

# INSPECTION REPORT

**ACRESFIELD COMMUNITY PRIMARY  
SCHOOL**

**Upton by Chester**

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique reference number: 111205

Headteacher: Mrs Sue Smith

Reporting inspector: Mr John Williams  
22516

Dates of inspection: 28 – 30 January 2002

Inspection number: 195910

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:	County
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Acres Lane Upton by Chester Cheshire
Postcode:	CH2 1LJ
Telephone number:	01244 390309
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr John Fowler
Date of previous inspection:	7 July 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
22516	John Williams	Registered inspector	English as an additional language Equal opportunities Special educational needs Mathematics Physical education Religious education	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? a) The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further?
19366	Bill Walker	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents? How well is the school led and managed?
8316	Jozefa O'Hare	Team inspector	Foundation stage Design and technology Information and communication technology Music Science	
27490	Michael Huggins	Team inspector	Art and design English Geography History	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>7</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>12</b>
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>28</b>

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Acresfield Community Primary School is located in the village of Upton on the north-east edge of Chester. Smaller than most primary schools it has 137 pupils on the roll, compared with the average size nationally of 243 pupils. This is slightly smaller than at the time of the last inspection when the school had 144 pupils. Children start in the reception class in the September of the year in which they are five. They have a wide range of ability when they start school but most have levels of attainment which are expected for the age group. The large majority of pupils are of white ethnic origin. There are four pupils for whom English is an additional language, one of whom is at an early stage of English language acquisition. There are 9 pupils (7 per cent) known to be eligible for free school meals; this is below the national average. There are 16 pupils (11.6 per cent) on the register for special educational needs, which is below average. One pupil has a statement of special educational need; this is below the national average.

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

This is a good, effective school of which parents and the community are justly proud. It achieves good standards in many subjects and average standards in the others. It is a warm and welcoming community in which pupils learn happily. It is very well led and managed by the dedicated and enthusiastic headteacher, ably supported by her acting deputy. The pupils are taught well. The committed, hard-working staff and knowledgeable governing body fully support her. They constantly strive to meet the school's worthwhile aims and to raise standards. The school gives good value for money.

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

- Pupils achieve well above average standards in mathematics and above average standards in English and science.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good in most subjects. This results in pupils achieving well and making good progress throughout the school.
- The leadership and management of the school by the headteacher and key staff are very good. This ensures that the school reflects very well its worthwhile aims in all its work.
- Pupils make a very good start in the reception class.
- There are outstandingly good relationships between all members of the school community.
- The school enjoys a close and profitable relationship with parents.
- The school functions as a harmonious community where all are included and valued.

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

- Pupils' skills in information and communication technology.
- Long-term school development planning.
- Resources for outdoor play for Foundation Stage pupils.

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

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

The school was last inspected in July 1997. Since then, it has made good improvement and addressed effectively most of the issues raised in the report of that time. There are now schemes of work to guide the teaching of each subject, and teachers keep good quality records of pupils' progress, although these are not always consistent. The deficiencies noted in the organisation and teaching of pupils with special educational needs have been very well addressed. Standards have improved in information and communication technology through better quality resources and training for teachers, although standards could still be better. Overall, standards in English, mathematics and science have risen in line with the national trend. Particularly marked have been improvements in investigative science and in standards in literacy and numeracy with the effective implementation of the national strategies. Standards in design and technology and in religious education have also improved.

There have also been improvements to the school grounds with play facilities and features of interest such as the school pond. Younger pupils have also been provided with their own play area.

## STANDARDS

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

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

**Key**

well above average    A

above average        B

average                C

below average        D

well below average    E

*Similar schools are those having less than eight per cent of pupils receiving free school meals.*

The above table shows that the results of the 2001 national tests for pupils at the end of Year 6 were above average in English and science and well above average in mathematics. Standards in English and science were in line with those of pupils in similar schools, and in mathematics they were above. This represented a slight decline in standards since 2000, but this particular year group had been subject to much turbulence and only six pupils out of a group of eighteen had begun their education in the school.

Inspection evidence confirms that these standards have been maintained. Pupils in Year 6 achieve well and are currently on track to equal these results in English, mathematics and science. Standards are in line with national expectations in all other subjects except in art and design and in design and technology, where they are above. Standards exceed the requirements of the local agreed syllabus in religious education.

In the 2001 national tests and tasks, pupils in Year 2 attained national average levels in reading, writing and mathematics. However, this was a year group with a larger than usual number of pupils with special educational needs. Their achievements, when compared with similar schools, were well below average in reading and mathematics and below average in writing. In the current Year 2 where there has been a great deal of mobility, pupils are on track to achieve average standards in reading and writing although they are below average in mathematics.

In the Foundation Stage, children make very good progress. Attainment varies from year to year but the inspection confirms that children in reception this year have levels of attainment similar to those expected for the age group. They are making such good progress that they are all likely to achieve or exceed the goals set for this age group by the time they reach Year 1.

Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and attain well in relation to their prior learning. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make very good progress. This is the result of the good teaching that they receive. There is no significant difference between the attainments of boys and girls. The school sets itself high targets each year and usually succeeds in achieving them.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. The majority of pupils show very appropriate attitudes to their work, to members of staff and to school life.



Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Almost all pupils behave well, both in lessons and around the school and this has a beneficial effect on learning.
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Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils relate very well to adults and to each other. They share ideas and work sensibly together. The majority enjoy taking responsibility for jobs around the school and are keen to help with routine tasks.
Attendance	Good. Continues to be above the national average.

Pupils take great interest in school. They work hard and are happy. They understand very well the effects of their actions on others and show respect for other people's feelings, values and beliefs. Older pupils are mature, show good initiative and take personal responsibility well.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Teaching in most lessons is good or very good. Teaching in the reception class is consistently very good. This leads to very good learning and gives these young children a very good start in school. Teaching in the other areas of the school is good overall, with a significant number of lessons judged to be very good. This extends to most classes and in all subjects. This makes a very significant contribution to the pupils' achievement throughout the school. As a result pupils progress from average levels of attainment on admission to the school to above average levels in English, mathematics, science, art and design, design technology and religious education, by the time they leave.

A major strength of the teaching is the way in which staff have a very wide range of strategies to keep pupils motivated and behaving well. They teach the basic skills especially in literacy and numeracy consistently well and have very high expectations of what their pupils can achieve. As a result, the pupils know exactly what is expected of them and they work very hard. Pupils with special educational needs are taught very well and receive good quality support from the learning support assistants. Hence pupils make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. Similarly, pupils with English as an additional language are ably supported. They are fully included in all lessons and make rapid progress. The school has begun to identify its gifted and talented pupils and offers them challenging work in lessons, instrumental music tuition and sports coaching.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The quality and range of the curriculum are good. The curriculum is relevant to the needs of all pupils. Good attention is paid to all subjects including personal, social and health education.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Teachers' planning ensures that work is well matched to pupils' needs and teachers monitor progress well.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The small number of pupils with English as an additional language are provided for very well. The very good quality help they receive ensures that they make very good progress.

Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Pupils are encouraged to be independent and to reflect on their actions. The strong warm ethos of the school contributes very well to the very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school monitors pupils' academic progress very effectively. Child protection procedures are good. The school knows and understands its pupils very well.

The school works very effectively in partnership with parents. The quality of information provided for parents, particularly about pupils' progress, is good. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is very good and this makes a very worthwhile addition to their children's learning.

### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership and management provided by the headteacher are very good. Together with the very supportive acting deputy headteacher and the hard working dedicated staff, she provides very clear leadership for the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors fulfil their statutory duties well and have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However there are some deficiencies in terms of the monitoring of long-term strategic planning.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has a clear view of its work and analyses effectively what works well and why. The quality of the procedures for monitoring pupils' learning is very good.
The strategic use of resources	Short term financial planning is good. The school uses its available resources efficiently and effectively. It applies the principles of best value satisfactorily.

There is a good number of well-qualified and experienced teaching and non-teaching staff to meet the demands of the curriculum. Learning resources are good in most subjects. The good quality, informative displays around the school make an important and stimulating contribution to the whole community's learning. The school keeps the accommodation in good order and ensures an attractive learning environment. Its cleanliness is a credit to the caretaker and cleaning staff.

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

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The teaching is good.</li> <li>• The school expects their child to work hard and to achieve his or her best.</li> <li>• Their children like school.</li> <li>• Their children make good progress in school.</li> <li>• Behaviour in school is good.</li> <li>• The school is helping their children to become mature and responsible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount of homework.</li> <li>• The range of activities outside lessons.</li> <li>• The information they receive about how their children are getting on.</li> </ul>

Nine parents attended the meeting with the registered inspector prior to the inspection, and 57 questionnaires were returned. Inspection evidence strongly supports the positive views that parents have of the school. Inspectors feel that the amount of homework given is appropriate in most cases. It gives effective support to the work the children do in lessons. The quality of information provided for parents, including that about their children's progress is good. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. At the time of the last inspection, standards at the end of Year 2, were above average in English, while in mathematics and science they were judged in line with national expectations. Standards were above average in art and in all other subjects attainment was in line with the expectations of the National Curriculum. At the end of Year 6, attainment was above average in English and in mathematics and science was judged to be in line with expectations. Standards in art and physical education exceeded expectations and in all other subjects, except information technology, attainment was in line with national expectations. In both key stages standards attained in information technology were unsatisfactory.
2. Standards since then have been maintained or improved in all subjects, culminating in the granting of an achievement award in 2000 for the improvement the school had made. Standards have varied since then. This has been caused by specific difficulties in different year groups. Last year's Year 2, for instance, had a much larger than usual number of pupils with special educational needs, whilst Year 6 suffered from very high mobility. Some year groups like the present Year 2 are very small having only 14 pupils, so overall judgements have to be regarded with caution.
3. In the present Year 2 standards in English are average, whilst in mathematics they are below average. They are above average in science. They exceed national expectations in art and design and in design and technology. In all other subjects they are in line with national expectations. This represents good achievement for this particular group of pupils.
4. At the end of the last school year, pupils in Year 6 attained standards in English, and science above the national average and well above average in mathematics. Pupils achieved well. In national tests they performed at well above average levels in mathematics and at above average levels in English and science. They equalled those in similar schools in English and science and exceeded them in mathematics. A larger than average number of pupils achieved the higher level 5 and one pupil achieved level 6 in English.
5. In Years 1 and 2, most pupils make good progress and build well on the good start that they make in the reception class. The attainment of Year 3 with its large number of pupils with special educational needs is about average. In years 4 and 5 it is above average. That of Year 6 is currently above that to be expected of the age group at this stage in English and science and well above in mathematics. Over the last four years the improvement in pupils' performance in national tests overall has been in line with the national trend. There are no significant variations between the performance of boys and girls.
6. Schemes of work, which have been introduced for all subjects, give good guidance to teachers in what to teach in each year group. This has focused teachers' planning on each stage of the pupils' development. This, in turn, is having a positive impact on the quality of learning and consequently pupils make good progress. The school has also implemented the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies fully and efficiently. These are beginning to have a noticeably positive affect on standards in English and mathematics, where standards of writing and pupils' mental arithmetic skills show good improvement.
7. In lessons seen during the inspection, no significant differences were observed in the performances of girls and boys nor in those of ethnic minority groups. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well in relation to the targets set for them in their individual education plans. Those for whom English is an additional language are particularly well supported and make very good progress. The majority of pupils achieve well. In Years 5 and 6, when pupils begin to use the good level of basic literacy and numeracy skills they have

acquired in all subjects progress accelerates. This means that the current Year 6 are on target to exceed the levels expected of that age group by the end of their time in school.

### **Foundation stage**

8. Children enter the reception class with a wide range of ability. Most have levels of attainment, across all areas of learning, which are average for the age group. This is confirmed by the initial assessments conducted with these young children. They make rapid progress in the reception class, particularly in their communication skills and their personal, social and emotional development. This is because of the very good teaching in these areas of learning and because of the importance placed, by all staff, on using language correctly and working and playing well together. The majority of the children are on course to exceed the goals set for the end of the foundation stage.

### **Years 1 and 2**

9. Results in the Year 2001 national tests showed that standards for the seven-year-olds were average in reading and writing and mathematics. When compared with similar schools, however, these results were well below average in reading and mathematics and below average in writing. This represented good achievement for this particular group of pupils. In science, teacher assessments show standards were well above average.
10. Inspection findings show that, for the current group of pupils in Year 2, standards in English are average in speaking, listening, reading and writing. A large proportion of these pupils have recently joined the school and the interruption in their schooling has had a detrimental effect on their performance. However they are beginning to settle, to make good progress and to achieve well.
11. In mathematics, pupils aged seven achieve well and more able pupils attain levels above the expectations of the age group. However, a group of pupils recently admitted to the school struggle to make good progress, and standards overall are below average.

### **Years 3 - 6**

12. The rate of improvement over the past four years in the national tests for 11-year-olds has fluctuated. After having improved greatly in 1999 and 2000, the test results showed a downward trend in 2001. This was caused by the high instance of mobility and the varying numbers of pupils with special educational needs within those groups. The school monitors the attainment and progress of all its pupils very closely and keeps very good records to support these findings.
13. Inspection findings confirm that good standards achieved in 2001 are being maintained. This reflects the positive impact the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are having on English and mathematics. This is particularly evident in mathematics where the Numeracy Strategy has given the pupils confidence in a wide range of strategies for performing calculations. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls nor in that of pupils from different cultural backgrounds. There has been a recent improvement in standards in information and communication technology through the provision of new equipment and training for staff. However these developments are new and the school recognises the need to bring about further improvement in standards. Pupils are on course to reach the predicted targets for them in English, mathematics and science this year. In all other subjects, standards are in line with the expectations of the National Curriculum, apart from art and design and design technology, where they are above. Pupils exceed the expectations of the local area Agreed Syllabus in religious education.
14. Standards of speaking are good by the time the pupils leave the school at the end of Year 6. Pupils discuss issues confidently and explain their work fluently. Reading standards are good. Pupils discuss literature in depth and use reading skills well in other subjects. For example, they

give clear reasons why they prefer one author but have 'lost interest in another'. The majority of pupils listen well to their teachers and to each other and show respect for other peoples' work and points of view. Standards in writing are above average. They write for different purposes and include a good level of grammar. Most pupils take pride in their work and present it very well. In mathematics, pupils in Year 6 work confidently with fractions and decimals to calculate answers to problems. They interpret data from graphs and reach very good levels of expertise in investigating mathematical patterns. In science, pupils achieve very well through practical investigation. They study, in depth, different aspects of the science curriculum. They use correct scientific language and record scientific experiments accurately.

15. Throughout the school, teachers encourage pupils to use their literacy skills in all subjects. Pupils use their writing skills well in other subjects, such as religious education and history. For example, they write descriptively or in reporting style to describe events in history. Numeracy skills are used well in geography and science. For instance, pupils use their knowledge of negative numbers when measuring temperature. Standards in information and communication technology have begun to rise due to recent improvements in provision, and pupils achieve satisfactorily. They begin to use the skills learned efficiently as a tool in other subjects. For example, they edit and produce final copies of their writing in history and English. They practise mathematical skills through number games on the computer. However the school acknowledges that this is an area for development.
16. The school provides well for pupils with special educational needs, and very well for those for whom English is an additional language, through carefully planned work that matches their changing requirements. Teachers identify gifted, talented and the more able pupils and challenge them sufficiently although the school has identified the need to extend this work.
17. The school's focus on teaching the basic skills needed for pupils to succeed ensures that the majority of pupils makes good progress and reach the targets set. The school sets itself appropriate targets and strives to exceed them. It works hard to raise standards in all subjects. The thorough coverage of the curriculum throughout the school ensures that pupils make good progress during their time in school. This, together with the clear learning objectives set by teachers in lessons, has a positive effect on raising standards.

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

18. The attitudes, behaviour and personal development of the pupils continue to be significant strengths of the school. As was found at the time of the last inspection, pupils show great interest in their work, behave well in and out of lessons and enjoy the best of relationships with their colleagues. As they move through the school they develop into mature and responsible young people, well prepared for the next stage of their education. Attendance is still good. The great majority of pupils come to school regularly and on time. The attendance rate compares favourably with that for other primary schools nationally.
19. It is very clear that pupils enjoy coming to Acresfield. As they arrive in the mornings their happy demeanour and cheerful greetings to friends and visitors alike reveal an enthusiasm for learning and a fruitful sense of anticipation for what the day holds for them. Children in the reception class make a very good start. They quickly acquire the confidence to leave their parents at the door whilst they assemble with their friends and their teacher. They listen well, display a good knowledge of school routines, relate very well to their colleagues and most are happy talking to adults about their activities. As they move up through the infant classes they display increasing levels of independence in catering for their own personal needs and in taking some responsibility for their learning. They are seen to work productively by themselves and to collaborate effectively in pairs and small groups. By the time they reach the senior classes pupils display some very good work habits. They have learned to recognise the high expectations of their teachers so they listen carefully, apply themselves industriously and take much trouble over the presentation of their work. They are anxious to be involved in school life and many take advantage of the wide range of extra curricular activities provided for them.

20. In all classes standards of behaviour are generally good and contribute positively to the learning environment. At times the response of pupils is excellent, as was seen in a religious education lesson when year 5 and 6 pupils listened with rapt attention to a skilful telling of stories from the New Testament. At other times particularly in the lower junior classes, a few pupils show how easily they can become distracted and the attention of the teacher has to be diverted from the lesson in hand to maintain an orderly environment. Outside of the classroom pupils conduct themselves very creditably. Movement about the school is calm and orderly. Pupils walk purposefully, hold open doors, defer to adults, and seem always to be looking for ways in which they can be helpful. At play they mix readily across gender and age groupings. They very clearly enjoy themselves but their natural exuberance and occasional boisterousness is not intimidating. Pupils have no concerns about bullying. Pupils look after each other and appear to be very sensitive to the potential impact of their actions on others.
21. Mealtimes are most civilised occasions. Pupils wait patiently to be served, show good manners as they eat, and take advantage of the low noise levels to talk quietly with their colleagues. There has been just one exclusion in the last year. Proper procedures were followed and every avenue explored before the relevant decision was made. The records show this to have been a very untypical situation. This is an inclusive school with a very strong sense of community. Pupils follow the very good example set by adult members of staff and the wider school community by valuing each other's company and conversation. Relationships throughout are excellent.
22. Pupils react very well to the trust put in them by their teachers. The opportunities for them to formally exercise responsibility, such as taking on the role of road safety or recycling officers, are few, but in the daily life of the school pupils in Key Stage 2 particularly play a valuable part in enabling routines to run smoothly. They help to operate equipment for assemblies for example, prepare classrooms, put away chairs and generally they do all this without waiting to be asked. Increasingly as they move through the school pupils have the confidence and the competence to take more responsibility for their own learning. A good illustration of this was seen in a Year 4 and 5 class when pupils, working individually or in small groups, researched and recorded the habitats of a variety of plants. The growing level of maturity and independence, is perhaps best illustrated by the special friendship bond that year 6 pupils, on a one to one basis, develop with children in the reception class. This serves very well to reinforce the personal development on which the school places such great importance. It also helps very effectively to engender confidence in those new to the school.
23. Pupils enjoy their schooling at Acresfield. The great majority come to school regularly and on time. There are a few pupils who attend irregularly but the overall rate of attendance continues to be good and compares favourably with that for other primary schools nationally. There is little unauthorised absence.

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

24. The overall quality of teaching is good. In the 31 lessons seen during the inspection, teaching was consistently sound or better. In 78 per cent of these (24 lessons), the quality of teaching was good or better. In 35 per cent (11 lessons) teaching was very good. In 3 per cent (1 lesson), it was excellent. This is an improvement since the last inspection, when there was some unsatisfactory teaching. The percentage of good and very good teaching was also lower. Weaknesses in teaching in the previous inspection were reflected in the lack of pace in some sessions, a lack of clarity about what pupils were expected to learn in some lessons and too many different activities in others. This is no longer the case. The quality of teaching has improved significantly.
25. The quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage is consistently very good or better. During the inspection, in all lessons teaching is very good or excellent. In Years 1 and 2, the majority of teaching is good. In Years 3-6, four lessons in ten were good and a quarter of lessons were very good. All staff work exceptionally well as a team and support each other most efficiently. Thus, the good quality of teaching results consistently in good learning by all groups of pupils.



26. The teaching of literacy in English lessons and numeracy in mathematics lessons is of good quality. The teachers have worked hard to implement both strategies, which they have done very effectively. Interesting texts and a good range of carefully selected big books, guided reading texts and relevant reading books have ensured that literacy lessons are challenging and relevant to the needs of the pupils. Numeracy lessons have very good mental warm-up sessions in which the pupils are engaged and are clearly focused on improving their mental agility.
27. The teaching of literacy and numeracy very successfully supports learning in other curriculum areas. For example, in science lessons, the pupils have opportunities to record the results of their experiments and explain what the results show. Teachers promote very good cross-curricular links and, in this way, the pupils see the relevance of their learning and the way in which it develops. They are beginning to use information and communication technology also as a very effective tool in other subjects, although this is an area to be developed further.
28. Throughout the school, the teachers show commitment and work very hard in their drive to improve their teaching. The headteacher monitors teaching and is well aware of strengths and weaknesses throughout the school. All staff strive to improve personally and to provide the best possible teaching for their pupils. The support and assistance that all staff give to each other, throughout the school, are impressive and have a very positive impact on the quality of teaching.
29. The pupils on the special educational needs register, and those for whom English is an additional language, are also well taught. Work is specifically targeted for their learning. Teachers are very careful to ensure that pupils' needs are met at all times. For example, very careful attention is given to a partially sighted pupil in one class. The teacher always ensures that she is watching and in a position to see and has a range of aids such as large print dictionaries to hand. Thus she is always included in all activities and understands clearly what she has to do. This caring attitude, along with the first rate support from all staff, ensures that the school has a very inclusive ethos and that most pupils achieve well.
30. The teacher in the Foundation Stage, has a very clear understanding of the needs of young children. Her enthusiastic, supportive and patient approach enables the children to be confident in their learning and, as a consequence, they achieve very well. The very good planning takes into account the early learning goals for children in the nursery and reception years. Careful planning ensures that the needs of all children are very well met. Together with the support staff she works hard to develop a wide range of activities, which help to promote very good learning, at a very rapid pace.
31. Teachers, throughout the school, have a very good knowledge and understanding of the subjects that they teach. They use the correct technical terms and appropriate subject based vocabulary to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of each subject. This is particularly evident in English, mathematics and science, where technical language is used accurately, not just in the teaching but also in the very good quality displays around school. Teachers focus clearly on the language needed for pupils to succeed in each subject.
32. Teaching staff place a significant level of demand upon individuals, to ensure that all are fully involved. Thus, pupils listen carefully to the very clear instructions that they receive and know exactly what they are expected to do. They work very hard and learn well. This results not only in very good pace in lessons but also in consistently good learning by most pupils. Teachers use the time available to them well. They link lessons together so that a class assembly or Circle Time leads naturally into the following literacy, geography or art lesson.
33. Planning for lessons is good. In literacy and numeracy, the teachers plan very closely to the structured frameworks. They plan all lessons effectively and at the beginning of each lesson recap and revise previous learning very successfully. They share the learning objectives for each lesson with the pupils and return to the aims at plenary sessions. This ensures that the objectives of the lesson are usually met. Planning is tailored effectively to include all the levels of

attainment in the classes. This means that most pupils, whatever their ability, are challenged most suitably and fully included in all lessons.

34. Teachers' expectations of the pupils and their work are very good. Teachers question pupils well, to establish what pupils know and understand and to help them think for themselves. All staff have high expectations that pupils will behave well and work hard. Pupils live up to these expectations. Teachers consistently and constantly praise and encourage the pupils. They challenge them very effectively, so that they give their best performance. This ensures that pupils are fully involved in their lessons, work very hard and concentrate very well. As a result, pupils achieve consistently well.
35. In all classes, teachers encourage the pupils to work independently. They plan activities which allow pupils to work in groups of various sizes. Consequently, the pupils co-operate well together, collaborate on the tasks set and achieve good results. Relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent. The mutual respect shown by teachers and pupils adds significantly to the quality of the work that the pupils produce and to the way in which they learn. The pupils feel their input is valued and this most effectively aids their personal development.
36. All staff manage the pupils well. They constantly strive to find ways in which to reward good behaviour and work. Lessons are well organised. Teachers use time and resources effectively and, as a result, lessons move along at a good pace. Teachers incorporate opportunities to use information and communication technology satisfactorily although they recognise that this is an area for further development. The learning support staff give very good, careful support to pupils and this enhances considerably all pupils' learning. They are much appreciated by the school as a very valuable resource.
37. The quality of day-to-day assessment is good. Teachers monitor the pupils' work well and give support and advice, as needed. They are quick to evaluate their lessons and use this information to inform their future work. They mark pupils' work in a supportive manner and give pupils new targets so that they move on to the next stage of learning. Homework is used well to supplement and support work done in class.

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

38. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum for pupils of all ages. All statutory requirements are met. The provision made for pupils in the Foundation Stage is very good. The school has effectively implemented the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies without neglecting standards elsewhere. In the last inspection, the curriculum was broad but physical education was under-represented. There have since been improvements in provision to ensure good curriculum coverage of all subjects at both key stages. Art and design, design and technology, religious education and science make a particularly strong contribution to the quality of provision. The quality of planning has improved. There is now a clear structure to planning, especially where staff have adapted nationally-available schemes of work to better meet the needs of the pupils. This has helped teachers to plan more effectively and ensure pupils make better progress in their learning. The school makes good provision for pupils' personal social and health education, including sex education and the dangers of the misuse of drugs.
39. A good range of extra-curricular activities enhances the curriculum provision, and staff and other adults provide much voluntary effort and time after school for this. There is a good variety of sports activities and coaching, which includes football, netball, cricket, athletics and table tennis. These motivate older pupils, for whom most activities are provided. A wide range of other activities includes recorders, choir, the 'Let's Bike' cycling safety programme, and French club. Pupils also have opportunities to go on residential visits to Cheshire's Outdoor Education Centres three times during their time at the school.

40. The school makes very good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils. This is significant improvement since the last inspection, which showed good provision for their social and cultural development, and sound provision for their spiritual and moral development. Acresfield is a caring school where the principles of showing courtesy, respect and compassion for each other are shown clearly in relationships amongst the staff, between staff and pupils, and between almost all pupils.
41. The provision for spiritual development is very good, and can be seen in the whole ethos of the school. Opportunities for spiritual development are evident in the planned programme for the daily act of worship. Music is carefully used to create an atmosphere of quiet and reverence, and periods of quiet allow time for reflection. Pupils participate fully in assemblies. Many assemblies contain opportunities for the headteacher or class teachers to recognise and praise the achievements of pupils, including those with special educational needs. For example, one celebration assembly seen allowed pupils from several classes to proudly talk about their work and display their musical skills. They were sensitively introduced and praised by their teachers. The head teacher emphasised the importance of living lives that touched others. This helped pupils of all abilities and from all backgrounds to feel that they were included. Assemblies led by visitors, such as the local vicar or other members of the Upton Council of Churches, have a further positive effect. Religious education makes a strong contribution to the fostering of spiritual development, and pupils understand that religion can guide people's actions. Teachers seize opportunities for fostering a sense of awe and wonder in other curriculum areas whenever opportunities offer. In the reception class, for example, pupils are entranced and engrossed in the learning activities provided.
42. The provision for the moral development of pupils is very good. The role models which teachers and support staff provide are highly supportive. Pupils begin to learn the concepts of right and wrong from their first entry into the school. Rules about behaviour and relationships are displayed in classrooms and teachers discuss them with pupils. As a result they are usually obeyed. A visiting anti-bullying workshop supports the anti-bullying policy. The behaviour management curriculum is well developed, and understood by pupils. Many teachers use and value circle time, where pupils sit in a circle and discuss freely matters which may be troubling them, as a way of helping pupils to explore moral issues and come to decisions.
43. Provision for pupils' social development is very good. The school gives a real feeling of being a warm, caring, extended family and community. As a result pupils show good social behaviour and self-discipline. They take part in local community events, such as the launch of Chester's Way Ahead, or Chester in Bloom. Pupils have a variety of opportunities for taking responsibility. For example two pupils acted as Road Safety officers, and gave guidance about getting safely to and from school. Older pupils have a 'special friend' in reception whom they can support. The Year 6 pupils help to raise money for their Leavers' Evening through the 'Making Fifty Pence Grow' enterprise project, and pupils more generally collect money for charities like the Hospice of the Good Shepherd or the Save the Family project. This helps pupils to recognise the importance of helping their fellow human beings in circumstances very different to their own.
44. The school's provision for cultural development is very good. The school promotes the cultural traditions of its own area very well. Younger pupils carry out visits to sites in Upton to develop their historical and geographical skills, and exploit the learning opportunities of nearby Chester Zoo. Older pupils make good use of Chester and visit local museums, as well as going to a Manchester museum to find out more about Ancient Egypt. The school is visited by artists, ballet and theatre groups and Music for Life project workers, members of which provide music tuition for some pupils. Art work drawing on a variety of periods and cultures helps to make the school environment attractive and pleasing. Pupils celebrate both their own cultures and beliefs and those of others, and treat them respectfully. As a result, one well-prepared Muslim pupil, for example, was able to confidently demonstrate Islamic rituals of washing to his classmates.

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

45. This is a very caring school where the interests of the pupils are paramount and where the headteacher and her staff are very sensitive to the needs of all of those in their charge. The weaknesses identified in the previous inspection report have largely been resolved: there are now very good, whole school procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress and very good use is made of assessment information to guide curricular planning. Staff, parents and pupils have all been involved in a thorough review of the behaviour policy and the procedures now in place are very effective.
46. The school amply fulfils its aim to provide a welcoming place and a happy and secure environment for all children. The warm and trusting relationships which are found at all levels in the school enable even the most vulnerable children to grow in maturity and self esteem. From the earliest contacts with parents, teachers get to know the children in the context of their family and this gives children the confidence to share their worries and get the support they need to cope with the problems of daily life. It is a fitting testament to the school's caring approach that families belonging to the Exclusive Brethren have chosen this school and trusted the staff to adapt certain parts of the curriculum to comply with that community's beliefs and wishes. Governors have recently reviewed their health and safety policy. This reflects the guidance of the local authority and makes explicit the school's commitment to train children to look after themselves. Good use is made of the curriculum, particularly those parts that relate to the personal, social, health and citizenship education, to implement this objective. Examples are seen in assemblies, where senior pupils share with their younger colleagues their awareness of road safety and of the benefits of recycling waste materials.
47. The school also provides an annual "Health Fair" where parents are invited to join with pupils in experiencing a wide range of health related presentations in the school. This is very well focused information and helps to raise awareness of factors contributory to a healthy life style in the family where it is likely to be most effective. In relation to the building, appropriate systems are in place for the routine maintenance of fire and electrical equipment and for regular risk assessment. In this the school makes good use of the expertise found amongst its governors. The practice is good but the procedures lack the formality of written records that would better facilitate monitoring by governors. The school complies fully with locally agreed child protection procedures and whilst there has been training for all members of staff in the past, the headteacher is aware of the need to revisit the training for the benefit of recently appointed members of staff.
48. The school reacted very constructively to difficulties, which it experienced in the recent past concerning the behaviour of a small number of pupils. The headteacher introduced a behaviour management curriculum and initiated a comprehensive action plan involving the whole school community, including parents and pupils. This has proved to be very successful in reinforcing good and often very good standards of behaviour across the whole school. There are still occasions when noisy or distracted behaviour in the classroom detracts from the learning environment but these are few. The effectiveness of the whole strategy is born out by the good learning environment in the classrooms and by the positive attitudes and courteous manners of the pupils in their relationships with their colleagues and adult members of staff. Over recent years the school has succeeded in encouraging good levels of attendance, well above the national average. The headteacher has worked closely with the education welfare officer to sustain this rate, and has had some success in discouraging parents from taking holiday during term time. She places much importance on regular and prompt attendance and continues to monitor the situation closely.
49. Monitoring of pupils' academic performance and personal development helps to promote good standards of teaching and learning. All the staff, and most especially the head teacher, know their pupils really well, have good relationships with them, and a good picture of their strengths and weaknesses.
50. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good, and procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are very good. The procedures for placing pupils on the special educational needs register are effective. Such pupils have very good individual action plans based on careful initial assessment and well-staged reassessment

thereafter. The last inspection judged that approaches to assessment were inconsistent and that more use could be made of test results. There is now much more consistency in assessment in the core subjects. There is a clear programme of formal assessment for each age group. In reception, the pupils enter with a baseline assessment across a range of basic skills. This is well used by the teacher to identify learning targets, and progress towards these is measured at the end of the year. Regular testing of English and mathematics, including literacy and numeracy, using both national standardised tests and teacher-assessments, is carried on throughout the school.

51. The school carries out statutory requirements with regard to assessment. Each class maintains individualised pupil profile sheets, which record assessment data, and results are used to identify target groups of pupils who demonstrate the capacity for improvement, or who need more teacher support. This has allowed the head to provide more effective and focused help for pupils who need it, and improve standards. All coordinators monitor curriculum coverage effectively. Detailed assessment files are kept for both literacy and numeracy. Assessment and record keeping for the foundation subjects are less consistent, but generally sound. Art and design for example, is assessed within the Cheshire Art scheme only at Key Stage 2, but most teachers use an art moderating sheet devised by the coordinator to identify talented and lower achieving pupils. In geography, teachers make comments at the end of the topic about the extent to which learning outcomes have been achieved using a common format.
52. The use of assessment information to guide curriculum planning is very good. In literacy work, for example, there are detailed group reading records for all pupils, and targets are set to improve skills and word knowledge. Assessment is built into schemes of work and teachers review each lesson in terms of its specified objectives. They are then able to modify the plans of their lessons to take account of pupils' responses. Co-ordinators are keen to support staff in using assessment to plan more effectively. Lessons are based on the levels of attainment found in the National Curriculum, and the detailed medium term plans used by teachers identify assessment opportunities.

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

53. Parents regard their school highly and the school enjoys a very productive working partnership with them. The good practice that was in place at the time of the last inspection has been enhanced by the greater inclusion of parents in the development of policy. The school has also provided fruitful opportunities for parents to explore the curriculum that is being taught to their children. The Friends' Association continues to support the school in a generous and productive way; they are a valuable, additional resource to the school.
54. Parents have expressed very positive views about the school's educational provision. Overwhelmingly they have indicated that they consider their children to be happy and to make good progress; they think they are well taught, work hard, behave well and are helped to become mature and responsible. A significant minority of parents disagree with the school's homework policy, although no reason has been given. In fact the school has recently reviewed the policy, incorporating it in the home/school agreement. It is clear and explicit and accords with guidelines published by the Department for Education and Employment in 1998. There may well be a lack of consistency following several recent staff changes but the overall evidence of the inspection is that homework is used effectively to support learning, particularly in the Foundation Stage. A small number of parents would like the school to work more closely with them and provide a wider range of activities outside of lessons. The inspection evidence did not support this concern. However the school is aware that some parents have reservations about the annual reports on pupils, a topic which is addressed below.
55. The quality of information provided for parents is generally very good. Official documentation, such as the prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents, are well presented and comply with legal requirements. Letters are well written, informative and interesting. Parental consultation evenings each term make good provision for parents to discuss their children's

personal progress and development. In addition the daily accessibility of teachers provides good opportunities for parents to resolve any interim concerns they may have. The aforementioned annual reports on pupils are substantial documents, reflecting much effort on the part of the teachers to convey appropriate information. They have many good features, including the setting of individual targets. Some of these, particularly for younger children, are very specific and well focused; others lack the precise terminology that would enable later evaluation to be made on their attainment. Overall the reports give a clear idea of the areas of work covered by pupils over the previous year and of their personal development. Some parents feel that the introduction of new technology has detracted from the individual and personal focus of the reports. The headteacher is aware of the concerns and is already taking steps to resolve them.

56. The school works very effectively with parents of pupils who have particular needs. For example teachers liaise closely with the parents of pupils who have English as an additional language; they ensure that parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept well informed and are fully involved in diagnosis and annual reviews; they discuss with members of the Exclusive Brethren how best they can cater for the educational and personal needs of their children without compromising their religious beliefs. This manifest commitment to co-operation and inclusion is a significant strength of the school's provision.
57. At Acresfield parents make a very positive contribution to their children's learning. The work begins at an early stage when they are invited to bring their children to school and discuss with the teacher personal and social targets with which they can help their children at home. In due course they agree future targets for their children as they progress from the Foundation Stage. With the very well-planned and structured introduction of the home/school agreement the whole process of parental involvement has been formalised and extended throughout the school. Many parents take advantage of the opportunities offered to become more familiar with the National Curriculum, particularly in the fields of literacy and numeracy. This enables them to provide effective support for the homework policy which is used effectively to reinforce and extend classroom learning. Many parents and friends also help regularly in the classroom, carefully planning their involvement with the class teacher. In a less obvious way parents and friends also make a remarkable contribution to the pupils' education through their fundraising. Substantial money has been given to buy resources which enrich the curriculum for literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology, physical education, music, drama and dance, as well as many social and pastoral needs for the whole school community. Parents have also assumed the onerous responsibility for organising before and after school facilities to the great benefit of working parents. Education in this school is clearly viewed as a shared responsibility. The partnership between the school, the parents and the friends is very fruitful and makes an effective contribution to pupils' learning at school and in the home.

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

58. The management and leadership of the headteacher and senior staff are very good. The governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and fulfil their statutory responsibilities properly. As was found at the time of the previous inspection, all work together effectively and provide the school with a clear sense of purpose and direction. The weaknesses that were previously identified in relation to documentation, teachers' planning, and professional expertise in information technology, have been satisfactorily resolved.
59. On a personal level the headteacher provides excellent leadership, promoting and sustaining a clear sense of direction for the school. She displays great energy and enthusiasm, which communicate themselves to those around her. She works very closely with every member of her staff, teaching and non-teaching, and is supported conspicuously well by her acting deputy headteacher. Together they set very good examples in the work they undertake and in the cheerful manner in which they operate. They have helped to create a very positive and supportive environment in which governors, teachers, other members of staff and volunteer helpers all work effectively together to promote the aims of the school. They subscribe to a vision of a school, which is firmly focused on raising standards within a caring and sharing environment.

60. The governors are regular visitors to the school. They include in their number members who are very experienced in education, industry and the public services and have the professional expertise to make an effective contribution, particularly in such areas as finance, curriculum and health and safety. They have a good awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Through their committee structure they are able to monitor the work of the school and ensure that statutory requirements are met. They have agreed a performance management policy for the school and have recently set appropriate performance targets for the headteacher.
61. The school improvement plan has been produced in a format which links the school's priorities with those of the local education authority and also incorporates the areas for development identified in the previous inspection report. The plan covers a three year period, finishing in the current year. The objectives and priorities identified are entirely appropriate, as are the strategies intended to be used for their achievement. Much progress has already been made and the target for the current year is to review the previous targets and continue to develop the good practice. This is a practical and pragmatic approach which has been successful in raising standards. Its weakness is that the only part of the plan which has been costed is that which relates to the improvement of the premises. The consequence is that when the governors consider the budget for the forthcoming financial year they have limited information about the priorities in the school improvement plan.
62. The special educational needs co-ordinator provides good leadership. The school's provision has been thoroughly reviewed and monitored. Plans are well advanced to take account of the requirements of the new Code of Practice. All statutory requirements are met. The progress of pupils is monitored and tracked. Effective use is made of all staff, teaching and non-teaching, including staff provided by the local education authority to support pupils with statements of special educational needs.
63. The headteacher monitors teaching very effectively, both formally and informally. She places a high priority on staff development and ensures that teachers have the opportunity to observe good practice, particularly in relation to literacy and numeracy. Where possible she also arranges for subject co-ordinators to be involved in monitoring planning, teaching and pupils' attainment, although the arrangements have been adversely affected over the last year by several staffing changes. Nevertheless the effectiveness of the headteacher's strategy is seen in the good quality of the teaching which has been observed throughout the school.
64. Despite the staffing changes the headteacher has implemented an effective performance management strategy, linking it with professional development. In this she clearly enjoys the confidence of her staff, as is evidenced by the strong sense of community and high morale witnessed during the inspection. For newly qualified teachers, or those new to the school, there are good induction procedures. The very good quality of the professional development systems and the support provided has been recognised by the selection of this school to be a provider of initial teacher training for graduates.
65. An examination of the school improvement plan alongside the resources available to the school indicates that the school has in the recent past targeted its spending effectively; the school has achieved its objectives and the school's finances are in good order. The governors have benefited from a bursary service which they have purchased from the local education authority. In terms of financial accountability this has proved to be a sound and effective measure. The headteacher and the governors are kept well informed and up to date with the school's financial position. The school is able to demonstrate that it makes good use of grants for designated purposes and the headteacher and chair of governors keep detailed records of expenditure. The finance sub committee monitors the budget effectively through the year; towards the start of a new financial year it agrees an outline budget with the headteacher and bursar and makes appropriate recommendations to the full governing body. Thus, retrospectively, the governors monitor expenditure well, but their role in strategic planning, particularly for the longer term, is under developed. As indicated above, there is insufficient link between the annual budgetary process and the priorities, as identified in the school improvement plan. The plan lacks detail and it also

lacks projection to enable governors to plan for the achievement of the school's goals over the period recommended by the Audit Commission of at least three years.

66. Day to day administrative and financial management is good. The recommendations made in the last auditors' report, in April 1994, have been implemented. The school administrator is an efficient and very active member of the school staff who has the skills to make good use of new technology. She ensures that school routines run smoothly and teachers are able to focus their attention primarily on the classroom.
67. In general the governors work satisfactorily to apply the principles of best value to their overview of the school's work, and the effectiveness of the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work between the staff and the governors testifies to that commitment.
68. The school has a good number of teachers who are very well-qualified and suitably experienced to teach the National Curriculum and religious education. The priority given by the headteacher to maintaining staffing levels and ensuring the professional development of all staff has had a very beneficial effect. In addition to outside training courses the school makes effective use of the expertise that exists amongst its own staff to support colleagues both with planning and in the classroom. Non-teaching members of staff are employed effectively and they make a valuable contribution to the quality of educational provision. They are involved in planning and work closely with teachers. The accommodation is good and allows the curriculum to be taught effectively. It is well maintained and kept very clean by the caretaker, a long standing and most valued member of staff. The teaching environment in the classrooms is of high quality. Colourful displays of pupils' work serve well to celebrate achievement and there is much interactive material, which enhances the opportunities for learning. There are, however, several shortcomings. The two detached mobile buildings used as classrooms are not equipped with toilet facilities and there are inevitable interruptions to lessons when pupils have to visit the main building; the lack of a designated library room hampers the development of independent learning skills by older pupils; the hall is used for several purposes and the consequential clutter and the carpeted surface both detract from its value as a base for physical education. The school is well equipped with learning resources for all subjects except information and control technology, where they are satisfactory, and in the reception class where there is still a lack of large wheeled equipment for the children. Most resources are in good condition, neatly stored and readily accessible.

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

69. In order to further improve the quality of education and standards achieved, the headteacher, staff and governors should:-
  - (1) improve pupils' skills in information and communication technology and give them increased opportunities to use them in other subjects.  
(paragraphs: 36, 113, 135, 137)
  - (2) develop the governors' role in strategic development planning for the longer term.  
(paragraphs: 61, 65)

In addition to the key areas for development, the following less significant but nevertheless important aspect should be considered for inclusion by governors in the action plan:

- (1) provide suitable large apparatus and toys to enable Foundation Stage children to develop their skills and co-ordination. (As identified in the school development plan.)  
(paragraphs: 80)



## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	31
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	28

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	11	12	7	0	0	0
Percentage	3	35	39	22	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	137
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	16

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	4

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	25
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	16

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	96

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3

National comparative data	93.8
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National comparative data	0.5
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*Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	14	11	25

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	10	10	13
	Girls	11	11	11
	Total	21	21	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	84 (88)	84 (82)	96 (76)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	9	13	14
	Girls	10	11	11
	Total	19	24	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	76 (59)	96 (76)	100 (71)
	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	12	6	18

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	7	10	11
	Girls	6	6	6
	Total	13	16	17
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	72 (86)	89 (91)	94 (95)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	8	10	11
	Girls	6	6	6
	Total	14	16	17
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	78 (95)	89 (95)	94 (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	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	133
Any other minority ethnic group	4

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

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20
Average class size	22.8

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

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	30

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

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

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	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	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000-2001
	£
Total income	308,679
Total expenditure	299,177
Expenditure per pupil	2,021
Balance brought forward from previous year	3408
Balance carried forward to next year	12,910

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	146
Number of questionnaires returned	57

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	74	23	4	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	51	44	2	4	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	39	56	4	2	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	39	35	19	5	2
The teaching is good.	53	46	0	2	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	46	35	14	5	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	74	18	9	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	72	26	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	49	39	7	5	0
The school is well led and managed.	53	37	7	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	61	33	2	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	44	37	14	2	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**

70. Children enter the reception class in September, before their fifth birthday, with broadly average knowledge, understanding and skills. They make good progress, so that, they are on course to exceed the Early Learning Goals in all areas of their development by the time they enter Year 1. This is very good achievement over time and is a direct result of the consistent very high quality of education provided by the teacher and the classroom assistant. The previous report judged the provision for children to be a strength of the school. The present provision is now even better.
71. The children follow a well-constructed curriculum and the staff provide the children with a wide range of activities, routines and experiences that are carefully chosen to match the learning needs of the children. The consistent, very high quality work of the reception teacher is evidenced in the way that every moment is a learning opportunity. As a result, children are inspired to learn. The curriculum is in line with the government guidelines and the assessment procedures are well in place so that all staff know how well each child is progressing and can plan to extend children's development through the activities provided. The partnership with parents is very good. In addition, there is a strong emphasis on valuing each child, their home language and culture and consequently, all children feel included. All these factors contribute to the children's very good start to their education.

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

72. Children progress very well in their personal, social and emotional development. This area is very well taught and, as a result, children exceed the Early Learning Goals, by the time they enter Year 1.
73. The children understand what is expected of them and they play and co-operate well with one another. For example, in the Cosy Café, one girl asked another to help her with taking the order from the menu and to help serve the food to the customers. Another child immediately offered to help out by arranging plates and cutlery so that people could be given their meals at an attractively arranged table. They are thoughtful and caring of each other and adults in the room. For example, one child warns an adult to 'be careful, as the sausage is hot'. Children quickly learn what is fair, by the teacher and the classroom assistant providing clear routines and procedures for taking turns, thereby ensuring that everyone has an equal opportunity to participate in all learning activities. Consequently, the children understand what is expected of them and respond accordingly. The teacher reminds them, for example, that when she is working with a group, they must not interrupt her 'except in an extreme emergency'. The children follow this rule very well and get involved in own activities, with remarkable independence and maturity. There is a calm, productive atmosphere in which children can learn to co-operate with each other. The teacher is always positive and praises the children often for what they do well. This makes every child feel valued and boosts the self-confidence. An example was observed in the physical education lesson, where the teacher praised the children for persevering in exploring different ways of travelling on apparatus. This made the children take pride in their efforts and inspired them to try harder.

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

74. Children make very good improvement in their communication, language and literacy skills over their time in the Foundation Stage. There are a few children who learn through English as an additional language. The very good teaching that they receive helps the children to develop their skills, so that, by the time they enter Year 1, the children attain above average levels for their age in this area of learning.

75. In the reception class, children communicate effectively and with confidence through the very good opportunities provided by the teacher where they are encouraged to communicate. For example, children construct trains and a station, working together amicably and discussing ways of improving the strength of the walls or adding extra coaches, so that 'we can take people to places'. When reading the story of The Giant Turnip, the teacher leaves gaps, so that the children can provide the missing words. She also asks questions that enable other children to participate fully. The teacher uses role-play effectively to which the children respond positively. For example, she invited the children to undertake the different roles in the story, in order 'to pull, tug and yank' the giant turnip out of the ground. The activity progressed to the next stage, where the children concentrated on learning to read and to write 'pull and pull and pop'. This learning is consolidated further with the teacher introducing the exclamation mark to end the sentence. She effectively introduced a new word, 'caption', as the title of the story. The higher attaining children are able to write words under their 'phonic fruits' correctly, with letters that are evenly formed. Very good use is made of stories to motivate the children to read the books for themselves. Words and sentences are reproduced on the white boards and repeated in different situations, so that the children come to recognise the same words in other contexts. Displays are clearly labelled so that the children can improve their vocabulary and knowledge. Very well prepared resources assist the children's understanding. For example, the teacher brought into the lesson a large basket of fruit, which the children sorted into sets. When one child who is learning through English as an additional language could think of the name of a favourite fruit in his own language, but not in English, the teacher encouraged him to find out from his mother at the end of the day and to let her know before going home. This is one example of the way the teacher values children's contributions and ensures that they are involved in the learning that is taking place.

### **Mathematical development**

76. Children achieve very well in their mathematical development and begin Year 1 with understanding and skills at a level that is higher than that expected for their age.
77. The teacher seizes every opportunity to enable the children to apply their developing knowledge and understanding of mathematics. For example, registration and exercises are effectively used to reinforce and extend the knowledge of counting from 1 to 10, forwards and backwards, followed by a game of doubling numbers to five. The knowledge of these numbers is consolidated further through singing a song of buying buns, with each child having a turn. Children learn to count and sort a variety of fruit into sets and record results onto a class chart or graph. The teacher takes this learning further by encouraging the children to propose their own criteria. The children respond positively and explain, for example, that they have put the grapefruit next to the melon 'because it is yellow'. The rich indoor environment provides the children with many interesting materials to sort, count, talk about and play with, including sand and water. Display in the reception classroom is used effectively to support children's learning.

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

78. Children enter the reception class with broadly average general knowledge. This area of learning is taught well and, by the time children enter Year 1, they have made good progress and show levels of attainment which are above those expected for their age.
79. The children learn effectively about the world around them through the teacher's carefully planned lessons, which stimulate children's interest. Both adults ask questions skilfully to develop children's knowledge and understanding. Activities enable the children to investigate their surroundings, find out about the past and present events in their own lives and explore aspects of their own environment. School grounds are used extensively, such as the newly developed play area, with attractive flower borders. Children explore their woodland trail, for example, to look for signs of autumn, and they go pond dipping in the summer. In work related to science, they investigate different kinds of fruit and vegetables, using all of their senses. They group these according to similarities and differences and learn new words such as whole, half, slice, skin, pith

and stalk. They understand that different clothes are worn on a hot and a cold day, 'We wrap up when it is cold'. Children are taught how to use the computer and learn how to manipulate the mouse and to pick out letters in words. During the inspection, a pupil was observed manipulating the mouse to move the appropriate fruit to the correct box. The wide range of toys and materials enables the children to explore and use their skills to make models and drawings of the 'very hungry caterpillar', and colouring numbers of spots on butterfly wings.

### **Physical development**

80. Children develop their physical skills well and make good progress over time in the Foundation Stage so that they begin Year 1 with their development exceeding the expected level for their age. This area of learning is taught very well and the reception teacher provides a wide range of interesting activities. These help the children to improve skills such as climbing and jumping, as well as improving finer motor skills when using pencils and scissors. However, as yet, the school has not purchased outdoor playing equipment, such as wheeled vehicles, apparatus for climbing and balancing, but this is planned for in the near future. This was noted in the previous inspection, but at that time, the school did not have a discrete play area for children in the Foundation Stage. There is now an attractive area and the co-ordinator is planning to rectify matters very shortly. The provision would enhance children's physical development further.
81. Children are making good progress in developing physical control and in their manipulative skills. They handle colouring pencils, play-dough tools and construction equipment skilfully. The teaching provides very good opportunities for indoor physical education as observed during the inspection. The teacher prepared a variety of large apparatus for children to explore. They warmed up before using all equipment in turn. The children learned to travel around, under, over and through balancing and climbing equipment. They followed the teacher's instructions and with careful practice, they improved their sequences and moved to other activities. The children used the apparatus eagerly and with confidence. They were observed to be completely engrossed in their work. At the end of the lesson, they cooled down and returned to their class quietly, dressing themselves with increasing independence.

### **Creative development**

82. The children exceed the expectations of the Early Learning Goals for creative development. They progress well as a result of the very good range of planned activities and the very effective teaching. Children enjoy learning and joining in with songs and rhymes. They sing tunefully and tap out rhythms as they sing. During the inspection the children were observed working on repeated sound patterns. The teacher made very good links with children's previous learning by combining syllables with rhythms. The children soon learned to combine beats of 'banana' with 'pear' and to make these into a repeating pattern. They used different kinds of percussion instruments to play these with considerable accuracy. The teacher seized this opportunity to compare and contrast instruments and the sounds they make. At the end of this session, she invited the children to 'take off the musical hats because we are going into the hall to do PE'.
83. The teacher provides numerous activities for role-play, such as playing in the Cosy Café, where children dress up and place orders from the waiters. The 'chef', dressed appropriately in the chef's outfit, creates menus for the café. In the construction area, the children make a pirate ship and talk about 'the strong pirates'. Photographic evidence indicates that children have numerous opportunities to explore stories, such as Goldilocks and The Three Bears. They build a house for the bears and make porridge. The children finger paint, exploring colours and textures. During the inspection, the children were observed using pastels to create pictures of still life, after the style of Cezanne. The teacher helped them to draw in perspective: 'You see, the jug is further away from the plate'. She drew the children's attentions to shape and construction, to help them to observe accurately. In information and communication technology, the children create simple patterns and pictures using an art program. Children enjoy all creative work and confidently explore all the stimulating activities provided for them. The sensitive teaching and intervention of



both the teacher and the classroom assistant, support learning very effectively in this area of children's development.

## **ENGLISH**

84. The pupils' attainment in English is broadly in line with the national average at the end of Year 2, and above the national average in speaking, listening, reading and writing at Year 6.
85. These findings are similar to those suggested by the 2001 National Curriculum tests, where the reading and writing results for pupils then at the end of Year 2 were broadly in line with all schools nationally. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 3 was also close to the national average in reading. When compared with schools with similar intake, pupils were well below average in reading, and below in writing. Pupils then at the end of Year 6 achieved results in their English tests that were above the national average, and in line with those schools with a similar intake. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 or above was well above the national average.
86. Standards of speaking and listening are average at the end of Year 2. By Year 2, pupils are improving their skills and a substantial minority of pupils reach the higher levels, and can talk with assurance in a range of situations, use standard English, and adapt their speech to the needs of listeners. A majority of pupils are confident when talking to an audience or listening to others. They respond thoughtfully to their teacher's questions. Some lower achieving pupils, however, have less confidence in talking to others, and cannot develop clear explanations.
87. In Years 3-6 pupils make good progress, and by the time they are eleven, standards are above average in speaking and listening. Most have a good command of standard English vocabulary and grammar, and show increasing confidence. One higher achieving pupil, for example, can point out that there is more 'technical language' in official documents, and provide examples of what she means. They adapt their talk to specific curriculum areas, respond to and question each other's ideas, and describe their own opinions.
88. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress in this area of English. They listen carefully and participate in discussion with increasing confidence. Teachers ensure that they are given appropriate opportunities for speaking and listening by modifying their language where appropriate to meet the needs of their pupils.
89. Standards of reading reached by the seven year olds are around the national average, partly due a large number of pupils leaving and joining the school. But by the end of Year 2 many pupils use pictures, phonics, and context to help read texts, and have built up a sight vocabulary. They select reading books carefully, and pupils of average and above average attainment can talk about the main events of a story. In the main, parents hear their children read fairly regularly, although home-school reading diaries are not consistently used by teachers. Most pupils use alphabetical texts like dictionaries and know that they offer meanings and help with spelling. Higher attaining pupils know that their dictionary shows plurals of words in colour, and know the word 'definition'. When they move on to work together to explore the CD Rom dictionary many pupils are able to compare and contrast the two different definitions of 'ladybird'. For example, they point out that both use words like 'fly', 'spots' and 'red'.
90. In Years 3-6 pupils make good progress in reading and by the end of the key stage their attainment is above the national average. Most pupils read accurately a variety of texts, and have an understanding of significant themes and characters in the books they read. They identify words in texts like 'methought' or 'sot', which are no longer used, and suggest what they might mean. The best readers have an excellent knowledge of a wide range of texts. One pupil, for example, could compare the structure, plots and characters of works by Conan Doyle, C.S. Lewis, and Tolkien. Most pupils find and make use of information. Almost all pupils, even the lower-attainers, know how to locate different types of book in their library, and use index, contents page or glossary.

91. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in both reading and writing, and are well supported by classroom assistants or well-briefed voluntary helpers. A partially sighted pupil, for example, is provided with suitably enlarged and adapted visual material so that she can play a full part in literacy lessons, and is given touch-typing tuition. The special educational needs co-ordinator ably keeps an overview of these pupils' progress. Dyslexic children, once identified, receive good support. Higher attaining pupils make good progress in English through more challenging and rigorous tasks to meet their needs.

92. Writing standards are in line with national expectations at the end of Year 2. Progress in the acquisition of writing skills is good. By the end of the Key Stage pupils convey their meaning with appropriate and interesting vocabulary. In writing their own definitions for example, they identify key ideas and key words and write their own definitions in a style very close to that of a beginner dictionary. Most pupils use capital letters and full stops correctly. Higher achievers use inverted commas with reasonable accuracy. More simple spelling is usually accurate for most pupils. They recognise that different combinations of letters, such as 'air', 'are', or 'ear', sometimes all make the same sound.
93. In Years 3-6, most pupils make good progress in writing, although attainment in Year 3, which has a higher proportion of lower attaining pupils, is just in line with the national average. By the end of Year 6 most pupils write confidently, in a variety of writing forms. They attain above average standards. They have studied Macbeth and write lively, well-structured poems based on the witches' spell. They write extended pieces of work such as diaries or stories, and most pupils are able to write in paragraphs, and use apostrophes to show possession.
94. Throughout the school handwriting skills are well taught, and pupils are provided with regular opportunities to practise. At the parents' meeting there was a concern expressed over pupils' carelessness. Scrutiny of work shows this is rare. Teachers have high expectations and so most pupils have a concern for accuracy and take care with the presentation of their work.
95. The quality of teaching and learning is good, overall, at both key stages, and never less than satisfactory. A larger proportion of good or better lessons were observed at Key Stage 1. This is an improvement on the last inspection when standards were more variable and there was some unsatisfactory teaching. All teachers follow the format and planning of the National Literacy Strategy, and all pupils receive challenging work appropriate to their level of attainment. Better lessons are characterised by very good knowledge of how to teach literary skills, and clear explanations. They have good pace and variety, with much use of positive feedback and praise. Teachers include all pupils in their questioning, carefully targeting their questions towards different groups. Pupils respond positively to this. Pupils are generally interested in all aspects of English, are attentive, and very willing to take part and contribute. Teachers mark work carefully and many provide some comments which praise achievement or set targets for improvement.
96. The school has successfully implemented the Literacy Strategy, and homework in the form of reading or researching information, and the learning of spellings is beneficial to the progress pupils make. The schemes of work are clear, and give guidance to teachers about what should be taught next, and there is a whole school approach to planning and assessment. However, the use of computers is not fully integrated into the planning of the English curriculum.
97. The subject leader, the headteacher, is well-qualified and experienced, and has a good overview of approaches to literacy and of what individual pupils are achieving in relation to their potential. This has a positive effect on standards. Analysis of pupils' performance is now allowing the school to focus on areas of weakness and target pupils in need of further support to reach the next level of attainment. The subject is generally well resourced and the library has a good collection of books to support the English National Curriculum.

## **MATHEMATICS**

98. Standards of attainment are below average at the age of seven. The present Year 2 is a very small year group which has a larger number of pupils than usual who have special educational needs. There has also been some turbulence in this group. Standards overall therefore are below average although the pupils learn well in lessons and achieve well.
99. By seven, more able pupils order numbers accurately to 1000 and beyond. Pupils identify correctly the properties of two and three-dimensional shapes. They draw simple graphs using information from tally charts. For example, Year 2 pupils create a graph from data they collect from the rest of the class. Pupils carry out investigations, such as finding the missing numbers

and symbols from sums. Higher attaining pupils work confidently at investigative tasks. They explain what they have discovered and most are able to make connections and explain why, giving good reasons for the choices they had made. For example, pupils make discoveries about the amounts of time Santa has to spend on his various tasks and marvel at how busy he is. Some pupils add 2-digit numbers mentally quite quickly, although not all have yet acquired secure knowledge of multiplication tables. They learn effectively about standard and non-standard measures and their relevance to shopping at the supermarket. Pupils are able to estimate and measure and transfer these skills to other subjects such as design and technology. Pupils' knowledge of data handling is reinforced by their opportunities to use computers although this is an area which is in need of development.

100. Pupils in Year 6 attain well above average standards and show very good achievement. These levels confirm a good improvement in attainment since the last inspection. The effective implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy is beginning to have a very positive impact on standards and this is reflected in the very good levels of attainment noted during the inspection.
101. By the age of eleven, pupils measure angles of scalene and equilateral triangles accurately. They discuss 2- and 3-dimensional shapes in terms of their properties knowledgeably and work out the perimeter and area of regular and irregular shapes. Pupils know that graphs need labelled axes and measurement information. They collect information, produce graphs in a variety of forms and interpret data from each other's graphs correctly. The majority of pupils use the four rules of number well and to complex levels. For example, they work confidently at multiplication and division sums and calculate percentages accurately and quickly. They have a well-developed grasp of number and the school's programme of mental arithmetic activities enables them to develop their own strategies for solving problems. They learn well about positive and negative numbers, are proficient with co-ordinates and are able to solve "real life" money problems including purchasing football kit and converting pounds to Euros. They have a good understanding of probability and are familiar with a variety of 3D shapes.
102. Pupils' attitudes to mathematics are good. They enjoy lessons. They are enthusiastic to answer questions in the mental arithmetic sessions. They encourage each other and are pleased with other pupils' success. For example, in one lesson the pupils worked hard answering division puzzles. They had to "show" their answers. All the class was excited by this activity and took part with great enthusiasm.
103. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Pupils in all year groups make good progress in lessons as a result of effective, challenging teaching. Teachers maintain very good pace in lessons so that the pupils are faced with a series of challenging tasks. For example, in one lesson the teacher started the session with a round of quick fire questions all based on a game of multiplication bingo. This fired the pupils' enthusiasm and they worked through the rest of the tasks the teacher gave them maintaining their keen attitude.
104. Planning for lessons is good throughout the school. Teachers know exactly what they want pupils to learn, including key mathematical vocabulary. They share the learning objectives with the pupils at the start of the lesson and try to check attainment of them at the end of it. In most lessons pupils are set interesting activities appropriate to the learning objectives so that they apply themselves well to them. Tasks are graded according to what pupils need to learn next. Assessment procedures are very efficient and teachers record pupils' progress accurately. The marking of pupils' work usually shows them what they need to do to improve. The school makes very good use of the information it gains from these regular assessments. Results are analysed very carefully, trends are identified and modifications made. For instance, in Key Stage 1 last year teachers identified the fact that pupils did not cover some aspects of the curriculum frequently enough. The curriculum was modified and this resulted in higher standards in the end of year tests.
105. Pupils take pride in what they do and most books show very well presented work. They apply their numeracy skills successfully in other areas of the curriculum. They collect data correctly and present their work precisely in a variety of forms, including block graphs and pictograms.

They use these skills well in subjects such as geography, science and design and technology. Pupils use their literacy skills well in numeracy lessons. For example, they use well-structured sentences and a good level of vocabulary to explain their strategies for working out answers in mental arithmetic sessions. They use their information and communication technology skills to compile graphs and bar charts from information they have collected.

106. All aspects of the mathematics curriculum are covered well and statutory requirements are met in full. The co-ordinators monitor the subject carefully. They are very aware of the strengths of the subject and have prepared an action plan to address further improvements. Resources are good and used well. The recent high focus placed on the subject through the introduction of the Numeracy Strategy is already having a positive effect on standards, which are rising. The school provides good opportunities for pupils with all abilities and from all backgrounds to achieve well.

## **SCIENCE**

107. Results of teacher assessment in 2001 showed that, by the end of Year 2, attainment in science was very high in comparison with the national average and high, when compared with similar schools. In the national tests for pupils aged eleven, in the same year, attainment was above the national average and average in relation to similar schools. Taking the performance of boys and girls over the three years 1999 to 2001 together, the average National Curriculum figures show that there are no significant variations in attainment between boys and girls. Standards have continued to rise from 1998, but there was a dip in 2001. However, these results should be treated with some caution, as the cohort of pupils taking the national tests, was small.
108. The previous inspection judged standards to be average. Since then, inspection findings show good improvements in the attainment of the pupils at age seven and eleven. This is related to greater emphasis on experimental and investigative science throughout the school. Pupils, whatever their backgrounds or abilities, achieve well in the subject.
109. In Year 2, the teacher builds on pupils' previous knowledge, by extending this investigation to examining the internal and external structure of a wide range of fruits, including lychees, papaya and pomegranate. Pupils classify fruits by colour of the skins, flesh and seeds. Their senses are engaged in these experiments. Scrutiny of work indicates that the pupils are involved in systematic investigations of all aspects of science. For example, in an investigation on forces and motion, the pupils find out that there is a reason why vehicles travel further from the ramp. One pupil concludes that 'The tractor went further than the fire engine, because it was lighter'. They are beginning to learn about cause and effect, for example, in caring for their health: 'You must brush your teeth with toothpaste - they might get rotten otherwise'.
110. In Year 6, the pupils compare everyday materials and objects on the basis of their properties and relate these to everyday uses. They learn to recognise hazards in materials and to assess risks. During the inspection, Years 5 and 6 were observed researching and discussing gases. They confidently explained compression and gave examples, such as blowtorch, helium airship and compressed air for inflating tyres, to show that they understand uses in everyday life. The pupils show remarkable scientific understanding of sources of gases. One Year 6 pupil explained that 'natural gas is formed by the decomposition of organic materials'. When asked to explain further, the pupil defined organic materials as 'tiny plants and animals'. The pupils in both year groups give examples of everyday uses of gases, such as 'carbon dioxide in fizzy drinks'.
111. Scrutiny of work indicates that all attainment targets in science are appropriately covered, as the pupils move through the school. In Year 6, the pupils investigate light sources and give logical explanations, following their investigations, using torches. One pupil records that 'A solar eclipse is a good natural example of this experiment'. In their research on the earth and beyond, the pupils explain that 'We know the earth is not flat because people have been to space and sent photos back which show that the earth is round'. Through the breadth of their studies, the pupils show clear understanding of solids, liquids and gases, of vibrations and sound, of life processes and living things. The pupils know about the respiratory system, healthy eating and the

importance of exercise to good health. In their experiments on pitch, pupils find out how various objects muffled the sound of the drum, 'by creating a barrier around the drum, when hitting it'.

112. The quality of teaching is good, with some very good lessons observed during the inspection. The teachers provide a very good learning environment, where the pupils want to learn. Moreover, they enthuse their pupils about science and the excitement of finding out for themselves, through careful investigations. The teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and how to teach it. The strong emphasis on investigations and very good assessments of what pupils know, understand and can do, result in progressive learning and acquisition of scientific skills. Teachers' skilful questioning during lessons helps the pupils to think scientifically. In the mixed Year 5 and 6 class, the teacher, probed her pupils' understanding of gases with questions such as, 'What do we know about hot air?' or 'What will happen, when the gas runs out?'. The pupils explain that escaping gas (from a gas stove) will continue to burn until the pressure goes or it is switched off. The classroom assistant interacts with the pupils well, asking questions and gives explanations as necessary, 'We use butane or calor gas for welding'. Relationships are outstanding throughout the school. As a result, teachers create a very positive environment, in which pupils are keen to learn. All teachers give homework regularly. This is carefully planned so that the homework given, consolidates and extends pupils' knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts.
113. Teachers, throughout the school, ensure that in science lessons, the pupils engage their developing skills of literacy and numeracy. Results from a permeability test are tabulated in Year 4 and ranked on the basis of analysis. If appropriate, other subjects are linked to investigations. For example, in Year 2, the pupils investigate games now and from the past. They record data about their favourite fruit, using information and communication technology. There are other examples in Key Stage 2, where the pupils access the Internet to find out scientific information. However, the use of information and communication technology is not always systematically planned for in science lessons.
114. The curriculum, based on the national guidelines ensures good breadth and balance. The subject is being managed by the newly appointed subject leader, with the headteacher keeping an overview of developments. A particular strength of the school's arrangements, is the close partnership that exists between all staff. They all work towards the same goal: improving teaching and learning for pupils of all abilities and from all backgrounds.
115. Science makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are good examples throughout the school of this provision. In Years 5 and 6, the pupils show delight in finding out for themselves, how air travelled. Through the setting up of group work, the pupils learn to co-operate and sharing resources with one another. They are excited about their work in science. The pupils use their independent skills and show much maturity and empathy by sharing and helping each other, including those who find science difficult. This enables the pupils to participate fully in all activities, where they can make the best progress of which they are capable.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

116. The school has maintained its good standards since the last inspection report. Standards are above national expectations, and good progress is made over time. Some pupils produce work of a high standard, contributing examples of work to Woodford Lodge visual gallery and to County Hall.
117. In the Foundation Stage, pupils explore colour, texture and shape in two and three dimensions. They are introduced to Cezanne's still life work and make similar arrangements of fruit. The teacher encourages them to move them around to create more pleasing aesthetic effects. They observe and draw them carefully and use pastels appropriately to colour them.

118. By the end of Year 2 pupils know more about the work of painters like Cezanne. They can explain that he was a painter, lived some time ago, and painted fruit and dancers. They paint closely-observed portraits of themselves, as they look into a mirror. They use ready-mixed paint to colour face, eyes and hair. After this dries, detail is added with felt tip pens. Lower achieving pupils have a more outline approach, but those pupils capable of higher achievement have careful, accurate and very detailed positioning of facial features.
119. Pupils in Years 3-6 review the work of twentieth-century artists like Picasso, and make aesthetic judgements about the artists whose work they consider. They understand the ways Picasso's paintings are deliberately distorted and can experiment with cutting up and distorting their own self-portraits. Almost all have good sketching skills. They investigate the effect of using pastels to show line and tone, or the contrasting use of warm or cold colours. To supplement their sketch books, some classes are beginning to use art journals and these help pupils to take responsibility for annotating, modifying and evaluating their work.
120. Pupils respond well to art in all classes, and pupils with special educational needs play a full part in lessons. Most pupils sustain interest and enthusiasm throughout the lesson, and work together well. In one class for example, better artists helped weaker artists to create a computer-generated portrait in the style of Modigliani.
121. The quality of teaching is good overall at both key stages. Teachers mostly have good subject knowledge. They discuss the work of artists with pupils, and use the vocabulary of art well to develop their pupils' language and understanding. They develop art skills systematically, building on prior learning, although three-dimensional work is less strong in some classes. Pupils are challenged at a high level and good use is made of time. Good use is made of links with other subjects, so that older pupils, for example, examine and reproduce Ancient Greek black-figure styles of vase painting.
122. Good displays of pupil work reflect the value placed upon them by the school, and raise teacher expectations. Some encourage an interactive response. The school seizes opportunities to have artists in residence to widen the curriculum and some pupils are still proud of their contribution to the millennium owl wood sculpture. Art is well led by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable co-ordinator, and good use is made of resources.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

123. Standards in design and technology throughout both key stages are above those expected for pupils of their age. Since the last inspection, which judged standards to be in line with expectations the school has made significant improvements in the subject. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, achieve well from their starting point.
124. It was not possible to observe any lessons in design and technology. Judgements, therefore, are made on the basis of scrutiny of pupils' work on displays and in their books, talking with teachers and pupils and on photographic evidence. Pupils in Year 2 design and make puppets, using felt and different coloured threads for decorations. They consider improvements they need to make, before deciding on the final product. The pupils in Year 3 design and make a variety of structures out of straws. They evaluate why it is strong and what makes it stronger. Using newspapers, the pupils made a tall structure, modifying their design after careful analysis, to see where improvements can be made. This design leads to progressive learning through the teacher's careful planning to build on pupils' previous learning. The next step involves pneumatics. The pupils will make a giant 3D Iron Man, with moving parts. This is just one example of how teachers combine areas from other subjects to extend pupils' skills progressively. Year 4 pupils made Viking helmets in conjunction with their history project. These are made out of papier mâché, effectively decorated with metallic paint and beads. The final products are attractively displayed for others to enjoy. Pupils in years 5 and 6 made Christmas decorations for their parents. They considered designs and purpose and evaluated their finished products, before taking them home. Past projects included making Japanese lanterns, which they carried round

the streets of Chester, in an inter-schools event. The pupils remember making Roman chariots and how they considered the construction and its suitability for the purpose. In years 4 and 5, the pupils made books, for example, about River Amazon. There is an outstanding example where the pupils used a variety of techniques, to make covers for their books. They used a plastic sheet, which they painted with PVC paints very effectively, to portray 'Hot and steamy, dark and deep' or "Reeks of rotten plants', of the river. Pupils have opportunities to learn through practical tasks to build on their developing skills, techniques, processes and knowledge. These include food technology, where the pupils also learn the importance of hygiene.

125. The subject leader is aware of the standards in the school, but she feels that the subject is in need of further development. Towards this end, the objective is to support and develop the quality of teaching and learning in the subject. The policy has recently been reviewed and updated in the light of the national documentation. Teachers are very imaginative in linking subject areas to developing pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. For example, pupils use their numeracy skills to measure resources needed to make their models. When evaluating their designs, pupils note the weaknesses and make improvements as necessary.
126. The whole school was involved in making a model of an owl, from a large log, to commemorate the millennium. They worked with a sculptor in residence and each learned to use chisels safely and accurately, to carve out a part of the owl. The final effect is outstanding and greatly adds to the attractiveness of the grounds. This is a good example of how the subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

127. At the end of Year 2 and Year 6, standards are in line with those expected for pupils for their age, and pupils, including those with special needs make sound progress. This maintains the standards achieved at the time of the last inspection.
128. At the end of Year 2, most pupils understand the many uses of maps. They know that to find cities like London or Paris they need an atlas, and that to find streets they need a much larger scale map. They use a local map to find where their school is, or local features like the war memorial or church. Those pupils capable of higher attainment can use the street features to explain the best route from school or home to other local places, although they still do not recognise the measurement of scale. They have studied their own locality carefully. They made sound use of fieldwork, beginning with a study of their school, and moving on to visit local shops or to carry out traffic surveys. Most children have good knowledge of the local area. They distinguish physical features like ponds and hills, and human features like roads or Chester Zoo, and explain how some of these features have changed. Pupils who have visited Burwardsley are able to compare it with Upton. Knowledge of worldwide places is more limited, although all pupils make Ainsley Owl passports each year to learn a little about particular countries.
129. By the end of Year 6, when more fieldwork investigations outside the classroom have been undertaken, pupils have a sound understanding of the importance of location. They have extended their study of their own locality to Chester. They know more about physical and human features of places in other parts of the world, and can see similarities and differences between these. For example, in comparing the maximum and minimum temperatures over time in Grasmere, Katmandu and Goetzens, they see that Katmandu is the warmest place and offer explanations. Higher achieving pupils make links between the height of mountains and temperature. They can research various mountainous regions and plot them on a map of the world. Most have a sound grasp of geographical language. They show knowledge of the dangers of mountain areas, and discuss avalanches, blizzards or frostbite sensibly. They know about environmental issues, and even younger pupils know how people cause damage to or improve the environment. They suggest ways of recycling litter, and devise posters to encourage other pupils to help.
130. The number of geography lessons observed in the inspection at Key Stage 2 was very limited, and no lessons were seen at Key Stage 1. Additional evidence was gathered by scrutiny and discussion. The standard of work seen in books and in classroom display indicates that



geography is studied effectively over time. Most pupils enjoy geography, and engage in class work with interest. Work is carefully planned and there are adequate resources. In the lessons seen the quality of teaching varied. In one lesson, although the teacher's knowledge was adequate, the pace was too slow, and there was insufficient variety of activity and challenge to involve all pupils fully. In one very good lesson careful planning and preparation, and well-focused questioning, ensured pupils were well-motivated and develop their own ideas. Pupils brought in data from their own computers at home, and other pupils were able to locate and use relevant web-sites on the computer from a list prepared beforehand by the teacher. At Key Stage Two some teachers use news footage of natural disasters and other geography-related events to enliven lessons and make distant places more real.

131. The subject leader works hard to promote the subject and has plans to monitor the teaching of colleagues in the classroom. Because geography is planned as part of a two or four year topic cycle, there are some lengthy gaps in pupils' study of the subject. During the last inspection there was no geographical scheme of work, and this has now been rectified, ensuring more systematic development of geographical skills.

## **HISTORY**

132. The findings of the last inspection showed that standards were broadly in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages. During this inspection it was not possible to observe any direct teaching at either key stage. This is due to the two-year cycle at Key Stage One and four-year cycle at Key Stage Two, so history is not taught in some half-terms. Evidence was gathered from an analysis of pupils' work, displays around the school, assessment records, and discussion with pupils and the history subject leader. These show that the standards of attainment are similar to those of the last inspection. At that time there was no scheme of work to aid planning and this has now been rectified.
133. By the end of Year 2 pupils know about old and new toys and can describe some of the characteristics of old toys. Higher achieving pupils talk about the materials used and how changes in technology have affected toy manufacture. Pupils understand chronological sequence and explain the different toys used by children of different ages. They answer questions like 'What sorts of toys did your parents or grandparents play with?'. They use words associated with the passing of time like 'older', 'younger' or 'very old', and know some of the key changes in their own lives from when they were a baby and toddler. Some pupils explain how they know that some teddy bears are much older than others. They have studied famous people like Louis Braille. They order the main events of his life and know why he is famous. They select appropriate pictures to illustrate the story, and compare and contrast his clothing with that worn today.
134. By the end of Year 6, pupils have a sound understanding of periods of history like Ancient Greece. They have developed their knowledge and understanding of life in the city states of Athens and Sparta, and the wars between them. They know the main differences between the states, and higher achieving pupils, give reasons for some of these. They understand about Greek temples and how they were built, and the nature and actions of the Gods in whom the Greeks believed. They have found out about the Persian invasion and the battle of Marathon, and can give an account of the story. They have sound knowledge of chronology, although only the highest achievers can sequence the key periods of history and developments they have covered. Most have developed their understanding of chronological language. They are less confident in describing the varied sources of evidence for the period, although they know about vase painting and sites like the Acropolis. Good links are made with other subjects. Pupils make drama masks, and copy jar paintings. They also reinforce their historical investigation skills through the use of history reference books from the library and the Library Loan Service. The subject is well led by an enthusiastic and well-informed co-ordinator who has clear plans for the development of the subject.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

135. The pupils' attainment in information and communication technology is in line with national expectations for seven and for eleven-year-olds. This is a good improvement since the last inspection, when their attainment and progress were below the national expectations in all year groups. The subject featured as the key issue for action. However, while the school has made strides to improve teaching and learning, there were delays in accelerating this process. This is attributed to unsatisfactory resources and insecure subject knowledge of the teachers. The school has since acquired improved resources and teachers' knowledge is improving, through professional development. A subject leader has recently been appointed, with a specific job description of developing the subject, so that the standards are commensurate with those attained in the core subjects.
136. By the end of Year 2, the pupils understand that a variety of information can be entered and stored on the computer. Pupils, for example, record their science findings and display the results, using a block graph. They explore a shape program to consolidate their understanding of shape and space in mathematics. In Year 3 and 4, the pupils manipulate shapes to draw a friend in a moving position. They use geometric shapes to create a collage, after the style of Matisse. Year 6 pupils know how to access the 'net' for their work in other subjects. However, many of the acquired skills are learned at home. Pupils generously share these with others as necessary, for example, in geography, and abstract the required information appropriately. The use of information and communication technology across all subjects is not always a carefully planned feature of lessons. As a result, pupils miss opportunities to consolidate and to extend their skills in the subject, and to reinforce knowledge and understanding across the full range of the curriculum.
137. No direct teaching of information and communication technology was observed during the inspection. In discussion with the headteacher, it is clear that teachers gather pupils round computers to teach specific skills on a regular basis, which they practise later. However, as yet, systematic and progressive teaching of skills does not take place in every year group. Nevertheless, with the recent training of all staff, the situation is improving and there are examples of work, which clearly support pupils' learning in other subjects. Year 6 pupils use spreadsheets to make calculations for multiplication and division of numbers, for example, on holidays, working out costs of accommodation, trips, flights for families and the cost of souvenirs. Pupils used formulae to work out calculations. They also show that they can cut and paste and import an illustration into writing, using a wrap around technique.
138. Pupils have positive attitudes towards the subject and respond very well to the individual tasks set. They talk with interest about work they have done and they use the equipment with care.
139. The curriculum for information and communication technology is sound, based on a national scheme. Assessment procedures are developing. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 have folders of their work and in Years 3-6, the work is entered into topic books. However, as yet, there are no systems in place, to track pupils' progress over time.

## **MUSIC**

140. Pupils throughout the school attain standards expected for their age. This broadly reflects the findings of the last inspection. They sing, perform, compose, listen to and appraise music satisfactorily. Pupils enjoy their music making activities and their achievement is sound across the school. Pupils with special educational needs, and those with English as an additional language, take full part in all musical activities. In assemblies, pupils sing tunefully and control their voices when the music calls for quiet singing.
141. Music education is effectively enriched through the high quality instrumental tuition, for which the parents pay. Pupils learn to play a variety of instruments, including clarinet, flute, keyboard,

violin, alto saxophone and trumpet. Pupils also have an opportunity to learn to play the recorder. There is an after school club for recorders and for a choir. At present, there are no boys singing in the choir. The newly appointed co-ordinator for the subject is taking steps to address this issue.

142. Only one music lesson was observed during the inspection. In this mixed reception and Year 1 lesson, the teacher was very successful indeed in teaching all the pupils how to sing and play different rhythms. They all managed to maintain a remarkably accurate beat. By judging standards of singing and playing in the school, it is clear that the quality of teaching is at least sound. The quality of instrumental tuition is very good. The peripatetic teachers inspire the pupils to enjoy their music and to practise techniques, to improve their performances. These pupils are confident to share their developing skills with others, in assemblies, for example. During a celebration assembly, one pupil played a piece by Mozart on the piano, and another, played the flute. These sessions provide good opportunities for the pupils to share their work with others and to play to an audience.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

143. By the age eleven, most pupils achieve standards in line with national expectations for their age. A significant number achieve good standards in dance, games, swimming and athletics. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection. Assessment of pupils' performance is a strong feature of lessons seen. The school provides opportunities for its pupils in Year 6 to participate in a wide range of outdoor and adventurous activities at a residential centre. It provides a number of out-of-school sporting activities. The curriculum is currently based on national guidelines, which the subject leader is reviewing. The school provides equal opportunity for pupils of all abilities and from all backgrounds to learn well. The school is well placed to bring about further improvement.
144. Throughout the school, pupils learn about the importance of warming up when taking part in exercise. They understand very well the heart's function and the health-related benefits of exercise. Teachers teach the value of health and safety; for instance, how to bend the knees when landing after jumping with feet together. Pupils learn to play games and understand the need for rules. In school swimming lessons, older pupils develop their water competence via a series of exercises designed to improve their basic swimming strokes. By the time they leave the school, the majority of pupils achieve the national standard of swimming of twenty-five metres unaided. School teams participate in a number of competitive sporting events against other schools, notably in athletics during the summer.
145. There is equal access for all to all activities and the majority of pupils make good progress as they develop and improve their skills. Progress in dance lessons leads to refinement of movements, improvement in physical control and appreciation of space. In athletics, pupils benefit from a range of well thought out activities each designed to offer them further challenge. The school provides a number of extra curricular opportunities such as Kwik cricket and "Let's Bike." Both boys and girls have the chance to make progress in developing appropriate skills in out-of-school coaching activities such as the soccer sessions organised by Chester City F.C. The school's provision in dance is enhanced by a volunteer parent who teaches classes in such recent topics as the Egyptians with Year 4 and the human body with year 2.
146. Pupils' response in physical education lessons is usually good. The vast majority of pupils enjoy their lessons. They participate fully and high levels of enjoyment are evident in the activities seen. Pupils work hard to develop their skills and the majority work co-operatively during group and team activities. They are happy to demonstrate and take pride in their physical prowess.
147. The quality of teaching is good. In the most effective lessons, teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge, plan their lessons effectively and have high expectations of their pupils. They give the pupils every opportunity to practise and to improve. Activities are well planned and ensure the progressive development of skills. They have a high level of challenge, which inspires pupils to work hard. Teachers are determined to achieve high standards and will settle for nothing

less. They use pupil demonstrations very effectively to assess performance and to help pupils to improve. In all lessons, there is a strong emphasis on the importance of safety. Teachers also consistently point out the benefits of regular exercise on the body. Very young pupils explain how exercise makes the heart beat faster as it pumps oxygen to the muscles.

148. The school has good facilities for physical education with an adequate hall, large playing field and hard play area. However at present limitations in the school's storage space means that much equipment and furniture are stored around the sides of the hall. This not only presents a hazard but also impedes the range of physical education activities that can be offered in the hall. The co-ordinator works hard and supports colleagues well with curriculum information and by reviewing planning.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

149. Standards have been improved since the last inspection. They match the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus by the age of seven and exceed them by the time they leave the school. The school has recently made a considerable effort to plan for pupils' progress in skills, knowledge and understanding. The co-ordinator has prepared a good policy and helpful guidance for teachers. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning is good at both key stages.
150. The curriculum has two strands; one is to encounter religion and the other is to respond to religion, in line with the local area agreed syllabus. During their time at the school pupils learn effectively about the nature of religious belief and about many of the world's religions, whilst exploring in more detail the beliefs and practices of Christianity. Teachers give pupils good opportunities to be still and reflect. These contribute effectively to the spiritual side of school life. For example, during assemblies, there are opportunities for pupils to listen quietly to stories. They have time to pray quietly and reflect on the wonder of life.
151. In the Reception class and Years 1 and 2, staff plan opportunities for pupils to discuss their ideas and feelings; for example, what makes them feel vulnerable or happy. Pupils learn about celebrations, such as the Chinese New Year, Christmas, Diwali and the Jewish New Year. Teachers listen carefully to pupils and challenge their ideas through good questioning techniques. Consequently, learning is good and pupils reach expected standards.
152. At Years 3-6, pupils study the some of the major religions of the world. Teachers plan interesting tasks to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. They give pupils opportunities to use their literacy skills well. For example, in Year 6, a visiting teacher runs through some of the major events of the New Testament. Pupils memorise them using a series of rhyming strategies. They are required to listen very carefully and commit them to memory. In another class pupils discover the symbolism of the washing procedure, 'wudu' from the Islamic faith, which is performed with great respect by a Muslim child. Pupils learn that in the religion of Islam there is only one god but that Hindus believe in many gods. Their learning is very good and they achieve well. Thus they learn to value and respect a variety of religious beliefs.
153. In most lessons, teachers involve all of the class in discussions. This means that pupils are able to bring their own experiences to the fore and interpret them. Teachers have high expectations of what their pupils are capable of. These they share with pupils and this helps to motivate them to learn well. A good example of this in a Year 2 class is where pupils discuss the importance of food in Christian celebrations and recall what happens on their own birthdays. The teacher's good knowledge of all the pupils, together with an understanding of their individual needs, enabled her to encourage them to share their ideas as a group. Through the discussion the pupils showed a great deal of maturity and understanding of the nature of celebrations. Teachers also have a very clear idea of what they want their pupils to learn. In this they are well aided by the school's curriculum framework with its rolling programme from year to year to ensure full coverage of the curriculum for all. Teaching is considerably enhanced by the good programme of visits to neighbouring places of worship and by lessons and demonstrations from visiting experts.

154. The co-ordinator has worked hard to support colleagues to ensure that pupils of all abilities and from all backgrounds respond well to lessons and enjoy the opportunities to discuss and share ideas. She has devised a programme of topics that change year by year to make sure that the curriculum is covered by all pupils.
155. Pupils behave well, showing respect for each other and adults. Both staff and pupils show a high level of sensitivity and understanding towards each other. Relationships are outstandingly good and everyone's contributions are equally valued. This is a very good feature of religious education in school.