

# INSPECTION REPORT

**HOLLINS GREEN ST HELEN'S CE AIDED  
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Hollinfare, Warrington

LEA area: Warrington

Unique reference number: 111364

Headteacher: Mr P N Roberts

Reporting inspector: Mrs Sonja Öyen  
7167

Dates of inspection: 3 – 5 December 2001

Inspection number: 195678

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 4 – 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Birch Road  
Hollinfare  
Warrington  
Cheshire

Postcode: WA3 6JS

Telephone number: 0161 775 2935

Fax number: 0161 775 2822

Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Rev Canon Brian Robinson

Date of previous inspection: June 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
7167	Mrs Sonja Öyen	Registered inspector	Foundation Stage Music Equal opportunities	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school  The school's results and pupils' achievements  Teaching and learning Leadership and management Key issues for action
9457	Mrs Gillian Bindoff	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development  Pupils' welfare, health and safety  Partnership with parents and carers
17685	Ms Linda Spooner	Team inspector	English Geography Special educational needs	
30439	Mr Malcolm Heyes	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Physical education	Quality and range of opportunities for learning
27541	Mr John Collins	Team inspector	Science Art and design Design and technology History	

The inspection contractor was:

Nord Anglia School Inspection Services  
Strathblane House  
Ashfield Road  
Cheadle  
Stockport  
SK8 1BB

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33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Hollins Green St Helen's CE Primary School is a voluntary aided school in the village of Hollinfare, seven miles east of Warrington. Most pupils live nearby but a significant number travel from Glazebrook village and from Cadishead. With 147 pupils, the school is smaller than average. There are six classes - two have mixed year groups as the number in each year group varies from 16 to 27. Five pupils are from minority ethnic groups and two have English as an additional language. One receives specialist teaching in learning English. Thirty three pupils (22 per cent) are identified as having special educational needs which is similar to the national average. Five pupils receive additional support mainly for emotional and behavioural difficulties and learning difficulties. No pupil has a statement of special educational need. The pupils come from a range of social backgrounds and the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Many pupils attend a play-group before joining the reception class and although attainment on entry varies, it is generally as expected for pupils' ages.

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

St Helen's is a good school. It is successful in meeting its mission statement as all the staff *"aim for high standards in all we do and value each child as an individual."* Parents rightly value the happy, family atmosphere and the school's place at the heart of the community. Standards are good and the pupils make good progress over time because of much good teaching and a rich curriculum that includes visits to places of interest. The good leadership of the headteacher and the commitment of all who work in the school ensure that it continues to improve. It gives good value for money.

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

- Standards are high in mathematics for Year 6 pupils.
- The good quality of teaching results in pupils' good achievement particularly in English, mathematics, science, ICT, art and design, design and technology and geography.
- The pupils really enjoy school. They are enthusiastic and there is a buzz to their learning.
- The curriculum is wide and exciting and reflects the school's Christian foundation.
- The clear vision of the headteacher unites the staff - all work hard to help the pupils meet their high expectations. Achievements are celebrated and pupils' work is very attractively displayed.
- It has a very good partnership with parents and the community.

#### **What could be improved**

- The use of ICT as part of learning in all subjects.
- The use of information to identify how well the school is doing and where it needs to improve.
- The quality of the provision to ensure that pupils are aware of life in a culturally diverse society.
- Procedures to track pupils' progress and to identify what they need to learn next.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school has sustained the many strengths identified in the 1997 inspection. It has also made good improvement not only in dealing with the four key issues but also in other aspects of its work. This has kept the school up-to-date with national initiatives and trends. Standards in English and mathematics have risen at Key Stages 1 and 2 so that St Helen's is doing far better than most other schools. The building of a new classroom, the creation of an ICT suite and improvements to the grounds have enhanced what the school offers. Sharper leadership and management skills are starting to pinpoint where the school needs to concentrate its efforts to improve. The willingness of the staff to make changes is a key factor in the school's continuing development.

## STANDARDS

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

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

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

Standards are good in most subjects. On entry to school, the children's attainment varies but is generally average. The children make satisfactory progress overall in the reception year and get off to a good start in reading, writing and number. By the end of Year 2, most are doing at least as expected for their age in reading, writing, mathematics and science, although too few do well in writing. When they leave Year 6, many pupils are doing better than expected for their age in most subjects. In 2001, the school was in the top five per cent of like schools for its high percentage of Level 4 attainment in English. The boys did particularly well in mathematics where the percentage of pupils who attained the higher Level 5 was well above average. Pupils' good progress in the junior years placed St Helen's second in the LEA in mathematics and fourth in English - a significant accolade. The school far exceeded its targets in 2001 and inspection evidence indicates that the targets for 2002 are not high enough. Boys and girls are all making good progress, especially in mathematics.

Pupils of all ages have good speaking and listening skills. Their good range of language and their maturity in discussions and debates contribute to the fluency and good expression in their reading and writing. This adds much to the quality of work in other subjects. In the infant and junior classes, standards are good in art and design, design and technology, geography and ICT. However, pupils' ICT skills are not being applied enough in other subjects to ensure high attainment. Standards are satisfactory in history and physical education. It was not possible to judge standards in music as too few lessons were seen.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good; the pupils are willing learners who work hard and enjoy their time in and out of the classroom.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good; while most pupils show a good level of self-discipline, a few younger pupils find it hard to behave as asked in lessons.
Personal development and relationships	Very good; pupils of all ages and from differing social and cultural backgrounds get on very well together and support one another. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility for jobs around the school but there are not enough chances for them to decide what to do.
Attendance	Good. Pupils are keen to come to school and arrive on time.



## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The overall good quality of teaching has been sustained since the last inspection although the incidence of very good teaching is not as prevalent. Taken overall, the teaching is at least satisfactory in nearly all lessons and good in three out of four. The teaching is stronger for pupils in Years 3-6 than for the younger pupils, and is strongest for pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6. Here, frequent good teaching is accelerating pupils' learning and helping them to achieve well.

Common teaching strengths lie in the teachers' high expectations of pupils to learn and to do well, their attention to preparing lessons and their knowledge of how to develop pupils' reading, writing and number skills. As a result, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, develop in competence and confidence in literacy and numeracy which enhances their learning in other subjects. Children in the reception class get off to a sound start as the teaching is often good especially in fostering the children's communication, language and literacy and their mathematical development. In other areas of learning, the teaching does not always take all the children's needs into full account and learning is not as consistent. The smallness of the Year 1 class contributes highly to the very good relationships between teacher and pupils and their good learning attitudes. Occasionally, the learning of all the Year 2 pupils slows when the teacher has to give a high amount of time to managing the behaviour of a few who quickly lose their concentration and disrupt others.

Good teaching in other subjects results in pupils' learning not only key facts but also the skills of investigation in science, geography and design and technology, as well as a wide range of techniques and strategies in subjects such as art and design. The pupils remember well what they are taught and are quick to use what they know when involved in practical work such as using the computers or creating dance sequences.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory for the reception year children; good for pupils in Years 1 to 6 because of the good range of themes, visits and extra activities that make the curriculum meaningful, interesting and often exciting.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory; pupils receive help from teachers and other adults and take full part in the curriculum but the work does not always fully match their needs and individual targets.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory; pupils receive specialist help during the week in learning English; in lessons, pupils are supported by the teacher and their peers. Less is done to provide visual and practical help.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall; the high quality of display sets a positive tone in valuing achievement and talent; the staff ensure that pupils know how to behave responsibly. The school is not as effective in developing pupils' awareness of cultural diversity and differing values.
How well the school cares for its pupils	There are good procedures to ensure pupils' welfare and safety. Although the staff know the pupils well, they do not track their academic progress well enough to plan the next steps in their learning.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The good leadership of the headteacher unites the staff and sets the direction for the school; gaps in management expertise are being plugged as key staff identify what needs to be done to meet the priorities in the school improvement plan.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are supportive and have a good overview of the life of school from their regular visits; they ensure that the school meets all statutory requirements.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school compares itself with others and systems are maturing to determine how well the school does in all of its work; governors and subject leaders are beginning to monitor and evaluate closely the links between teaching, learning and standards.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory; the school is using its budget and reserve funds to support six classes; time is not always used well – lessons over run and some are too long. While good use is made overall of the buildings and grounds to support pupils' learning, the junior library is under-used.

The school benefits from being on a large site and agreed plans to extend the building should ease office accommodation problems. The new classroom provides a good environment for the reception year children. The high quality of display throughout the school enhances the ambience. Pupils' learning is well supported by the good range and number of resources in most subjects. The school applies best value principles satisfactorily – it consults parents and pupils about school issues and seeks good value in its purchases and services. However, targets are not always challenging enough and data is not being used critically to evaluate the school's effectiveness.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They feel comfortable approaching the school with problems as the staff are friendly and concerned about the children.</li> <li>• Their children are expected to work hard.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• Their children like school as there is a happy atmosphere and a lot going on.</li> <li>• Their children make good progress as the teaching is good.</li> </ul>	<p>There were no aspects raised by a significant percentage of parents.</p> <p>The following points were raised by a few:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the limited range of activities outside lessons.</li> <li>• Not being informed enough about their children's progress.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees in large part. The parents' positive views reflect the areas that the inspection finds the school does well. The concerns are less well founded. As in many schools, the activities outside lessons are mainly linked to sport and music. The school offers a good programme of visits linked to curriculum themes. Parents have formal meetings with teachers each term and many parents were seen to take advantage of the "open door" policy to discuss their children's progress with staff at the end of the day.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

- 1 Standards are good in most subjects. Standards in English, mathematics and science have risen since the school was last inspected in 1997. Inspection evidence indicates that standards are at least as high as those achieved in the 2001 national tests, especially in Year 6, as a significant number of pupils are doing better than expected for their age.
- 2 In the national tests in 1997 for seven and eleven year olds, the school's overall results were slightly above the national average in English and mathematics. The school did best in science, largely because of the good performance of the boys. Since then, standards at both key stages have followed the national upward trend but at differing rates. At Key Stage 1, the initial gentle rise has been more marked in the last two years in reading and mathematics. Standards in writing have not risen as much. At Key Stage 2, standards have seesawed. Although this partly reflects the distorting impact of the use of percentages when comparing cohort sizes where, for example, one pupil may account for five percentage points, it still indicates important aspects. The dramatic rise in 1999 in English, mathematics and science was followed by a dip below the national average in 2000 and then by a rise in 2001. When compared with 1997, standards in science have fallen. The school's results in 2001 were similar to those of 1997. The school has not maintained the differential between its results in science and the national average which has risen substantially since 1997. The school has rightly identified science as a priority for improvement and inspection evidence shows that, given pupils' current good achievement, standards are set to rise in the 2002 tests.
- 3 The school is effective in ensuring that pupils attain the level expected for their age. In the 2001 tests, all the Year 2 pupils reached Level 2 in writing and mathematics, and nearly all in reading. Teacher assessment in science also indicated all reached Level 2. This placed the school in the top five per cent of all and similar schools for writing, mathematics and science. Similarly, nearly all the Year 6 pupils reached Level 4 in all three subjects. This placed St Helen's well above the average for all schools in English and mathematics. Moreover, in English, it placed the school in the top five per cent of similar schools.
- 4 Given the pupils' average attainment on entry, the two levels progress at each key stage represents satisfactory progress for most. It is the increasing percentage of Year 2 pupils who reach Level 3, and Year 6 pupils reaching Level 5, that is raising standards.
- 5 In 2001, nearly half of the Year 2 pupils attained Level 3 in reading and close to 40 per cent did so in mathematics and science. This was an increase compared with the previous year, and kept Level 3 standards well above the national average. In writing, however, there is significant underachievement. No pupil reached Level 3 last year placing the school well below the national average and that of similar schools. Inspection evidence indicates that this picture is not changing. The higher attaining writers are not being helped enough to improve the quality of their writing and their potential is not being realised.
- 6 A more even picture emerges in Year 6 across the three subjects. Good teaching, and often very good teaching in mathematics and science, is accelerating the pupils'

learning and lifting standards. In English, standards in reading and writing are good. This continues the good trend seen in the 2001 tests when one in three pupils attained Level 5, the level more typical of pupils two years older. Unlike the national picture, the writing results were only slightly lower than in reading. The school did well in writing. The 30 per cent of pupils reaching Level 5 was more than double the national percentage. The school also far exceeded the national Level 5 percentage in mathematics. Only in science did the percentage fall below the average of all and similar schools.

- 7 The general rise in standards is due to several key factors:
- the school makes good provision during the spring and summer terms for pupils to take part in a range of booster and revision classes. A similar programme is planned for this school year;
  - there is a common drive for pupils to do the best they can – the teachers have high expectations of all the pupils;
  - the support for the lower attaining pupils and for those with special educational needs ensures they grasp key knowledge and learn procedures so that they more often than not attain the level expected for their age;
  - an increasing recognition of what the higher attaining pupils can and ought to achieve;
  - focussed teaching to help the pupils reach class and school targets.
- 8 The school is using national data as well as information from the LEA (Local Education Authority) to compare itself with others. This is helping to show where the school needs to make improvements and is also highlighting the danger in merely accepting the school's good Level 2 and 4 results rather than looking at how well pupils achieve given their starting point on entry to school and on entry to Key Stage 2.
- 9 Published data indicates that the school was the second highest school in the LEA in terms of adding value to mathematics attainment at Key Stage 2, and the fourth highest in English. This is a significant achievement for the school and shows how the school helps the average, lower attaining and those pupils with special educational needs to achieve well. Most reach the level expected for their age. However, the data also indicates that the higher attaining Year 6 pupils made only satisfactory progress at Key Stage 2 in English, unsatisfactory progress in science but very good progress in mathematics. Also, the boys outperformed the girls in all three subjects but most noticeably in mathematics. The implications of these aspects has not been analysed fully or included in the school's improvement priorities. The introduction of a system to track each pupil's progress and the development of the monitoring of teaching and learning offer the potential for the school to focus more on such aspects and factors.
- 10 In 2001, the school far exceeded its targets for Level 4 attainment in English and mathematics. The targets of 79 per cent for 2002 are more challenging, but given inspection evidence, appear to be again too low. The school also lacks clear targets for Level 3 and Level 5 attainment to ensure that standards are at least sustained and the higher attaining pupils are suitably challenged.
- 11 In the Foundation Stage (reception year), the children make satisfactory progress overall. Many start school with a good level of general knowledge and language skills. Good teaching boosts their learning in reading, writing, number and the scientific aspects of knowledge and understanding of the world. Most reach the standard expected by the end of the reception year and the higher attaining children

are working towards Level 1 of the National Curriculum in reading, writing and number.

- 12 Year 1 pupils are achieving well across the curriculum because of good teaching and also because being only 16 in the class, they gain more teacher attention. A particular area of developing strength is pupils' speaking and listening skills, their ability to explain their thinking in literacy and numeracy and their confidence in justifying their opinions in subjects such as design and technology.
- 13 Year 2 pupils are confident speakers and independent readers and writers although their reading skills are better than those in writing. They are fluent readers as they are taught well the basic skills of word recognition and gain much practice in reading at home. Higher attaining readers use good expression and are confident tackling a range of books. Standards are good in spelling and basic number as the pupils remember well rules and procedures. This also helps them in science as they are quick to remember facts and how to do things. In writing, most use correctly punctuated sentences and often include interesting words and phrases. The higher attaining writers however, have not yet learnt to use joined handwriting or how to use speech and extended sentences to best effect.
- 14 In the junior years, the pupils make good progress and achieve well because of much good, systematic teaching especially in English and mathematics. In the mixed age classes, pupils' achievement is good as the teachers set their sights high and through support, questioning and frequent revision ensure that all the pupils grasp key information. The higher attaining pupils are expected to produce work of a higher quality. They achieve well as the teachers give them specific feedback on their work and often set them more challenging tasks.
- 15 By Year 6, the pupils show mature, good language skills. They debate and discuss issues confidently, converse easily and listen appreciatively to adults and others. This assists their learning as they rarely need to have things repeated and lessons move at a brisk pace. Their good range of vocabulary and turn of phrase adds to their understanding of what they read and to the quality of their writing. As they are equally confident in reading fiction and non-fiction they have little trouble reading texts in other subjects. However, they have poorly developed skills in finding books as they have not been taught classification systems and how to use them. Standards in spelling, grammar and punctuation are good. Presentation standards are not as good, as pupils' handwriting is often immature for their age.
- 16 Year 6 pupils show good facility in handling number. They are achieving well because the teaching challenges their thinking. Regular sessions of mental mathematics problems, number patterns and multiplication tables are refining their intuitive awareness of number relationships. Pupils know procedures to deal with number problems and ways to check their answers. A significant number of girls as well as boys show a good "feel" for number and are already working towards Level 5. They cope easily with mathematical aspects that arise in other subjects, such as data handling in science. The pupils remember scientific facts and processes. They show a good grasp of fair testing and understanding of scientific vocabulary.
- 17 Standards have risen in ICT since the last inspection and are now good because the pupils have regular hands-on experience and are being systematically taught how to use specific programs and functions. The pupils are quick to learn and achieve well in lessons but have too few chances to apply their skills and knowledge especially using the classroom computers.

- 18 As noted in 1997, standards are good in art and design, design and technology and geography. Pupils acquire good subject skills as well as subject knowledge, and many achieve high standards for their age especially in art and design. Standards are satisfactory in physical education and in history. It was not possible to judge standards of attainment in music as too few lessons were seen and the specialist music teacher was absent.

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

- 19 Pupils' very good attitudes to school and to learning are a continued strength since the last inspection. Along with the good teaching, they are a highly significant factor in the pupils' good progress and their good standards of work. Nearly all parents who returned the questionnaire agreed that their children enjoy school and many commented that their children flourish in the happy, family atmosphere.
- 20 The pupils' conduct and achievement reflect the good quality of the school's provision for personal development seen in the attractive environment, the harmonious day-to-day life of the school, the high expectations of the staff that the pupils will do well, and the good model set by the staff in their approach to work. In most lessons, the pupils showed a positive attitude to learning and an enthusiasm for what they did. They showed a positive self-image in terms of their own learning and often mature skills in evaluating the quality of their own work. This extended to activities outside lessons and is well exemplified in the pupils' keenness to talk to inspectors about school and what they had learnt.
- 21 This positive attitude begins in the foundation stage. The reception year children are interested in what the day brings and what they will be doing. They are happy and relaxed as they know the routines and what is expected of them. They know each other and are developing a good sense of their own talents and achievements. Several were quick to point out their work on the walls and to talk about how they had learnt lots of words and started to read. Most sit still and sustain their attention for long periods as they try to please the teacher. When getting their coats or going to the toilet they show a high level of self-confidence and self-reliance but in the classroom, this is not being used to best effect as the adults tend to direct and control too much of what the children do.
- 22 This lack of use of the pupils' initiative and mature ability to make their own decisions and choices also typifies some lessons at Key Stages 1 and 2. It also echoes criticisms made in the last inspection. The pupils generally work and concentrate hard and rise to a challenge. They persevere and help one another and only ask an adult when they cannot resolve problems themselves. This reflects the encouragement of the teachers to pupils to have a go and to try things out. As a result, the pupils take pride in doing something well and evaluate their learning in a sensible and thoughtful way. This was highly evident when Year 6 pupils commented on the content and impact of others' arguments. Groups had worked industriously to develop and present their case in a class debate about the importance of going to school. These good social and personal skills are not always being put to best effect in opportunities for pupils to develop their own initiatives and to carry out personal research.
- 23 The pupils' behaviour is good overall in and out of school. In many lessons, when the pupils are engaged in practical work and absorbed by their learning, the behaviour is very good. Most pupils show a good level of self-discipline and can be trusted to act sensibly. In a few lessons seen, the immature behaviour of a few Year 2 pupils, most frequently boys, distracted the attention of others and interrupted the

flow of the lesson. All the pupils' learning slowed when time was lost as the teacher regained everyone's attention. Older pupils understand how their behaviour affects others. Year 5 pupils held a spirited discussion about the effects of vandalism and the damage it can cause.

- 24 During periods when the pupils could not go outside because of wet weather, they behaved very well in class, occupying themselves with work and games. School evidence shows that instances of bullying and other oppressive behaviour are rare, and pupils and parents know that the headteacher deals with such problems quickly and effectively. Pupils who have been identified as having behaviour difficulties are praised for meeting their targets and are generally well supported by adults to ensure they play a full part in school. There have been no exclusions in recent years.
- 25 Relationships between the pupils, and between pupils and adults, are very good. Boys and girls get on well together and are happy to work as partners. The pupils listen attentively to each other and enjoy hearing about others' experiences, such as life in another country. They readily share ideas and are open with their praise and ideas for improvement. The staff and parents commented positively on how the pupils help those new to the school and how this eases the process for those learning to speak English. Pupils enjoy working collaboratively. Pupils in Years 4 and 5 contentedly rubbed shoulders while working on a shared picture. This acceptance of others starts early. The reception children took care to give each other enough space in the hall to practice ball-handling skills. There is a friendly, sociable atmosphere in the playground. Older pupils support the younger pupils and often show considerable tolerance and patience.
- 26 All the pupils take an active part in school life and willingly offer to take part in additional activities. Pupils who sang at the Young World concert in Manchester had been keen to attend and said, *"It was great; it was even better than last year because we all knew the words"*. They value the involvement of the community in school and give visitors a warm, polite and genuine welcome. Although the pupils have limited experience of meeting others with different beliefs and cultures, they show a good understanding of the importance of valuing people as individuals.
- 27 Older pupils have very responsible attitudes to their role in the school community. Chosen pupils act as representatives for their class groups on a school council and suggest ways in which the school environment can be improved. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are also developing skills as mediators in resolving playground disagreements or referring problems to the staff.
- 28 Parents commented that their children want to be at school on time and their good, punctual attendance ensures that lessons get off to a prompt start.

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

- 29 The good quality of teaching is a prime reason why standards are as good as they are. Given the substantial changes in staffing, the school has sustained the overall good quality noted in the last inspection. In all but two lessons seen, the teaching was at the least satisfactory. It was good in 63 per cent and very good in a further 11 per cent. Unlike the last inspection, no excellent teaching was seen and the prevalence of very good teaching was not as strong. Care should be taken in interpreting the statistics as each lesson is equivalent to more than two percentage points.

- 30 Although the overall teaching quality is good in all three key stages, there are differences in the quality between and within them. The teaching is stronger for junior pupils than those in the infant classes, and strongest for those in the mixed classes of Years 4, 5 and 6. All the very good teaching was seen in these two classes. The class of Year 4 and 5 pupils is benefiting from consistently good, and often very good lively teaching, which is raising the pupils' achievement across the curriculum.
- 31 Weaknesses in class management accounted for the two unsatisfactory lessons for Year 2 pupils when they made minimal progress. In reflecting on the lessons, the teacher realised why her teaching had not been effective and what could be done to improve it. The changes in planning and her firmer stance with pupils resulted in good teaching and learning in a number of lessons. The inconsistencies in teaching mean that pupils are not all learning as fast as they should. Not enough consideration is given to ensuring that the lesson length and learning tasks are best suited to the needs of all the pupils.
- 32 The teaching in the school is strongest in mathematics. The co-ordinator is setting a good model of teaching and all the teachers have good subject knowledge. They are following and adapting the guidance of the National Numeracy Strategy to make learning fun. They make good use of practical activities, games and problems to foster the pupils' learning about number relationships and mathematical rules. The daily sessions of mental mathematics are strengthening the pupils' intuitive awareness of number and their learning of multiplication facts. At such times the teachers make good use of competition to encourage the pupils to do better than previously, although in some sessions, the pace was too leisurely.
- 33 A strength of the mathematics teaching in all classes is the development of the pupils' skills in explaining their thinking and the use of relevant mathematical terms. The pupils learn a range of strategies to work out problems and also to check their answers. A good feature of a lesson for pupils in Years 5 and 6 was the way the teacher flagged up common errors in how the pupils were interpreting the questions. She then gave them tips to remember such as looking to make sure fractions were in their simplest form before making an equivalent decimal. Pupils are encouraged to use what they know in dealing with mathematical aspects in other subjects such as co-ordinates in mapping, and data handling in science.
- 34 The teaching in English is good and the pupils use and develop their reading and writing skills in other subjects. The teachers facilitate this by making meaningful links and reminding the pupils of what they have learnt in literacy hours. In a science lesson for Year 3 pupils, the teacher made effective use of pupils' completed work as exemplars to discuss and improve the way they had recorded their findings. Pupils' work in geography, history and design and technology shows good teaching of different writing formats including lists, accounts, reports, evaluations, narrative and verse.
- 35 Most literacy hours are well structured and purposeful. The teachers make good use of ideas from the National Literacy Strategy to teach spelling rules and to develop pupils' awareness of the link between letters and sounds. They also use, and expect the pupils to use, correct terms such as "phoneme" when talking about language. Useful prompt cards helped Year 2 pupils to discuss the features of instructional writing. Such work places an equal focus on developing the pupils' listening and speaking skills as well as ensuring that skills in recognising and spelling words are well taught. Literacy lessons for pupils in Years 4 and 5 are often very good and pupils achieve well because the teacher, the literacy co-ordinator, has very secure



subject knowledge and an enthusiasm for literacy. She sets a very good model for the other staff in using display to remind the pupils of what they need to remember about different text formats, spelling and grammar rules, and features of good writing.

36 Several other strengths characterise the effectiveness of the teaching overall and contribute to the pupils' positive attitudes to learning and the happy ethos of the school:

- All the teachers and support staff have very good relationships with the pupils. The frequent repartee and shared comments, especially between the teachers and the older pupils, lightens lessons and keeps the pupils' attention so that they remain interested in learning. By sharing information about her own bathroom, the reception teacher prompted the children to describe their bathroom furniture and its purpose.
- The teachers show a high level of commitment to the pupils and their teaching. They consult and support each other and share good practice. They plan and prepare lessons thoroughly. Because the teacher stuck "post-its" on each computer with relevant passwords, Year 1 pupils were able to log on as soon as they got into the ICT suite. The teachers also take time and care to display pupils' work to a high standard. Classroom routines are well established so classroom life runs smoothly. This sets the tone and pupils learn almost imperceptibly that they are to be equally industrious and committed. The teachers commented that the pupils often stay for additional "tutoring" when they have not quite understood the content of the lesson or prefer to forgo playtime to complete their work.
- The teachers pass on a sense of urgency in their teaching. They share the purpose of the lesson so that pupils know exactly what they are expected to learn and achieve in the time. In the best lessons, the pupils were given constant feedback on how well they were doing. For instance, in a very good dance lesson, Year 4 and 5 pupils lifted their performance markedly as the teacher praised and commented on good style and movements. No time was wasted as the pupils responded to the fast pace of the teachers' instructions and were quick to apply new advice.
- Skilful questioning by the teachers draws out from pupils what they already know, helps them to make new connections and to evaluate what they have done. When the teacher asked, "*So why did you use a template?*", referring to their making of puppets, Year 2 pupils explained that "*Without a shape if you cut one and then another it might not meet.*"
- The teaching and support staff work co-operatively and effectively together so that pupils with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language are supported as needed. The presence of support staff often reassures those pupils who otherwise demand attention from the teacher. In the reception class, the teacher and nursery nurse are sharing ideas. The book of different materials is a good example of the effective use of the nursery nurse's flair and ideas.

37 A strand of a key issue from the last inspection was the need to evaluate more systematically the quality of teaching and learning. The teachers give a lot of time to planning what they will teach and to evaluating its impact. In some cases, such as the programme for the reception class, the teacher's review of the week is sharply

reflective and analytical. Her observations, which identify clearly what the children are learning, act as a valuable record of progress. Not all the teachers' evaluations indicate what are the next steps in learning for the class, different attainment groups and individuals such as those with special educational needs or the higher attaining pupils.

- 38 The teachers comment that they want to “drive” the pupils to do well. This has both positive and negative features. The teachers exert a good pace in most lessons as they know what they want to teach. However, this often leads to the teachers directing the pupils too much both in what to do, how to do it and what to use. In the reception class, this is stifling the children’s achievement in several areas of learning. In the junior classes, the pupils are often denied the chance to assume responsibility and this detracts from the overall quality of teaching. For example, Year 4 and 5 pupils’ evaluations of their work in art were “hi-jacked” by the teacher in her eagerness to point out key elements. While this served to reinforce their learning about Klimt’s style, it minimised the pupils’ time to share constructive comments which was a planned part of the lesson.
- 39 The teaching drive also means that some lessons overrun and the teachers dwell too long on aspects that the pupils already know. This accounted for the loss of pupils’ concentration in a literacy hour for Year 2 pupils. When the teachers focus on what the pupils will learn, the lessons are often more effective. This is most consistent in ICT when the teachers identify specific skills and knowledge and the steps needed for pupils to acquire them when they use the computers in the ICT suite. The same does not apply to the use of ICT equipment as learning tools across the curriculum.
- 40 The teachers conscientiously mark the pupils’ class and homework which is often an extension of lessons. The quality of the marking varies in helping pupils to improve their work. The best marking is for the Year 4, 5 and 6 pupils. The teachers comment on the quality and content of what the pupils have done and explain why it is “good” or what was needed to make it better. The effective use of questions, such as “*What does this tell you about the materials you used?*” in a Year 5 pupils’ science book, challenges the pupils and shows where the gaps in their reports lie.

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

- 41 Overall the curriculum is good although it is richer and more exciting for pupils at Key Stages 1 and 2 than for those in the Foundation Stage. A strength of the school curriculum is the emphasis on the pupils’ personal as well as their academic development, and the inclusion of all pupils. A particular facet is the good range of residential visits for junior pupils to places such as Beeston Outdoor Centre, Llandudno and Delamere Forest. Parents commented how much these help to develop their children’s independence and maturity.
- 42 The curriculum is satisfactory for children in the reception year. The teacher uses national and local guidance to guide her comprehensive planning in the six areas of learning but the organisation of the timetable follows too closely that of Key Stages 1 and 2. While this establishes a common routine and subject focus throughout the school, it does not reflect fully nationally recommended principles of best practice for this age group. The potential of one activity to foster learning in several areas of learning is not wholly recognised. This is best seen in the infrequent use of the outdoors. Photographs show the children have had some opportunities to use wheeled toys and equipment outdoors, and have also been on local walks, but

planning does not show the systematic use of outdoor activities to extend and develop the children's skills.

- 43 A strength of the Foundation Stage curriculum is the focus on the children's personal, social and emotional development as well as communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. The time given to these areas is well reflected in the children's progress in following class codes, and learning to read, write and use number. The teacher has devised useful planning sheets to give a clear indication of what the children will learn and also to record her evaluation of their achievements. This planning shows progression and challenge for the children, but there is not enough to indicate the different starting points and expected outcomes for groups and individuals who are at different stages of development in the six areas of learning. Good use is made of practical experiences, such as finding the best paper to write on, and adult led activities to introduce new skills and materials. However, the children have relatively few chances to rehearse and apply these skills especially in the areas of knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development.
- 44 The school has sustained its effective use of themes, which often cross several subjects, to provide meaningful contexts for pupils from Years 1 to 6 to acquire the subject knowledge and skills identified in the National Curriculum and in the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. A very good example was the project for Year 4 and 5 pupils on safety in the home. The information books they produced drew on work in science as well as literacy, numeracy, art and design, design and technology, ICT and history.
- 45 Curriculum planning is regularly monitored by the headteacher to ensure consistency with and development of agreed topics. The co-ordinators have also successfully updated subject policies and integrated national exemplar schemes of work with school elements, such as visits and topics that have been very effective in the past. Good examples are the visit by all junior pupils to Port Sunlight as a focus for work in geography, and the visit to Wigan Pier by the infant pupils as part of their study of the Victorians. The detailed two-year rolling programme for Key Stage 1 and four-year programme at Key Stage 2, ensure that pupils in mixed age classes do not repeat topics and that the curriculum includes all the specified content of the National Curriculum.
- 46 The school follows the frameworks of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and is also implementing the Additional Language Support and Early Literacy Support national initiatives. Well-planned and well-organised daily lessons in literacy and numeracy adhere closely to national guidance and are very effective in developing the pupils' awareness of reading, writing and number strategies. They are complemented by opportunities in other subjects for the pupils to use their skills, such as applying rules to spell mathematical terms or writing notes and accounts in science. Debates, discussions, sessions in drama and opportunities to write at length ensure the school meets all the programmes of study in English. The only weak aspect is the limited use of ICT equipment to develop speaking, listening, reading and writing skills.
- 47 The time and focus given to ICT has improved since the last inspection. Key to this has been the timetabled use by classes of the recently completed ICT suite to develop the pupils' skills and understanding of how to use different computer programs. However, the classroom computers are not being fully utilised to develop pupils' skills further, and to support their learning in other subjects, particularly in literacy and numeracy.

- 48 For a school of its size, the provision for extra activities is good when account is taken of activities that take place at lunchtime, after school and out of school. In their questionnaire returns, 20 per cent of parents indicated, either lack of knowledge, or some concern, about the programme of activities but this is unwarranted. Like many other small schools, the after-school programme is heavily weighted to music and sport and draws on the expertise of teachers, parents and others. For instance, there are practice sessions for the soccer and netball teams, rugby league coaching by Warrington Wolves and school involvement in local tournaments in swimming and athletics. Pupils can also pay to attend a French club and to have music tuition.
- 49 The curriculum is enhanced by the school's good links with the local community. Pupils visit the church regularly to take part in Christian festivals and both the vicar and the local Methodist minister take school assemblies regularly. Good links with the pre-school group, other local small schools, and the secondary school ensure that pupils and staff benefit from shared initiatives, such as ICT technical support. The school also welcomes visitors to enrich and contribute to topics. Grandparents talk about their lives in the 1930's and 1940's, and the local M.P. took part in a question and answer session with pupils.
- 50 The quality of the provision for the pupils' personal development is very good and reflects the ethos of the school. Pupils' individual needs are generally taken into account when the teachers plan the curriculum. Consideration is given to ways to extend the challenge for the higher attaining pupils and to provide support for those with special educational needs. A strong curriculum strand is the provision for personal, social and health education that includes the programme 'Pathways towards Adult life', and deals with personal and health issues, including sex education and drugs awareness. Relevant skills and knowledge have been identified and linked to other subjects. Pupils' awareness of the cross-curricular nature of this element is being developed through the onus placed on them to save work that they feel is important and representative. Their knowledge is enhanced by working with visiting experts, such as those leading the 'Citizen 2001' workshop, and two scientists from Manchester University who led work on the five senses.
- 51 Parents at the meeting with inspectors agreed that the positive social and moral attitudes and values promoted by the school echo those of home and the Christian foundation of the school. However, the very good provision for spiritual, social and moral development is tempered by gaps in the provision for cultural development which although good, remains a continuing area for improvement. The school is very effective in helping pupils to recognise, explore and understand their own culture and values but has not developed its provision to help them understand cultural diversity and the changing nature of society.
- 52 The provision for pupil's spiritual development is strong and integral to all the school does. The inspectors endorse the parents' view that the school successfully develops a climate in which their children thrive and develop positive self-esteem and respect for others. The staff encourage the pupils to develop a sense of themselves as individuals through displays such as 'Special Me!' in the reception class. Vibrant displays of pupils' and others' work, such as the mural of school life, celebrate talents and achievements and topics are used very effectively to promote a sense of wonder and interest. For instance, older junior pupils have thought about life in other times and what it would have been like to be a child then.
- 53 Assemblies provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on their feelings, beliefs and a range of issues. The headteacher made effective use of an advent calendar and candles to help pupils appreciate their Christian symbolism and the value of giving as

well as receiving. The staff expect the pupils to express their own views and promote this very successfully not only as part of daily routines but also through opportunities to appreciate and interpret literature, art, music, dance and drama. Good examples are Year 3 pupils' reflections on the concept of fear in which they liken it to "*the colour black*" and "*creepy footsteps*", and Year 4 and 5 pupils' dance interpretation of Glenn Miller's "In the mood".

- 54 Provision for moral and social development is also very good. All adults in school provide very good role models in how they socialise and converse with the pupils. This is the basis for the very good relationships throughout the school. Many opportunities are taken to emphasise the difference between right and wrong, and to explain why some behaviour in class, such as interrupting others, is unacceptable. Pupils are encouraged to think about the consequences of their actions and all classes have lists of rules that the pupils have agreed among themselves and which place high store on consideration for others. In geography and history, pupils consider moral and social issues related to the local environment and the wider world. For example, Year 6 pupils have looked at the social impact of evacuation in wartime.
- 55 The school fosters very effectively the skills of self-reliance, tolerance, co-operation and collaboration through regular group work in lessons and through allocating pupils jobs to do in class and school, such as working together to design party shoes or to supervise others. The success of the school's expectation that pupils will support one another is very evident in the harmonious mix of the different age groups at play and lunchtimes, and the pleasure of the older pupils when the younger ones take the floor in assemblies and performances. The School Council, with two elected pupils from each class, is an effective way to develop pupils' sense of being a citizen. This is reinforced by the school's involvement in local events and links with sporting, publishing and waste recycling agencies.
- 56 The school's clear place in the Hollinfare community contributes much to the good provision for pupils' cultural development. However, this tends to focus on local culture rather than provide pupils with a wider view of cultural diversity. Studies of the local area in geography and history help to develop pupils' sense of how and why the community has changed which is reinforced by visits to other places of interest. Pupils study a wide range of artists and their works, and also listen to a range of musical styles although these are predominantly from Western culture. The school nurtures pupils' musical talents through providing opportunities for them to learn to play instruments. It is less active in developing partnership with others to foster theatre, gallery and exhibition visits or to share pupils' creative and artistic work. The school's website offers the potential to develop this aspect of cultural provision. The school recognises different cultural events such as Chinese New Year but has limited resources, for example, books about other cultures and expertise to help pupils understand issues of racism and race equality.

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

- 57 The school's provision for pupils' welfare is good and is an integral part of the day-to-day life of the school. Parents rightly value highly the happy, caring atmosphere and the welcoming, friendly approach to pupils and their families. Inspection evidence confirms parents' comments that their children are well known by everyone in the school and that all staff take good care of them. Ninety eight per cent of parents who returned the questionnaire agreed that the school helps their children to become mature and responsible. This is well seen in the very good, relaxed relationships between pupils and adults, such as in the polite, good-humoured exchanges between

the kitchen staff and pupils when they buy toast or biscuits. Pupils comment that they are confident in talking to any adult if they have any problems.

- 58 The school places a strong emphasis on pupils' safety and governors and staff take a very responsible attitude towards health and safety. Their concern about road safety issues is reflected in the appointment of Year 6 pupils to promote road safety within the school. In response to parents' concerns about traffic hazards, the governors are trying to bring about changes when parents bring and collect their children and the staff are also considering revision to the timetable.
- 59 Pupils' personal safety is also well covered in lessons. For example, reception year children were reminded about the importance of looking where they were going and being careful not to bump into each other when doing physical education in the hall. Changes since the last inspection have strengthened the security of the school and the headteacher has provided detailed risk assessments for out-of-school visits. The governing body, however, is less active in ensuring that similar risk assessments are carried out for all school activities. The provision for child protection is good and meets locally agreed procedures. The headteacher has attended recent training and is fully aware of his responsibilities.
- 60 The inclusion of personal, social and health education contributes much to pupils' personal development and their awareness of concepts such as citizenship. Pupils develop self-confidence and self-esteem through the process of debate. They develop an understanding of local and national issues such as vandalism and the need for children to protect themselves but less about issues related to living in a multi-cultural society. While the pupils' profile folders are used well in some classes to record achievements and to monitor their personal development, this is not consistent throughout the school.
- 61 As noted in the last inspection, the school has effective, good strategies to promote good behaviour and to ensure that pupils understand the impact of their actions on others. From starting school, pupils are encouraged to think and consider what they do. Self-discipline is expected and gained, although there are some pupils, predominantly Year 2 boys, who find it hard to behave appropriately in class. All pupils know class and school rules and the staff ensure that they understand that bullying and other forms of oppressive behaviour are unacceptable and why this is so. A range of systems such as "Our wonders of the week", star charts, awards and certificates, is much liked and valued by pupils. Those who win awards are readily congratulated.
- 62 Effective procedures to promote, record and monitor attendance have helped to bring the school's attendance figures to above the national average. Parents are contacted on the first day of absence if no reason is given. Although the system of monitoring records weekly is providing useful information on trends in lateness and absence, it has not yet been matched to records of progress and attainment.
- 63 While there are strengths in the systems to assess pupils' attainment, as noted in the last inspection, there are also areas for improvement especially in relation to using information to inform curriculum planning. This is still in the early stages of development but work done in mathematics is setting a useful model. Here, an analysis of pupils' weaknesses in their responses to the 2001 national tests has led to changes in emphasis in teaching and the curriculum.
- 64 The procedures for the assessment of pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory and meet statutory requirements. Effective systems to record the pupils'

progress begin in the reception year where the teacher is making good use of photographs, work and personal notes to comment on the children's progress in the Foundation Stage. Not enough has been done, however, to use the information from the tests done in the first term in school to assess each child's level of development in each of the six areas of learning and to link this to curriculum planning. The children have been grouped by attainment for literacy and numeracy but in other areas, such as personal, social and emotional development, too much is often expected of those children who are not as mature as others. Opportunities are being missed to use the stepping-stones of development given in national guidance to set differing expectations.

- 65 This typifies the weakness in the assessment procedures throughout the school. Although teachers keep their own records of pupils' attainment in most subjects, there is no agreed system to provide a consistent, comprehensive record of individual pupils' progress in acquiring knowledge, understanding and skills. For example, in ICT the teachers have only their own checklist to indicate what pupils can do. Class teachers know their pupils well but they, and subject co-ordinators, have too little secure evidence to pinpoint what needs to be done to improve pupils' learning. This sometimes results in activities not being well enough matched to the learning needs of all pupils. While most work in pupils' books is marked, the good quality evaluative comments to pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 on where they have been successful and what they need to do to improve, are less evident in other classes. Few teachers refer to, or set, individual targets with time limits.
- 66 The teachers augment the statutory national tests with optional, standardised tests to assess pupils' attainment in English and mathematics in Years 3, 4 and 5. This gives the school good information on pupils' progress year to year and helps to identify those pupils who would benefit from Early and Additional Literacy Support, Year 6 booster classes and revision groups. The school uses the information to set targets for each year group in English and mathematics and records how much pupils have learnt from work in science and sometimes in other subjects such as history and geography. However, the large amount of ready data is not being analysed sufficiently well to allow the school to track over time the achievement of individuals and groups, such as those who join the school after the reception year. This lessens the school's effectiveness in evaluating its success in boosting pupils' achievement and identifying strengths, weaknesses and other key factors. The school has yet to evaluate the effectiveness and value of a procedure recently introduced to monitor individual's progress from Year 2 to Year 6.
- 67 The school follows recommended guidance on the identification and provision for pupils with special educational needs. The special needs register is regularly updated and pupils' progress in meeting the targets in their individual education plans is monitored through teachers' own records, regular reviews, evaluations and liaison with outside agencies. The very detailed records and observational notes of significant events kept by the reception year staff are evidence of good practice. The school provides additional adult support for pupils with particular needs, but inspection evidence indicates that more support is needed to ensure that the class of Year 2 pupils makes optimal progress in all lessons.
- 68 The school has no particular systems to support pupils who have English as an additional language other than general support from teachers and pupils. This has been effective in helping two pupils to develop their skills in speaking English. The younger pupil also benefits from weekly sessions with a specialist teacher. On occasions, in lessons with their class, there was not enough visual support or

additional explanation to ensure that both pupils understood fully word meanings or knew clearly what they had to do.

- 69 A recent useful assessment initiative is the register to identify gifted and talented pupils. However, the lack of precise criteria, such as those in national guidance, means there is inconsistency in the identification of such pupils and in the effectiveness of planning appropriate provision.

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

- 70 Since the last inspection, the school has sustained its good links with parents who are very supportive. This is well seen in the parental response to the inspection – 18 attended the meeting with inspectors and 51 per cent returned the questionnaire. A significant number made additional comments.
- 71 Nearly all parents said that their children enjoy school and are expected to work hard. Parents agree the teaching is good and that the school helps their children to become mature in their attitudes. The highest percentage of strong agreement (84) was that parents are comfortable approaching the school. Parents commented that they find the school friendly, welcoming and very approachable. During the inspection, many parents came into school to discuss matters and there was often much sharing of general news about the school and also the community. A small number of parents expressed concerns about the range of activities provided outside lessons and also about how well they are kept informed about how their children are getting on. The inspectors endorse the parents' positive views but feel parents' concerns are unwarranted. The school provides a good range of additional activities and good information for all parents with some very good opportunities for them to be actively involved in their children's learning.
- 72 Parents at the meeting commented how the school is very much part of the community and how *"there is a lot going on during the year"*. There is good support from parents for the social and fund raising activities organised by the parents' association as well as regular offers to help in school and at events. The parents highlighted how the school's "family feel", warm welcome and happy atmosphere counted much towards their choice of St Helen's for their children.
- 73 Good liaison with a local Pre-school group and their involvement in some school celebrations ensures that links with parents are well established before their children start at St. Helen's school. The practice of informal discussions at the end of the day with the reception class teacher sets the tone for other year groups and supports the partnership with parents very well. The 'open door' policy works very effectively through visits, reading records and homework books. Parents' active involvement in their children's learning at home contributes to the good standards they achieve, especially in reading, spelling and topic work. Regular newsletters keep parents up-to-date with events and issues. Parents also receive good information about what their children will learn, their targets for each term and how they can develop topic work at home or in school. Parents and grandparents support a range of activities including cooking, sewing, hearing pupils read and helping with science activities.
- 74 Parents value the detail in the end-of-year written reports as they give useful information about their children's achievements and guidance on what they should do to improve. Not all the reports, however, give parents enough indication of how their children are doing for their age.



- 75 The school works very closely with the parents of pupils who have English as an additional language and those pupils with special educational needs by involving them in the review of their children's learning. This often also involves discussion with visiting specialists.
- 76 The school has good procedures to consult parents about school issues and curriculum developments. For example, parents have been asked to give their views on the use of the Internet as part of ICT lessons and general computer use. Parents were also consulted about the terms of the home/school agreement.

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

- 77 The overall quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The good leadership of the headteacher unites the school and sets a clear way forward. Governors, headteacher and subject co-ordinators have worked successfully over the last year to update school policies and to introduce systems to help the school evaluate its effectiveness. However, they recognise that gaps in management expertise, especially in the work of the subject co-ordinators, are hindering the commitment and enthusiasm of all to raise standards further. Current professional development, mentoring and guidance from LEA advisers and a Beacon school, are all providing valuable support in plugging the gaps and developing the knowledge and awareness of all staff, especially in what needs to be done to move the school forward.
- 78 The gaps in management expertise, and apparent change in the quality of leadership and management since the last inspection, are explained by the recent significant changes in the management and staffing structure of the school. There is considerable potential for strong school management. Four of the seven teachers have been appointed since 1997 and include several with minimal subject management experience but who are benefiting from mentoring and guidance from others. The previous report highlighted the under-use of the deputy headteacher in management terms, and his appointment in 2000 as headteacher – and the subsequent appointment of the deputy headteacher - from within the school has resulted in a steep learning curve for the senior managers in dealing with all aspects of school leadership and management. The impact of the headteacher's conscientious, thoughtful approach and his awareness of the need to keep up with national trends are well seen in the successful introduction of Performance Management, the strong team spirit in the school and the good level of co-operation with the governing body.
- 79 The school has made good improvement since the last inspection. It has sustained the strengths and gained some new ones, such as good standards in ICT, as well as dealt successfully in large part with the four key issues. As given in the key issues, the action has strengthened the work and effectiveness of the governing body although there are still areas for development, especially in the quality of the evaluation of the school's performance, the quality of teaching and learning and its impact on standards. This also typifies the work of the subject co-ordinators and senior managers.
- 80 Many of the governors, including the chair, are relatively new but all are very supportive and have a good awareness of the school from regular visits. There is effective delegation of responsibilities to committees and statutory requirements are met. Governors consult parents and staff informally and through questionnaires, and also the pupils through the School Council, as they are keen to provide the best for pupils. To this end, they place high emphasis on, and are effective in keeping the

accommodation in good decorative order and the extensive school site well maintained. The classrooms vary in size and are on different levels limiting access for any pupil in a wheelchair, but all are adequate for current classes. Governors have plans for an extension to provide better office and support facilities as well as a more spacious junior library. The latter was part of a key issue from the 1997 inspection and remains a concern, not because of its size and situation but because it is little used and is poorly organised to promote pupils' library skills.

- 81 Building improvements have provided an infant library, ICT suite and good accommodation for the reception children who have a large room with access to a secure outdoor area. Two disadvantages are that the children have to walk through the ICT suite to go to the toilets and cloakroom, and the height of the classroom sink makes it impractical for the children's use. School grounds improvements have extended the range of amenities and widened teaching and learning opportunities in science, physical education and geography.
- 82 Governors have made good use of grants to support this work but are not as efficient in determining whether the outcomes have been as effective as they intended. A good example is the computer suite. While the use of the suite is helping to ensure that all pupils develop good ICT knowledge and skills, there are aspects of inefficiency as the suite is often unused in the mornings due to the timetabling of literacy and numeracy hours. Added to this, classroom computers are frequently idle. This hinders the application and development of pupils' ICT skills and their achievement. Similarly, during the inspection, the reception class children made little use of the outdoors and available resources, such as the wheeled toys.
- 83 Although the introduction of the Foundation Stage has been well managed, the four daily work sessions are resulting in an unnecessary chunking of time for subjects similar to the Key Stage 1 and 2 timetable. This does not reflect national guidance for children of this age. Chances are missed to use available adults to create smaller groups with tasks more closely matched to the children's stage of development. In all classes, playtimes were eroded when lessons overran. In some cases, playtime was an intrusion for junior pupils who wanted to carry on working. As a result of inspection evidence, the school is already considering timetable changes.
- 84 The school has retained the good quantity and quality of learning resources noted in the last inspection. New purchases and the replacement of worn equipment ensure the school meets the needs of the National Curriculum. The good use of book baskets is an effective way to interest the pupils in reading. The new infant library, which makes very good use of a defunct storage area, has a good selection of books paid for largely by funds raised by parents. Co-ordinators have already identified gaps in resources for history and ICT that do not limit pupils' learning unduly but which are needed to ensure fuller coverage of National Curriculum programmes of study.
- 85 Since the last inspection, the governing body has used appropriate grants to provide three infant classes. This has kept class sizes low although the year group that benefits most is Year 1 where there are 16 pupils. The governors have not considered sufficiently the outcomes they might reasonably expect from sustaining such a small class or how to determine the additional value gained. Governors are more conscious of the need to seek best value in goods and services through bids and tenders.
- 86 Overall financial planning and monitoring are sound. The school development plan includes costs and governors receive regular financial statements. Day-to-day

finances are carefully managed and the school makes effective use of the services of a budget officer from the LEA to monitor and indicate spending patterns. The school receives a slightly higher than average amount per pupil because of different national grants but also has substantial funds accrued from under-spending in previous years. Governors have considered possible options and are drawing on funds to maintain six classes and to provide additional classroom support this year and next. Even so, the surplus is far higher than in most schools. Inspection evidence indicates that not enough has been done to ensure that the needs of current pupils are met fully. For instance, in Year 2, not all pupils learn as well as they should in all lessons because a few boys disrupt their own and others' learning. When another adult was present, such disruption was less evident.

- 87 Governors already add to the allocated funds in the school budget for pupils with special educational needs in order to provide classroom support. The quality of this is good especially in literacy and numeracy sessions. The special educational needs co-ordinator gains an overview of pupils' progress in meeting their targets from information given by classteachers. All documentation is very well organised and there is good liaison with the designated governor. Nevertheless, as the co-ordinator does not monitor classroom provision, she and governors have little information on how well the provision follows the recommended strategies and content in pupils' individual education plans or its effectiveness in boosting pupils' achievement.
- 88 The appointment of a part-time music teacher has resolved successfully the weakness in music expertise identified in the last report. Recent appointments have also strengthened teaching expertise in ICT and mathematics. A common area for improvement in these and other subjects, is the use of monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning across the school to identify what needs to be done to improve the quality of provision and to raise standards. The co-ordinators have a good grasp of standards in their own class and key stage but are less secure in giving the reasons for standards being as they are in each year group. Co-ordinators have yet to agree common procedures and criteria to guide them in their evaluation of pupils' learning.
- 89 The recent work in mathematics to analyse test data and to identify the implications for teaching and learning sets a good model for other subjects. Similarly, the work done last year in literacy has highlighted steps to improve the quality of provision. Writing has rightly been identified as a priority for improvement this year, but the action plan includes little to show precisely how the school intends to raise standards in writing, especially at the end of Year 2 or how progress will be regularly evaluated.
- 90 The headteacher is making good use of local and national comparative data to compare the performance of St Helen's with other schools in national tests, and also to assess additional value from teaching and provision in the three key stages. This is helping to highlight where standards are not high enough. The school is tracking pupils' progress year to year and beginning to look at trends, such as the attainment of boys and girls. It is not as effective in looking at factors, such as the impact of pupils leaving and joining different year groups. For example, there has been a 33 per cent turnover in Year 5 since September 2000 and this has a significant impact on target setting and progress value indicators. The compilation of a register of gifted and talented pupils, and the agreement of a policy for inclusive education, are very recent initiatives that offer the potential for the school to look more critically at the quality of its provision for each pupil.
- 91 The headteacher is very effective in making all who work in the school feel valued and involved in the school's future. He has delegated much of the routine work to the

two administrative assistants who are making good use of computerised finance and office systems. The school runs very smoothly as all teaching and support staff work as a team. It is also very successful in meeting its mission statement especially in its *“aim for high standards in all we do and value each child as an individual”*. This is an integral part of how the school functions and is well seen in the high level of industry and commitment of the staff, their wish to improve practice and performance, and parents’ positive views about their children’s personal progress. The drive to raise standards further is reflected in the school development plan for the next three years. The plan identifies appropriate priorities in ICT, science and mathematics but, other than in ICT, it is not clear from the subject action plans exactly how the priorities will be met. Similarly, the plan does not give governors clear, measurable targets to help them to determine the success of the action taken in raising standards.

- 92 The school gives good value for money. Given the average attainment on entry, the pupils achieve well and standards are good. This is because the quality of education is good and there is strong leadership that sets the tone not only in work but also in pupils’ behaviour and conduct towards others. Parents justifiably value the school’s place at the heart of the community.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

93 To raise standards further and continue the programme of school improvement, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

(1) ensure that pupils are given opportunities to use and apply their ICT knowledge and skills as part of their learning in all subjects by making best use of ICT equipment;  
(paragraphs 17, 39, 46, 47, 126, 130, 138, 146, 156, 160, 170)

(2) improve the quality of monitoring and evaluation of the school's work by

- clarifying the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of governors, managers and subject co-ordinators so that all are aware of their part in the process;
- implementing consistent systems to collect, analyse and evaluate performance data and evidence so that governors, managers and subject co-ordinators gain a clear, informed picture of what the school does well, where it needs to improve and how this may be done;
- including challenging, measurable targets for improvement in the school development plan.

(paragraphs 9, 37, 66, 77, 79, 82, 85-91, 121, 131, 146, 148, 156, 162, 167, 174, 186)

(3) improve the provision for pupils' cultural development by strengthening existing curriculum strands, such as music, literature and art, and by providing more experiences for staff and pupils to heighten their understanding of the attitudes, values and traditions of other cultures.  
(paragraphs 51, 56, 60)

(4) Implement a whole school assessment system so that the staff know how well each pupil is progressing, especially in the different elements of English, mathematics, science and ICT, and use the information to identify what pupils need to learn next.  
(paragraphs 31, 37, 64, 65, 69, 97, 103, 109, 121, 130, 146, 162, 174, 186)

In addition to the key issues, the governors may wish to include in their action plan the following minor issues:

- the development of pupils' library skills (paragraphs 15, 80, 126)
- the use of the outdoors by the reception class (paragraphs 42, 82, 97)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed

46

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

25

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	5	29	10	2	0	0
Percentage	0	11	63	22	4	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	N/A	147
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A	13

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR-Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	N/A	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	N/A	33

#### English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.1
National comparative data	5.6

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	13	8	21

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	13	13
	Girls	8	8	8
	Total	20	21	21
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	95(100)	100(100)	100(95)
	National	84(83)	86(84)	91(90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	13	13
	Girls	8	8	8
	Total	21	21	21
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100(100)	100(95)	100(100)
	National	85(84)	89(88)	89(88)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	16	11	27

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	16	16	16
	Girls	10	8	10
	Total	26	24	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	96(75)	89(63)	96(94)
	National	75(75)	71(72)	87(85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	15	16	16
	Girls	8	7	8
	Total	23	23	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	85(81)	85(81)	89(100)
	National	72(70)	74(72)	82(79)

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

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

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	144
Any other minority ethnic group	2

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

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

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

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

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	7.15
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.6
Average class size	24.5

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

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	98

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	N/A
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	N/A
Total number of education support staff	N/A
Total aggregate hours worked per week	N/A
Number of pupils per FTE adult	N/A

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000/01
	£
Total income	310,691
Total expenditure	313,958
Expenditure per pupil	2,196
Balance brought forward from previous year	59,447
Balance carried forward to next year	56,179

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3.15
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*



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

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	143
Number of questionnaires returned	74

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	72	27	1	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	69	26	4	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	57	36	3	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	54	36	5	3	1
The teaching is good.	70	26	0	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	55	31	9	1	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	84	14	3	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	78	18	4	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	59	31	9	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	74	20	5	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	68	30	1	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	45	36	14	1	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**

- 94 The satisfactory quality of the provision for the youngest children has been sustained since the last inspection when they were in a class with Year 1 pupils. The current reception class of 27 children started school in September and many have attended a local pre-school group.
- 95 When the children start school, their attainment varies but overall is as expected for their age in all six areas of learning. A significant number of children, boys and girls, have good general knowledge and well developed social skills but there is also a similar number who are at an earlier stage of development. Most have little difficulty in communicating with others and many have a wide vocabulary. One child has been identified as having special educational needs and the school is working with outside agencies to provide appropriate support.
- 96 The children's achievement is at least satisfactory because of the overall good quality of teaching, especially in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. The teacher and nursery nurse work well as a team and inspection evidence shows that most of the children are on track to attain the standard expected for their age in all six areas of learning by the end of the reception year. Most are on track to do better than this in personal, social and emotional development. A scrutiny of work from last year shows that the higher attaining children's achievement is satisfactory. They attain above expectations especially in reading, writing, number and scientific aspects of knowledge and understanding of the world where they are working towards Level 1 of the National Curriculum.
- 97 Three areas for improvement lie in the need for more critical use of assessment information to plan different starting points and outcomes for the children, even more use of the outdoors, and increased provision of child-chosen activities to allow the children time and opportunity to practise the skills introduced in adult-directed sessions. These aspects weaken the overall provision which nevertheless has strengths in developing the children's confidence and self esteem, and in the use of practical experiences to promote skills across the six areas of learning.

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

- 98 The children make quick progress in this area of learning as the teacher works hard to ensure they meet her very high expectations of them to follow class rules and routines, such as putting up their hands to speak or wearing an apron when at the water tray. Many children, boys and girls, already show they have attained the standard expected particularly in the early learning goals for dispositions, attitudes, self-confidence, behaviour and self-care.
- 99 The children are confident as they know the routines and they show a good level of maturity in getting what they need and tidying things away with few reminders. They are happy to come to school and their parents commented on how well they had settled and were enjoying learning. The teacher also commented on the good progress made since the start of term in the way the boys, who outnumber the girls by two to one, are more conforming and show a higher level of self-discipline. The children understand what is right and wrong and most show a good degree of tolerance of those children who find it hard to sit still for long or are sometimes

clumsy as they move around. However, a few become a little anxious when the adults are a little too strict.

- 100 The children are curious about what is going to happen and are keen to learn. They much enjoy activities such as counting with actions, singing, and sharing stories particularly when they get to hold items such as the bears and clock from the "Peace at last" story sack. Although many are confident to offer their opinions when the class is gathered together, others are more reticent and chances are missed to use available adults to build the children's confidence in smaller group discussions. When this happens, as in one role-play session, the children readily work with the adult and offer their ideas.
- 101 A strength of the provision is the chances for the children to develop their skills in working with others. Four children helped each other to follow the rules of a money game and a boy and a girl worked very co-operatively to wash and dry dishes in the 'café'. They often show a high level of involvement. When matching initial letters to relevant pictures, four children persevered in their cutting and were oblivious to what was going on around them. They organised the resources with comments like "*We'll share this glue right? You first, then me*" and concentrated hard on sticking things down neatly.

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

- 102 The children's learning is good as the quality of teaching and provision is good, particularly in reading. Most children attain the standard expected by the end of the reception year and the higher attaining ones are working towards Level 1 of the National Curriculum in speaking, listening, reading and writing. Chances are missed however, for the adults to talk about the purposes and format of writing as part of what they do and to provide daily reading and writing challenges to reinforce and develop the children's awareness of stories and themes. For example, the children rarely look at books when they sit on the carpet.
- 103 Most of the children have good language skills. They chat easily and listen attentively to others. When a group acted out a story, the others listened carefully and quietly. Their good general knowledge and facility with words enhances their understanding and appreciation of stories. Through daily well structured class and group literacy sessions, the children have made good progress in sharing books, recognising words in the first reading books and learning to recognise and write letters and words. Their learning has been enhanced by the willingness of their parents to help them at home in learning words and reading books. However, some children are being 'pushed' into reading books too early. Too many are developing a stilted reading style as they rely on memory, read word by word and sound out words rather than use clues in the pictures and text. This partly reflects the teacher's under-use of information about each child's stage of development to decide the next step in learning.
- 104 The children like stories and often talk excitedly about them. In a good lesson, the teacher helped the children to retell a story. By drawing their attention to the print, she reinforced their awareness that capital letters were used to indicate the bear's snoring as well as first words in sentences. The children were keen to pick out words and letters they knew. Higher attaining children knew that an exclamation mark told the reader "to speak loudly".
- 105 The children are making satisfactory progress in writing. They learn to recognise and write their name and simple words. A scrutiny of work from last year shows the

higher attaining children learn to write independently in sentences by the end of the reception year. They are already having a go at writing their own news. All the children are learning how to form letters correctly and to use their letter knowledge to spell simple words. Effective use is made of ongoing activities to promote writing. For example, the children write orders and telephone messages in their play in the 'café' and write messages for teddy. Good use is made of computer programs and tapes to help the children identify letters, sounds and listen to songs, rhymes and stories.

### **Mathematical development**

- 106 As a result of good teaching in mathematics lessons, the children are achieving well in learning to count and calculate. Most are on their way to meeting the early learning goals in this area and the higher attaining children towards Level 1 of the National Curriculum. By the end of the reception year, many are confident in number to 20 and are beginning to record number sums formally.
- 107 The teacher prepares good resources for mathematics sessions and places appropriate emphasis on helping the children to explain their thinking. As a result, the children are learning about number, money, shape and pattern from meaningful practical experiences such as buying food in the 'café', action rhymes, games and tasks such as making a cube from interlocking blocks. Chances are missed to develop the children's mathematical thinking outdoors and as part of work planned for other areas of learning. The children know basic shapes and correctly follow repeating patterns with two or three colours. Tasks set out on cupboard tops, such as "Sort out the shapes before the egg timer runs out", are a good extension of class activities but no child was seen to take up the challenge during the inspection.
- 108 The children confidently chant numbers to 10 forwards and backwards. A growing number manage to 20 with adult guidance and many match numbers and items to five correctly, often recounting to check. Many are still uncertain of number as an amount and this was evident when the children were introduced to coins. While some suggested that the largest coin was worth the most, only a few realised that it was the five pence coin in this case as "five is the biggest number".
- 109 The teacher has developed a useful planning sheet but it is not clear how the work and expectations differ for the children at different stages in each of the elements of mathematics. Although the planning shows that the children experience a wide mathematical curriculum in line with national guidance, there is less to indicate progressive and systematic challenge for the lower attaining as well as the higher attaining children.

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

- 110 The focus on teacher-directed sessions in geography, history, science and design and technology fragments unnecessarily the otherwise strong coverage and satisfactory teaching in this area of learning. The teacher is often ambitious in her expectations of the children but they achieve well as they are quick to make connections between new information and what they already know and are curious to find out about new things. Attractive displays record previous work, such as the investigation of different textures and the photographs of what the children saw on their walk round the village, but there is little to prompt the children's curiosity to observe, explore and find out for themselves.

- 111 The teacher has good ideas to spark the children's interest and over the year the children take part in a good range of activities, in and out of the classroom. For example, the children investigated which papers were best to write on and built up a mini museum of old household items. Such experiences help them to develop a good awareness of time, place and change. The children also develop skills in looking at evidence and organising their ideas. They learn to use tools and techniques to join materials but the adults tend to direct them rather than allow them to learn from trying things for themselves. When the children designed a space rocket they made a simple plan and decided which materials they would use and how they would stick them together. Several children showed good skills in assembling houses using different construction materials. In evaluating their product they used relevant terms such as "semi-detached" learnt previously. Most of the children confidently use the computer mouse and tape recorder but have not yet learnt how to use key functions such as rewind or eject.
- 112 In the adult-led sessions, the adults tended to stick to their own agenda rather than develop the children's ideas and allow them to show the full extent of what they knew. For example, the children knew that sponges soaked up water and suggested that the largest sponge would hold the most water but they were not given the chance to find out for themselves or to repeat the "test". Similarly, the teacher's focus on predicting, testing and looking at the results, took some of the gloss away from finding suitable materials to keep 'Teddy' dry on a wet day as the children had too little time to assimilate what was happening.

### **Physical development**

- 113 The children progress well in learning to use and move their bodies and many have already met the standard expected by the end of the reception age especially in the early learning goals for movement and sense of space. Most are well co-ordinated for their age and show maturity, skill and good control in balancing and stepping between people as they move out of a group. In a lesson in the hall, they carefully looked where they were going to avoid bumping into others. While all ran and moved easily during a run-and-catch game, few could skip. They know that exercise makes their heart beat faster and that they need to warm up before vigorous exercise.
- 114 Photographs from earlier outdoor sessions and evidence from a lesson seen indicate the steady progress made by the children in acquiring skills in controlling wheeled toys and in throwing, catching and kicking balls. In the lesson, good teaching and a high level of keenness from the children enabled them to learn to dribble a ball and control it with a hockey stick. The children have learnt well to use skipping ropes, quoits and hoops.
- 115 However, their skills in managing small hand and finger movements such as cutting and forming numbers and letters are not as good; many are learning how to manipulate scissors and to hold different tools so that they achieve what they want. The way that many competently handle small pieces of construction kits and jigsaws indicates they are on course to meet the standard required by the end of the reception year.

### **Creative development**

- 116 The quality and range of the provision are satisfactory. While there are strengths, such as the teaching of specific music and art skills and techniques, there are weaker areas such as the limited opportunities for the children to explore and develop their ideas and to rehearse activities done previously. Art and craft materials are brought

out as needed for specific activities. This constrains the children's selection of what they want to use and limits their achievement although most are on line to meet the expected standard by the end of the reception year.

- 117 Over time, the children develop drawing, painting and printing skills. They are taught how to mix colours and to use different media such as powder paint and dough. The teacher often works alongside a small group to encourage their comments on their own work and to help them develop their ideas. This was very effective in improving two children's skills in holding brushes, strengthening colours and filling in gaps as they painted houses in the style of Paul Klee. However, this practice means that it takes a long time for all the children to have their turn.
- 118 As well as singing in class, the children have music lessons with the specialist teacher when they learn a range of different songs, play percussion instruments and compose their own pieces.
- 119 The children use their imagination in their play in the 'café'. They create their own scenarios drawing on their own experiences and using the different props.

## ENGLISH

- 120 Standards in speaking, listening, reading and writing are above average at the end of both Years 2 and 6. The good standards judged in the last inspection have been sustained because of several reasons. Firstly, the school places great emphasis on English as a subject in its own right and as part of the whole curriculum so there are good links between the work done in the literacy hour and work in other subjects. For example, junior pupils wrote detailed accounts of their visit to Port Sunlight identifying differences in the environment compared with Hollinfare. Secondly, as in the last inspection, the teaching is good and there are often very good aspects in lessons. Reading and writing skills are well taught and reinforced and pupils' learn in a stimulating, often exciting, literacy environment. As a result, all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, achieve well.
- 121 Standards in reading are higher than in writing. This confirms the school's results in the 2001 national tests when in reading, nearly half of the Year 2 and 6 pupils attained the level expected of pupils two years older. In writing, although all Year 2 pupils attained Level 2 as expected for their age, no pupil did better. This was well below the national average and the school is aware of the need to rectify particularly the under achievement of the higher attaining pupils. However, not enough has been done to identify exactly what pupils need to be taught to improve their attainment, such as the development of joined handwriting. The majority of Year 2 pupils are in line to attain the expected Level 2, but the higher attaining pupils are not set sufficiently challenging targets nor always expected to produce a good amount of work to ensure that they secure Level 3.
- 122 The overall good reading and writing standards owe much to the pupils' good language skills. Pupils' listening and speaking skills are above those expected for their age. Pupils are given good opportunities to share their ideas and opinions in class discussions and small groups. A good example of this was when Year 1 pupils developed their ideas of how to wrap up a Christmas present. With the teacher's help, they moved from vague instructions to being much more precise. By the end of the session they were using appropriate language such as "*Wrap the paper round, fold the ends and cut some tape.*" Year 2 pupils confidently express their ideas but do not all listen to each other, especially the boys when they are in a large group. As

several crave attention and take much of the teacher's time, this often means that the more quiet pupils are not asked for their opinions or are interrupted by those not prepared to wait their turn to speak.

- 123 At both key stages, the teachers use good questioning skills to engage the pupils' attention, to check what they have learned and to challenge their thinking. They expect the pupils to use relevant technical language to explain what they know in literacy as well as other subjects. Through her own use of specific terms, the teacher prompted her Year 4 and 5 pupils to use phrases such as "high frequency words" when explaining spelling rules. Year 6 pupils listen very attentively and appreciatively in assemblies, class and group discussions. They are articulate and fluent conversationalists who show an interest in others' comments. Their answers often show a good understanding of the main points of a discussion and an ability to realise nuance and inference. For example, they talked about a character having 'an unstable personality' and explained concisely the main features of ethical reporting.
- 124 Inspection evidence shows that the school is well placed to attain higher standards in the 2002 national reading tests for Years 2 and 6 compared with this year. This is because basic reading skills are taught systematically and the pupils enjoy reading. They are pleased with their own progress and keen to take books home. Parents support their children in learning new words and in hearing them practice their reading. Initial reading skills in recognising words are taught well. Year 1 pupils are confident in using pictures, letter sounds and the context to work out unfamiliar words.
- 125 In the literacy hour, the teachers reinforce the pupils' knowledge of letter sounds through good reference to words in stories. For instance, Year 2 pupils offered several other words containing "ou" when discussing words in the title "The lighthouse keeper's lunch". Most Year 2 pupils read with good expression and talk about what is happening in a story. They know to use the contents and index pages to help them find information in non-fiction books and the more advanced readers are beginning to use their alphabet knowledge and reading skills to locate information. They have a very positive attitude to reading and are confident when asked to read aloud or, for example, read the instructions on a worksheet in science.
- 126 Pupils continue to make good progress in the junior classes as they read a wide range of fiction and non-fiction books and regularly borrow books from class libraries. Current Year 6 favourites include Harry Potter books and stories by Jacqueline Wilson. When reading aloud, most pupils read accurately and often with fluency and expression. As most Year 6 pupils tackle non-fiction confidently and know how to use scanning and skimming skills to locate information, they cope very well with technical texts in other subjects. One weakness, however, is pupils' poorly developed skills in using a library. Most pupils are unfamiliar with the Dewey classification system. When asked, pupils said they searched each shelf to find the book they needed. Too little has been done to deal with this weakness also identified in the last inspection. The school has set up a small attractive library for pupils in Years 1 and 2 and has plans to create a bigger library area for the junior pupils but has not done enough since 1997 to ensure pupils know how to find books in a library and how to use a library, CD ROMS and the Internet as information sources.
- 127 The coherent, consistent school approach to teaching writing results in a wide range of good quality writing. Pupils' imaginative writing is as good as their factual writing. For example, Year 2 pupils have retold the story of "Threadbear" using good phrases and vocabulary and produced sensitive accounts of a day in the life of a Nicaraguan child.

- 128 Spelling standards are good as pupils are explicitly taught spelling rules and strategies. As a result, Year 6 pupils spontaneously use dictionaries and apply spelling knowledge. Parents commented on the regular spelling homework and tests. For their age, almost all pupils attain sound skills in grammar and punctuation and apply them in a wide range of writing situations across the curriculum so that their work in other subjects shows increasing accuracy in spelling and use of English. For example, Year 5 pupils' work shows their secure understanding of double negatives and Year 6 pupils' skill in readily moving from the use of the first to third person when retelling a story.
- 129 The teachers place good emphasis on teaching pupils how to draft their work. Pupils in Years 4 and 5 made good progress in revising their instructions as the teacher helped them to think about the language of sequence and presentation devices such as bullet points.
- 130 Although the teaching often has very good elements, several features explain why it is good overall.
- all the teachers expect the pupils to achieve good standards. They value the pupils' work by displaying it attractively and by encouraging them to produce their own books that then become reading material for others. However, although pupils are taught handwriting, this is the least well-developed aspect of pupils' writing. Most Year 6 pupils are developing a satisfactory joined-up style but there was little evidence of high quality, mature fluent handwriting in their books or on display.
  - While the classroom computers were used in a few literacy lessons, there is little to show that this is a regular occurrence in every class. A scrutiny of pupils' books showed little work using ICT equipment.
  - The teachers produce detailed planning and follow the guidance of the National Literacy Strategy. However, there is less evidence of assessment information being used to set clear, specific targets for individuals and for groups that are then reflected in teachers' short-term plans.
  - Teachers evaluate their teaching and pupils' learning but do not always make amendments to the content as the lesson progresses. In an unsatisfactory lesson, Year 2 pupils did not make sufficient progress as many found the writing task too difficult to do on their own.
- 131 The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The subject co-ordinator has a clear commitment to raising standards and sets a good model of teaching. She has very good subject knowledge and her room provides very good literacy support as there is much to remind pupils about key reading and writing information. However, the co-ordinator has too little information about other teachers' lesson planning, the impact of their teaching and the outcomes of pupils' learning to provide her with an overview of strengths and weaknesses in the standards and quality of provision.

## **MATHEMATICS**

- 132 As in the previous inspection, standards are above average. Inspection evidence indicates that most Year 2 pupils are already attaining the level expected for their age. Given the good progress seen in lessons, standards are set to rise further and at least equal the school's results in the 2001 national tests when all pupils attained Level 2 and just under half attained Level 3.



- 133 Similarly, Year 6 pupils' good achievement is raising standards. As the majority are already attaining the level expected for their age, especially in number, the school is well placed to exceed its target of 79 per cent Level 4 attainment in the 2002 national tests. In 2001, the school far exceeded its target with standards well above the average of all and like schools. Although the boys did better than the girls, this year many girls are doing well and in lessons, often show quick thinking in solving number problems.
- 134 As noted in the previous inspection, the pupils achieve particularly well in number. This is because of good systematic teaching of number facts, rules and procedures. The pupils learn how to set out their work and the quality of presentation in pupils' books is good. By the age of seven, most pupils count to and understand number value to 100. Higher attaining pupils are secure in adding two numbers and use their knowledge of number in solving problems. For example, they know to partition 84 into 80 and 4 as an aid to adding on another number. In a lesson seen, Year 2 pupils made good progress in sorting and classifying numbers because the teacher involved all the pupils at their own level to reinforce their understanding and use of the mathematical signs for "more than" and "less than". While the higher attaining pupils needed little help to order and explain their choice of numbers in tables of multiples and non-multiples of 10, lower attaining pupils recognised numbers as odd or even but needed some adult help to decide where they should go in the tables.
- 135 An improvement since the last inspection is that such problem solving activities are a common feature of lessons and group work for all year groups. This adds to the pupils' confidence in using number so that by Year 6, most pupils have a good understanding of number and readily apply their knowledge in work in other subjects such as data handling in science. They confidently add, subtract, multiply and divide mentally and on paper numbers to thousands. They are usually quick to learn new procedures such as rounding up and down. For example, Year 4 and 5 pupils were taught how to round to the nearest 10 and 100, such as rounding 65 to 70 in the sum  $65 \times 5$ . Higher attaining Year 5 and 6 pupils, rounding up 3.46 to 3.5, were initially surprised to see that this was then rounded down to 3, but then quickly grasped why when the teacher referred them back to the original number. Such very good learning is boosting standards. However, the teachers often rely on published material rather than adapting ideas or setting their own problems.
- 136 The pupils enjoy mathematics and show a determination to succeed. Year 3 pupils concentrated hard on games designed to consolidate their understanding of time and place value. They needed minimal help to organise themselves or to ensure that all followed the rules. Such enthusiasm and good teaching is also ensuring that the pupils do well in other aspects of mathematics. Year 1 pupils were very excited to play a game of throwing a bean-bag onto a given clock time. They made good progress in recognising different hours and higher attaining pupils went on to work out times "an hour later". By Year 3, pupils use their knowledge of analogue and digital clock times to answer queries about "Gardeners' World". Similar good progress is evident in pupils' learning about shape and space. Year 2 pupils know the properties of two and three-dimensional shapes and use rulers to measure lengths in centimetres. By Year 4, pupils know how to calculate angles and find the area of shapes. There is no evidence that symmetry is an area of weakness as commented in the last inspection.
- 137 The school has successfully implemented the National Numeracy Strategy and uses the guidance to structure teachers' planning. In the lessons seen there was a good balance of mental skills and opportunities for pupils to consolidate and extend their

mathematical understanding through direct teaching and practical activities. At Key Stage 2, many of the lessons are longer than the nationally recommended 45 minutes. Occasionally the initial mental mathematics session was not taken quickly enough to sharpen pupils' intuitive thinking but the teachers used a good variety of ploys, such as number fans, games and chants to involve all the class.

- 138 Although the teachers prepare lessons conscientiously, most miss chances to use the classroom computers and other ICT equipment to extend pupils' mathematical skills. The teachers have high expectations of the pupils and this sometimes means that the lower attaining pupils, and those with special educational needs, need adult support to reassure them and help them realise what they need to do. One older pupil commented to another, "*I'm getting it but not as fast as you*" when working out the decimal equivalent of a fraction. When the teacher worked alongside him and gave a step-by-step approach, he was able to continue working on his own.
- 139 The quality of subject leadership is good. Since her appointment in 2000, the co-ordinator has been a significant force in raising standards. She has very good subject knowledge and work with an LEA advisor on analysing pupils' test results has helped to identify areas for curriculum change and teaching focus. Two relevant areas for development are the greater use of ICT to support pupils' learning and the monitoring of teaching and learning throughout the school. The system to record and assess pupils' progress is providing well-grounded information to set targets for groups and individuals.

## SCIENCE

- 140 Standards are above average at the end of Key Stage 2 and average at the end of Key stage 1. Inspection evidence shows that most Year 6 pupils are already attaining the level expected for their age and achieving well in scientific knowledge and skills. The school is well placed to achieve higher standards in the 2002 national tests than in 2001 when the school's results were average.
- 141 The school has maintained the overall good standards of teaching judged in the previous report. One improvement is the firm emphasis on developing the pupils' investigation skills. The positive impact of this was well seen in the responses of pupils in Years 5 and 6 to the problem of determining how much air was in a soil sample. They made marked progress because of very good teaching. This was typified by a structured approach. The teacher initially guided the pupils through the process of planning an investigation and used her good subject knowledge to frame challenging questions. Her constant use of "Why?" drew the pupils more and more into the discussion about solids, liquids and gases. Pairs of pupils then worked hard to decide how they could measure the amount of air in different soil samples. When the pupils carried out their experiments, their knowledge and awareness were reflected in their realistic predictions. They followed their planning, took very careful measurements and came to sound conclusions such as "*the bigger the lumps of soil, the more air spaces there are between them.*" Many pupils' responses were more typical of older pupils.
- 142 This good standard in scientific investigation is also evident in the work of the other junior classes and indicates good learning by average and higher attaining pupils. Examples of unfinished work in other pupils' books suggest that the challenge in recording their work is often too high for them. Despite this, the development of pupils' skills in how to record their findings is a second area of improvement since the last inspection. Although work from last year shows that the higher attaining pupils were often constrained by the frequent use of worksheets where they merely made

simple responses, this year's work is more varied in all classes. The work shows the development of scientific reports and the use of diagrams, charts and graphs that give good opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy and numeracy skills. The use of a table enabled pupils with special educational needs and the lower attaining Year 3 pupils to compare, contrast and record their ideas on the suitability of card to make Christmas cards with little help from an adult. Questions as part of the teachers' marking, such as "*What does this tell you about the materials you used?*" in one Year 5 pupil's book, emphasise the need for clear conclusions.

- 143 Throughout the school, the majority of pupils achieve well in lessons because the activities are well planned, are often linked to current interests, such as Christmas, and there is a good range and number of resources. As a result, all pupils like practical science and are keen to carry out investigations. Their enthusiasm is noticeable and their lively discussions contribute to the development of their speaking and listening skills as well as collaborative skills.
- 144 The strong focus on developing the pupils' observation skills begins in the reception class. In Years 1 and 2, pupils refine these skills. Year 1 pupils enthusiastically investigated the properties of different papers to help them decide which was the best for wrapping a present. Good skilful questioning by the teacher enabled all pupils to make good progress in clarifying their ideas and opinions, predicting which would be best and then testing them to find out. When experimenting with the papers, the pupils' comments reflected their learning about appearance and texture. Pupils often used relevant terms, such as in "*This one's transparent so that's no good as I can see the present.*" Similar good questioning helped Year 2 pupils to look at how some materials change when heated and how some changes are reversible. Because pupils saw what happened to jelly cubes and chocolate when they were heated and cooled, higher attaining pupils began to predict which chocolates would melt quickly and why. This attainment indicates the school is on track to sustain the good standard indicated in 2001 by the teacher's assessment of the Year 2 pupils' attainment.
- 145 Although topics are planned as a two-year cycle and pupils in Years 1 and 2 study the same area, a scrutiny of pupils' work shows it is at appropriately different levels of challenge. Similarly, the four-year cycle of topics in the junior classes meets all the requirements of the National Curriculum programmes of study in science. The topics also ensure pupils acquire a good range of scientific knowledge and develop an understanding of fair tests and experimental procedure. For example, the lesson for Year 3 pupils built on their existing knowledge of natural and man-made materials.
- 146 The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The co-ordinator is aware of the need to monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning of science to identify what needs to be done to improve consistency, quality and higher standards. Pupils in all years have had little experience of using different ICT equipment, including cameras and sensors, as part of their investigations. Assessment procedures are satisfactory in giving an overview of progress but less informative in identifying what pupils need to learn next. The portfolios of pupils' work are a useful start in helping the teachers to match the pupils' attainment to National Curriculum levels of attainment.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

- 147 A scrutiny of pupils' work shows that the high standards identified in the last report have been maintained. By the end of Years 2 and 6, standards are higher than those expected for pupils' ages. Some of the work is of an impressive standard,

particularly in the use of colour and mixing of media, and is more typical of the work of much older pupils. This indicates good progress in learning and good teaching at Key Stages 1 and 2 of skills and techniques as well as the development of the pupils' imagination and confidence in tackling small and large pieces.

- 148 The displays to show and celebrate pupils' work considerably enliven and enhance the whole learning environment. The co-ordinator sets a very high standard in the quality of display in all subjects by presenting pupils' work imaginatively and creatively. Her positive, artistic influence and good leadership can be seen throughout the school. She advises other teachers and sets a good example in assessing progress through selected samples of work. Not enough has been done to monitor the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school and to identify where standards could be improved.
- 149 Only one lesson was seen, at Key Stage 2. Other evidence was gathered from talking to the co-ordinator, teachers and pupils, a scrutiny of planning and portfolios of pupils' work. This evidence shows clearly that all pupils learn to use a very wide range of materials, tools and techniques and that often the same theme is used very effectively to highlight the pupils' developing skills and knowledge. This is enhanced by the school's good range of resources. For example, in compiling self-portraits, Year 1 pupils used pastels while Year 3 pupils used papier-mache in the style of Modigliani and Year 6 pupils mixed wax, oil and pastels in the style of Picasso and Warhol. Similarly, Year 2 pupils have designed and made a large wall collage celebrating the Chinese New Year using different papers, and textiles have been used to make landscapes and seascapes.
- 150 A strength of the curriculum is the effective way the teachers use the work of famous artists and craftspeople to inspire and enthuse pupils who respond with imagination and flair. In the lesson seen, Year 4 and 5 pupils drew on their knowledge of Klimt's use of metallic colours and inclusion of swirls and patterns to experiment for themselves with different media and to design and create their own patterns. The teacher demonstrated how she would overlay pastel sections with thick lines and blocks of contrasting and blending colours so that the pupils felt confident to develop and improve their own work. Pupils working together on a larger piece often shared comments about the quality and impact of their work. All concentrated very hard and showed a very positive attitude and willingness to learn. They took great pride in their work and appreciated the talents and skills of others.
- 151 Discussions with pupils confirm that they enjoy art and design work because of the exciting and challenging activities that are often linked with work in other subjects. For example, Year 1 pupils produced striking Rangoli patterns as part of work on shape in mathematics.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

- 152 The good standards reported in the 1997 inspection have been maintained. By the end of Years 2 and 6, pupils attain standards above those expected. The quality of teaching remains good at both key stages and resources, having been increased in range, are good. As a result, all the pupils make good progress in learning the design process and how to use a wide range of materials and techniques as part of projects, such as designing plates, making vehicles with moving parts or making mock-ups of party shoes designed for their teacher.
- 153 At both key stages, pupils learn to work with a good range of materials including paper, card, cloth and wood. Pupils learn to follow the full design process and to

evaluate their own success in solving a problem. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well because the teachers carefully target their support to challenge and help pupils. The high quality of the work on display shows the systematic development of pupils' skills in designing, making and evaluating what they do.

- 154 At Key Stage 1, pupils learn different ways to fix and stick things together, such as using paper fasteners to give a puppet moving limbs or using a running stitch to join fabric. They also develop an understanding of the steps in the design process. Year 1 pupils know that before starting something, they need to decide what they will need and how to go about it. They also learn to evaluate their work as they go along. The classteacher skilfully helped Year 1 pupils to see that they needed more practice in cutting and shaping to help them produce felt squares for a quilt. Her comments, such as *"Have you tried it this way?"* gave pupils useful pointers on how to deal with frustrating problems with scissors and patterns. In this lesson, the classroom computer was used effectively to give some pupils practice in making repeating patterns that helped them when they came to design their own. Higher attaining pupils produced imaginative work with little adult help.
- 155 The teacher's good subject knowledge and very effective questioning was the prime reason why Year 2 pupils made good progress in evaluating their work to make puppets. They showed considerable thought in commenting about the difficulties of using templates and using blunt needles. They also suggested sensible ways to deal with similar problems another time. Good teaching also ensured that Year 4 and 5 pupils regularly reviewed their shoe designs and discussed problems and solutions. As a result, the pupils improved their original designs and a wider range of styles and shapes emerged. The buzz of activity in this lesson was due to the pupils' high involvement and co-operation. All were eager to see their shoe designs in a paper version. Pupils with special needs were well supported by a parent and trainee teacher whose comments and suggestions helped to keep them focussed on the task and equally productive and successful as the others.
- 156 The co-ordinator is new to the role but is enthusiastic and has good subject knowledge. Her action plan rightly includes more use of computers and ICT equipment to support pupils' work in design and technology. She has not yet been able to monitor teaching and learning and has also to devise procedures to assess pupils' progress.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

- 157 By the ages of seven and eleven, pupils' attainment is above expectations. This indicates that the school has maintained the good standards judged in the previous inspection report. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, make good progress over time and achieve well because of good teaching and interesting topics at Key Stages 1 and 2. The school has successfully linked its own detailed scheme of work to recent national guidelines and changes in the curriculum. This provides a clear and purposeful framework for teaching and learning and takes satisfactory account of the learning needs of all groups of pupils. It also makes a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues.
- 158 An effective strand of the curriculum is the focus, at both key stages, on pupils learning skills through geographical investigations. They learn to draw and use maps as part of simple fieldwork and research. Their work is usually well presented. They also develop an understanding of location, geographical features and factors and

issues, such as pollution and conservation that affect where people live and what they do.

- 159 The school makes good use of its grounds and the local environment to spark the pupils' knowledge and interest. Year 1 pupils' map of Hollinfare includes photographs of local places of interest and, as in their own maps of their route to school, the pupils have written simple labels to identify key places such as the Post Office. Year 2 pupils build on their knowledge of location by identifying the use of local buildings and recognising simple symbols on a key. In the lesson seen, the pupils were very interested and the majority had brought from home their own maps of their route to school compiled as part of their homework. The teacher's use of map games so interested the pupils that by the end of the lesson, all were able to produce a key and translate the key symbols onto their own maps. Year 2 pupils know what they like and do not like about the area where they live. Their suggested improvements include the need for more litter bins and signs to help people find their way.
- 160 At Key Stage 2, pupils develop their skills in using maps and their knowledge of places. They learn how to compare and contrast localities such as Port Sunlight and Hollinfare and that there are certain geographical processes, such as erosion that explain geographical features. Year 3 pupils made sound progress in using the eight points of the compass to draw diagrams and write instructions. The teacher missed the opportunity to link this work with the use of a programmable floor robot and ICT programs.
- 161 In one lesson, by talking about what they saw on their visit to Port Sunlight, Year 4 and 5 pupils made good progress in understanding the differences between vandalism and pollution and the concept of conservation. Pupils concentrated hard on completing a worksheet which provided not only a good structure for their answers but also set the format for their homework about Hollinfare. By Year 6, pupils have a good understanding of location through the use of co-ordinates and grid references. They make good use of their mathematical skills to work out distances to scale and their literacy skills to write directions.
- 162 The leadership and management of geography is satisfactory. The co-ordinator monitors teachers' medium-term planning, provides support and ensures that there are sufficient resources to support teaching and learning. She has not monitored the quality of teaching and standards of pupils' work to identify where the school needs to make improvements. There is no agreed system to assess and record pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding so the co-ordinator can not track pupils' progress or ensure that the work is at an appropriate level of challenge for pupils.

## **HISTORY**

- 163 Standards are satisfactory. Pupils' attainment is in line with that expected for pupils' ages. Inspection judgements are based on the evidence of one lesson seen for Year 5 and 6 pupils, discussions with the co-ordinator, teachers and pupils, the scrutiny of teachers' planning and previous and current work of pupils. The limited work seen indicates that standards are not as good as judged in the last inspection. It is not possible to judge the quality of teaching overall but evidence indicates that it is at least satisfactory. In the lesson seen, it was good and the pupils made good progress.
- 164 As noted in the last inspection, teaching and learning in history are very closely and successfully linked with geography and good use is made of visits to places of

historical interest to bring history to life. For example, the visit to Port Sunlight enabled pupils to consider differences in housing and the influence of Victorian philanthropists. Pupils' work, displays in school and pupils' and parents' comments all demonstrate how successfully this helps all pupils to develop a good sense of the past. The curriculum meets all the requirements of the National Curriculum and by the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have experienced a wide range of topics that develop their awareness of chronology and understanding of fact and opinion.

- 165 Key Stage 1 pupils learn about the lives of famous people such as Florence Nightingale. They learn about life in other times through looking at evidence from other times, such as artefacts, pictures and visits to Wigan Pier and Penryhn Castle, where they were able to experience at first hand daily life in Victorian times. Pupils remembered vividly being dressed in period costumes, spending time in a Victorian classroom and playing with typical toys of the time. In connection with their work in science on light, they have compared how streets were lit in the past with modern times.
- 166 At Key Stage 2, pupils develop their knowledge about historical periods and their skills in finding out about history from primary and secondary sources. In a good lesson, Year 5 and 6 pupils increase their knowledge about World War II evacuees because of the teacher's careful and well-framed questions about aspects such as the impact of "careless talk" mentioned on posters.
- 167 The subject is led and managed satisfactorily. Although the co-ordinator has not yet been able to monitor the quality of teaching and learning to identify common areas of strength and weakness, her recent audit of resources has identified the need for more artefacts and support materials, such as CD ROMS and source evidence.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

- 168 The last inspection report indicated that pupils' attainment matched that found nationally for pupils aged seven and eleven years. There has been good improvement since then in the provision for ICT and in standards which are now good overall but show gaps in some aspects.
- 169 The school is making effective use of the computer suite to provide class lessons when pupils work in pairs at a computer. This works very well as the pupils take turns and readily help one another. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from the knowledge and help of others and also help others in turn. All are quick to learn and often show much pleasure and excitement in their achievements. Their good learning is boosted by good, explicit teaching of skills and techniques in using different programs so that pupils' attainment is higher than that expected for their age at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2.
- 170 A weakness, however, is pupils' poor skill in using the keyboard. Many Year 6 pupils rely on one finger and take time to find letters on the keyboard. Many pupils benefit from using computers at home and are familiar with using the Internet. Although the teachers are confident in teaching ICT and effective in developing the pupils' skills, they are not making enough use of the computers in the classrooms to allow pupils to rehearse and apply their skills across the curriculum. Computers and other ICT equipment were rarely used in literacy or numeracy lessons.
- 171 At Key Stage 1, pupils systematically learn the functions of the basic computer controls and how to use a variety of programs and ICT equipment. They learn how to log on, enter a password and find the program they need. In one lesson, Year 1

pupils were keen to show what they could do to create repeating patterns on screen using the mouse to click on icons to form shapes and to change size and colours. The teacher's timely interventions enabled those pupils who were hesitant to develop confidence in roaming between using the brush, fill and erase functions as well as saving and retrieving their work as needed. Such skills have been used well by the pupils to design and produce labels for their own trays. Year 2 pupils added captions to their pictures. They also know how to enter data to produce simple graphs, how to find information on a CD ROM and how to enter instructions to control a floor robot.

- 172 By the age of eleven, pupils use computers and software confidently, and realise the relevance of its use in their everyday lives. Year 5 and 6 pupils worked hard to improve the attraction to a reader of their presentation content and layout to a reader. The higher attaining pupils made good use of the tool bar to change font size and style, and to produce columns of justified and centred text. The teacher's encouragement to try things out through comments such as *"It's your presentation girls"* also meant that several pairs learnt through their mistakes and also developed their knowledge of what could be achieved. While lower attaining pupils often needed some teacher guidance in how to present their ideas, all retrieved and saved their work confidently.
- 173 The teachers are making effective links between ICT and other subjects such as mathematics, science and art and design. This is contributing significantly to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A good example was when Year 3 pupils discussed the work of Andy Warhol and Charles Rennie Macintosh and then went on to create repeating patterns in similar styles by copying and pasting on screen. As the teacher had planned activities to extend the challenge where needed, the more confident pupils went on to refine their work by altering the thickness of lines and borders and selected shades of colours.
- 174 The co-ordinator provides satisfactory subject leadership. She advises other staff and ensures that the school meets National Curriculum requirements through monitoring the teachers' planning. Gaps in the management of the subject lie in the need for an overview of the effectiveness of the teaching and learning and for an agreed school assessment system to track the development of pupils' skills and knowledge.

## MUSIC

- 175 It was not possible to judge overall standards in music, or the overall quality of teaching, as in the two lessons seen taken by classteachers, the pupils did not compose or perform music and the teaching ranged from unsatisfactory to very good.
- 176 The governors have successfully dealt with a key issue from the previous inspection to improve expertise in music by employing a music specialist who teaches each class on a weekly basis and acts as the music co-ordinator. This is a satisfactory arrangement that provides specialist teaching alongside lessons given by the classteachers, and ensures that the school meets National Curriculum requirements. Discussion with the specialist teacher, and a scrutiny of the scheme of work and planning for the term, show that the subject is well co-ordinated, assessment systems are being introduced, and relevant aspects for development identified.
- 177 Pupils experience a wide musical curriculum. They hear music from different cultures and sing, play and compose their own music that gradually develops their awareness of musical notation and terms. The specialist teacher makes good use of a range of instruments, including hand chimes, sound beams and computer linked



equipment. Some pupils also choose to learn to play the recorder and others pay to have specialist tuition in playing the electronic keyboard. The specialist teacher's enthusiasm and her links with other schools have enabled pupils to take part in musical performances such as the mass carol concert in Manchester.

- 178 Standards in singing are satisfactory. In assemblies, pupils sing hymns in tune and time to recorded music but their singing lacks spirit. When Year 1 pupils sang spontaneously, their singing was much more lively. In listening to and appraising music, most pupils' attainment is as expected for their age although a few show good skills. All listen appreciatively to music, recognise different styles and often comment sensitively on what they feel about musical phrases and use of instruments. Several Year 2 pupils likened what they heard to the theme music from the Harry Potter film while one pupil said *"it's like someone tiptoeing across the rocks."* The pupils were eager to play the percussion instruments but their learning slowed as the teacher had too few instruments to ensure that all the boys felt included. Time was lost as the teacher dealt with their misbehaviour.
- 179 Pupils in Years 4 and 5 commented very maturely on the sung diary of a soldier losing his friend in "Goodnight Saigon" by Billy Joel. They appreciated the changes in tempo to echo moods and events. They made very good progress as the teacher confidently drew out the pupils' responses to help them see the connections between what they had learnt in previous lessons and this new piece of music. Her very good use of questions and prompts ensured the pupils listened attentively and gave justified comparisons with pieces heard before. This not only took their music learning further, but also built on current work in literacy, history and dance.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 180 As in the previous inspection, standards are satisfactory and similar to those seen in other schools. In physical education lessons and as they move around the school and playground, pupils show a range of skills and movements typical for their age.
- 181 Only lessons in gymnastics and dance for Key Stage 2 pupils were seen during the inspection. Discussion with the co-ordinator, teachers and pupils, and a scrutiny of teachers' planning indicate that over the year the school provides for Key Stage 1 and 2 pupils a balanced programme which meets national requirements.
- 182 The school benefits from having a large hall as well as a playing field and playground which provide space for pupils to play indoor and outdoor team games, to participate in athletics, gymnastics and to respond to music through dance and movement. All Key Stage 2 pupils take swimming lessons for two terms out of three and by the end of Year 6, most pupils swim at least 25 metres and have undertaken survival and lifesaving techniques. All pupils have the opportunity to take part in adventurous activities as part of their residential visits. Older boys and girls can attend extra-curricular activities including netball, soccer and rugby league, and school teams participate in local league matches, tournaments and competitions.
- 183 Pupils made good progress in the lessons seen because of good, and in one case very good teaching. The teachers have good subject knowledge and confidence in how to develop and extend the pupils' skills. This means that the pupils perform with increasing competence as they are praised, encouraged and told how to improve their performance. A common feature of the teaching is the constant stream of advice and guidance to pupils as they work. When Year 6 pupils were asked to appraise the demonstrations of their peers, they used similar phrases to the teacher such as *"using pointed toes"* to highlight effective features.

- 184 The pupils respond enthusiastically to advice. Year 3 pupils successfully refined their sequence of balances and the higher attaining pupils performed a series of high and low balances by twisting their bodies and legs to allow their partners to travel through. Pupils in Years 4 and 5 were highly responsive to comments from their teacher and friends as they performed movements to music to create and interpret the theme of being evacuated schoolchildren in World War II. By focussing on facial and body movements to indicate how tired and miserable they felt as they walked to the evacuee centre, pupils lifted the quality of their dance.
- 185 Pupils' attitudes to physical education are good. Lessons begin and end in an orderly manner and pupils are aware of the need for appropriate warm-up and cool-down activities. The teachers provide good role models by dressing appropriately and by showing enthusiasm themselves for physical activity. This adds to the subject's positive contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. Pupils co-operate well in team games, show a good awareness of fair play alongside a competitive spirit and also an appreciation of the achievements of others. They behave well when getting ready as well as in lessons. A strength of the teaching is the good opportunities for pupils to express their own opinions when evaluating others' performance. In all the lessons seen this was an integral part of the pupils' learning.
- 186 The leadership and management are satisfactory. As the headteacher has recently taken over the co-ordinator's role, he has yet to monitor the quality of teaching and learning to provide an overview of what the school does well and what it needs to improve. One area of improvement is in the replacement of old mats and benches with ones easier for pupils to move and handle with minimal adult help. The policy and scheme of work reflect national and local guidance but the teachers' assessment procedures are not consistent throughout the school.