

INSPECTION REPORT

CHRIST CHURCH CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

BIRKENHEAD

LEA area: WIRRAL

Unique reference number: 105064

Headteacher: Mrs K.Leighton

Reporting inspector: Mrs J. Tracey
20270

Dates of inspection: 24th - 27th June 2002

Inspection number: 195062

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

School category: Voluntary controlled

Age range of pupils: 3 to 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Borough Road
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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs J. Monty

Date of previous inspection: June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Team members | | | Subject responsibilities | Aspect responsibilities |
|---------------------|------------------|----------------------|---|--|
| 20270 | June Tracey | Registered inspector | Mathematics Design and technology Information and communication technology | The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further? |
| 9504 | Sheila Gurney | 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? |
| 10859 | Olga Cooper | Team inspector | English Physical education | How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? |
| 15678 | Jennifer Radford | Team inspector | Art History Music Religious education Special educational needs Equal opportunities English as an additional language | |
| 23081 | Carol Waine | Team inspector | Science Geography Foundation Stage | |

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REPORT CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|-----------|
| PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT | 7 |
| Information about the school | |
| How good the school is | |
| What the school does well | |
| What could be improved | |
| How the school has improved since its last inspection | |
| Standards | |
| Pupils' attitudes and values | |
| Teaching and learning | |
| Other aspects of the school | |
| How well the school is led and managed | |
| Parents' and carers' views of the school | |
| | |
| PART B: COMMENTARY | |
| | |
| HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS? | 11 |
| The school's results and pupils' achievements | |
| Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development | |
| | |
| HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT? | 13 |
| | |
| HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS? | 15 |
| | |
| HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS? | 17 |
| | |
| HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS | 18 |
| | |
| HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED? | 19 |
| | |
| WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER? | 21 |
| | |
| PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS | 23 |
| | |
| PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES | 27 |

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Christ Church School is a larger than average primary school providing education for 271 pupils in the age range 3 to 11 years. Numbers have reduced slightly in the last few years. Pupils are mostly taught in single age classes. Most pupils come from areas close to the school where there is a high level of social disadvantage and unemployment. Some pupils are in public care. The mobility of pupils joining and leaving the school at other than the normal times is high (33 per cent in 2000/01). The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average (62 per cent). Thirty-two per cent of the pupils are on the register of special educational need, which is above average. Most of these have moderate learning difficulties. The proportion with formal statements of need is average. Overall, pupils' attainment on entry is well below average. A relatively small number of pupils come from ethnic minority groups, namely Pakistani and Chinese. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language is average. The school is involved in a number of local and national initiatives that enhance educational provision, promote healthy living and involve parental partnership. It received a school achievement award this year for improvement in pupils' attainment.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Christ Church School provides an effective education for its pupils in a supportive and caring environment. Overall standards of work are average by the time the pupils leave the school, although English is below average. The school is well led and managed. Teaching is satisfactory overall and consistently good for the oldest pupils. Pupils achieve well from their starting points. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils of all abilities achieve well. Pupils who join the school from other schools are given good support to overcome the discontinuity in their education.
- The leadership and management are good.
- The school's Christian ethos permeates its work. Pupils are well cared for in a supportive learning environment that nurtures very good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Relationships are very good.
- Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are above average.

What could be improved

- Standards of work in reading and writing.
- The curriculum provision and use of accommodation in the Foundation Stage.
- The distribution of additional support for pupils who need extra help.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Overall improvement since the previous inspection in June 1997 is satisfactory. The school has successfully dealt with the key issues raised at that time. A Foundation Unit has been established for children aged three to five that ensures smooth progression in the acquisition of the skills relevant to early learning. Standards have improved throughout the school in mathematics due to more rigorous teaching and better monitoring of pupils' progress. The use of well-designed strategies to support pupils who are not making sufficient progress with the early stages of reading and number work is working well and raising pupils' confidence. The school's development plan has improved in that it now incorporates the costs involved and measures for determining the extent to which intended outcomes are achieved. However, the school lacks a strategic policy with a clear vision for the future that takes into account possible changes in the balance of the school's population. Additional improvements, instigated through the school's own self-evaluation include better provision for ICT, both in resources and teaching. This has led to much higher standards of attainment. The quality of teaching has improved and pupils' results in national tests have risen, in line with national trends.

STANDARDS

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

| Performance in: | compared with | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|------|------|-----------------|
| | all schools | | | similar schools |
| | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2001 |
| English | D | E | E | B |
| Mathematics | D | E | C | A |
| Science | E | D | C | A |

| Key | |
|--------------------|---|
| well above average | A |
| above average | B |
| average | C |
| below average | D |
| well below average | E |

Attainment is well below average on entry, particularly in social and communication skills. Children make good progress in their personal development and early reading and writing skills in the Foundation Stage. By the time they start Year 1, overall attainment is below average. A substantial minority of pupils do not reach the expected level for their age in mathematics and communication, language and literacy.

The high mobility rate of pupils joining and leaving the school at other than the normal times results in a fluctuating spectrum of abilities in all year groups. This, combined with the above average proportion of pupils with special educational needs, diminishes the school's results in national tests compared to all schools.

Standards of work are below average in Year 2 but pupils achieve well overall in relation to their prior attainment. Standards are below average in English, mathematics and science. Results in national tests taken at the end of Year 2 in 2001 were below average in writing and well below average in reading and mathematics. The pattern of results varies from year to year in accordance with the ability range and the length of time pupils have been at the school. Overall, the trend is upward. The latest results, for 2002, show further improvement in the proportions reaching the level expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics, significantly so in reading.

Overall, standards of work are average in Year 6. Pupils of all abilities achieve well, including those with special educational needs or for whom English is a second language. Standards are below average in English and average in mathematics and science. Over time, the trend in the school's average points score in national tests taken at the end of Year 6 is broadly similar to the national average. However, the improvement in mathematics and science is significantly better than in English. In 2001, the school exceeded its targets in mathematics and science but failed to meet them in English. Currently, there is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls.

Pupils' speaking and listening skills are average. They are better than reading and writing skills, which are below average. Pupils' numerical skills are average. They improve progressively due to the good implementation and effect of the National Numeracy Strategy.

In Years 2 and 6, standards of work are above average in ICT, below average in physical education and average in other subjects

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Attitudes to the school | Good. Most pupils are enthusiastic, attentive and eager to learn. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Behaviour in and out of lessons is good. The vast majority of pupils have respect for the school's disciplinary code and work within it. There is a small element of challenging behaviour that occasionally leads to exclusion. The number of exclusions is average for primary schools. |
| Personal development and relationships | Good. Pupils gain in self-confidence as they progress through the school. They show initiative and are keen to make a contribution to the school through the school council. Relationships between pupils and adults are very good. |
| Attendance | Attendance is below average. The attendance figures are seriously affected by a few pupils who are poor attenders. |

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of pupils in: | Nursery and 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

Overall, the quality of teaching and pupils' learning is satisfactory. Some good teaching was seen in all year groups during the inspection, but more consistently so in the Year 5/6 and 6 classes. Teaching and learning are inconsistent, and sometimes unsatisfactory, in Year 4. Staff absence has led to discontinuity in teaching and spasmodic learning in one of the classes. This manifests itself in poor written work that lacks rigour and progression. Teaching is good throughout the school in science, ICT and religious education. It is satisfactory in other subjects. A major difference between satisfactory and good lessons is the extent to which learning is based on practical and oral activities. Pupils' poor language skills limit their progress in lessons that depend heavily on reading and writing. Strategies for promoting pupils' numerical and reasoning skills are good. Teachers structure their work on the National Numeracy Strategy, adapting it well to meet the pupils' specific needs. The teaching of literacy skills is effective. Standards are improving, although not as quickly as in mathematics and science. The school does not make enough use of other subjects to underpin the teaching of literacy skills across the whole curriculum. Scrutiny of pupils' books indicates that written work is often not sufficiently rigorous or extensive. Pupils are more confident when editing and redrafting their work using ICT skills.

Good teaching is characterised by thorough preparation and good use of information about pupils' progress to set suitable and challenging tasks. Pupils know what they are expected to learn and evaluate the extent of their achievement at the end of the lesson. Lessons that were satisfactory rather than good tended to be over-reliant on worksheets. They did not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to record their work independently. The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching observed was due to poor planning and organisation, and inadequate preparation of resources.

Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are well taught. They work with adult support on tasks that are specifically tailored to their need.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|---|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | Good overall. Provision for the Foundation Stage is satisfactory but the organisation of outdoor play and free choice activities could be improved. The curriculum provides a wide range of experiences and opportunities for pupils of all ages. It is enriched by a good range of extra-curricular activities including languages, sport, computers and environmental work. |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs | Good. Pupils' specific needs are clearly identified and they receive good support in helping them to achieve their targets. |
| Provision for pupils with English as an additional language | Good Those pupils who join the school with little or no knowledge of English progress well because of the good follow-up to the individual tuition they receive. |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is very good in all aspects. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to explore values and beliefs and to consider how they effect their own and other people's lives. |
| How well the school cares for its pupils | The school cares for its pupils well. They are made to feel safe, secure and valued through working in an orderly and purposeful environment. Overall, assessment procedures are very good. The information gained is used effectively to monitor pupils' progress and to inform curriculum and lesson planning. |

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | The school is well led and managed. There is a sharp focus on priorities for development, which are shared with the staff. Teaching and non-teaching staff are committed and caring. They work together as a team so there is a unified approach to the school's work. |
| How well the governors fulfil | The governing body effectively fulfils its responsibilities. Governors are aware |

| | |
|--|---|
| their responsibilities | of the school's strengths and weaknesses and know the reasons for them. They are conscious of the need to form a long-term strategic plan to meet future needs and possible changes in the size of the school roll. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | Good analysis of national tests and school assessment records enables the school to target perceived areas of weakness for improvement. |
| The strategic use of resources | The school understands and satisfactorily applies the principles of best value. Resources are adequate apart from the provision of good quality, up-to-date books for English and the library. The resources for several areas of the curriculum in the Foundation Stage could also be improved. Good use is made of classroom assistants and adult volunteers to support learning but their effort is not always directed towards situations of greatest need. |

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 and make good progress. • Teaching is good. • The school is approachable and deals well with concerns. • The school is well led and managed. • Behaviour is good. | <p>A minority of parents feel that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • homework varies in quality and instructions are not always clear, • the school does not work closely with them and that they are not kept well informed about pupils' progress, • the school does not provide an interesting range of extra-curricular activities. |

Inspectors agree with the parents' positive views, except in that whilst some teaching is good, the overall quality is satisfactory. Homework was found to be of suitable quality and quantity, but not all pupils complete it and hand it in on time. There have been inconsistencies in some classes however due to periods of staff absence. Parents' comments about the school not working closely with them were not found to be justified. There are numerous opportunities for exchange of information about pupils' welfare and progress, in addition to which the school operates an 'open door policy'. However, letters giving details of imminent events were sometimes found to be sent out at short notice. The range of extra-curricular activities is good. It is more extensive than that found in many schools.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Overall, attainment on entry to the Foundation Stage is well below average. Children's social and communication skills are much lower than in most schools at this stage. Children make good progress in their personal development and early reading and writing skills, and satisfactory progress in other areas of learning. They achieve well overall, but, nevertheless, attainment is below average for their age at the end of the reception class. This is because very few attain higher levels and a substantial minority does not reach the expected level in mathematics and communication, language and literacy. Some children, often the higher attainers, leave to attend other schools at the end of the nursery or reception class. This has the effect of making attainment on entry to Year 1 well below average because of the higher proportion of lower-attaining pupils. This is higher than in many schools. The high mobility rate of pupils joining and leaving the school, and spread across all year groups, is also a significant factor to be taken into account when measuring achievement in relation to prior attainment. In 2000/2001, 55 pupils joined the school at various times during the school year and 49 left. Thirty-seven per cent of the current Year 6 began their education at other schools.

2. Overall, standards of work are below average in Year 2 and average in Year 6 representing good achievement in both year groups. In Year 2, standards are below average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils achieve well from their starting points in mathematics and science. They achieve satisfactorily in English. The difference in levels of achievement is due to pupils' poorer language skills, which have a significant effect on progress in reading and writing. In Year 6, standards are average in mathematics and science but remain below average in English. Pupils achieve well in mathematics and very well in science because they seem to have an innate feel for number work, and because many of the tasks are based on oral and practical work. Pupils' language skills are not as good as their numerical skills and many lack confidence when they need literacy skills to access work in other subjects. Achievement in English is satisfactory. It could be improved through the allocation of more time to the improvement of reading and a sharper focus on the development of writing skills through other subjects in the curriculum. Standards of work throughout the school are above average in ICT and pupils achieve well. This is due to a well-structured scheme of work and good teaching that ensure all pupils are taught the necessary skills and given sufficient opportunity to put them into practice. Standards of work are below average in physical education and average in other subjects in Years 3 to 6. Achievement is good overall in art, geography, history and religious education, and in music in Years 3 to 6. It is satisfactory overall in design and technology and physical education, and in music in Years 1 and 2. In the Year 4 class where there has been a succession of teachers, progress is barely satisfactory. Here, pupils' eagerness to learn has not been satisfied by rigour in teaching or expectations of high enough standards in written work. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls.

3. Pupils with special educational needs usually attain the standards that their teachers expect of them. They make good progress in most subjects as they move through the school. Progress in English is satisfactory in Years 3 to 6. It is hindered at times when additional support is not available for group activities. The school makes satisfactory provision for its highest attainers. These pupils make good progress in common with other groups of pupils. Pupils with English as an additional language achieve well. Those who enter the school with little or no knowledge of English make good progress because they are well supported by school staff and by the specialist team from the local education authority. Pupils from ethnic minority groups achieve similarly to other pupils of equal ability.

4. In 2001, pupils' results in national tests taken at the end of Year 2 were below average in writing and well below average in reading and mathematics. Compared with similar schools, results were well above average in writing, average in reading and below average in mathematics. Since the previous inspection there has been an upward trend in results, similar to that found nationally, apart from a dip in Year 2000.

This accurately reflected the ability spread of a year group in which the mobility of pupils in Years 1 and 2 was particularly high. Pupils' results in the 2002 tests became available during the inspection. National figures are not available for comparison but in relation to 2001, the results show a significant improvement in the proportion reaching the expected standard for their age (level 2) in reading. Results also improved in writing and mathematics. The realistic target set by the school for mathematics (80 per cent at level 2) was exceeded by 5 per cent.

5. Pupils' results in national tests taken at the end of Year 6 in 2001 were average in mathematics and science and well below average in English. The small proportion of higher-attaining pupils achieved similarly in the three subjects, at the higher level than expected for their age (level 5). The poorer results overall in English were due to more pupils not achieving the level expected for their age than in mathematics and science. This is indicative of the weakness in their language skills in comparison to numerical ones. The school's results in comparison to national figures are significantly affected by the persistent absenteeism of a small number of pupils. Some of these are the higher attainers. The school exceeded its self-imposed targets in mathematics and science but did not achieve them in English. The targets are appropriately based on pupils' prior attainment but the fluctuating nature of the school's population means they have to be read with caution and consideration of changes in the year group. For instance, one fifth of the pupils in the current Year 6 joined the school during Years 5 and 6. It is evident that learning is more consistently progressive, resulting in higher achievement, when pupils complete the whole of their primary education in the one school. The overall trend in the school's average point score is broadly similar to the national trend. This is creditable considering the many extraneous factors that affect pupils' progress at this school. Results of the national tests taken by the current Year 6 were received during the inspection. The targets set for English, mathematics and science were exceeded and there was an increase in the proportion reaching the level expected for their age in English and mathematics, significantly so in the former.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

6. The vast majority of children are happy at Christ Church. As at the time of the previous inspection, pupils' behaviour is good, frequently very good. Relationships between pupils and with adults are very good. These are strengths of the school. From the Foundation Stage pupils are taught to behave well. Staff expect high standards and most children fulfil them. Pupils are polite and friendly. One pupil said "everyone is very friendly, especially when you are new". This comment is particularly relevant considering the high number of pupils joining the school during the year. They settle in quickly because the staff and other pupils are welcoming and make determined efforts to engage them in school life. In class, pupils are generally enthusiastic, attentive and eager to learn. When working in pairs or groups, they work sensibly and co-operate and collaborate well. They take pride in their work and enjoy showing it to adults.

7. Most pupils with special educational needs, and those with English as an additional language, have positive attitudes to their work and to school life in general. They usually behave well and have very good relationships with their teachers and fellow pupils. In lessons and extra support sessions they respond well to the help that they receive.

8. Some pupils, often those in difficult personal circumstances, do exhibit challenging behaviour. As a last resort a few are temporarily, or occasionally permanently, excluded. The number of exclusions is average for primary schools nationally. Pupils use and respect the procedures in place for dealing with incidents of alleged bullying. They and their parents have confidence in the way such incidents are speedily and satisfactorily dealt with. The small number of pupils from ethnic minority groups are well integrated and relate well to other pupils.

9. Parents are very pleased with the self-confidence and maturity that children achieve. Pupils take on a range of responsibilities and activities that positively promote their good personal development. For example, older pupils are encouraged to formally apply for jobs as 'player managers' to play games with

younger children. There is a school council with two elected delegates from each class. This gives pupils a share in the ownership of the school and makes them feel their views can make a difference. For example they asked for more playground equipment with which they are now very well supplied. A further example of responsibility and ownership is the right to vote on the shade a classroom will be painted. Pupils appreciate the wide range of clubs, visits and extra-curricular activities offered to them. Year 6 pupils find their residential outdoor pursuits course in Wales both enjoyable and character building.

10. Attendance was below average for the year 2000/01. Unauthorised absence was above average. The pattern of attendance this year is similar, although the proportion of unauthorised absence is lower. The attendance figures are badly affected by the few pupils who are very poor attenders.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

11. Overall, the quality of teaching and pupils' learning is satisfactory. There has been a significant improvement in teaching since the previous inspection when 11 per cent of the lessons observed were unsatisfactory. The amount of very good teaching has almost doubled. The improvement is due to changes in staffing, better planning and a sharper focus on the use of daily assessment in lessons to influence planning for subsequent ones. Ninety-six per cent of the lessons observed were satisfactory or better, 37 per cent were good and 19 per cent were very good. Two lessons were unsatisfactory.

12. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in the Foundation Stage. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when there was some unsatisfactory teaching in the nursery. The reasons for this were mainly the poor management of children, leading to indiscipline, and objectives for learning that did not match their level of understanding. The climate for learning is now much more conducive to encouraging children's personal development, which in turn leads to their greater confidence. They are better motivated to apply what they learn in creative and practical activities. Children are well behaved and teachers promote good relationships that help them to feel safe and secure at this early stage in their learning. Targets for learning are sharply focused where there is a direct teaching input to the whole class. Teaching could be improved further through the identification of clearer targets where children have free choice of activities.

13. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall throughout the school. They are consistently good, sometimes very good, for older pupils, mainly in the Year 5/6 and Year 6 classes. Two classes have been taught by temporary teachers for the greater part of the school year. The lack of continuity in one of the Year 4 classes due to staff absence and a succession of temporary teachers has been detrimental to pupils' progress. Their learning has been spasmodic and their written work frequently lacks rigour and progression. These pupils' response to the good teaching during inspection week showed how quickly their thirst for knowledge could be rekindled. Pupils in the current Years 5 and 6 also missed out on basic grounding in literacy and numeracy skills in earlier years. Teachers of these older pupils are working hard to make up for this. They are consolidating previous work before moving on, and providing extra 'booster groups' for pupils who are identified as not fulfilling their potential. These practices are successful and underpin the overall improvement in pupils' attainment, particularly in science and mathematics, since the previous inspection.

14. Pupils with special educational needs are well taught in their withdrawal sessions because work is carefully tailored to their needs. In most main school lessons teachers plan effectively to ensure that all pupils are able to join in discussions and learning activities. Building confidence is a key feature of the most successful lessons and the quality of teaching is enhanced considerably by the good level of support that pupils receive. For example, in a Year 1 numeracy lesson, pupils with special educational needs overcame their reluctance to contribute to the discussion session because of the classroom assistant's helpful prompting and encouragement. However, in some of the literacy lessons, pupils do not achieve as well as they should because no additional support is available. Pupils with English as an additional language are well taught in main school classes. They are usually willing learners because they are well motivated, and, also, because of the very good relationships that teachers have developed in the

classroom. In most classes, teachers structure the work well so that higher-attaining pupils have sufficiently challenging work to stimulate interest and keep them purposefully occupied.

15. Teachers have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the requirements of National Curriculum subjects and religious education. The latest recommendations for teaching in the Foundation Stage are interpreted well. Teachers have been conscientious in making themselves familiar with the basics of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. These have been implemented effectively. In English, pupils' standards in both reading and writing are showing an improvement over those in previous years. However, there is still much to be achieved because pupils' overall language skills are below those expected for their age. Standards in mathematics have significantly improved as a direct result of the emphasis on numerical work, its greater use to stretch pupils' mental agility and the constant message to pupils that they may need to call on a variety of strategies to solve a problem.

16. The quality of teaching in science, information and communication technology and religious education is good throughout the school. It is satisfactory in other subjects. The difference is due to the more practical approach to learning in science and ICT, and in religious education to the good use of discussion to encourage pupils to consider the implications of the factual knowledge they are progressively acquiring. Pupils have more confidence in the written recording of their work when it is based on practical or oral work. In this respect ICT is a useful bridge because it enables pupils to draft and modify their work before presenting it in its final form. More use could be made of this across the whole curriculum to give pupils greater confidence in their writing. It is exemplified in a pupil's comment in an English lesson taken in the ICT suite - " I don't like English because I find it hard to write down what I want to say". This followed a good oral discussion in the early part of the lesson in which pupils showed very good knowledge of what the lesson was about. It highlights the difference between pupils' understanding of the work and their ability to record it. The quality of learning as reflected in oral work shows that pupils' knowledge and level of understanding are often good and better than is evident from their writing. This, underpinned by pupils' very good personal and social development, explains why pupils' achievement is judged better than their learning. The high rate of movement of pupils in and out of the school is a contributory factor to these judgements. The pupils involved achieve well but their rate of learning is often slow because teachers frequently have to build on low levels of prior attainment.

17. Good use is made of ICT in lessons now that resources have improved. Pupils satisfactorily learn the skills they need in specific ICT lessons, and transfer them to other subjects. For example, pupils accessed a mathematics program that led them through mathematical reasoning at their own level before moving them on. In geography, pupils searched the Internet for information about five day weather forecasts and related this to predications and preparations for events such as sporting fixtures. In all, teachers are making good use of ICT to promote learning and foster pupils' independence.

18. Teachers cope well with the above average level of movement of pupils during the year. They monitor progress very closely, providing the relevant tuition and practice where necessary to assist pupils catch up with other pupils of similar ability. Many of these pupils have experienced discontinuity in their schooling. They respond well to the pastoral care and stability provided by the staff.

19. Throughout the school teachers manage pupils well. They promote good discipline through respect and by encouraging pupils' consideration one for another. Examples of good teaching were seen in most subjects, characterised by thorough preparation and good use of information about pupils' progress to set suitable and challenging tasks. Pupils were clear about what they were expected to learn and could evaluate the degree of success in meeting the targets set for them. In the very good lessons, expectations were high, the pace was brisk and pupils were caught up in the momentum of wanting to learn more. For example, in a Year 2 science lesson, pupils hypothesised about the movement of cars on ramps of different inclinations and surfaces. Towards the end of the lesson one pupil suggested repeating the practical test because the result in her group was unexpected. Where lessons were satisfactory rather than good, there was an over-reliance on worksheets and not enough emphasis on planning for pupils to work independently. The approach to marking was also inconsistent, for instance, when there was no

obvious improvement or follow up to the teacher's comment that the presentation of work should be improved. The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching observed during the inspection was due to poor organisation of an outdoor play session in the Foundation Stage and to poor planning and inadequate preparation of resources in an English class. The lesson lacked sparkle and failed to stimulate pupils' interest enough to sustain their concentration.

20. Some parents expressed concerns about homework. Inspectors found that the school had responded well to the issue raised at the time of the previous inspection. Homework is set regularly and of suitable quality and content to complement pupils' learning. Teachers do their best to encourage pupils to complete homework but not all pupils are as co-operative in its return as they could be.

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

21. The school provides its pupils with a wide range of experiences and opportunities for learning that cater well for the interests, aptitudes and needs of most pupils. All National Curriculum subjects, religious education and the areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage are included and statutory requirements are fully met. The curriculum is effectively enhanced by the range of educational visits, visitors and links with beacon schools that enrich pupils' experience. Overall, the curricular provision is good and has improved since the previous inspection.

22. The school is committed to providing equality of access to the curriculum for all its pupils, including those with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic groups. It is largely successful in this respect, except when some pupils with special educational needs do not receive sufficient support in literacy lessons owing to the way in which teaching assistants are deployed.

23. The provision for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall. It has improved since the previous inspection when provision in the nursery was unsatisfactory and children did not make sufficient progress. The curriculum provides satisfactorily for children's needs in all the areas of learning and planning for the direct teaching sessions is good with clear learning targets. The targets are not as clear in the activities children choose for themselves. Children are sometimes not as well motivated in these activities because the range of resources is basic and unexciting.

24. There are effective policies and schemes of work for all subjects, which combine the local education authority's schemes and national guidelines. The planning is thorough, with a clear focus on what pupils are expected to learn. There is a clear overview of what is to be taught in each term of each year, with more detailed plans for each half term which feed into the weekly lesson plans. The planning is rigorously monitored and areas for improvement are clearly identified and followed through. These schemes of work ensure pupils build systematically on what they already know and can do. English is the only subject where the learning objectives identified in the half-termly plans are not always brought through into the weekly planning. This leads to a lack of focus on what it is that pupils are expected to learn or consolidate in some lessons.

25. The school makes good provision for pupils in need of extra help. The curriculum is accessible to all pupils with special educational needs and to pupils with English as an additional language. A wide range of additional support is available. For example, pupils benefit from regular reading practice with trained volunteers, as well as from group-work to improve speaking and listening skills. An outside specialist provides tuition for pupils at an early stage of English language acquisition. Individual education plans are in place for those who need them and they are effective in ensuring that pupils' particular needs are identified and met. Higher-attaining pupils and those with particular talents are catered for satisfactorily in the extra-curricular activities that are made available, such as the sports coaching and the art and drama sessions at the Williamson Art Gallery.

26. The school continues to implement the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies well and like most schools gives more than half its teaching time to literacy and numeracy, recognising the need to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Teachers' planning is consistently and securely based on these strategies. Other national initiatives to enhance the teaching of literacy and numeracy have also been implemented and are improving the provision. This is becoming evident in pupils' attainment and their achievement over time. The time available for teaching other subjects is allocated satisfactorily and provides a balanced coverage.

27. A wide range of extra-curricular activities is provided including languages, music, sport, computers, art, cookery and environmental clubs. These are often provided for a period of six weeks to enable more pupils to participate if they wish. All activities are open to both girls and boys. A study group for Year 6 pupils was provided from October to May in literacy and numeracy. This gave a boost to pupils' performance prior to taking the national tests. More able pupils are involved in a study support group based at the local museum and art gallery, which encourages them to reach their full potential. Those pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 who wish to train as player managers to support pupils at play during lunchtimes are invited to do so.

28. The provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is very good. PSHE features on all class timetables. Pupils are provided with good opportunities to discuss issues of concern. They consider their personal qualities and talk about aspects of school life which affect them, for example playground games at lunchtime. Class discussions are effective in helping to build pupils' self-esteem and confidence in expressing their views and opinions and coping in difficult situations. The provision includes sex education, the safe use of drugs, personal hygiene and the importance of becoming good citizens. The school promotes understanding of the need for racial harmony and understanding through incorporating teaching about them at relevant points in schemes of work; also through the Christian environment of the school which values the worth and contribution of all its members.

29. Pupils with special educational needs and those pupils with English as an additional language have good opportunities for personal development through activities which are designed to improve their social skills, such as discussions and pair work in lessons, team work in games, and taking part in role-play and music-making.

30. The school provides a wide range of visits and visitors to extend and enrich the curriculum. In history, for example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 visit local places of interest to develop their understanding of past and present times. In Year 3 pupils visit the Grosvenor Museum in Chester as part of their study of the Romans. Pupils in Years 4 and 5 make similar visits as part of their studies of the Tudors and Victorians. These help to bring history to life. Other visitors include poets, musicians and theatre groups. Pupils learn much from these opportunities.

31. People in the local community make a very good contribution to pupils' learning. Grandparents tell pupils of their experiences during childhood. The local vicar, librarian, Salvation Army officers and members of the church congregation are well involved in pupils' learning. Parents of pupils from minority ethnic groups and staff from the multi-cultural centre also make effective contributions.

32. The school is linked with several 'beacon schools' and works in very close partnership with local high schools. These links have led to pupils experiencing a writers' workshop, working with an artist in residence, having access to ICT resources in the local high school and a 'French' afternoon. The links with 'beacon schools' have also improved the school's discipline policy and its self-evaluation procedures.

33. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good in all aspects. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to explore values and beliefs, including religious beliefs, and the way they have an impact on people's lives. For example, in religious education, pupils learn about forgiveness and the practice of daily prayer in different religions. Parents of pupils from minority ethnic groups play an important part in this and a visitor talks pupils through a Hindu wedding ceremony and the reasons behind the traditions. Pupils are treated as individuals with their own uniqueness and through class

discussions are given opportunities to consider what animates them and others. Through their sponsorship of a child in India, collecting pennies to pay for Kishor's school meals and books, pupils develop an understanding of the plight of others less fortunate than themselves. The school has successfully monitored its provision for spiritual development by identifying the opportunities provided and observing the effect on pupils' attitudes.

34. Pupils' moral and social development are very well provided for. There is a clear code of conduct, which is consistently promoted at all times. Incidents of unacceptable behaviour are talked through with those concerned and the choices made very clear. Helping pupils to make the right choices is an important aspect of the provision. This is effective in developing skills in the resolution of conflicts and helping pupils to understand the impact of their actions on others. Good behaviour is appropriately rewarded with merit points. The pupils are expected to take care of the play equipment available at lunchtimes and to put it away tidily. The adult play managers set good examples for pupils and encourage their participation in playground games. This ensures that the school's ethos of inclusion and care is encouraged not only in lessons but also at play. The school successfully promotes racial and religious equality. In lessons and discussion sessions pupils consider, for example, the difference between wants, needs and rights and move on to consider their entitlements. A sense of school community is fostered well through assemblies and residential visits. The school has effective links with the world of work and the wider community and invites people into school to raise pupils' aspirations and experiences. Such visitors include a female industrial chemist, a bricklayer, firemen and policemen.

35. Pupils' cultural development is promoted very well. The school's provision begins with the local culture and then extends beyond. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to explore their own cultural assumptions and values through assemblies and lessons. The school identifies and nurtures potentially gifted and talented pupils and helps them to achieve their full potential through involvement in study groups. Displays around the school reinforce the school's cultural values, such as the display of pottery based on the work of a local potter. An eye-catching display about North American Indians, created by pupils in Years 2, 4 and 6 captures other pupils' imagination. It emanates from work with an artist to extend pupils' multi-cultural experience and promote understanding of artistic vocabulary. Hand made tapestries, which are a feature of the local culture, are well displayed in the main entrance hall.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

36. The school makes good provision for the personal support and guidance of its pupils. The Christian ethos is warm and caring yet orderly, disciplined and purposeful. The staff are clearly dedicated to the welfare of the children and are sensitive to the needs of those in difficult personal circumstances. They know the children well and relationships with their pupils are generally very good. The school is truly inclusive in its support for boys and girls of all abilities, race and creed. Nursery staff pay home visits to all new starters and do everything in their power to ensure they settle in easily. From the nursery onwards care of the individual is of paramount importance. Though education in the nursery is part-time, needy children are admitted full-time or, occasionally on a temporary basis. A kitchen has recently been installed so that breakfast and/or tea can be provided for those who need them. However, this excellent facility is not used as regularly as it could be. There are good procedures for the induction of pupils into the reception class and very sensitive help for the many children who enrol part way through their primary school careers.

37. Playtime is a very enjoyable experience for pupils. Much time and effort has gone into providing good quality play equipment and teaching and organising traditional children's games. The quality of supervision and organisation of some of the mid-day supervisors is quite outstanding.

38. Behaviour management and anti-bullying policies are effective. Certificates are awarded for good or improved work, behaviour or attendance. These are valued by pupils and saved in their records of achievement, which are passed on to the receiving secondary schools. Local authority guidelines on

measures to ensure child protection are scrupulously followed. All staff have had thorough training and are well aware of the need to be vigilant.

39. Attendance and punctuality are well monitored and parents/carers are telephoned on the first day of unexplained absence. There has been a drop in the rate of unauthorised absence in the current academic year.

40. Procedures for ensuring the health and safety of pupils are good. Risk assessment is meticulous and the caretaker carries out daily checks because of the regular vandalism that takes place locally. The local authority is very supportive and necessary repairs are swiftly completed. High priority is given to health education, which is mainly taught through science and PSHE. The school nurse has an input, which includes sex education for Years 5 and 6. The school is a 'healthy eating' school which has resulted in the withdrawal of the tuck shop, the encouragement to eat fruit and the provision of water bottles for each child in the classrooms. Very helpful and sensitive support is given to children with severe medical conditions.

41. Procedures for checking pupils' academic progress are very good. They enable teachers to target pupils who are underachieving. The school has effective systems for monitoring the performance of pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language. The arrangements for identifying and supporting individual pupils in need of extra help are good and pupils' individual education plans give clear information on targets for improvement. Support staff know the pupils well and are alert to signs of potential problems. There is very good liaison between the school and the local specialist services.

42. Overall, the standard of care is very good and can best be summed up by a parent who wrote '... if you want your children to be happy, rounded and achieve the best of their ability – send them to Christ Church'. Similar sentiments were expressed by a Year 6 pupil who said “We will all miss this school when we go. We wish we could take our teachers with us.” All the Year 6 pupils interviewed agreed.

43. There is a very good range of assessment procedures in Years 1 to 6 in English, mathematics and science. They provide a comprehensive bank of information through which the school checks that pupils are making suitable progress from year to year and within each year group. The information gained is used effectively to highlight groups and individual pupils who need extra support or who are potentially higher attainers. Targets are set for groups and individuals but, whilst these are effective in raising standards in science and mathematics, they are less so in English, where teachers are not sufficiently reviewing progress towards the targets they set. The results of annual assessments are analysed thoroughly to highlight areas of the curriculum that need improvement.

44. Assessment procedures in the Foundation Stage are sound, with formal assessments on entry to the nursery and reception year. Information gained is used appropriately to group pupils and plan work to meet their needs. Staff assess children from day-to-day. They record their progress towards the national targets set for the end of the reception year so that they know just how well children are progressing throughout the two year groups.

45. The school analyses its results in national tests in English, mathematics and science to compare its performance against similar schools and measure the progress that pupils have made. Assessment procedures in other subjects are satisfactorily providing teachers with a clear picture of progress from year to year.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

46. The school's partnership with its parents is satisfactory. Fewer than 15 per cent of parents completed the questionnaire and very few attended the pre-inspection parents' meeting. However, the vast majority have signed the home/school agreement. Parents interviewed were mainly very pleased

with the school. Almost all the questionnaire respondents say their children like school, behave well, work hard, make good progress and are helped to become mature and responsible. All say the school is well led and managed and they feel comfortable approaching teachers with queries or concerns. A few parents say homework varies both in quality and quantity and instructions are not always clear. However, inspectors found homework provision generally satisfactory. Some of the questionnaire respondents feel they are not sufficiently informed about how well their children are doing. Inspectors did not feel this criticism to be justified. Each class has two consultation evenings per year and these are quite well attended. There are also open afternoons when parents can sit in a class and view their children's work. Parents are always informed if there are concerns about a child and class teachers and the headteacher are readily accessible after school or by appointment. As one parent put it – "you only have to ask". A few parents criticised the extra-curricular opportunities offered but inspectors found these to be good.

47. The school has a good partnership with parents of pupils with special educational needs. Parents are involved in reviews of their children's achievement and usually work closely with the school to ensure a united approach to problems. They are pleased with the different ways in which their children make progress.

48. Information given to parents is satisfactory. Written reports meet statutory requirements but targets are not always sufficiently specific. The prospectus, though adequate, is not an attractive or inviting document. The text is dry and contains too much educational jargon.

49. The parent/teacher association has recently lapsed as parents are reluctant to become involved with its organisation. However, fund-raising and other events organised by staff are generally well supported. A few parents and friends give valuable help, for example by hearing readers, with the library, with sports and ferrying children to matches. Most of the learning support assistants started by working at the school voluntarily.

50. The school does all it can to involve and support parents and spends much time helping those with difficulties. Various initiatives are in place to reinforce this help; for example, through involvement with 'On Track' which is a child and family service. This is aimed particularly at parents of children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Parents can meet an expert advisor directly in school without having to access a series of agencies. The school has run courses on understanding the new literacy and numerically initiatives and further courses are planned. From the nursery onwards a high priority is placed on involving parents and responding to their wishes. However, not all parents support the school with regard to their children's regular attendance and punctuality. On the other hand, many parents are very supportive of their children, anxious to help them and keen for them to do well.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

51. The school is well led and managed. It successfully pursues its aims to provide enjoyable and challenging opportunities in a Christian environment where pupils feel loved and valued. The headteacher and deputy work well together as a team and encourage a co-operative spirit amongst staff. The school sets itself specific targets, relating to overall provision and pupils' attainment. It is self-critical in evaluation of its work and uses the outcomes well in development planning. The school population is more mobile than in many schools with significant numbers of pupils joining various year groups throughout the year. Staff cope well with this, checking progress at frequent intervals and ensuring that pupils integrate quickly into the school community. The school emanates a warmth that fosters an effective learning environment in which pupils of all abilities, background, race or creed feel safe and recognised for their individuality.

52. The leadership team has established a positive climate for learning characterised by high expectations of effort and behaviour. Pupils respond well to the teachers' concern for their welfare and progress by conforming to the disciplinary code and showing respect for other pupils' achievement. The headteacher and deputy have high profiles about the school and know pupils well. This provides them with first hand

information and early warning of potential difficulties. It makes pupils and parents feel confident that any concerns will be dealt with quickly and without fuss.

53. Issues at the time of the previous inspection included improvement in the quality of education for children under five, raising standards in mathematics in Years 1 and 2, and improving the school development plan. Satisfactory improvement has been made in respect to all of these. The school has since targeted other areas for further development. Well directed action has led to further improvement in standards in mathematics and science and a significant improvement in the provision for ICT. Simultaneously, the school has embarked on new ventures linked to local and national initiatives. For example, it has been proactive in seeking out funds to support special programmes in reading and mathematics. These are clearly targeted at pupils who need extra help to get them off to a satisfactory start in their education. Other initiatives are helping the more able and talented pupils. In promoting the development of skills beyond the levels expected for their age it is hoped that pupils will become self-motivated and more prepared to work independently.

54. Subject co-ordinators have a key role in the organisation of their subjects, especially in policy -making, curriculum planning and monitoring of progress. Their impact on pupils' standards is variable depending on the time available and the priority given to each subject in the whole school development plan. Currently, there is insufficient overview of standards in design and technology and physical education. The core subjects of English, mathematics, science and ICT have received more attention. They have been highlighted in respect to training for teachers and assessment of pupils' progress. Consequently, progress in them is more marked. Monitoring of teaching and pupils' work is mainly carried out by the headteacher and senior staff. It leads to effective discussion with teachers and pupils and to corrective action where pupils are considered to be underachieving. Good analysis of pupils' results in various school and national tests, and ongoing checks on progress from year to year, assist the school to evaluate whether individual pupils are making sufficient progress from their starting point. This is a particularly important measure because so many pupils do not start their education at Christ Church. The governors set as realistic targets as is possible bearing in mind uncertainties about the prior attainment of pupils who have previously attended other schools.

55. Management of special educational needs is satisfactory overall and in some areas it is good. For example, the provision for pupils with statements of special educational needs is carefully monitored to ensure that statutory requirements are fully met. The school has made good progress in preparing for the implementation of the revised Code of Practice. The systems for issuing and amending pupils' individual education plans are efficient. Daily routines run smoothly because of good co-ordination, and there has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Management of the provision for pupils with English as an additional language is good.

56. The governing body effectively fulfils its responsibilities in ensuring that statutory requirements are met. The governors are well organised and work through a committee structure. This provides good opportunities for governors to discuss particular aspects of the school's work in depth and so to provide sharp, specific information for the full governing body prior to decisions being taken. The governors are satisfactorily aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses but there is scope for them to extend their knowledge of the work within individual subject areas. Governors are conscious of the need to formulate a long-term strategic plan that takes into account the possible scenario of falling rolls. The school's present development plan touches on this but not in sufficient detail. It concentrates appropriately on improving teaching and raising standards and includes in its scope, the curriculum, buildings and resources. The school's ethos effectively promotes racial equality, as is evident from the very good relationships between pupils. The policy for racial equality is clearly translated into practice.

57. Overall, staffing is adequate apart from inconsistency in the provision in Year 4 due to staff absence. The progress over time of some pupils in this year group has been affected and standards are not as good as they should be, especially in written work. The school benefits from additional support from local people and the many initiatives it is involved in. Together with the valuable work of classroom assistants, they help individual pupils to gain confidence in themselves and in their ability to succeed. The distribution

of additional support is sometimes inequitable however, leaving some teachers with too little time to spend with pupils who need extra help to progress. This was particularly evident in Year 4.

58. The accommodation is adequate for the school's needs. The buildings were being rewired at the time of the inspection so the school's appearance was not at its best. Teachers mount suitable and informative displays to enhance pupils' learning but there is not enough of the pupils' own work in evidence. This denies pupils the opportunity to celebrate success and to see good quality work that they themselves can aspire to.

59. Overall, learning resources are satisfactory. Provision for ICT is good. The combination of the ICT suite and modern computers in classrooms ensures that pupils have good opportunities to follow up learning in a whole class situation by repeated and regular practice in the classroom. The provision of books for English and independent work is not as good as it needs to be to encourage higher standards in reading. The library does not provide a sufficiently attractive environment to encourage pupils to research for themselves. The stock of books lacks breadth and the content of many of them fails to stimulate the pupils' interest. Similarly, provision for children in the Foundation Stage could be improved through better quality resources for imaginative and creative play.

60. Financial planning, control and day-to-day management of accounts are satisfactory. The income and expenditure per pupil are about average. Prudent planning ensures that funds are available at the appropriate time to resource priorities in the development plan. Specific grants are used satisfactorily for their intended purpose. The headteacher and governors maintain an oversight of finances and ensure that money is spent satisfactorily in accordance with the principles of best value. The local education authority carried out an audit in January 2001. Its recommendations were accepted and formed the basis of an action plan.

61. Taking into account the satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection, the very good quality of care and the standards achieved in relation to the school's challenging context, the school provides good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

62 In order to consolidate and further develop the school's work, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- (1) Raise standards in reading and writing throughout the school by;
 - hearing pupils read individually more frequently until they are confident readers,
 - improving the range of graded reading books available, especially those for older, lower-attaining pupils,
 - encouraging parents and carers to be more involved in pupils' reading at home,
 - making even more use of assessment information to target those pupils who could make better progress with extra support,
 - implementing a consistent whole school approach to teaching writing skills, especially spelling,
 - teaching writing skills more effectively through other subjects,
 - adopting a consistent approach to marking pupils' work, particularly their spelling,
 - reducing the over-reliance on the use of work sheets,
 - displaying good exemplars of writing for pupils to aspire to,
 - improving the school library.

(Paragraphs 2, 15, 16, 19,43, 58/59, 78 - 85, 94, 109, 113)

- (2) Improve the curriculum provision and use of accommodation in the Foundation Stage by;

- improving the planning and organisation of outdoor play sessions,
- improving planning for sessions in which children choose activities for themselves,
- improving the range of practical resources, particularly for role play and construction,
- improving learning conditions for children in the reception class by making better use of the accommodation,
- reflecting children's success in early writing in displays of work.

(Paragraphs *12, 19, 23, 63 - 65*)

- (3) Use classroom assistants' time more flexibly to provide more equitable support for pupils with special educational needs or who need extra help.

(Paragraphs *14, 22, 57, 74, 89*)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

| |
|----|
| 62 |
|----|

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

| |
|----|
| 52 |
|----|

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| | Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|------------|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| Number | 0 | 12 | 23 | 25 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Percentage | 0 | 19 | 37 | 40 | 2 | 2 | 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) | 16 | 255 |
| Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals | | 167 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

| | Nursery | YR – Y6 |
|---|---------|---------|
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs | 1 | 4 |
| Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register | 2 | 87 |

English as an additional language

| | No of pupils |
|---|--------------|
| Number of pupils with English as an additional language | 9 |

Pupil mobility in the last school year

| | No of pupils |
|--|--------------|
| Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 55 |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving | 49 |

Attendance

Authorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 5.3 |
| National comparative data | 5.6 |

Unauthorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 1.2 |
| 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 | 14 | 16 | 30 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | Reading | Writing | Mathematics |
|---|----------|---------|---------|-------------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above | Boys | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| | Girls | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| | Total | 19 | 21 | 23 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above | School | 63(63) | 70(68) | 77(71) |
| | National | 84(83) | 86(84) | 91(90) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above | Boys | 12 | 14 | 13 |
| | Girls | 14 | 13 | 10 |
| | Total | 26 | 27 | 23 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above | School | 87(59) | 90(66) | 77(59) |
| | 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 | 28 | 13 | 41 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above | Boys | 14 | 20 | 26 |
| | Girls | 11 | 11 | 12 |
| | Total | 25 | 31 | 38 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above | School | 61(63) | 76(67) | 93(81) |
| | National | 75(75) | 71(72) | 87(85) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above | Boys | 16 | 19 | 17 |
| | Girls | 11 | 10 | 11 |
| | Total | 27 | 29 | 28 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above | School | 66(63) | 71(72) | 68(65) |
| | 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 | |
| Black – African heritage | |
| Black – other | |
| Indian | |
| Pakistani | 2 |
| Bangladeshi | |
| Chinese | 5 |
| White | 208 |
| Any other minority ethnic group | 2 |

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR– Y6

| | |
|--|------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 12 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 23.2 |
| Average class size | 23.2 |

Education support staff: YR– Y6

| | |
|---|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 8 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 207 |

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

| | |
|--|----|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 1 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 16 |
| Total number of education support staff | 2 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 58 |
| Number of pupils per FTE adult | 8 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

| | |
|--|---|
| Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years | 4 |
| Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years | 3 |
| | |
| Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE) | 0 |
| Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE) | 1 |
| Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE) | 0 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Exclusions in the last school year

| | Fixed period | Permanent |
|------------------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | | |
| Black – African heritage | | |
| Black – other | | |
| Indian | | |
| Pakistani | | |
| Bangladeshi | | |
| Chinese | | |
| White | 4 | 1 |
| Other minority ethnic groups | | |

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

Financial information

| | |
|--|--------|
| Financial year | 2001/2 |
| | £ |
| Total income | 611223 |
| Total expenditure | 594365 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 2193 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | -6821 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 10037 |

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 270 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 29 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 64 | 29 | 0 | 7 | 0 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 57 | 36 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 43 | 50 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 19 | 48 | 26 | 7 | 0 |
| The teaching is good. | 60 | 36 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 36 | 36 | 17 | 11 | 0 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 86 | 14 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 64 | 28 | 0 | 4 | 4 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 46 | 32 | 22 | 0 | 0 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 50 | 50 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 48 | 48 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 35 | 25 | 32 | 4 | 4 |

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

63. Children enter the nursery in the term after their third birthday with levels of attainment that are much lower than those in most schools, particularly in their social and communication skills. They make at least satisfactory progress in each area of learning and good progress in their personal, social and emotional development and in early reading and writing skills. At the end of the reception year, overall standards are below average. Most children attain the level expected for their age in all areas of learning but very few attain higher levels and a substantial minority, about a quarter, do not reach the expected levels in mathematics and communication, language and literacy. Several of the higher-attaining children leave to attend other local schools at the end of the nursery or reception classes.

Strengths in the provision are:

- children achieve well in their social and communication skills and in early reading and writing;
- children have good attitudes to their work and behave very well;
- sound improvement has been made since the previous inspection.

Areas for development are:

- planning for sessions in which children choose activities for themselves,
- the range of resources for several aspects of the curriculum;
- the use of the accommodation;
- the arrangements for outdoor play.

64. At the time of the previous inspection, the provision in the nursery was unsatisfactory and children did not make sufficient progress. Since then the school has made satisfactory improvements, both in the nursery and the reception class. A Foundation Stage Unit has been developed to provide appropriately for the needs of the children and the curriculum is planned satisfactorily to the national guidance. Planning for the direct teaching sessions is good with clear learning targets. That for the children's choice activities does not have the same clear learning targets and there is only a very basic range of resources to provide structure and motivation for the children. For example, the range of constructional toys and role-play area equipment is narrow. Some of the equipment is very old and worn, with no exciting 'extras' to stimulate children's imaginations and develop creativity. Staff compensate for shortages by buying supplementary equipment themselves. Teaching is much improved since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory, overall, and sometimes good, particularly so in personal, social and emotional development and in the direct teaching sessions in the reception class. Staff have very good relationships with the children and manage their behaviour very well, which was an unsatisfactory point noted at the previous inspection in the nursery. There are several children with special educational needs, who are identified early and supported well. They also make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development and take a full part in activities.

65. Both nursery and reception children are taught within the unit by a team of two teachers and four support staff. However, the 36 reception year children are taught together for the more formal aspects of the curriculum and the accommodation in their area of the unit is unsuitable for such sessions, being strangely shaped, with several small areas. Sensible arrangements have been made to split the class between the teacher and support staff for as much of the time as possible. However, there are occasions when children are taught together in a very cramped area. This is not conducive to good learning. The provision for outdoor play has improved since the previous inspection through the acquisition of a good range of large play equipment, but arrangements are still not satisfactory. The outdoor play area has recently been extended but is still quite small and is a difficult shape to supervise. Consequently, children cannot have free access through the day. When the reception class is timetabled in this area, there are far too many children to allow them to explore the use of space safely in energetic play. For a short part of

the day both nursery and reception children use the area together and this is totally unsatisfactory. Additionally, on occasion, there are too many wheeled toys in use at one time for safe play.

66. Assessment procedures are sound and teachers keep an on-going record of children's progress towards the learning targets for this age group, the Early Learning Goals. Information is used appropriately to group children and set work appropriate to their needs, particularly in early literacy skills, but there are occasions when the level of challenge in group-work is insufficient for higher-attaining children and tasks are not sufficiently practical for lower-attaining children. There are good arrangements for introducing parents and children into the school and beneficial relationships are formed between staff and parents.

Personal, social and emotional development

67. Staff promote children's personal, social and emotional development effectively. Teaching and learning are good and children achieve well. Staff are caring and supportive and raise children's confidence by praising their efforts and achievements. They set a good example of co-operation for children to follow and children make good progress in learning to work and play together constructively. Staff listen with interest to what children have to say and children develop confidence and trust in them. Children know that some actions are right and some are wrong and that their actions affect other people. Their behaviour is very good and they work together as friends, sharing equipment and waiting patiently for their turn in activities. Most concentrate well and enjoy taking responsibility, for example when they collect the registers from the school office. They develop independence well, such as when nursery children register themselves on arriving by moving their name label into a special pot, and by tidying up when the music is turned on at the end of play sessions. Children take care of their own physical needs competently, such as when dressing and undressing themselves independently for physical education lessons. Although many lack confidence when they enter school and have weak social skills, by the end of the reception year, children attain the levels usually found in children of this age.

Communication, language and literacy

68. The teaching of basic skills is sound. For example, children learn their letter sounds in reading and learn how to read and spell simple common words. Staff focus well on developing children's ability to listen to what is said. For example, in the nursery, children sit and listen to stories with enjoyment, joining in with those they know. Staff encourage them to use their knowledge of letter sounds to help them to read and write the unfamiliar words they meet. They give children appropriate opportunities to discuss their work, in groups or with the whole class. Whilst the teacher and nursery nurse focus on this in their own group activities, there is only limited conversation with those children in choice activities, such as when they play in the home corner or experiment with sand, water or in outdoor play. Although children sometimes chat together in these areas, there are many occasions when they play silently, either on their own or alongside others. Children mainly speak in simple structured sentences but very few develop a rich enough vocabulary to express feelings or describe objects or events. Their spoken vocabulary is below average on entry to Year 1.

69. Children enjoy reading and by the time they enter Year 1 most have made a sound start on the school's reading scheme, although because of a very tight focus on learning individual words, rather than on understanding, many read in a mechanical way. There are insufficient labels and signs in any of the rooms to give children a real purpose for reading. For example, very few of the boxes of construction toys have labels on them. Average attainers know a satisfactory number of common words and use the picture clues and initial letters to help them with new words. Higher attainers know a good range of words and read accurately, with expression. Lower attainers read confidently at their own level and most know the letter sounds, although they find it difficult to build these into words. In writing, standards are below average, although children make good progress. Higher and average-attaining children write simple sentences unaided, spelling common words correctly and making good attempts at new words, using their knowledge of letters. Very few go beyond this by beginning to apply simple punctuation, such as full stops, and they do not use descriptive language in their writing. Lower attainers are beginning to form

letters correctly but do not apply their word and letter knowledge well in spelling. Children have some opportunities to practise and improve their skills when working independently at a writing table or in the role-play areas. Written work is not sufficiently celebrated in displays of work to provide good examples to others. Standards are below average at the end of the reception year, but, overall, children achieve well from their low starting point.

Mathematical development

70. Teaching is satisfactory and children make satisfactory progress in their understanding of number. In both the nursery and reception classes, children have satisfactory opportunities to count and use practical equipment, but these are limited largely to direct teaching activities. They are often not extended as well as they should be into associated activities, for example, by counting how many small bottles are needed to fill a large one, when playing in the sand or water. By the end of the reception year, higher-attaining children count to 20 accurately and begin to add and subtract with numbers to 10. Average attainers count to 10 and record simple pictorial calculations. Lower attainers work on counting numbers to 10 but a substantial number are not yet confident with them. Children know and understand simple properties of shapes and use them to create pictures. They enjoy practical experiences that develop their understanding of shapes and measures, such as length, weight, height and capacity. However, some opportunities for children to handle and use practical equipment are missed. The limited range of resources available exacerbates this. By the end of the reception year, standards are below average overall, although many children attain the levels expected for their age. Higher attainers do not exceed them by applying their knowledge to solving simple problems.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

71. The curriculum provides for some interesting and well taught lessons to deepen children's understanding of their world. They develop a good sense of place and time through studies of their environment and their own lives. For example, they compare how they looked as babies and how much they have grown and changed. Through planting seeds and watching them grow they learn to love and care for their world. Children bake food, including cakes for their friends' birthdays, noting how the ingredients change when they are cooked. They satisfactorily learn about simple properties of materials and their uses, such as when considering cotton or woollen clothes and when these would be worn. Construction toys and materials are used to build a variety of products but many of these sets have insufficient pieces and some are in poor condition. They do not stimulate children to explore and experiment and few were observed choosing these activities during the inspection. Good use is made of computers. Children practise their counting and knowledge of letters in appropriate games. They type in their names and simple words and control the movements of an electronic toy. Knowledge and understanding of the wider world is deepened by a sound range of visits, such as a geography walk close to the school when children note the buildings they see. In religious education, they study their own and other religions and celebrate the festivals and cultures of other people. For example, they learn about Rama and Sita in Hinduism and celebrate Christian festivals such as Easter and Christmas. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory and children make sound progress in this aspect of their development. By the end of the reception year, most children reach the standard expected for their age, but few exceed it.

Physical development

72. Provision has improved since the previous inspection and is satisfactory overall. The majority of children reach the standard expected for their age but not many attain higher standards. Teaching is satisfactory in providing children with appropriate opportunities to manipulate simple tools and toys and children make sound progress in developing their finer control. Children make satisfactory progress when they take part in physical education lessons in the school hall but teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in the outdoor area, despite a good improvement in resources and in opportunities to use the area. There are often too many children for staff to be able to develop skills and imagination in their play. Equipment is not always set out in time for children to take full advantage of the time available and there is insufficient

structure to the activities. For example, in one lesson observed, all the wheeled vehicles were in use in one area of the grounds, with no roadway or obstacle course to follow. Children simply peddled or pushed their toys as fast as they could around the area, instead of learning to control their movements and develop an awareness of space and others. There is no covered area for outdoor play but climbing and balancing equipment is used indoors.

Creative development

73. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Children are taught art skills and learn to draw and paint by observing carefully. This was clearly exemplified in children's still-life pictures of flowers. They learn about famous artists and create pictures using similar techniques. For example, children in the reception class looked at David Hockney's paintings of water and then successfully created the reflective property of water by making a collage of different types of paper. They developed the idea further by considering how to create the effect of movement using other materials. Children have some opportunities to paint their own pictures on an easel but such activities were not observed during the inspection. Similarly, although children play untuned percussion instruments in lessons, they were not observed experimenting freely with them at other times. Children learn a sound range of simple songs and join in well, singing with reasonable tunefulness and a sound sense of rhythm. In role-play areas, they take turns sensibly. Staff change these areas regularly to provide stimulation. However, resources are very well worn and do not provide adequately enough to develop children's imagination. There are not enough displays to celebrate children's independent creative efforts. Children achieve well from their attainment on entry. Standards are below average at the end of the reception year because although most pupils achieve the standard expected for their age, few achieve beyond it.

ENGLISH

74. Standards of work are below average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. On entry to Year 1, pupils' attainment is below average. Pupils achieve satisfactorily over time in the school, although progress is better in some year groups than others. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in Years 1 and 2, where additional support is provided by classroom assistants and national initiatives. In Years 3 to 6, their progress is satisfactory. At times they do not receive the support they need to be fully included in lessons, for example, when the class is working on group activities. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress throughout the year groups and those identified as potentially gifted make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and satisfactory progress in other years. There is no significant difference in the attainment of girls and boys. Pupils' overall attainment is affected by poor attendance, particularly in Year 2 and high mobility rates.

75. Pupils' performance in national tests taken at the end of Year 2 has been consistently below the national average in both reading and writing in the last four years. In 2001, results were below average in writing and well below the national average in reading. Results for 2002 show an improvement in reading and writing but national figures are not yet available for comparison. The improvement is due to the continuing influence of the National Literacy Strategy, which the school is implementing effectively, and to other initiatives such as the Reading Recovery programme and the Reading Parent Partnership. The latter involves members of the local community in hearing pupils read individually. These strategies are helping pupils to make better progress. Nevertheless, standards could be raised further.

76. Pupils' results in national tests taken at the end of Year 6 were well below the national average in three of the last four years, including 2001. The results in English, particularly in writing, do not show the same rate of improvement as those in mathematics and science. There is room for further improvement. Results for 2002 show an improvement in the proportion of pupils reaching the level expected for their age (level 4).

77. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are not well developed for their age when they enter Year 1. Teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to speak and to listen to their classmates not only in

literacy hours, but also in other lessons. Pupils are frequently reminded of the need to listen carefully to instructions so that they know what they have to do. Teachers take some opportunities during discussions to extend the range of pupils' vocabulary, but other opportunities are missed. Whilst standards are broadly average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 and pupils speak clearly, their range of vocabulary remains limited and a significant number of pupils struggle to find the words needed to express their views and opinions with confidence. Towards the end of literacy lessons pupils have many opportunities to share and read aloud what they have written, which helps in developing their confidence in speaking. Pupils are engaged in drama activities and debates, which also make effective contributions to developing speaking skills, for instance when Year 1 pupils acted the story of the Ten Lepers in a religious education lesson. The pupils' limited range of vocabulary has an effect on their progress in reading and in writing.

78. Standards in reading are below those expected for pupils in Year 2 and Year 6, although in Years 1 and 5 standards are higher and are broadly average for the pupils' ages. Additional time outside literacy hours is allocated to reading activities, but progress for many pupils is still slow. Pupils develop strategies for attempting to read unfamiliar words by Year 2, often using their knowledge of letter sounds or picture cues. Higher-attaining pupils successfully split words into smaller parts and read fluently. These pupils talk about the books they have chosen to read, giving a reason for their choice and justifying this by reference to the text. Average-attaining pupils can self-correct some errors in their reading when reminded about spelling patterns, or by rereading the sentence, but are hesitant readers. Lower-attaining pupils are beginning to use their knowledge of initial letter blends, along with pictures, to work out unfamiliar words. Many pupils do not read frequently enough at home. Progress is slow for some average and lower-attaining pupils because they need more practice in reading to adults on an individual basis. Few pupils had a favourite story that they liked to read at home.

79. By Year 6, pupils know how to find books on specific topics in the school library and have been taught to read for information and scan pages to answer factual questions. However, there are insufficient books in the library, both fiction and non-fiction, and some are out of date and uninspiring. Many average and lower-attaining pupils do not have sufficient knowledge of a range of authors of children's books to be able to make informed choices when selecting books to read. When reading whole-class texts they struggle to understand the author's intent and some still follow the words with their fingers when reading. A few pupils with special educational needs relating to reading sometimes feel excluded from this part of the lesson when they struggle to follow the text because of lack of additional support. The school has already identified the need for suitable reading books for older lower-attaining pupils, in terms of interest level, and additional resources have been ordered. Reading records are rarely completed by parents. Some records show pupils taking long periods of time to complete one book indicating that they do not have a real love of literature. Pupils' understanding of what they read is a weakness.

80. Standards in writing are below average in Year 2 and Year 6 and are influenced by a number of factors. The school's policy is to have targets for improvement written inside the front covers of pupils' books and most, but not all, do. The targets are rarely referred to in the marking so pupils do not know their progress towards achieving them. When asked, some pupils were unaware of the progress they had made over the course of the year. The approach to marking and correcting spelling errors is also inconsistent. Pupils make satisfactory progress in most year groups, and good progress in Year 6, but the scrutiny of work showed slower progress for pupils in one Year 4 class. Also, the quality of previous teaching has affected the progress of some Year 5 pupils. In Years 1 and 2 pupils often write their weekly news but this does not interest those who have had few exciting experiences and does not stimulate them to want to write. Pupils make satisfactory progress in understanding story structure and begin to retell simple stories by Year 2, with higher-attaining pupils using adjectives and connecting words to make their work more interesting for the reader. Occasionally pupils' work was not marked. In Year 1 there is a heavy reliance on the use of worksheets in other subjects such as science, which does not help pupils to develop their independent writing skills through other areas of the curriculum.

81. In Years 3 to 6, pupils analyse texts and write for a range of purposes, such as letters of complaint, newspaper articles, holiday brochures and stories. A significant number do not know the criteria for

writing effectively and struggle to plan and organise their work well. Spelling is generally weak among lower and some average-attaining pupils. Higher-attaining pupils write more imaginatively and show understanding of the importance of good story openings, settings, characters and a plot, but do not write in paragraphs. There are inaccuracies in the use of verb tenses and in spellings, which go unmarked. There is insufficient emphasis on the use of standard English. Throughout the school, pupils' written work is not prominently displayed and literacy skills are insufficiently promoted through other subjects. However, higher-attaining pupils in Year 1 were seen to take notes in history for use later in the lesson. The library is too small to be used as a good resource for pupils to develop their research and enquiry skills.

82. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teaching is good, sometimes very good, in Year 6 and for the more able group of pupils in Year 5. In these classes, progress is better. The good teaching results from thorough preparation of lessons, which enables them to proceed at a brisk pace. The purpose of the lessons is shared with pupils so they are clear about what they are expected to learn. The teachers have high expectations of pupils' efforts and behaviour and most respond well to the challenge and work hard to complete their work in the time. A very good lesson in Year 6 developed pupils' understanding of how to write a good story opening to hold the reader's attention. The overall strengths in the teaching are in the planning of lessons and the management of pupils. There are however, some weaknesses, which led to unsatisfactory teaching in one lesson where the shared text was photocopied, was not large enough for pupils to read easily and did not encourage them to join in. Giving pupils photocopied pages of a book when reading as a group is unsatisfactory. Where teachers plan practical activities for developing pupils' spelling skills, such as seen in Year 2 when learning 'igh' words and in Year 4 when learning compound words, these are more successful and ensure all pupils are involved and having to concentrate. The use of small individual whiteboards for pupils in Year 5 to record characteristics of Grandpa Chatterjee and Grandpa Leicester and then show the teacher is equally successful and enables the teacher to assess pupils' understanding and progress. There is some over-reliance on worksheets, particularly with lower-attaining Year 5 pupils. This hinders their progress as they are confined by the space they have to write in. Further time is wasted in drawing pictures and colouring them in. Effective use is made of ICT in lessons for recording ideas and presenting work in different ways. In lessons in the computer suite, programs are used well to develop pupils' accuracy in spelling.

83. The approach to teaching writing is not consistent throughout the school. Good practices are in evidence in some year groups but writing is not developed progressively as part of a coherent whole-school plan. Pupils are satisfactorily taught to plan their work and to draft and redraft it but there is insufficient evidence of teachers showing exemplars of good writing on which pupils can model their own. The visiting poet effectively enriched pupils' experiences of poetry writing and gave them much to think about in the approach to their work. From the reception class onwards, pupils are taught to join letters in their handwriting. Whilst this helps to prevent the reversal of letters, a significant number of infant pupils struggle to develop a fluent style, particularly those requiring therapy to develop the movement of their fingers and hands. Comments in pupils' books tell them to improve the presentation of their work, when some are not able to do so at this stage. For some pupils the use of biro adds to the problem. They require larger writing implements that can be gripped firmly.

84. The subject is satisfactorily led and managed. Assessment information provides a good overview of standards in each year group. Pupils' performance is analysed to see where they are not doing as well as expected and the curriculum is amended accordingly. Teaching and pupils' learning are monitored and feedback given, with support provided where necessary. This has eliminated the poor teaching found during the previous inspection. Very little unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the current inspection. Overall improvement during this period is satisfactory. The next challenge for the school is to improve the overall quality of teaching and to raise standards further in reading and writing.

Key skills across the curriculum -Literacy

85. The focus on teaching basic literacy skills in English lessons is assisting pupils to learn the appropriate techniques but opportunities to develop these through other subjects are missed. Pupils' learning is advanced in lessons where such opportunities are programmed into the planning, such as in some history

lessons. This is because teachers capitalize on pupils' interest in the content of the work to motivate them to write thoughtfully and in sufficient depth. For example, in Years 1 and 2, pupils used notes taken by one of the class as the basis for their own writing. Teachers provide pupils with examples of how to structure their writing, which is helpful, but, too often, this involves the use of prepared worksheets. These provide good guidance and assist pupils to develop their ideas but they tend to restrict the amount of writing. Pupils need more opportunities to write independently, and at length, in subjects other than English.

MATHEMATICS

86. Standards of work are below average in Year 2 and average in Year 6. These represent good achievement overall, especially when the high incidence of pupils' movement to and from the school at other than the usual times is taken into account. In Years 1 and 2, the pupils involved frequently have poor understanding of number concepts so they have a slow start. The discontinuity in education affects their progress and teachers spend a considerable amount of time reinforcing and consolidating previous work. Since the previous inspection, the school has focused on raising standards in mathematics. It has been successful in raising those of lower-attaining pupils closer to the levels expected for their age. The spectrum of mathematical ability in each year group varies, but, in general, there is a higher proportion of lower-attaining pupils than in most schools.

87. In 2001, pupils' results in national tests taken at the end of Year 2 were well below average. They were below average compared with schools of similar background. The pattern of results accurately reflected the ability spread in the year group. The proportion of pupils exceeding the level expected for their age was similar to the national average. This indicates that the relatively smaller proportion of higher-attaining pupils are achieving as well as they should. National figures for the current year, 2002, are not yet available for comparison but the school's results show that the proportion of pupils reaching the level expected for their age has continued to rise. The realistic target set by the governors was exceeded. Pupils' overall performance in tests taken at the end of Year 6 in 2001 was average. It was well above average compared with similar schools. The school significantly exceeded the target set by the governors. However, it has to be noted that targets are sometimes based on very limited information about prior attainment when pupils move from school to school. Taken over the past three years, results have improved at a similar pace to those nationally. During this time, boys have achieved significantly better results than girls in Year 2. Conversely, girls achieved better in Year 6. The reasons for this are considered to be bound up with boys' dominance in oral work in the earlier years and their greater disaffection with school in the later years. The school has consciously worked towards changing the culture. In the lessons observed during the inspection boys and girls of all abilities achieved at a similar level.

88. Overall, pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2 because teachers focus on developing numerical skills. They make effective use of the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) to promote mental arithmetic and encourage mental agility. The arrangement for grouping pupils in two single-age groups and one mixed-age group works well because pupils are taught with others at similar stages in learning. By the age of seven, most pupils are developing a satisfactory understanding of place values in hundreds, tens and units. Most have a satisfactory understanding of addition and subtraction of whole numbers, demonstrated by their ability to find the unknowns in questions such as $7 + 3 = ?$ and $10 - ? = 7$. In general, pupils have a reasonable understanding of number facts associated with the two, five and ten times tables. Some pupils are more confident, and accurate, when working orally than in writing. This is because language skills are not as well developed as they should be for pupils' ages. This weakness is highlighted when pupils attempt to solve simple word problems; they find difficulty in translating the meaning to the equivalent number sum. In Year 2, most pupils have a satisfactory understanding of a range of measures including money, time and length. They use them successfully within the limits of their numerical knowledge and skills. Most pupils know the properties of simple two and three-dimensional shapes and can construct simple charts to represent information that they have collected.

89. The school makes good use of ICT to promote the development of mathematical skills, particularly in Years 3 to 6. Good programs of activity reinforce numerical understanding, usually through oral work based on the use of a large interactive board at the front of the class. This work is followed by practice on the computers. Exercises are well graded to allow every pupil to work at their own level. Pupils achieve well overall in Years 3 to 6 but progress is inconsistent. In Year 4, the progress of some pupils, across the range of abilities, is unsatisfactory because some have been taught by a succession of teachers with different expectations. This was evident from the scrutiny of pupils' books. Some contained little work and were poorly presented. The work was often repetitive and unchallenging. The arrangement for grouping pupils by ability in Years 5 and 6 works well. It enables the average and higher-attaining pupils to tackle more demanding work. Others work more slowly at a pace that allows them to gain confidence before transferring and combining skills in other aspects of the work. A significant number of pupils, in all year groups, find the recall and retention of mathematical knowledge difficult. This, often combined with poor language skills, inhibits learning. Pupils tend to have more difficulty in interpreting questions than in applying the numerical operations involved. By the age of eleven, most pupils have a satisfactory understanding of number beyond 1000. They successfully consider and apply knowledge about simple fractions and decimals. Average and higher-attaining pupils extend this to percentages and related word problems. Pupils' knowledge of angular measure and their ability to handle and interpret data is satisfactory. The weakness in pupils' work, identified through the school's monitoring system, is in their ability to express themselves clearly, logically and accurately when working through written calculations. As a result, teachers now emphasise this particular aspect. Scrutiny of pupils' recent work shows a distinct improvement, particularly in Years 5/6 and 6 classes. Pupils are now more inclined to explain their working, which helps teachers to know to what extent pupils fully understand the strategies they are using. Pupils remember what they have learned better, and are able to apply it, when the topic has been approached through practical work with examples based on everyday situations. Throughout the school, lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress when opportunities are provided within class for additional adult support. This helps them to voice their difficulties and talk through solutions. Facilities for such support are inconsistent. Consequently, in some classes, pupils have to wait too long for help with activities and momentum is lost. Progress is then satisfactory rather than good. Pupils for whom English is an additional language receive good support and make similar progress to others of equal ability.

90. Evidence from the inspection, including lesson observations, indicates that, overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Learning is not as good as achievement because it is constrained by pupils' below average language skills and the large number of pupils who join the school at a late stage with poor numerical skills on entry. Added to this there is some inconsistency in teaching. For example, in one Year 4 class, the scant amount of work in some pupils' books implies that teaching for a considerable part of the school year has been unsatisfactory. All the lessons seen during the inspection were satisfactory or better. The mental and oral sessions at the beginning of each lesson were almost always good. They focused on accurate use of mathematical language and the development of pupils' understanding of number concepts. For instance, in another Year 4 class, skilful questioning by the teacher led to pupils predicting missing numbers in sequences and being able to explain the strategies used. The most able pupils worked backwards too, using expressions such as "It is 4 before the first number". They satisfactorily extended this work to 3 digit numbers. This helped them to see that there are often different ways of working out a problem. Pupils gain self-confidence from the oral work. Teachers constantly review lesson plans in the light of pupils' achievement in previous lessons so misconceptions are corrected before pupils move on to the next topic. Teachers sensibly use the technique of revisiting topic areas at frequent intervals because recall and retention of knowledge are weaker features of pupils' work. Some very good teaching was seen in the Year 6 classes. In these groups teachers have very high expectations. Lessons are rigorously planned and demanding. Teachers endeavour to make up for ground lost in earlier years by repeatedly reinforcing and building on pupils' previous knowledge. Pupils' written work clearly demonstrates the strategies in use. This is linked to similar explanations in oral work, showing that pupils are being taught to understand mathematical reasoning as well as to answer correctly. A good example was the Year 6 lesson on percentages and pie charts. The most able pupils calculated percentages such as 15 per cent mentally. Others use 'a half of a half' to explain how to find 25 per cent of an amount. They extracted information from two pie charts and satisfactorily compared the interpretation of a sector

from each. Good teaching occurs where lessons are varied in content; they motivate pupils and sustain interest. Where teaching is inconsistent, or satisfactory rather than good, greater emphasis needs to be placed on good presentation of written work and on ensuring that pupils have sufficient opportunities to practise the application of mathematical knowledge in practical situations. Homework is relevant and complementary to classwork but not all pupils return it regularly. Teachers are mindful of the need to develop pupils' literacy skills to aid understanding in mathematics, for instance when asking " Can you rephrase that statement to make it into a question?"

91. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Thorough analysis of pupils' response to test questions has led to identification of areas for development, such as the higher focus on written calculations and assisting pupils to understand the importance of being able to draw on a variety of strategies to work round problems. Monitoring of pupils' work assists classteachers in providing specific help for those pupils who have the potential for higher achievement. There has been satisfactory improvement in mathematics since the previous inspection. To improve standards further, greater consistency is needed in teaching, particularly in Year 4. In addition, putting exemplars of pupils' best work on display in classrooms would raise the profile of mathematics within the school environment.

Key skills across the curriculum- Numeracy

92. Pupils' numerical skills are average. Pupils use calculators satisfactorily to estimate and check computational work in mathematics. Most pupils successfully extend the use of mathematics to other subjects, such as science, history, geography, design and technology and ICT through measurement and collection, analysis and display of data. They are generally confident and accurate in carrying out the practical aspects of the work, such as when measuring distances in the playground and using graphs and tables to compare temperatures and hours of daylight from statistics extracted from the Internet. Pupils' oral interpretation of numerical information is better than its written equivalent.

SCIENCE

93. Overall, pupils of all abilities achieve very well by the time they leave the school. Standards are a little below average at the end of Year 2, because of a significant group of pupils who have special educational needs, or English as an additional language or who were new to the year group this year. Of the other pupils, the vast majority are attaining the level expected for their age and a small group, about a fifth, are exceeding it. This is better than standards indicated by the annual teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2001, which were well below average. Pupils achieve very well in Years 3 to 6. Standards at the end of Year 6 are average. This largely reflects the results of national tests in 2001 when pupils' performance was average compared with all schools and well above average compared with similar schools. Since the previous inspection there has been rapid improvement in the average grades scored by pupils in national tests; the rate has far outstripped the national rate of improvement. This is because the school has much improved its curriculum, putting a very high focus on developing pupils' scientific vocabulary and giving pupils first-hand experience of investigating for themselves. Overall improvement since the previous inspection is very good. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. Teachers make good use of the assessment information they gain to match work to pupils' needs and set targets for improvement. The school exceeds the realistic targets it sets itself.

Strengths in science are:

- pupils achieve very well by the time they leave the school;
- results in national tests at the end of Year 6 are better than those in similar schools;
- teaching is good; teachers make good use of assessment information in planning lessons;
- the very good improvement in the curriculum, with much more investigative work;
- the subject makes a very strong contribution to pupils' personal development and they develop very good attitudes to their work.

94. There are no major areas for development but the ways of providing opportunities for pupils to practise and further develop their literacy and numeracy skills within the context of science could be investigated and promoted. Although there are some attractive and informative displays of scientific work prepared by teachers, there are few that reflect pupils' own successes and provide a source of inspiration for other pupils.

95. At the end of Year 2, pupils, including those with English as an additional language, achieve well and develop a sound understanding of how to carry out simple experiments to find out what they want to know. They develop satisfactory knowledge in all areas of the subject and record their work appropriately. By the end of Year 6, pupils have a sound range of knowledge in all areas of the subject and a good understanding of how to devise and carry out their own investigations. They know that they must observe and record carefully, although the weak literacy skills of about a fifth of the pupils limits their success in recording their findings and affects the overall results in the annual national tests. Pupils know that tests must be fair if they are to be valid and understand that they can only change one of the variables at a time. They know a sound range of scientific vocabulary and teachers make sure that they understand the language used, such as 'solution' and 'dissolving'. They record their work in a scientific manner. For example, in work on friction, pupils measure and record accurately the amount of movement of a shoe on different surfaces when the same force is applied. They then record their findings in a bar line graph. However, this is not as carefully planned as it might be to develop these skills further. Pupils learn to repeat experiments to check their findings and try to discover why some things do not turn out as they expected. For example, a Year 6 class, experimenting with yeast found that nothing happened. The teacher skilfully turned this into a good learning experience and drew from the pupils that they should try again, varying one of the conditions. The pupils with special educational needs make very good progress because of the support they are given and their opportunities to work alongside other pupils in experiments and learn for themselves.

96. Teaching and learning are good. Pupils make good gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding. During the inspection teaching was always at least good and was very good in two of the three lessons observed. Since the previous inspection there has been an improvement in the way that teachers plan their work to a new and very comprehensive scheme of work. This has a very high focus on developing scientific skills and understanding through independent investigation. It provides for exciting lessons in which pupils develop very good attitudes to the subject because of the many opportunities for practical work. Lessons are well focused and skilful questioning challenges pupils to think carefully when devising experiments or considering their findings. Pupils understand what is expected of them and know what they are intended to learn. They respond very well to this approach. They behave very well because they are highly motivated and organise themselves effectively when undertaking investigations. Relationships between pupils are very good. They co-operate well, discussing their work and their findings purposefully, which consolidates their understanding. The closing part of lessons is used profitably. Teachers encourage pupils to discuss their findings and raise questions. The information gained is built on in subsequent lessons.

97. The subject is very well led and managed. The curriculum is strong and incorporates an effective assessment system. Pupils' work is assessed at the end of each unit of study and matched to the levels of the National Curriculum to enable teachers to check that pupils are making sufficient progress as they go through the year. The system of using a different book for each unit of scientific study, which travels through the whole of Years 3 to 6, also ensures that progress can be checked in each topic. Co-ordinators check books on a termly basis and have a very clear overview of standards. There are many visits into the locality to enrich pupils' learning. For example, Year 6 visit a coastal park and compare and contrast the variety of plant life that they find in the habitats there, drawing conclusions about why different plants grow in different parts of the area. The subject contributes very well to pupils' personal development, through encouraging independence in learning, developing social skills in group work and in deepening their spiritual awareness of their world.

ART AND DESIGN

98. Evidence from the inspection, including lesson observations, discussion with pupils and teachers, and scrutiny of work indicates that standards of work in Years 2 and 6 are average. Boys and girls achieve well in relation to their attainment at entry. Art is strongly promoted by enthusiastic leadership, and most pupils have good attitudes towards the subject. They have very good relationships and gain enjoyment and satisfaction from their work. There has been satisfactory improvement in provision since the previous inspection, for example in the weekly workshop at a local art gallery for pupils who have been identified as gifted and talented.

99. At the age of seven, most pupils recognise different methods and approaches of well-known artists. They satisfactorily produce similar effects in their own work, as in the display of colour mixing in the style of Georgia O’Keeffe. Pupils show confidence in handling a range of materials, such as blocks and rollers to make patterns. At the age of eleven, most pupils can talk about and compare ideas used in their work and they know how to improve it to meet their intentions. Work seen during the inspection indicates that the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, with examples of good and very good teaching. There are several strengths. For example, teachers’ careful preparation of resources and clear explanations of what is required enable pupils to settle to their practical tasks promptly and work productively. This was evident in a lesson in which a group of Year 3 pupils were drawing and painting sunflowers in the style of Van Gogh. They sustained concentration because they knew what to do and had everything they needed to hand. Thus, by the end of the lesson many pupils had successfully reached the final stages in their work. Higher and middle-attaining pupils were confident in their sketching and use of colour, and their paintings caught the vibrancy and flamboyance of the original. Another strength is teachers’ knowledge and understanding of the subject, which informs pupils’ decisions and guides experimentation. A key element in a very good lesson was the well structured discussion. Pupils related the design principles of Mondrian to their own chair making projects, and then clearly explained the approaches they were using. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress, especially when they have the support of a classroom assistant.

100. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. They are good in Years 3 to 6 where teaching methods, planning and assessment are particularly effective in stimulating pupils’ interest. Areas for improvement include the use of displays and sketchbooks. Displays throughout the school provide evidence of a wide variety of work, including drawings and paintings, multicultural artefacts and three-dimensional masks, as well as attractive pottery in the style of Della Robbia. However, these displays are not sufficiently well co-ordinated to demonstrate the systematic development of different artistic skills. Similarly, there is no clear rationale for the use of sketchbooks. They are rarely used to develop techniques in drawing, shading and composition. Most sketchbooks contain very little work, although pupils in Year 4 have used them effectively to try out designs for chairs, and younger pupils took them along to make sketches of flora and fauna when they visited the Lady Lever Art Gallery.

101. Art plays an important role in subjects such as history, geography and religious education. It also makes a good contribution to pupils’ spiritual development through the opportunities available for creativity and reflection. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There are very good opportunities for social and cultural development on the occasions when pupils work together on a project with an artist in residence. Well-planned programmes of study and the visits to art galleries also enable pupils to explore and appreciate the work of artists from different cultural traditions.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

102. Standards of work are average in Years 2 and 6. Overall, pupils’ achievement is satisfactory throughout the school. Standards are similar to those at the time of the previous inspection. The amount of time allocated for design and technology has reduced somewhat but the scheme of work is suitably planned so that pupils have the opportunity to develop their design and making skills progressively over the years. Pupils enjoy the practical aspects of the work but are less keen on the written work. This is often because of their limited language skills. Pupils with special educational needs or who have English as an

additional language achieve satisfactorily. They particularly enjoy and benefit from the practical nature of the subject

103. By Year 2, pupils have learned to design and make products to a satisfactory standard. They consider the purpose of the product and decide on the materials that they want to use. Simple tools are used to cut and join materials and pupils are imaginative in their designs. They are interested in finding out how things work and incorporate the ideas in their own designs. Pupils in one class made use of their knowledge about winding mechanisms to make a models of a spider moving up the outside of a tube. Others made good working models of Hickory Dickory Dock. The products were attractively decorated and well finished. One of the more able pupils added a good explanation to the display by writing ' The string is attached to the axle which rotates and moves the string and the object'.

104. Pupils make steady progress in Years 3 to 6. By the end of Year 6 they have a satisfactory grasp of planning and design. They investigate how artefacts and products are made and reproduce them to their own designs. For example, pupils examined slippers to see how they were made and then designed and constructed their own. Photographs of the finished articles showed that thought had been given to the strength of materials and that a variety of skills and techniques had been used. Discussion with pupils revealed that the slippers were standing up to wear in everyday use. Comments were made about possible improvements, such as " another time I would make the soles thicker". Pupils' skills in testing and evaluating their products are satisfactory. On occasion, pupils actually make the improvements. One pupil explained how he had taken the squared corner off the musical instrument he had made to make it easier to handle. Mathematical skills such as measuring, weighing and estimation are usually used satisfactorily to ensure accuracy in dimensions and content of the final product. Pupils understand technical terms such as compressed, pneumatic, input and output. They use them accurately when describing the principles on which their models are based, for instance when a squeeze bottle was used as the body of a 'moving monster'. Boys tend to have a greater interest in mechanical mechanisms, for instance when using a pulley as a simple machine to give a mechanical advantage. This is counter balanced by girls' interest in the crafts that contribute to the make up of a product.

105. Only one lesson was seen during the inspection but supporting evidence indicates that teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers have a satisfactory understanding of the subject and plan purposeful lessons based on the overall scheme. Pupils' written work is not as good as the practical work. Much of it is on worksheets and does not encourage independent recording of designs or explanation and evaluation of the work. On occasion, teachers' expectations are not high enough. For example, some of the models of moving toys in Year 5 were poorly finished showing little pride in the quality of the finished product.

106. The scheme of work is well designed and the resources are satisfactory. However, there is no clear overview to ensure consistency of standards or to determine how well pupils are progressing because the subject does not have a permanent co-ordinator at present. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

GEOGRAPHY

107. Only three lessons were observed during the inspection, in Years 4, 5 and 6. Judgements are supported by the analysis of pupils' work, photographs and teachers' planning and records. Satisfactory improvement has been made since the school was previously inspected. Pupils achieve well and standards have been maintained at average levels at the end of Years 2 and 6. Those pupils with special educational needs or English as an additional language make sound progress in relation to their prior attainment because lessons are frequently practical with recording tasks that are matched to their needs. They often have sound support within lessons.

Strengths in the subject are:

- pupils achieve well and enjoy the practical approach to lessons;

- there is a good focus on the local environment, with many visits to make learning real;
- there are strong and beneficial links with local industry;
- the subject contributes well to pupils' personal development.

Areas for improvement are:

- pupils' mapping skills are not developed progressively;
- the range of localities studied is very wide and does not allow for sufficient depth of geographical study;
- a more planned approach to the use of pupils' literacy and numerical skills.

108. Pupils satisfactorily describe physical and human features of places. For example, throughout the school, pupils visit local places and compare them with places further afield. By the end of Year 2, pupils understand the use of buildings in Birkenhead. They compare them with other locations in the Wirral and with life further afield, such as in Formby or on a Scottish island. They note what features are attractive within their own environment and what they feel needs improvement. Pupils produce tourist brochures for Birkenhead and draw plans and maps with simple symbols, such as those to show a railway line. By the end of Year 6, pupils have built well on the work on the local area and have a good understanding of environmental issues that affect their lives. They understand at first hand how humans affect the places where they live and so start to take responsibility for improving their own environment. For example, through links with local industries that provide support with resources, they have improved their own playground and provided seating areas and a garden area. Pupils study a wider than usual variety of locations in other countries, which provides for a good level of interest but does not always allow sufficient time for a good depth of geographical study. It contributes well to pupils' cultural development because they investigate the lifestyles and customs of other people and note how their lives are different from their own. For example, Year 6 pupils studying a twin town in France compared French and English currency, food, shops and markets. Pupils produce maps of the areas they study but this skill is not developed as progressively as it should be. The school is aware of this and improvements are already being planned.

109. Teaching and learning are sound overall. Good teaching was seen in some lessons. Teachers take a practical approach to the subject, which brings learning to life and motivates pupils to work hard. They manage their pupils well and behaviour is good. Lessons are interesting and the many visits into the area contribute very well to pupils' understanding of the subject. Teachers encourage good use of computers to research and record work. For example, in a Year 4 lesson, pupils learned how to find and download weather forecasts from the Internet. They contrasted daylight hours in Birkenhead and Peru, the country they are currently studying. Whilst teachers provide pupils with opportunities to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in meaningful situations these are not sufficiently well planned to develop skills progressively. Although pupils achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry learning is often restricted by poor language skills. Pupils' understanding and comprehension are better in oral work than in written presentations.

110. Leadership and management of the subject are good. There is a clear overview of standards and progress and an understanding of what needs to be accomplished to improve these further. The development of the curriculum is well planned but some of the necessary changes have not yet been introduced. Strong links with the community, such as local industries and a local multicultural centre contribute very well to the subject and to personal pupils' development. Pupils take part in Environment Week and Geography Action Week, which recently focused on 'The Global Village'. This further enriched their understanding of life in modern Britain and its place in the world.

HISTORY

111. During the week of the inspection it was only possible to observe two history lessons, because in many classes the subject was not being taught that week, in line with the school's timetabling arrangements. The requirements of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have resulted in

constraints on the time available for subjects such as history. Judgements, therefore, are based to a large extent on teachers' planning, and talks with pupils, together with scrutiny of their written work.

112. At the ages of seven and eleven pupils attain average standards and they achieve well in relation to their standards on entry to the school. Their knowledge and understanding of the work as demonstrated in oral sessions is frequently better than the subsequent written work. At age seven, pupils have started to recognise and describe the ways in which the past can be represented, and to appreciate the differences between 'then' and 'now'. For example, after listening to a personal recollection of youthful holidays in the country from a local grandmother, pupils were able to compare information on pastimes, accommodation, transport, and food with their own holiday experiences. They successfully pointed out and explained the differences in quality between photographs taken in the past and those produced with modern technology. At the age of eleven, most pupils have a sound knowledge of what life was like in the ancient Greek and Aztec civilisations, and also during the Anglo-Saxon, Tudor and Victorian periods in England. They can give examples of the impact of economic and social change in Britain since 1930 from both national and local perspectives. Pupils of all levels of attainment discuss their findings with enthusiasm and record them in drawings and short descriptions. They use information sources such as tape recordings, role-play, and visits to historical sites in a constructive way to answer questions about the past. They satisfactorily match events to the relevant period in history. Attitudes to the subject are good. Pupils' interest and enjoyment are evident in the way in which they take pride in the presentation of their work, and also in the good relationships within the classroom

113. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Overall, learning is not as good as achievement because a significant number of pupils join the school at other than the normal times, frequently with low standards on entry. A strength of the teaching, as reflected in the work seen, is the way that teachers have come to terms with the restrictions of the timetable by making good use of the topics studied to reinforce learning in other areas, by developing skills in literacy, numeracy and design and technology. For instance, pupils in Years 1 and 2 used some excellent notes made by one of the younger pupils as a basis for their own writing on changes in holiday customs. Also, in order to appreciate the size of a Viking long-ship, pupils in Year 3 measured out the relevant dimensions in the playground and then placed themselves in the correct positions for rowing. Their work on a model long-ship involved collective decision-making in coming to an agreement on the materials to be used for shields and the sea. Models of writing showing pupils how to structure their written work enable pupils with special educational needs or English as an additional language to make well-focused responses. However, there are some areas that can be improved. There is not enough emphasis on the use of artefacts as sources of evidence, and older pupils are not given enough opportunities for extended writing. Furthermore, work is sometimes left unmarked.

114. The subject is well co-ordinated. Resources are adequate and there are effective arrangements for assessment. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' social and cultural development, especially through the programme of visits that deepen pupils' understanding of changes in ways of living. Pupils go to Birkenhead Priory to find out more about the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII and they take part in local history walks and reconstructions of Victorian life in Birkenhead. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

115. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection when resources were barely adequate and teachers lacked the relevant expertise. Following an audit of the school's provision the school set about establishing an ICT suite, siting up-to-date computers in classrooms and providing training for staff. The large interactive board is particularly effective for class teaching in that all pupils can see what is happening on the computer screen and follow the teachers' instructions. A good scheme of work was put in place, linking ICT to other subjects, with the result that ICT skills are being utilised well to complement other subjects. In mathematics, for instance, a very good program is in use that enables pupils to interact at their current level of attainment in numerical skills. The school frequently operates as a centre for the promotion of new courses and ideas.

116. Standards of work are above average in Years 2 and 6. Pupils of all abilities achieve well throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs satisfactorily tackle similar work to other pupils, but usually with additional help from the teacher. The scheme of work covers all strands of the National Curriculum. By the age of seven, pupils have developed good skills, especially in word processing. They confidently explain what they are doing and have a good understanding of technical terms and how to operate a computer. They know their way round the keyboard and are suitably conversant with the range of facilities that can be accessed through it. Teaching successfully extends beyond the bounds of the basic curriculum. For example, pupils in the younger age groups have produced an animated film of 'Incy Wincy Spider'. The local education authority is using it to promote the use of ICT in schools. The topic also links up with practical work in design and technology.

117. By the time pupils reach Year 6 they have experienced a broad education in ICT. They recognise its value as a tool to support work in other subjects. It is used well to improve spelling through a program that uses sight and sound to link the written word and pronunciation. Pupils also use the Internet well to seek out information. They reason out the consequences of predicted events, such as the impact on tourism of particularly wet or dry climates. Other aspects of work satisfactorily embrace the use of ICT skills to input figures on spreadsheets and give directions. These include the sequencing of instructions to control events, such as the flashing of traffic lights and the movement of a robot. Discussion with pupils in Year 6 revealed their confidence and enthusiasm for ICT. They were able to predict from their work, for example by considering how spreadsheets could be used to plan a business venture - the setting up of a theme park. Pupils were shrewd in their reasoning, understanding that the price of tickets and expected number of visitors would affect the profit margin, and hence the success of the project. Pupils have a good grasp of word-processing skills. They produce well-designed pieces of text, incorporating graphic art, which illustrate their ability to make text easier to read by using lists, line breaks, columns, highlights and fonts of different size. By the time they leave the school they know how electronic mail works and can send text messages. This has recently fostered links with an American school.

118. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school, except when there are interruptions in learning due to prolonged absence of staff. Pupils' work then lacks the progression needed to maintain momentum and practice in the use of ICT skills. Strong features of the teaching are the teachers' expertise, which is constantly being reinforced through training, and the regular opportunities provided for pupils to practise the skills. Classes sometimes use the ICT suite as much as three times a week. ICT is well integrated into lesson planning in English and mathematics and is making a significant contribution to the development of literacy and numeracy skills. It is noticeable that pupils are less reluctant to express themselves when putting their writing on the computer screen than when recording their work in exercise books. One reason for this is that pupils feel they can make corrections more easily on the computer. Teachers should take this into account when looking for additional ways to improve pupils' writing.

119. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their work in ICT. It is successfully promoting their independence and self-confidence. Their enthusiasm is carried over to extra-curricular activities. Throughout the period of the inspection the ICT suite was a hub of activity. Good opportunities are provided for older pupils and the gifted and talented to work on special projects. Currently, pupils are working on the presentation of information through track and sound. They recognise the potential of PowerPoint presentations and know how these are created. A link-up with the local university resulted in an ICT processed project on space entitled 'The Final Frontier'. Consideration is now being given to a follow-up through international links with other institutions.

120. Good leadership and management of the subject have been successful in raising standards and creating the momentum for further development.

MUSIC

121. Standards of work are average in Years 2 and 6. Pupils enjoy their music making. Pupils of all ages, both boys and girls, perform with confidence. They listen attentively and appreciate the importance of making improvements in their work. They sing tunefully and with enthusiasm in morning assemblies, even when there is no musical accompaniment, and they are prompt to show their appreciation of other people's achievement. The instrumental tuition for older pupils, which is provided by visiting specialist teachers, enables those who have been identified as gifted and talented to achieve well.

122. At the age of seven most pupils know how to handle instruments and they understand how different moods can be created by the arrangements of sounds. Pupils of all ability achieve satisfactorily. They can select and order sounds within a simple structure and use symbols to represent changes in tempo and volume. They are competent in using ICT in composition. At the age of eleven pupils achieve well. This represents an improvement since the previous inspection and is a direct result of good teaching in Year 6. In group performances using untuned instruments, pupils work together constructively, synchronising their clapping and playing successfully with the beat of the music.

123. The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is satisfactory overall. Teaching and learning were at least satisfactory in the lessons observed and very good in one of them. Classroom assistants give good support to pupils with special educational needs as well as to those with English as an additional language. In classes where teachers are confident in their subject knowledge, the standards are high. This is because pupils are given good opportunities to extend their musical experience and to develop their musicianship. For example, Year 6 pupils made good progress in learning about the rhythms of African and South American music through the skilful way in which the teachers phased the introduction of the different instruments. Because of the careful preparation and their own attentive listening, pupils had very positive attitudes and were keen to succeed. They showed good control and rhythmical accuracy in their group playing and made thoughtful comments on the quality of their performance. A strength of the learning is the effective way in which pupils use their music notebooks to record what they have learnt during the lesson. Tasks include responses to questions such as "How does the melody begin and how does it develop?" Work is regularly marked with brief comments and technical corrections where necessary. Nevertheless, there are areas that can be improved in those lessons that are satisfactory rather than good. Pupils lose interest when they have to be passive listeners for too long, and when time is not used efficiently.

124. Management of the subject is good. The well-structured programme of study gives helpful guidance for non-specialists, and assessment of pupils' progress is carried out regularly. Resources are good and there is a wide range of extra-curricular music-making which encompasses pupils' involvement in seasonal concerts as well as performances in school with professional musicians. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to broaden their experience by attending concerts in the locality. Music makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development through the opportunities it provides for creativity and disciplined response and for appreciation of music from different cultural traditions. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

125. Current standards are below those expected nationally for pupils aged seven and eleven. The satisfactory standards at the time of the previous inspection have not been maintained. This is partly due to the amount of time given to teaching basic skills in literacy and numeracy, which has reduced the time available for physical education. Some pupils in Years 5, 4 and 1 and all pupils in Year 3 currently have only one lesson per week, which is insufficient to develop skills and stamina. This is reflected in the pupils' limited abilities to sustain physical activity. All other pupils have two lessons each week. The school does not have a grassed area large enough for athletics or games activities and this further impedes pupils' progress in developing skills and techniques. Pupils are achieving satisfactorily in relation to their prior attainment, but could achieve more with better facilities. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are fully included in lessons and make the same rate of progress as their peers.

126. Lessons observed during the inspection included games skills and athletics. Planning shows that pupils experience a wide range of physical activities including gymnastics, dance, swimming and outdoor pursuits. Standards in swimming are average and match those expected for pupils by the end of Year 6. The large majority can swim 25 metres unaided and a significant number achieve the bronze awards.

127. By the end of Year 2, pupils satisfactorily work as a team when controlling a parachute to raise it off the ground and eject a large sponge ball off it. This was made into a competitive game, which the pupils thoroughly enjoyed, jumping off the ground in their attempts to raise the ball higher in the air. It led to good periods of physical exertion, which were followed by appropriate rest periods before the next game. The game of 'cat and mouse' that followed enabled pupils to begin to develop early skills in dodging and marking others and improved their awareness of space. Pupils have not reached the stage of using simple tactics or working together to catch the 'mice'. Pupils satisfactorily develop their skills in throwing and striking balls. Progress in developing skills in catching is slow as tennis balls are used, whereas larger balls would be more appropriate. Pupils are not yet evaluating their work in order to improve their performance. They know they need to do suitable 'warming up' and 'cooling down' activities, but are not sure as to why.

128. By the end of Year 6, pupils have developed a range of athletic skills such as throwing the javelin, hurdling and long jump. Pupils cannot develop their skills to full potential however because lessons take place on the school playground where space is limited. The lessons were well planned and prepared and pupils worked very sensibly to gain as much as they could. In a very effective lesson in the Year 5/6 class, pupils were given time deadlines for the completion of the activity to make it more competitive and to set a standard for them to improve on in future lessons. The pupils worked well together, but were frustrated when the sponge javelins were carried by the wind. Pupils' skills in throwing, catching and striking balls have not improved progressively between Year 1 and Year 4, very similar activities being seen in the lessons in these year groups.

129. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Only one of the lessons seen in Years 1 and 2 was taught by a teacher, the other lessons were taught by a visitor to the school. The evidence indicates teaching to be satisfactory. In Years 3 to 6 there are examples of good and very good teaching. The key features are the teachers' enthusiasm for the subject and their good role models in terms of dress and the level of participation in lessons. The very good teaching results from secure subject knowledge, attention to health and safety issues, a brisk pace and effective deployment of a teaching assistant to help in setting out the activities whilst pupils are warming up. This ensures the time and resources available are used well to develop pupils' skills and techniques. There are overall strengths in the planning of lessons and in the management of pupils. Where teaching is satisfactory, the pace is slower and the time taken to set equipment out and for activities to get started is too long.

130. The leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. This is because there is no secure overview of standards and the action plan for development is based on discussions with other staff and the monitoring of planning, not on first hand evidence of standards and where they could be improved. Taken overall, improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory.

131. The curriculum is enriched by extra-curricular activities that include football, netball and judo. In addition, residential visits for pupils in Year 6 enable them to experience a good range of outdoor pursuits. Such activities make a good contribution to the development of pupils' personal and social skills. Pupils use their numerical skills satisfactorily to time their activities and measure the distance they have jumped.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

132. The attainment of pupils at the ages of seven and eleven meets the requirements of the Local Agreed Syllabus. It exceeds them in areas such as knowledge and understanding of the Christian way of life, and the development of spiritual awareness. This is because pupils respond well to the distinctive

ethos of the school. The pattern of prayer during the day, and the seasonal celebrations within the Christian year form an integral part of pupils' religious education. Overall, pupils achieve well and there has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

133. At the age of seven, most pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of the main beliefs of the Christian faith, and aspects of other major world faiths such as Hinduism. For example, Year 1 pupils know that the Bible is a special book for Christians. They understand the lessons to be drawn from the Old Testament story of Jonah, and the Gospel narrative of Christ's healing of the ten lepers. They are also aware that celebrations, such as Christmas and Easter, and the Hindu festival of Diwali, are a vital element of religious life. Attitudes to the subject are good. In lessons and morning assemblies, pupils are usually attentive listeners. Responses often take the form of discussions, and pupils enjoy sharing ideas. Written work is of an average standard. It is mostly in the form of pictures and captions and is generally presented neatly. Higher-attaining pupils organise their information confidently when writing at greater length, as in the retelling of the Russian Christmas legend of Baboushka.

134. At the age of eleven, most pupils have a clear understanding of the principal teachings of Christianity, and their application to everyday life. For instance, pupils in Years 5 and 6 produced good written responses on the way in which Jesus is remembered, and in relating the Lenten theme of temptation to personal weaknesses and renunciation. Pupils also have a sound knowledge of the main beliefs of Buddhism, Islam and Sikhism, and use specialist words accurately, for example when referring to the Arabic names for the Five Pillars of Islam. Year 6 pupils are well versed in the history of the Jewish nation as told in the Old Testament. This is as a result of the course of lessons entitled "Bible Explorers", given by a visiting speaker. Attitudes and behaviour are good overall. The quality of written work is good in Year 6. Pupils cover a wide range of themes and write for a variety of purposes. These include spider maps to show the way in which food is shared at harvest time, annotated sketches of sacred buildings, newspaper reporting on the events of Good Friday, and personal responses to spiritual and moral issues. Higher-attaining pupils present their work very effectively and they write at length when describing events and reporting research findings. The writing of middle-attaining pupils shows a clear understanding of spiritual matters, as in this comment on The Last Supper: 'the wine was a symbol of Jesus' blood, to wash away all bad things'. Pupils with special educational needs often lack the support of examples of writing to improve the structure of their responses. However, they show thoughtfulness and imagination in short pieces of original writing such as eyewitness accounts of the events of Holy Week. In Years 4 and 5 there is a lack of consistency in the quantity and quality of work produced. Weaknesses include tasks that lack challenge, and assignments that are unfinished or missing altogether. Teachers generally mark work regularly and include encouraging comments. However, there is no common approach to the correction of spelling errors.

135. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teaching was satisfactory or better in all the lessons observed. It was good in the majority of lessons, and very good in one of them. The strengths of the teaching lie in teachers' commitment to the subject, and the opportunities offered, through discussion and reflection, for the development of pupils' spiritual and moral awareness. In the most effective lessons pupils make good progress because work is well planned to engage their interest and widen their personal experience. For example, in a lesson on faith and the importance of prayer, Year 3 pupils listened very attentively to the story of St. Bernadette of Lourdes because of the skilful and moving manner in which the teacher told it. Similarly, pupils in Years 5 and 6 made good progress in understanding the different ways in which Christians remember Jesus, through exploring ways in which they themselves would be remembered when they had moved on to the next stage of their school life. Teachers usually manage their pupils well. They encourage everyone to contribute to class discussions with the result that the pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language take an active part in the lesson. In satisfactory lessons there are features that can be improved. Sometimes the lesson objectives are not always made sufficiently clear to pupils, and not enough use is made of role-play to develop language skills. However, the strengths of the teaching far outweigh the weaknesses.

136. The subject is well managed. The programme of study follows the guidelines of the Local Agreed Syllabus, and there are clear arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. Resources

such as artefacts and the Internet are well used, and pupils benefit from visits to the parish church and the neighbourhood mosque, as well as from the expertise of visiting speakers. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' social and cultural education through the diversity of the religious traditions studied.

