mathematical language and ability to use it confidently in practical activities and discussion is below that expected for their ages. The good progress in counting and number recognition is because the teachers, particularly in the nursery, seize opportunities to count and match, such as in singing games and rhymes. Most activities specifically planned for different ability groups in the reception class provide appropriate challenge and help develop mathematical thinking. However activities for independent play, such as in the sand and water, are not planned in a way that develops children's thinking or increases their mathematical development. Adult interaction, whether in a group situation or with individuals, does not consistently extend and develop children's use of mathematical skills and understanding.

Physical development

88. Children make satisfactory progress in their physical development and by the end of the reception year they reach levels expected for children of this age.

89. Throughout both nursery and reception children handle small toys and equipment carefully and appropriately. They help to clear away activities at the end of sessions, generally putting things into their correct places. In reception the majority of children are able to undress and dress themselves for physical education lessons and most willingly and competently help each other fasten aprons when painting. They use pencils, paint brushes and scissors with care and developing control.

90. Nursery children have daily opportunities to use pedalled and 'push' or 'pull' wheeled toys as well as run freely in the outdoor play area. During the summer months they are able to use a grassed area and climbing equipment. They show appropriate control and share equipment and games that need more than one person. Most children make satisfactory progress so that by the end of the reception year they use large equipment in the hall with the control and confidence expected for their age. Reception children enjoy their lessons in the hall, showing good awareness of their bodies when stretching and curling. They are beginning to understand how they can balance and make a variety of shapes using knees, backs, heads and sides as well as hands and feet. Good teaching is helping the children develop an awareness of the need to warm up and to recognise that exercise makes the heart beat faster. This good teaching also motivates the children to work hard, but only occasionally is good use made of the children's efforts as an example to the others and insufficient emphasis is placed on key words to help develop children's language skills.

Creative development

91. Overall the children make satisfactory progress in this aspect of the curriculum because of effective teaching. By the end of the reception year, however, the majority do not meet all the Early Learning Goals. Many of the activities are too closely prescribed by the teacher, limiting opportunities for the children to develop creatively, particularly in the areas of using imagination, responding to experiences and communicating ideas. In both the nursery and reception class, for example, children lean to use appropriate colours to create representative paintings such as snowmen and trees in the snow. There were also examples of children painting their own portraits, showing good observation of features and colour. In the nursery children have also been given the opportunity to use ribbon and strips of paper to weave creatively into netting. However, they are given insufficient opportunities to experiment and explore in a number of other ways as described in the 'Stepping Stones' of the Foundation Stage. Musical opportunities, such as singing and exploring the sounds of different instruments, are mostly appropriate and help the children make satisfactory progress in this area of their creative development.

ENGLISH

92. Pupils enter Year 1 with below average standards. Effective teaching is enabling most pupils to make good progress through the school but, at the end of Year 6, attainment remains below average. A significant reason to be taken into account is the very high proportion of pupils with special educational needs, including those with SNC whose low attainment is included in the test results. This makes comparisons difficult. The increasing numbers of these pupils slows the school's rate of improvement in national tests, which is slower than that of most schools, although there has been improvement at the end of Year 6 since the previous inspection. The school is fully committed to raising standards for all of its pupils, although this is currently proving to be more effective in speaking and listening and

reading, than in writing. It has introduced the National Literacy Strategy effectively and allows a generous amount of curriculum time. Whilst lessons provide effectively for most pupils, higher attaining pupils do not gain as much from them in writing as lower and average attaining pupils. This is partly because of a lack of challenge in some of the pupils' independent tasks and insufficiently high expectations of what they might achieve by the end of Year 2. Progress is best in Years 1 and 6 and for the pupils with special educational needs, where lessons focus sharply on the needs of all pupils and teachers make good use of pupils' personal targets to promote good achievement. The only pupil with English as an additional language, speaks English well and makes the same progress as other pupils.

93. Inspection evidence shows that at the end of Year 2, standards in speaking and listening and in reading are below average. In writing, they are well below average because few pupils are attaining at a higher level. This is an improvement on the results of National Curriculum tests in 2001, when there was an even higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs, including some pupils with SNC. Results in reading and writing were in the bottom five per cent of all schools, and compared unfavourably with schools with a similar level of free school meals. At the end of Year 6, evidence shows that most pupils attain the levels expected for their age but the large number of pupils with special educational needs, including 11 per cent with SNC, means that standards are below average, overall. This is an improvement on the tests in 2001, when results were well below the national average, although better than those for similar schools. This improvement has been achieved because the school has worked effectively over a number of years to target higher standards in reading. This work is now being extended into writing but has not yet had sufficient time to impact fully on standards. Girls achieve higher standards than boys at the end of Years 2 and 6 but this is because of the much higher proportions of boys with special educational needs or SNC.

94. Pupils develop good listening skills but their speaking skills are limited because most have only a basic vocabulary. Although confident in participating in class discussions and answering questions, pupils have limited skills in arguing their case and a limited range of descriptive vocabulary to express their opinions or feelings. Teachers are now targeting spoken language in English lessons and this is promoting improvements in Year 6, although few pupils use their new found vocabulary in their everyday conversation or in their writing. Although some teachers plan carefully to introduce new language carefully into other subjects, there is no whole school approach to doing so and practice is inconsistent.

95. Reading is a high priority for the school and is well taught. Parents are involved in their children's reading from an early age through successful workshops and home-school projects. Pupils of all ages derive much pleasure from books and by the end of Year 6 are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about literature. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are lower attainers enjoy reading as much as average and higher attainers and make good progress. Shared reading sessions promote a keen interest, because the texts used appeal to all pupils, as does the range of books for guided group reading and library loans. Lower attainers and those with special educational needs take a full part in joint reading sessions, with confidence. Younger pupils learn letter sounds and names and use these with confidence to help them read new words. Those who are lower attainers or who have special educational needs are given individual support to help them make good progress, whilst higher attainers move on to more complex letter patterns to help them tackle increasingly difficult vocabulary, reading fluently with good expression. A range of additional strategies, for example the reading support programmes, are proving beneficial to help raise standards. By the end of Year 6, most pupils read at the level expected for their age and have sound skills in looking up information in reference books and on the Internet. Higher attainers, almost half of the year group, do so with fluency and expression, and discuss and compare characters and themes with good understanding. Pupils know a wide range of authors and

eagerly discuss their favourites, comparing different books by the same author. Pupils gain good skills with which to support their learning across the whole curriculum.

96. Standards in writing are not as high as in reading. Whilst the school has been successful in raising the attainment of its lower attaining pupils, it has not yet been successful in raising standards for those who are higher attainers. Pupils make a good start in Year 1 but then the pace of learning slows because of lower expectations. Expectations rise as pupils reach the top end of the school and progress gains pace in Year 6. A previous lack of whole school systems of teaching the basic skills of spelling, grammar and handwriting has had a negative impact on standards. Whilst policies are now in place and improving the quality of teaching and learning, this has not had time to impact on standards at the end of Year 6 and these aspects remain significant weaknesses. Some pupils in Year 2 are not yet printing letters of a reasonable size with proper spacing and legibility; some have yet to find a comfortable grip when holding pens and this really should have been picked up earlier. By Year 6 work is generally appropriately structured and organised but is often untidily presented, which detracts from its quality. Where pupils use computers to present their written work and check spelling, it is of a much better standard. The content of writing at the end of Year 2 is somewhat stilted and much lacks imagination. The over-use of worksheets in some subjects, for example history is limiting the potential for pupils to use writing skills to produce creative pieces of length. Writing is much better at the end of Year 6, where pupils reap the benefit of the intensive enrichment provided in literacy lessons and in opportunities to listen to visiting authors and poets, watch visiting theatre groups and take part in drama productions, such as Romeo and Juliet. They are more confident in expressing their ideas, although few use a rich range of vocabulary to make their writing exciting to the reader or to convey empathy with their characters.

97. The National Literacy Strategy has been effective in improving teachers' planning since the previous inspection, but there are still some variations in quality. Some lessons lack precise learning objectives and teachers do not make full use of assessment information to match work well to the needs of all pupils. Whilst the needs of lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs and those with SNC, are carefully planned for, higher attaining pupils too often work on the same tasks as average attaining pupils and do not achieve as much as they could. Although all pupils have individual learning targets in literacy, not all teachers consider these in planning or check with pupils to see whether they are remembering to work towards them. The individual plans for pupils with special educational needs, including those with SNC, are very carefully followed to target consistently good progress and support staff are well used to support learning. There is no rigorous whole school approach to the systematic monitoring of teachers' plans and, although teaching and learning in lessons has previously been observed, to identify areas for improvement, this is not now a regular feature by which the school can ensure that expertise is shared with all staff. Teaching of basic skills, has improved since the last inspection, it is now good and promotes good progress.

98. The subject is well led and managed and co-ordinators have ensured a well balanced curriculum, much enriched by visits and visitors and incorporating the study of texts from many subjects. Teachers provide sound opportunities for pupils to apply their reading skills in research in other subjects but there is no systematic approach to planning to develop pupils' oral and writing skills in other subjects by introducing and explaining specific vocabulary and identifying a wide range of writing opportunities. A wide range of assessment procedures exists, including a marking policy that ensures consistency in annotating mistakes. Some teachers write good points that help pupils improve their work but the quality of these comments is inconsistent and are sometimes limited to congratulatory remarks. Reading records are well kept and used to promote good progress for all pupils but other records are

complex and not easily usable by teachers when planning the next steps or to track the progress of individuals.

99. Overall, there has been sound improvement since the previous inspection and the school's ambitious targets for 2002 English tests reflect its commitment to continue to improve. The stronger focus on setting specific targets for the growing proportion of pupils who are expected to achieve at the higher level 5 is a positive feature. The inspection team judges the school has good capacity to meet its targets.

MATHEMATICS

100. Until comparatively recently, improvement in mathematics has not been at the pace found in some other subjects. The 1997 inspection report portrayed the provision for mathematics being satisfactory, though there were a number of weaknesses including inconsistent assessment and not enough emphasis on mathematical problem solving and investigation. Overall standards were average and teaching quality was satisfactory.

101. The school's performance in the National Curriculum tests in Year 6 since 1999, has remained well below the national average. Results in Year 2 declined from below average to very low over the same period. However, the results do not tell the whole story and in reality, these results have been respectable given the backgrounds of the pupils. The headteacher, all staff and the governors are committed to continual improvement to standards in mathematics and everyone works well as a team to ensure that the pupils make steady progress. There are a number of aspects of mathematics that require enhancement but the school is on the right track to boost standards. A positive feature is the good strategy in place for promoting numeracy across the curriculum.

102. The judgements of the current inspection confirm the picture of standards portrayed in the National Curriculum test results. From a low starting point when children join the nursery, standards rise to a well below average level by the age of seven and continue to rise to a below average level at the age of eleven. There are however a number of complications to this picture. The most fundamental is the high total proportion of pupils with special educational needs. Most of these pupils have specific learning difficulties and many have mathematics as personal targets on their individual education plans. The quality of support given to pupils with special educational needs in the main classes is good and they make good progress. Many more pupils with statements of special educational needs are admitted into junior classes as part of SNC support and these pupils settle well to their mathematics and are given very good opportunities to learn and succeed. By the end of Year 6 all these pupils have progressed well, though their standard of work is understandably not as high as that shown by other pupils in school.

103. There are a number of pupils who are potentially higher attainers in school. Whilst they make satisfactory progress on the whole, their individual needs are not met as effectively as those pupils who are given special educational needs support. The expectation of what such higher attaining pupils can achieve is sometimes too low and lesson planning too often takes a broad sweep rather than identifying precisely the learning objectives for these pupils. In many lessons, and as shown in the work scrutiny, higher attaining pupils complete the same core work as the middle attainers but do not then have time to do the extension activities. School managers understand the need now to target and track more effectively the progress made by higher attaining pupils.

104. In many classes there are more boys than girls and in the National Curriculum tests boys do not do as well girls. It is a fact that more boys comprise lower sets, the majority of pupils with special educational needs are boys and SNC pupils in Year 6 are all boys. During

lesson observations in the current inspection boys and girls worked equally well, were just as well behaved and motivated as each other and showed the same levels of interest and enjoyment. Year 6 boys in particular, show a refreshing maturity about their work.

105. Because standards have not been as high as the school would like, it has introduced a system of setting by ability in Years 5 and 6. This has been in place for about 16 months in Year 6 but only four months in Year 5. The experience, and evidence, from Year 6 shows that such setting is working to advantage. Teachers are able to focus the work on the needs of a narrower band of ability and to meet individual needs more successfully than in the mixed ability mathematics classes in earlier part of the junior-phase. Further, in Year 6 teachers are now refining the work within the set to ensure that higher attainers in particular are extended and challenged sufficiently by the work. Such positive moves have not been spotted as quickly as they might have been because the school's target setting and tracking procedures do not focus on the continual progress made by pupils but tend to indicate what has been achieved at a given point only. Thus, it is not an easy matter for staff to determine whether an individual pupil is working to best effect.

106. One great strength of mathematics lies in the pupils. They work very hard for success, concentrate well and their behaviour is very good. Mathematics lessons have a pleasant working atmosphere and pupils of all abilities and backgrounds and the staff have very good relationships. These working conditions contribute strongly to the quality of learning in lessons. Overall, this is satisfactory, being best for all pupils with special educational needs and requiring enhancement for the higher attainers.

107. Teaching quality also varies depending on the ability group. During the inspection all mathematics lessons were judged to show satisfactory teaching at least and there was a healthy proportion where teaching was good. The scrutiny of work tended to confirm the picture of good teaching in Years 1 and 6 and satisfactory teaching in other years. This evidence also shows that the expectations of pupils at the end of the infant years could be higher but that they are good for pupils with special educational needs in mainstream and SNC classes. Overall, teaching is judged to be satisfactory. Particular strengths of teaching are the management of pupils and the teaching of basic skills. It is very evident that the numeracy strategy is having good impact on standards and that the school's provision of extra and booster classes in mathematics is also a success. The focus on mathematical problem solving and investigation is now much sharper than in 1997 and is good, particularly in later junior years. Marking of pupils' work is not used sufficiently to indicate to pupils how well they are meeting their targets and what needs improvement; the pupils themselves are rarely given opportunities to evaluate their own learning at the ends of lessons.

108. One of the best lessons observed was that for the top set in Year 6. This lesson shows how the school has moved ahead in mathematics and shows where good practice can be modelled. In this lesson, the pupils were working to multiply decimal values by whole numbers. The focus in the lesson was very clearly that of helping pupils sharpen their skills and knowledge. The work planned was challenging and went much beyond the mechanical process of multiplying decimals. The pupils were able to relate the multiplication tasks to the associated division problems and one boy said "*this work is about the inverse operation.*" The lesson culminated in a concluding session where the pupils found different ways to achieve a total of 1.75. They suggested 175 divided by 100 to start, but within two minutes were suggesting problems such as 0.00175×1000 and at the lesson end were moving into the realms of millions and millionths, such was their confidence and accuracy.

109. Mathematics is managed successfully by the two committed and hard working co-ordinators. They are knowledgeable about mathematics but there remains the task of making subject monitoring more rigorous and honing the good assessment procedures into a

system that allows the continual evaluation of pupils' progress. The co-ordinators have identified these priorities, and the need to target the achievement of higher attainers, formally in their subject development plan. The prospects for further improvement to mathematics are good, not least because there is a shared sense of educational direction amongst staff. The next step is to drive forward improvement through the speedy implementation of the well-conceived action plan.

SCIENCE

110. The previous inspection report judged standards to be average by the ages of seven and eleven. Progress was satisfactory throughout the school. The quality of teaching was at least satisfactory and often good. Current inspection findings indicate that standards are below average at the end of Years 2 and 6, with the percentage achieving the higher levels being well below average at the end of both years.

111. The higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs throughout the school is an influencing factor on standards in the national tests in 2001, the results of which were below the national average. If pupils with SNC are withdrawn from the data there is a more positive picture. However, the school's performance when set against similar schools is below average. The findings from inspection show that standards are below average.

112. In addition to the high proportion of special educational needs pupils in the school, standards are affected by three other factors. Firstly, a below average amount of time is allocated to science and best use is not always made of this, particularly the slow pace at which some lessons proceed. Secondly, there is an over-reliance on worksheets by some teachers and low expectations of what pupils can do, especially the higher attaining pupils in the class. This results in underachievement for high-attaining pupils because work is not demanding enough. Thirdly, the features that are present in the good teaching and learning observed in Year 5 and 6 are not sufficiently promoted in other years.

113. A further weakness is the recording and presentation of work. Teachers place an increasing emphasis on pupils undertaking their own experiments and investigating for themselves. This good practice is leading to improving pupils' enquiry skills, but it is highlighting a weakness in their ability to record efficiently what they find. The school is aware of the need to improve standards in science as a continuing priority. At present, it is not making best use of its predictions to set targets in order to raise standards, particularly for the higher attaining pupils.

114. Standards at the end of Year 2 are below average. In Year 1, practical investigations increase pupils' awareness and understanding of 'fair testing' as they experiment with different materials to check if they are waterproof, but this is at an early stage of development. Weaknesses in speaking skills inhibit pupils' ability to explain clearly in many cases. In Year 2, pupils complete worksheets on healthy foods and sequence pictures of the human life cycle. They identify items using electricity and the dangers of electricity. They have some knowledge of making a circuit to light a bulb, but are hindered by weaknesses in recording skills. The amount of work covered is limited by the time devoted to science and the pace at which pupils work.

115. In Years 3 to 6 there is a good focus on scientific enquiry, but the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs is reflected in the standards being attained. Pupils in Year 3 investigate rock formation using hand lenses for closer observation. Higher attainers use language such as 'natural' and 'manmade' but most pupils have limited knowledge of rock formation or the names of different rock. One boy asks 'If you dug and dug through rock would you eventually fall through space?' Another when describing a rock says 'soft' instead of 'smooth' because use of language to describe, is limited. In Year 4, pupils use thermometers to make measurements of temperature. Some pupils are unclear what is required of them and a number did not understand the difference between 'estimate' and 'predict'.

116. The SNC pupils are included well in the group who receive support to carry out the practical tasks. They are beginning to understand the concept of temperature change over time but are not confident in their knowledge. Year 5 pupils investigate evaporation through a variety of experiments whilst pupils in Year 6 conduct an experiment to explore how vibrations change in their work on sound. They use tables to record their findings independently. They investigate how to separate a dissolved solid from a liquid. They do not always use scientific language such as 'sieve', 'particles' and 'filter' and a significant proportion are unsure which are the important steps to record in their investigations.

117. Many pupils with special educational needs are hampered in their progress as a result of limited literacy skills. However, most pupils understand how to conduct a 'fair test' and can speak about this with confidence.

118. Progress in science is satisfactory overall with good progress being made in some lessons in Years 5 and 6, as a result of good preparation, demanding activities and the use of specialist teaching. Good progress is made in Year 1 because lessons are well structured, interesting and resources well prepared. In the lesson on 'materials' pupils increased their knowledge of scientific language, higher attainers recalling terms such as 'transparent' and 'waterproof'. Pupils with special educational needs often make good progress because they are well supported in lessons and are well motivated by practical investigations.

119. Overall, teaching is satisfactory with some good features. Specialist teaching for the older pupils in Years 5 and 6 is good. In the good teaching seen pupils are well motivated by interesting and challenging tasks. They work together enthusiastically as a result in their investigative groups. Thorough planning and lesson preparation, and effective questioning skills contribute to the successful teaching, helping pupils to learn. The effective work of the learning support assistants ensures those with the greatest learning needs are fully involved. Where teaching is weaker it is linked to limited knowledge and a lack of confidence in the subject. Pupils' understanding is not checked. The lack of pace in some lessons limits the progress being made, particularly for higher attainers.

120. Whilst the co-ordinator provides sound advice and supports teachers with planning and resources, the monitoring of teaching and learning in science is unsatisfactory. Marking and other assessment information is not being used effectively to inform planning. Predictions are not used to set targets for improvement. Insufficient use is made of the computer to support work in science. Good resources, including library books and useful displays support learning well. Science makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. There is reasonable capacity in science to build on strengths and eliminate the shortcomings identified but more concerted drive is required.

ART AND DESIGN

121. The attainment by pupils at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6 is above average for their ages. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make exceptionally good progress from a below average start when they leave the reception class. Although they make satisfactory progress overall from Years 3 to 6, progress in Year 6 is particularly good. These high standards and good progress are due to some very good teaching in certain year groups, with particular expertise in Year 6. Standards were above national expectations at the last inspection and the school has done well to maintain them in the light of increased emphasis on literacy, numeracy and ICT.

122. Throughout the school pupils are expected to use sketchbooks to experiment with colour, try out ideas and make detailed observations. The successful use of sketchbooks varies considerably from year to year and is clearly linked to the teacher's knowledge and expertise. The co-ordinators have wisely identified this as an area for improvement in some year groups. A lovely example of the good use of sketchbooks was seen in Year 2. On a walk round school looking for patterns, pupils made very good detailed sketches of architectural features such as skylights, roof patterns and wrought iron work. Selecting one particular sketch, in pairs, the pupils then made a three-dimensional representation of the pattern in a shoe box lid. 'Mod-rock' casts, (as used to plaster a broken limb!), were made of the patterns and these casts will be used to print with and finally to make a whole class collage of school architecture. In Year 5, pupils were also seen making good use of sketchbooks, (and a good range of reference books), to try out sketches of pots and vases with the typical types of decoration used by the Ancient Greeks. These sketches are used by the pupils to create their own paintings, pastel drawings and large three-dimensional papier-mâché pots. As Year 5 pupils are studying Ancient Greece in history, their work is typical of the good links with other subject areas.

123. As pupils move through the school they are given opportunities to work with a variety of media and to learn about the work of a wide range of artists. The use of water-colours, pastel, clay and fabrics shows good progression and work in the style of contrasting artists. In Year 1, pupils' self-portraits were clearly influenced by careful observations of a range of portraits by famous painters. They also made very effective, three-dimensional 'water creations', using strips of paper and weaving techniques in the style of Andy Goldsworthy. Year 3 pupils study the work of William Morris and his nature designs, whilst some exciting impressionist work, based on Claude Monet has been produced by Year 5 pupils. Year 6 work featured drawings in the style of Lowry, still life pastel drawings inspired by Paul Cezanne and exploring colour with Turner. Altogether there is an impressive range of work which shows the teachers have high expectations and pupils worked hard, putting in a great deal of intellectual and creative effort.

124. Work with fabrics and clay is also extensive. In a very good lesson, the teacher extended Year 1 pupils' knowledge and appreciation of fabrics by introducing them to textiles from different countries. The pupils were highly motivated to talk about the textures and patterns and were inspired to make careful observational drawings. Year 4 pupils show they have satisfactory modelling skills through the making of Roman clay pots, whilst Year 6 pupils' clay artefacts, (seals, priest kings, goddesses and pots), linked to work about the area round the river Indus, show appropriate skills and use of modelling tools and techniques. Year 6 work on 'Talking Textiles' is particularly impressive. Large, group wall hangings show that the pupils have been introduced to techniques such as batik, (wax resist) and the use of a variety of decorative ribbons, lace and lurex to retell, through art and design, one of their literacy texts.

125. Information technology now plays a satisfactory part in the pupils' progress in art and design. An example of good use of ICT was in Year 2 where pupils had photographed their favourite toys using a digital camera and then used the photos as a stimulus to create fabric pictures. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated into all art and design lessons and, in the light of their abilities, frequently make very good progress.

126. The quality and range of work clearly shows the overall good teaching. In the few lessons seen during the inspection there was a high proportion of very good teaching. In Year 6 good use is made of teacher expertise and, on a rota basis, all pupils are taught by the same teacher. In a very good lesson the pupils were studying how to represent people moving. The techniques used by the teacher, which included a video clip, looking at work by various artists including the sculptor Henry Moore, and pupils posing for each other, the group were inspired and confident to try out their own ideas.

127. The use of the national recommended guidelines provides a good framework for teachers and should ensure that skills are taught systematically and built on year by year. This framework does not appear to be consistently followed by all teachers in Years 3 and 4 and the pupils' progress slows. However Year 3 pupils benefited greatly by working with a visiting artist and produced high quality, three-dimensional creations based on their knowledge and impressions of Ancient Egypt. Ensuring that these pupils had this opportunity reflects the high quality of leadership given by the co-ordinators. As yet, they have not had the opportunity to observe and monitor any teaching.

128. Art forms a major part of the inspirational displays around school. In addition to the pupils' work, the use of photographs and works of art, with reviews and explanations about the artists, and adds significantly to the pupils' spiritual and cultural development.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

129. Standards are average at the ends of both Year 2 and Year 6, despite a dip in the middle years. This reflects similar standards to those found at the last inspection in 1997. Pupils' positive attitudes and some good teaching found then have generally been maintained.

130. The teaching in Years 1 and 2 is consistently good and pupils make good progress from a below average start. Teachers are very clear about what it is they want the pupils to learn and share this with them. At the end of lessons pupils are aware of what they have learnt and have a good sense of achievement. In a very good lesson Year 1, pupils, after trying out a variety of ways, worked well together in small groups to decide which were the best and the worst fastenings to use to make an elbow joint as part of their project on moving toys. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, were motivated and challenged. The more able children recorded the group's decisions as the others

discussed and explained their reasons, thus the teacher provided good opportunities for developing pupils' literacy as well as evaluative skills. Earlier work by Year 1 pupils showed good understanding of constructing vehicles with wheels in their challenge to help 'teddy' get around. One pupil, with special educational needs, had even included a seat belt and steering wheel! Imaginative finishing techniques were also evident in Year 2 pupils' monsters. Bright colours and curled paper added to the delightful effect of egg-box mouths, which opened by the use of a simple pneumatic device created with a washing-up liquid container and piece of plastic tubing.

131. As pupils move through the school the good scheme of work provides teachers with clear guidelines and ensures that previous learning is built on. In Year 3, there are opportunities to extend their understanding of joints and linkages and identify everyday objects such as scissors, staplers and spectacles where good joints are crucial. The standard of work produced by the pupils in the two classes is inconsistent and indicates some lack of subject knowledge by the teachers. Consequently the standard of work and progress made by the pupils is not as high as it could be. In Year 5, pupils consider the best types of fabric with which to make reflective armbands and apply and extend their knowledge to select an appropriate method of fastening it. In Year 6, overall good teaching ensures that the pupils make good progress in all aspects of design and technology. Careful attention is paid to the designing process and the purpose for which the product is intended and pupils are helped to consider marketing techniques. The making of products showed appropriate construction skills and good finishing. Very good examples of this were the operational draw-bridges made last term. Satisfactory evaluations are carried out, with pupils expected to consider how they could improve their designs and products.

132. In the Year 6 lesson seen during the inspection, pupils showed good understanding of designing for a specific purpose. This was reinforced well by the teacher who constantly reminded them, through clearly focused questions and remarks to individuals, to consider how their designs of drinks cans would attract people to buy them. Pupils are enthusiastic and work hard during lessons, particularly on individual and group tasks. Even during the occasional tedious, and at times slow, pace of parts of the lessons, pupils remain attentive and show an interest. During these times, when teachers tend to talk at the pupils, the pace of learning slows. Teachers do not use question and answer techniques sufficiently to reinforce learning and they miss opportunities for extending speaking skills and for assessing pupils' knowledge and understanding.

133. Throughout the school teachers expect pupils to use their numeracy skills in a variety of ways, for example in the careful measuring of wood and card and appropriate care is taken with the teaching of correct terminology. However the use of ICT skills has yet to have any real impact on the subject. Pupils are frequently expected to work in small groups, which they do well and this has significant impact on their social skills. An enthusiastic and knowledgeable co-ordinator has recently taken on the role. She has already identified some of the areas for improvement, but as yet it is too early to have impacted on standards and teaching.

GEOGRAPHY

134. The standards being achieved by pupils in Years 2 and 6 are below average. Although these standards are lower than at the time of the previous inspection, this is largely due to the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in the school who have assessed literacy needs. Most pupils make satisfactory progress overall. The very good provision for pupils with special educational needs enables them to participate fully. The very good support they receive enables many to make good progress, given their prior attainment. A significant

shortcoming in the standards in geography is the poor writing skills of a significant proportion of pupils which are holding back their recorded achievements in geography.

135. In Year 1, pupils follow the travels of 'Barnaby Bear', labelling on a map the places he visits. As part of their topic, they use simple research skills to find out what it is like in China. They ask questions to gain information as well as referring to newspapers, photographs and the good range of topic books made available. They know some parts of China are cold in the mountain regions, whilst other parts are hot. They compare and contrast food, money and clothes with their own country.

136. Pupils in Year 2 build systematically on these early mapping skills through 'Barnaby Bear's travels'. They use simple maps of the school, expressing their likes and dislikes about the local environment. They are familiar with a map of the United Kingdom and many can name the countries it includes. They understand the concept of an island surrounded by water and identify land and sea on the map. They are aware of the local area of the Wirral, labelling a map of the area. Year 2 pupils explore the changing seasons and weather patterns. Most know the names of the seasons but many are unsure of the sequence. Some pupils cannot recall the names of the months, although higher attainers and some average-attaining pupils are confident about this. The amount of work recorded is fairly limited, largely a result of the weaknesses in literacy skills for a significant proportion of the class.

137. Year 3 pupils build systematically on early research skills to find out where the Victorians spent their holidays. They can locate the places on a map, and use atlases to locate countries of the world as they research where different foods come from. In Year 4, pupils explore the contrasting locality of the Amazon Rainforest. They locate South America, the Amazon River and most pupils name the continents. Year 5 pupils visit Eyam contrasting it with Moreton. They use aerial photographs, compare services available in Eyam and Moreton and locate Eyam on the map. They know how the plague started and visit the graveyard and church in Eyam, writing sensory poems to express their feelings in response to this.

138. Year 6 pupils build on their research in their study of the Indus Valley. Most pupils identify physical features of the area and using a map, locate sea, desert and the River Indus. Good cross curriculum links involve pupils in artwork, making clay seals and statues and literacy, producing a tour guide of Mohenjo Daro. Good use is made of computers to produce these tour guides.

139. Year 6 pupils also study Europe, identifying and recording significant places and environments on the European map and on a world map. Knowledge is superficial about some specific geographical aspects; for example, there is confusion between 'capital' and 'city'. Lack of teacher confidence affects progress being made.

140. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall but an unsatisfactory lesson was observed in Year 4. Good teaching was seen in Year 1. The well-planned lesson had clear learning objectives. Skilful questioning and good resources contributed to pupils' developing research skills. However, in many lessons the same task is set for all pupils. Consequently, some pupils, usually higher attainers are insufficiently challenged by the work and do not work at a brisk pace. This was the case in the unsatisfactory lesson where the teacher's expectations were too low. The good resources are often used well to enhance learning, and make geography more meaningful. This is particularly true of the very good programme of educational visits.

141. At present there is a lack of leadership for the subject. Not all teachers have confidence in geography and they lack the support from good leadership. The lack of monitoring of teaching and the standards being attained also inhibit the progress being made.

HISTORY

142. Standards in history are below average by the ages of seven and eleven. This is not as positive a picture as reported by the previous inspection. This is largely due to the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs currently in school and also reflects weaknesses in pupils' writing skills which are holding back standards in history.

143. Most pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the school. The high proportion of pupils with special educational needs is reflected in the quality of written work. Weaknesses in literacy skills, particularly speaking and writing, hamper their ability to articulate clearly and record well in a significant number of cases. However, the very good provision for pupils with special educational needs and effective support enables them to be fully included in all aspects of learning, and they make good progress towards their individual targets as a result. Progress of higher attainers is more limited because tasks are not always matched to ensure sufficient challenge for these pupils. The slow pace of some lessons also hinders their progress.

144. By the age of seven, most pupils can sequence a series of pictures into a simple time line from birth to five years. A few pupils describe an object from the past, but the closed worksheet for this limits extension of ideas for higher-attaining pupils in particular. They recognise toys from the past and make comparisons with present day toys, recognising differences and changes over time, such as the materials of which they are made. There is good involvement of parents in this work through the use of a questionnaire.

145. In Year 1 pupils learn about their families, grandparents and family trees. They explore culture and customs in China, including Chinese New Year. This work is supported by very good displays of artefacts and role-play provision of a Chinese restaurant, which helps to bring history alive for children. Children in Year 1 also develop an awareness of the importance of famous people from the past such as Florence Nightingale and a local person, William Lyndsey, who ran the Great Wall of China.

146. Pupils show an increasing sense of chronology as they learn about the history of the school in Year 2, using source materials such as the school log book to help them, and looking for evidence such as a wall plaque indicating the date when the school opened. Pupils acquire historical vocabulary such as 'past', 'present' and 'evidence'. Limited literacy skills of some pupils, including a high proportion of special educational needs, impact on their ability to record. There is limited written work as a result. Effective use is made of library books, pictures and photographs to develop early research skills. Not all pupils use historical terminology such as *past/present* confidently.

147. By the age of eleven, many pupils have a sound knowledge of a range of historical periods. Year 3 use artefacts and evidence to explore the Ancient Egyptian lifestyle and know some of the differences in rich and poor lifestyles in Victorian Britain. Year 4 visit Chester to enrich their learning about the Romans, while Year 5 study Tudor times such as Henry VIII, the Fire of London, the plague and the Spanish Armada. A visit to Eyam in Derbyshire and to Speke Hall, supports aspects of this learning very well. They also study the Ancient Greeks in Year 5 visiting the Liverpool Museum and Art Gallery to extend their learning. Their knowledge is at a superficial level. Year 6 explore the ancient civilisation of the Indus Valley and compare New Brighton in the past with the present day in their local history study. Most pupils have a sound sense of chronology, being able to order events and periods on simple time lines.

They demonstrate awareness of change and some pupils can compare aspects of periods studied such as school in Victorian times with present day. However, coverage of some work is too superficial to be very meaningful. Pupils make little use of the computer to support learning other than using word processing skills. Pupils use a range of sources to gather historical information. The very good programme of visits and use of visitors has a major influence in bringing history alive for pupils. As a result, most are well motivated and interested in their work.

148. Teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, but planning does not always match tasks to the needs of different groups. As a result some activities lack sufficient challenge for higher attainers who underachieve. In some classes good links are made to literacy. For example, pupils in Year 6 wrote 'stones' poetry as part of their topic on the Indus Valley - 'Stones tell stories, ancient stories, tamed by nature, unseen by man', wrote one child. In their study of New Brighton, Year 6 pupils wrote a diary account of a day in New Brighton. Year 5 pupils wrote sensory poems in response to the visit to Eyam. These good links build on their literacy skills and contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The best teaching presents work in a lively and imaginative way, involving pupils often in rich, first hand experiences. Good use of questioning challenges pupils' thinking skills. Resources are well used, as in Year 1's study of China, supporting learning very effectively.

149. History is soundly managed and very well resourced. The role of the co-ordinator has yet to be extended to include monitoring of teaching and learning. Whilst sound procedures are in place to assess progress, the use of assessment information to inform planning needs to be developed. Good library provision and very good displays enrich the learning experience for all pupils. Satisfactory attention is given to developing the skills required for history, overall, although it is better in some classes than others.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

150. The 1997 inspection report identified information technology as a key issue for improvement. A combination of unsatisfactory resources, weak subject knowledge and sporadic coverage of the curriculum resulted in below average standards and unsatisfactory progress. The school put in place an effective action plan to redress the shortcomings and, four years on, ICT, as the subject is now known, is much improved with average standards at the end of Years 2 and 6.

151. The starting point for this improvement was two-fold. Investment was made in new hardware and software and in a well-planned programme of staff development. This investment has been money well spent. Today, staff are confident, soundly informed teachers who use the computer suite effectively to build pupils' skills and knowledge in the subject. Teaching quality is satisfactory in infant and junior classes and there is some good teaching taking place. The evidence for this lies not just in the lessons observed, but also in the work sample provided for inspectors. Strengths of teaching include the management and motivation of pupils and the careful attention given to the development of skills. Planning to show how higher attaining pupils will be challenged by the work and the use of ongoing assessment to help pupils evaluate their own progress are two elements of teaching that could be enhanced.

152. Because teaching and the curriculum have been improved well, learning has become much more secure. Generally, pupils build skills, knowledge and understanding steadily across all strands of the subject, including computer control and modelling and the use of the Internet. For example, a Year 6 group of pupils with a wide range of ability used the Internet in one lesson to research facts about the countries of the European Union. Their knowledge of

the Internet was broadened well in this lesson as they learned how to make a search using keywords and the + operation. A pupil with a statement of special educational need typed *Germany+currency* and was pleased when the display showed a list of sites that gave facts about the Deutschemark. He was then able to answer the question set about the money used in one European Union country. Other pupils quickly identified that some sites were more up to date than others when the currency given for Spain listed the Euro. The pupils aired their views at this point about the merits and disadvantages of the new currency and different countries' views of it. Thus, this lesson is also an example of how well ICT is linked to work in subjects such as geography and mathematics. It was also representative of the very positive attitudes and behaviour shown by the pupils in the lessons observed.

153. Because the management of the subject is good, the school has made good progress with improvement to ICT. The co-ordinator is well informed and effective and recognises the need now to ensure that the computers based in classrooms are used as effectively as those in the suite. He is keen to have opportunities to monitor standards and the quality of learning in other classes and to evaluate in more depth the strengths and shortcomings of the subject. He has good ideas for the future direction of the subject, including its use to improve writing standards across the curriculum and the focusing of additional support in lessons to ensure it always promotes best progress. In lessons where pupils with special educational needs and those with SNC are given additional support, this is generally effective, though occasionally it is not well focused during the introductions to lessons. Overall however, ICT has a positive future in school.

MUSIC

154. Pupils throughout the school attain average standards overall in music. This is the same picture as reported at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils enjoy their music making activities and sing very well. Singing was observed to be a joyous and uplifting experience that contributed very positively to pupils' spiritual development. Visiting specialists provide good opportunities for a small group of Year 5 and 6 pupils to extend their musical talents in playing a range of instruments. These pupils make good progress. Overall teaching is satisfactory.

155. Younger pupils in Years 1 and 2 show good control of pitch, dynamics and rhythm in their singing and appropriately use untuned percussion instruments and clapping to maintain the rhythm. A good variety of songs, including a calypso rhythm and one with Chinese names, provide good challenge and enhance the pupils' cultural development. Good teaching is also helping them to become aware of the need for good posture and diction in their singing. The pupils respond very well, are eager to learn new words and try very hard. They all thoroughly enjoy the singing sessions and pupils with special educational needs participate fully and make equally good progress. Teachers' planning indicates that other areas of music, including pupils making their own music, are taught satisfactorily.

156. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 also sing very well and are beginning to listen to a variety of music with increasing interest and understanding. In a very good singing session, pupils demonstrated the ability to maintain their part during the singing of a three-part song. The enthusiastic and knowledgeable teaching highly motivates the pupils, including those with special educational needs, uses correct musical terminology and improves performance. In other areas of music teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers' good knowledge and enthusiasm is still apparent, but the lack of detailed planning and being clear about exactly what the pupils will learn prevents the pupils making more than satisfactory progress. Through the good selection of music, pupils are developing an understanding of how composers use dynamics, tempo and a variety of instruments to create a picture in the minds of the listener. The playing, (in two different lessons), of 'The carnival of animals'

captivated the pupils and they were able to recognise the animals created by Saint-Saens. Some good, targeted questions helped the pupils think more deeply and talk about the feelings the music evoked, but opportunities were missed to reinforce and extend learning about technical terms. The lack of clear learning objectives also meant that lesson time is not always well planned to maximise learning.

157. By contrast, teachers in Years 5 and 6 are very clear about what the pupils will learn and lessons are carefully planned but in Year 5, this is not always based on previous learning and tasks are sometimes too challenging. Pupils' musical knowledge and understanding of terminology such as dynamics, tempo and texture are below that expected for their age. In a very good Year 6 lesson pupils were given opportunities to use their knowledge of how sounds can create visual images for the listener. The teacher set a challenging task, very well explained, in which the pupils, in small groups, had to evoke feelings and create atmosphere by interpreting text from their literacy work on Macbeth. In response they worked hard, with good use of voice and hands, to produce a series of sounds, which they recorded in graphic notation. A valuable part of the lesson was the way in which the pupils were helped, by very good questioning, to sensitively and thoughtfully comment on and improve their own and each others' work. Consequently the pupils are developing a good understanding of the importance of musical background effects and overall achieve about average standards. This is particularly commendable considering the large numbers of pupils with special educational needs.

158. The school has successfully adopted the nationally recommended guidelines to provide teachers with clear guidelines, but not all teachers are yet successfully adapting it to suit their pupils' individual needs. The co-ordinator works enthusiastically to help and support colleagues, particularly with singing, but as yet has had little opportunity to monitor and evaluate teaching in order to raise standards in other areas.

159. Throughout the school music has a significant impact in raising pupils' self esteem and providing good opportunities for their social and cultural development.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

160. In 1997, inspectors judged physical education to be a strength of the school, with good teaching, good standards and good progress. These positive features have been sustained over the last four years and physical education is strength of the school.

161. During the current inspection, lessons in games, dance and gymnastics were observed. Standards in these elements of physical education are above average. Pupils improve their movements well as they progress through school. By the age of eleven, pupils move with poise and confidence and develop original, well planned and performed sequences. Year 6, for example, showed some very good movement in a dance lesson based on a South American theme. The teacher encouraged pupils to constantly evaluate their own movement and to work hard for improvement. The pupils were very willing to do this and they suggested many ways to refine their own and other pupils' work. Boys as much as girls worked productively to create a sequence of movements that followed the rhythm and sensory nature of the accompanying music. Pupils observing this work did so with rapt attention, such was the quality of the result.

162. Pupils are enthusiasts for physical education and work energetically. The quality of behaviour and relationships is very good and very positive contributions to pupils' personal development emerge from their work. All pupils, regardless of background, work sensibly and in an increasingly mature way. When taking swimming tuition, for example, pupils are very

good ambassadors for the school. The school's records show an increasing proportion of pupils can swim the desired length by the end of Year 6.

163. The quality of learning is good. Teachers use national guidance to ensure that all elements of the subject are covered and this shows in their thorough planning. Teachers have good subject knowledge; they plan interesting and motivating lessons, have good expectations and teach skills well. There could be more opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own performance in some classes, though in general this aspect of learning is promoted successfully. Additionally, higher attaining pupils could be challenged more. The school can point to much success in developing good quality physical education skills for pupils with special educational needs and those who are given SNC support. These pupils are very well integrated into lessons and they achieve very successfully. Whilst higher attaining pupils reach above average standards, some could do even better, given similar provision as for all pupils with special needs.

164. Each year there is a sports afternoon for pupils in infant and junior classes. Parents as much as the pupils enjoy these occasions. The programme of games and sports activities outside lessons has been much reduced since the previous inspection and there are no school games teams.

165. Management of physical education is satisfactory and the co-ordinator is keen to take on the additional responsibility for the direct monitoring of standards and the quality of education. This will enable her to identify strengths and weaknesses in the subject and then to take timely intervention to ensure that physical education remains a strength of the school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

166. The strengths identified in religious education at the time of the previous inspection have all been sustained. Attainment at the end of Years 2 and 6 meets the expectations set out in the locally agreed syllabus. As at the time of the previous inspection, pupils have sound knowledge of Christianity and now have better knowledge and understanding of a range of world faiths. They achieve well in learning about the beliefs, customs, celebrations, special books and artefacts of the different faiths. Very close links with the personal, social and health education curriculum supports their understanding well. A weakness in attainment is the recording of pupils' work, which does not always reflect the good quality of their learning.

167. In Years 1 and 2, pupils learn how people live as Christians and discuss their feelings confidently. They learn stories from the Bible, look at objects special to Christians and visit local churches. Pupils examine artefacts and photographs from other countries and faiths and express their views about how they make them feel and how, as a Christian they might help others. Year 2 pupils learn about life as a Hindu and stories special to Hindus. They compare festivals of light from different faiths and what these represent.

168. In Years 3 to 6, pupils build on this work well, learning a good range of Bible stories and what they mean to us today. They extend their studies to Sikhism, Buddhism, Judaism and Islam, considering similarities as well as differences between them and Christianity. Pupils learn how faith affects the way that people live. For example, Year 6 discuss the difficulties faced by Muslims in modern Britain. During the inspection, a local Christian mission worker spoke to them of how he had devoted his life to God in helping the least fortunate of local people. Pupils revealed a deep empathy through their questions and discussions. They relate significant points in their own life and talk of how their lives were affected. Pupils gain a good understanding of the special features of different faiths by handling religious objects and visiting local places of worship. Whilst hand-written work does not fully reflect the quality of learning, there are some good examples of writing about a Year 6 visit to a mosque completed on computer. This work reflects pupils' experiences and feelings well and is displayed effectively so that others can share their observations.

169. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school, with teachers placing a very strong emphasis on understanding, through discussions and practical experience. This is effective in helping pupils to understand the relevance of faith. They develop a deep interest and respect for the beliefs and customs of others. Teachers provide many good opportunities for discussion, which promotes the development of speaking and listening skills but do not have a systematic approach to the development of written communication skills. Some teachers provide appropriate written tasks for lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, but there is little evidence of challenging work for higher attaining pupils. Teachers often create a spiritual atmosphere in lessons, such as through meditation and reflection, which promotes pupils' personal development well. They make good use of local faith leaders and celebrate the different faiths of pupils, sharing their knowledge with others. Although teachers use ICT in the computer suite to record and research work, they make insufficient use of those in classrooms to develop recording skills.

170. The subject is well led and the co-ordinator supports teachers' planning well and checks the quality of pupils' written work. This is not as rigorous as it should be, being concerned more with coverage of the curriculum than standards. The school has built up a good range of resources, including artefacts of many faiths and this is a positive feature. The subject makes a very strong contribution to pupils' personal development because of the close links to the personal, social and health education curriculum and the emphasis on understanding.