

INSPECTION REPORT

SANDIWAY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Sandiway, Northwich

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique reference number: 111050

Headteacher: Mrs G Thorley

Reporting inspector: Mr David Carrington
15414

Dates of inspection: 1st – 4th October 2001

Inspection number: 224103

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 4 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Norley Road
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Cheshire

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Christopher Alvin

Date of previous inspection: 23rd June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
15414 Mr David Carrington	Registered inspector	Art and design Design and technology Physical education	Characteristics of the school The school's results and pupils' achievements Teaching and learning Leadership and management
9928 Mr Alan Dobson	Lay inspector		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Care and welfare of pupils The partnership with parents
1189 Mrs Sharon Brown	Team inspector	English History Areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage Special educational needs Equal opportunities	
7593 Mr John Collier	Team inspector	Mathematics Music Religious education	
27541 Mr John Collins	Team inspector	Science Geography Information and communication technology	The curriculum

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Inspection Quality Division
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Sandiway Primary School is situated in a residential village about three miles to the west of Northwich in Cheshire. The school is housed in fairly modern buildings and is surrounded by pleasant playing fields and a well-planned area for the youngest children to play. It has 91 boys and 93 girls aged four to eleven, most of whom joined the school in the September before their fifth birthday. There are seven single age classes and eight teachers, including the headteacher. The pupils live in Sandiway and the surrounding district, but over the years the proportion of pupils who travel more than three miles to school has increased substantially. This year, the proportion of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is below the level found in most primary schools, although the proportion of pupils with statements of SEN is about average. All the pupils are white and everyone speaks English as their main language. Very few pupils are entitled to free school meals. Pupils have at least the expected level of skills and knowledge when they start school and overall attainment on entry is above average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Sandiway Primary School is a very effective school. The quality of all-round education is very good. Standards are better than those usually found because the quality of teaching and learning are both good. The headteacher gives very good leadership to the school and other staff support her very ably. Everyone in school, adults and pupils alike, are committed to hard work and good standards. The pupils are at the heart of the school; staff know them very well as individuals and they grow into mature and sensible learners. There are one or two aspects that remain for continued development, but school managers have identified them clearly in their improvement plans and the prospects for the future of the school are bright. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Children make a very good start in reception and because progress is consistent, standards are good overall and very good in English and art and design by the end of Year 6.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good and pupils make good progress because there is a rich curriculum that provides high quality experiences.
- Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported and they learn effectively.
- Pupils develop into very pleasant children who are interesting to talk to because the spiritual, moral and cultural development of pupils is very good; their social development is excellent and the quality of relationships is one of the school's prime assets.
- The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher. The dedicated staff team and the governors give strong support in the quest for improvement.

What could be improved

- The role of subject co-ordinators is not yet as strongly focused on standards and school performance as in most primary schools.
- Ways to assess what pupils have learned and the use of information gained through assessment could both be enhanced.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress with improvement since the last inspection because standards have been held at good levels and boosted in some cases. In addition, all of the key issues identified in 1997 have been pursued with commitment and success:

1. Ensuring swimming is taught as required by the PE curriculum.
2. Completing schemes of work for all subjects and monitor their implementation.
3. Providing staff training in the use of information technology so skills and knowledge are taught successfully.

Because staff are a united team in their bid to raise standards and the governors give valuable support in this, the prospects for continuing improvement are good.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	All schools			Similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
English	A	B	A	A	very high A*
Mathematics	A	D	A*	A	well above average A
Science	A	C	B	C	above average B
					average C
					below average D
					well below average E
					very low E*

Similar schools are those schools with up to 8% of pupils entitled to free school meals.

Because the numbers of boys and girls are relatively small, just one more or less achieving the expected level can have a big impact on the school's results. Nonetheless, standards at the age of eleven have generally been at high levels in the national tests during recent years. In 2001, Year 6 pupils at Sandiway Primary School achieved very well when compared nationally. Indeed, the results in mathematics put the school amongst the top 5% of all primary schools. When compared with those primary schools with up to 8% of pupils entitled to free school meals, standards were well above average in English and mathematics and average in science.

Standards achieved by seven-year-old pupils were not as high in 2001 as those achieved by the eleven-year-old pupils. There were more pupils with special educational needs in Year 2 in 2000-1 and this contributed to the overall results. However, results in Year 2 have generally been good or very good during the last five years.

Girls do not always do quite as well in tests in both Years 2 and 6 as the boys. Inspectors did not observe any significant difference in the interest, concentration and effort shown by boys and girls in lessons.

Art and design is a particular strength of the school, as is English. The artwork in school is vibrant and of very good quality. Whilst standards in geography, history, information and communication studies and religious education are satisfactory, they are not yet at the good levels found in other subjects. The school sets appropriate targets for pupils to achieve at the end of Year 6 and pupils make good progress toward these. The overall level of standards in school is good.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. This is a particular strength of the pupils. They enjoy coming to school and they listen well and work hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils are very well-behaved at all times and are very willing learners. There have been no exclusions in recent years.

Personal development and relationships	Very good. The personal development of pupils is something that the school does very well. Pupils are very pleasant children and the relationships they form are excellent.
Attendance	Very good. The level of attendance is much better than is usually found in primary schools.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	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.

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching during the inspection and much that was of very good or excellent quality. The quality of teaching is very good in the reception class and in some other years in school. It is at least good in the remaining classes. Teaching is very good in art and design and is good in all other subjects, including English and mathematics.

The strengths of teaching include teachers' subject knowledge, their high expectations, the very good teaching of basic skills of English and mathematics, the high quality support given by the non-teaching staff, particularly for pupils with special educational needs, and the very effective management of pupils.

Aspects of teaching for improvement are few, but the setting, sharing and reviewing of targets with pupils in lessons and marking could be further improved.

Pupils learn well; lessons are interesting and motivating and pupils work hard. Their development as mature and responsible learners is good. All pupils produce the quality of work that they are capable of.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The curriculum is very rich and provides pupils with very good opportunities for learning. The thematic approach works well generally though there is a need to review the emphasis given to a few non-core subjects.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. These pupils are given very good support, particularly by the non-teaching staff. Their work is planned carefully to help them make good progress and most achieve their personal targets.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. This is one of the chief strengths of the school. Pupils' social development is excellent and they become caring children who enjoy outstanding relationships and who collaborate most effectively. The spiritual development of pupils is another key strength. Pupils reflect in depth about the things that they find attractive and special. Moral and cultural education are also very good.

How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Staff know their pupils very well and they take very good care of them. Assessment procedures require further improvement in order to provide all the necessary information to enable the setting and sharing of personal targets for learning.
The partnership with parents	Good. Parents have positive opinions of the school. Most parents join the school in an effective partnership to educate their children. Parents could be given more information in advance about the curriculum.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher gives very good leadership to the school. She is very ably supported by the deputy headteacher and all other staff. Together they form a strong team who are committed to high standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors work hard in the interests of the school and they know its strengths and weaknesses well. They make the necessary checks and comparisons to ensure that the school applies the principles of best value successfully.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Comprehensive data is collected and analysed to show how well the school is performing. Co-ordinators could be more involved in the process of checking and evaluating the strengths and shortcomings of the school. Successful action is taken to bring continuing improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Good. There are no shortages of staff, accommodation or learning resources. All forms of resources are well used in the best interests of the pupils. Additional funding, for example that to support pupils with special educational needs, is spent wisely to support successful learning.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like coming to school. • It is easy to talk to staff when parents have concerns or suggestions. • Teaching quality is good. • Staff have high expectations of the pupils. • Their children are becoming mature and responsible learners. • Behaviour is good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents could be better informed about the progress that their children are making. • Amounts of homework are inconsistent. • The school could work more closely with parents.

The inspection team has no hesitation in agreeing with the positive views of parents. In addition inspectors judge that that levels of homework are suitable and that the school works constructively with parents. However, the information about pupils' progress could be more comprehensive.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

The size of some classes varies from year to year. In some cases the class is small. Where this is the case, one pupil more or fewer gaining the expected level will have a significant impact on the overall results. For this reason, statistical comparison may not be totally reliable.

1. Since the previous inspection, standards have generally been sustained at a good level in school. This applies as much to the results in the Year 2 national tests each year, as it does to those in Year 6.
2. In the Year 6 national tests, results were well above the level found in most primary schools in English and were very high in mathematics and above average in science. The school's Year 6 results in mathematics placed it in the top five per cent band of all primary schools nationally. When these results are set against those found in other schools with up to eight per cent of pupils entitled to free school meals, pupils in school did very well overall. This year, standards are well above average in English and above average in mathematics and science. This reflects the different profile of the current Year 6 class who are not likely to achieve as many level 5 grades as compared to last year.
3. Pupils learn well and make good progress at Sandiway Primary School because teachers expect much from them. The level of challenge in the work is very good and this taxes the highest attainers properly. There are some particularly gifted and talented pupils in school and they do very well. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels 3 and 5 in the national tests has improved since the previous inspection and most years, one or two pupils work at, or close to, level 6 by the time they leave school aged eleven. In all, pupils make good progress towards the appropriate targets set for them at the age of eleven.
4. All pupils are expected to be as successful as this in their own terms. Pupils with special educational needs, for example, are given very good support by teachers and the non-teaching staff and this enables them to work well towards their individual targets. The support staff are particularly successful in encouraging and coaxing these pupils to work with confidence and to achieve very respectable standards.
5. During the inspection, there were no pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and none spoke English as an additional language. In past years there have been a small number of such children, including refugees. School records show that these pupils did as well as the other pupils and that they were very valued members of the school community.
6. The national test results in the most recent four years have shown some difference in the attainment of boys and girls. In general, girls did not do as well as the boys in Year 2. This trend in boys' and girls' attainment is opposite to that found nationally. Inspectors looked carefully at this trend, but did not identify reasons for it during their observations. In lessons, girls and boys were equally well involved in the activities, they worked as hard as each other and maintained interest for the same span of time. The school monitors the results of boys and girls carefully and has identified resources and topics that are equally attractive to both boys and girls.

7. When children start in the reception class, their level of skill and knowledge is at least at the expected level and some children already attain well. During their first year in school, they make very strong progress and nearly everyone achieves the expected goals by the end of the reception year. Pupils make good progress through the infant and junior classes and maintain good standards. Performance is best in art and design and standards are well above those expected for seven and eleven-year-old pupils. Standards in English rise from above average at the age of seven to well above average by the age of eleven. Attainment is above that expected in mathematics, science, design and technology (DT), music and physical education (PE). It is at the expected level in geography, history, information and communication technology (ICT) and religious education (RE). Inspectors saw some good work in each of these last four subjects, but this is not as consistent across the school as in the other work. The school has identified the closer monitoring of standards by subject co-ordinators as one of its main priorities in a bid to keep standards strong, and this task forms one of the two key issues from the inspection.

8. The school has good procedures for analysing the national test results to identify patterns of achievement. The school sets sensible overall targets for English and mathematics by the age of eleven and it tracks individual progress carefully. The target setting procedures do not reflect clearly enough the school's expectations for individual achievement. Because of this there is no simple way to track progress to show that pupils are achieving their potential.

9. Where standards are best, as identified above, this is because expectations are high, challenge is sharp and the work is motivating and enjoyable. Where the results are not as high, the systematic development of skills and knowledge is not as consistent and/or the emphasis given to the subject in thematic work is not as strong as for other elements. The school is keen to tackle these shortcomings and the shared commitment to improvement and its past track record suggests that standards will be more uniformly high in the future.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. The pupils have a very positive attitude to school and learning. This is apparent throughout the school, confirming that the high standards observed in the previous inspection have been fully maintained.

11. Pupils like school and have a high opinion of it. They know they are there to learn. They settle down quickly, are interested, attentive and very keen to join in. When given a task they show very good levels of concentration and perseverance. Lessons usually have a buzz of activity. Pupils work very hard and show a real pleasure in achievement, typified in a year 2 science lesson, where groups became positively excited as they succeeded in making a simple electrical circuit. This pleasure in achievement is impressive because it is very much part of the basic ethos of the school, not the result of a system of rewards or a highly competitive environment.

12. Behaviour is very good; a similar judgement to the previous inspection. This opinion also reflects the parents' views. Very high standards are expected and achieved without continual reference to school rules. Praise, used appropriately by the teachers, is effective and appreciated by the pupils. Noise levels are very low producing an atmosphere that is very conducive to learning. This is particularly noticeable in the open plan area of year 5 and year 6, where during the inspection an activity-based year 6 art lesson caused no disturbance whatsoever to a year 5 lesson on personal and social education. Movement around the school is very orderly. Dining is civilised with very good table manners apparent.

Playgrounds have a happy and friendly feel where pupils mix very well together. Pupils are not worried about bullying and express confidence in the staff's ability to sort out any problems. There have been no exclusions in recent times.

13. Relationships in the school are extremely friendly. Pupils are polite and courteous. They get on very well with each other and have an easy although respectful relationship with the staff. They make visitors feel extremely welcome. When working in pairs or larger groups, pupils work very sensibly and productively. During class discussions, pupils listen attentively to each other's opinions. They show clear respect for others' beliefs, as witnessed in a year 4 lesson on the Jewish festival of Sukkoth.

14. As pupils move up through the school they show increasing maturity and very good levels of personal responsibility. By year 6 pupils are very interesting to talk to. They are articulate and confident without being precocious. They take on additional responsibilities enthusiastically such as helping reception children to settle into school life. School clubs are well attended and homework, when given, is taken seriously.

15. The pupils' very positive attitudes, their very good behaviour and their friendly relationships form a very firm base for their learning. They are also very pleasant children, a credit to the school and their parents.

16. Pupils with special educational needs achieve standards appropriate for their age and ability. Pupils are very well behaved, enjoy their activities and have very good attitudes to learning. Most are eager to succeed, take a pride in their work and have good self-esteem.

17. The level of attendance is much better than is usually found in primary schools. This is broadly similar to the situation found on the previous inspection. Holidays in term time are not a major reason for absence. The start to the school day is punctual, though the practice of not marking registers first thing means that sometimes the first session does not have a clear beginning.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

18. The previous inspection report stated that the quality of teaching was good and a strength of the school. Since then, there have been a number of new staff in the school and they have shown the same good teaching as their predecessors. Thus, the school has made good progress in maintaining and strengthening the quality of teaching. During the present inspection, teaching quality was also judged to be good overall and a strength of the school.

19. The good teaching extends to all parts of the school. Every teacher observed taught more lessons that were of good or very good quality than were satisfactory. The proportion of lessons judged very good or better was considerably greater than is found in most primary schools. There was some excellent teaching and none was judged unsatisfactory. The scrutiny of pupils' work from last year showed that this pattern of good teaching is experienced by pupils in weeks other than that of inspection.

20. The quality of learning follows that of teaching. Lessons are settled learning experiences where the pupils work hard, show very good concentration and interest levels and build skills, knowledge and understanding at a good rate. The pupils are very much at the heart of the staff's work. Their individual needs are known well and the work is made involving, stimulating and motivating.

21. Teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good and pupils make good progress. Teachers know their pupils well and plan activities that are matched to their needs. Individual education plans contain specific targets for improvement, particularly in English. Pupils are given very good support by teachers and the non-teaching staff, and this enables them to work well towards their individual targets. The support staff are particularly successful at encouraging pupils to work with confidence, and to achieve very respectable standards. Records of gains in skills, knowledge and understanding are carefully maintained.

22. The higher attaining pupils also have a good education. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels in national tests in Year 2 has remained above the national average in recent years and often well above average in Year 6. All staff are very aware of the needs of higher attaining pupils and plan work that is taxing and extending. Whether when talking to inspectors, completing practical work, completing written tasks or learning physical or creative skills, the high attaining pupils do well. Teachers' high expectations are the root of the demanding work provided for these higher attainers. Those few pupils with particular gifts or talents are also taught well and they too make good progress.

23. Inspectors did not observe any significant difference in the learning of boys and girls. Staff have investigated the differences seen in national test results since the previous inspection with care. They are alert to the possibility that one gender may not do as well as the other and provide work that is well judged to be equally attractive to boys as to girls.

24. Teaching quality is very good for children in the Foundation Stage and they make very good progress in their learning. Both the teacher and support staff are very successful in catering for all of the needs of the children and the reception classroom is a vibrant place of learning. The children welcome visitors with enthusiasm and they are keen to share their experiences. During the inspection, the reception classroom had been transformed into a sea scene, complete with underwater grotto, beach, and fish and chip shop. One group of children were insistent that the "shark" would come out of its hiding place in the aquarium if they were as quiet as possible. They explained this to the inspector with confidence and a hint of conspiracy. The very strong links between the reception class and the Year 6 pupils is a real strength of the school and makes a strong contribution to the quality of learning for both groups. Year 6 pupils work with warmth and sensitivity to help reception children learn to read and the partnership and bond formed between them is very evident when they sit together in assembly.

25. The two infant classrooms are also attractive and practical places of work. The children respond to the many different learning experiences with enthusiasm. The quality of display is often excellent and this helps extend the teachers' high expectations and gives pupils much to aspire to in terms of well presented, well completed work. The first thing that the visitor notices in infant classes is the eager sense of anticipation shown by the pupils. They listen carefully to the teacher as she explains, instructs, advises or coaxes them in their learning. When they start their practical or written tasks they settle quickly and work productively. The support staff are very successful in extending the opportunities for pupils in infant classes to learn well.

26. Junior pupils continue to enjoy these qualities of teaching and learning. Relationships continue to strengthen and pupils learn to co-operate and collaborate in learning very effectively. The teaching of basic skills of English, mathematics and ICT remains very good in junior classes and pupils build knowledge and skills well. The management of pupils is a particular strength of staff. Discipline is very good and behaviour

corresponds with this. Thus, lessons are sessions when staff and pupils work together on imaginative projects with a sense of fun and often a spirit of adventure. A Year 6 lesson where history and literacy were combined in a study of *Beowulf* is one such example. In groups, the pupils were engaged on written work, discussion, spinning and weaving of natural materials. Every pupil was committed to learning, and enquiry and research were paramount. The pupils demonstrated a maturity and responsibility in learning that is unusual in Year 6.

27. The strengths of teaching and learning are clear from the visitor's first moments in the room. School managers and staff are committed to holding on to the strengths and improving aspects that are ripe for development. Thus, the marking of work to show ways for pupils to improve and the setting, sharing and review of targets for learning with pupils in lessons are two elements of teaching that the school is working to develop. At present, targets for learning are shared with pupils at the start of lessons, but they are not often reviewed with them at the session end. In some cases, the work in books does not reflect enough the targets set and marking of work is not always used to show how successful the pupil has been in achieving the target. Inspectors agree that these are sensible priorities to take the school forward. Since school managers are committed to improvement, the prospects for success in these aspects are good.

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

28. The curriculum provides all groups of pupils with a very good range of high quality learning experiences and meets all statutory requirements. The learning environment in classes, and throughout the school, is considerably enhanced by the richness and quality of its displays. It fully meets the interests, aptitudes and particular needs of all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs. All subjects are taught in accordance with the requirements of the National Curriculum, the locally agreed syllabus for religious education and the areas of learning for children under five. Appropriate emphasis is given to the teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy. The school has successfully implemented the National Strategies for numeracy and literacy and these have helped to raise standards. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Provision for pupils' personal, health and social education, including sex and drugs education, is also good and taught well throughout the school. Provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and sometimes excellent.

29. The school has successfully addressed the issues raised in the last inspection report. Swimming is now taught on a secure basis, all subjects have schemes of work based on national guidance, and the provision for teaching and learning in ICT has been improved. The school has developed a good system for long, medium and short-term planning. The thematic and topic approach works well generally, though there is a need to review the emphasis given to a few non-core subjects, such as history, geography and religious education. Whilst good use is made of language skills in many other subjects, the use of cross-curricular numeracy and ICT skills could be improved. These are areas of development for the school.

30. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. These groups of pupils are set work appropriate to their needs and are very well supported in classes by teacher assistants and parent helpers, who are well briefed by teachers. The requirements of the code of practice are met in full. In general, the school makes good provision for

pupils of all backgrounds and this contributes to the good progress made through the school.

31. In addition to the statutory curriculum, many pupils benefit from a good range of activities and clubs. These include football, netball, country dancing, a number of instrumental groups and an environmental 'Watch' club, and are well supported by pupils and parents alike. Some parents' concerns over this aspect of the school's provision were expressed, but the inspection team judge that the provision for activities outside lessons is good. The range of visits that different groups of pupils make in connection with their work also considerably enhances the school curriculum. Visits have been made to the Albert Docks and cathedrals in Liverpool, Manchester airport and Beeston Castle. Various theatre and musical groups also visit the school.

32. The school has positive links with the local community as it tries to involve it in its work. It has co-operated with the local quarry and a local housing developer in designing posters for safety campaigns. The school enjoys good links with its partner institutions. Visits to the local high school are arranged for Year 6 pupils and there are good relations with local playgroups. Pupils visit the secondary school for a week before the end of their last term and teachers come to Sandiway to meet them.

33. The overall provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. As at the last inspection, the school continues to develop in its pupils a very mature and responsible attitude and parents who have an opinion about this overwhelmingly endorse it.

34. The provision for spiritual development is very good. The school does exceptionally well to develop a sense of wonder for the beauty of the world through art, music and poetry, and pupils are given regular opportunities throughout the day to reflect on their work. Often, music quietly plays as they read books at the beginning of the morning and assemblies offer a time of calm in the midst of the busy day. When the school community comes together, there is a real feeling of warmth and joint endeavour as the topic for the day is explained. A candle is lit to show that this is a special time and pupils concentrate very well on what is being said. In one assembly they reflect quietly on the richness of the earth's resources, taking ancient rocks as an example and realise that it is our task to look after these resources for future generations. During the act of worship within the assembly they are given time to think about this as music plays and lines of poetry are read. There is no specific invitation to pray to God and this requirement is omitted in a class assembly too, but in contrast, pupils in Years 1 and 2 robustly recite the Lord's Prayer during their assembly and repeat each line of another prayer after the teacher. Due emphasis is therefore given to the act of collective worship.

35. The provision for pupils' moral development is very good. There is an inherent expectation that pupils will behave very well and they do. Parents agree that this is so. There is a clearly understood behaviour code and pupils know right from wrong. Sanctions rarely have to be applied because relationships are very good and teachers constantly praise the positive qualities that pupils display in their work and behaviour. Adults act as excellent role models and there is a mutually supportive atmosphere. Bullying is not tolerated. This high quality provision was also commended in the last inspection report.

36. The school provides excellent opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills. Particularly impressive is the way that each pupil in Year 6 looks after a child in the reception class, helping with reading and taking him/her to the school assemblies. This is an excellent way to teach new members of the school community what is expected and to

perpetuate the 'family' atmosphere that was commended in the last inspection report. Regular charity collections are made so that pupils become aware that, in the wider community, some are not as fortunate. There are numerous occasions when pupils go out into the nearby community to socialise in a different setting than school – for sports matches, for visits and for performances, for example at the Llangollen Eisteddfod. Pupils have responsibilities within their classes and around the school and even the youngest take part, organising the Christmas Shoebox collection for example. In lessons, pupils are encouraged to work co-operatively and this was particularly evident in a Year 6 music lesson where groups combined very successfully to perform their compositions.

37. There is very good provision for developing pupils' awareness of their cultural heritage and of the multicultural nature of modern society. Religious education plays an important role in this because pupils come to appreciate the values, traditions and beliefs of Christianity and other faiths, notably Judaism and Islam. Other festivals are celebrated besides the great Christian ones of Christmas and Easter. An Eid party was held last year for the reception class and they invited their friends from Year 1. Year 4 pupils are currently learning about the Jewish harvest festival of Sukkot. Pupils are introduced to an exceptionally rich diet of culture through music, art and poetry. Visitors share African music and dancing. Children from Chernobyl stay in the vicinity every year and perform musical items in school. Pupils create exceptional art work in the style of a famous painter such as Turner or the ceramic designer Clarice Cliff. They create an impressive collage of tiles designed after hearing 'Silver' by Walter de la Mare. However, history and geography are not contributing as richly to pupils' cultural development as other subjects, though even here there are some distinctive touches not usually found in other schools – a study of South African history in Year 5 for example and support for conservation work at Chester Zoo.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

38. The school has good procedures for ensuring the care and welfare of its pupils. It is a happy and friendly community, where adults have high expectations of the pupils, know them well and treat them with consideration and respect. The school maintains adequate levels of supervision to cater for the many nooks and crannies in the play areas. This was a point of concern raised by some parents. The school is a safe and secure environment. The judgements here are broadly similar to those of the previous inspection.

39. Procedures for child protection are very good. Two members of staff are fully trained and all staff, including midday assistants, are regularly reminded of the school's procedures. Health and safety is treated seriously. There are good procedures for noting and following up points of concern. The premises are formally inspected once a year by the governing body and detailed notes made during this inspection. Fire drills are held termly and equipment is regularly checked. There is adequate first aid cover and correct records are kept of accidents.

40. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are generally satisfactory. Registers are generally well kept although there is some inconsistency in the coding of absences. All absences without reason are followed up on the first day, effectively reminding parents of the importance the school gives to good attendance. The school's dislike of holidays in term time is made very clear to parents in newsletters and other documents. Morning registration does not take place first thing and consequently does not meet statutory regulations. This results in the school having no formal records of pupils arriving up to 30 minutes late, a point raised in the previous inspection.

41. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very effective. The school achieves very high standards of behaviour primarily by having very high expectations. Rules exist but are rarely referred to. Praise is used sensibly and effectively. It is impressive that the school achieves very good behaviour without the need for systems of rewards common in most primary schools. The school has the correct procedures for recording incidents of bullying and racism, but these are rarely called upon.

42. Procedures for supporting pupils' personal development are good. Teachers know their pupils very well and give them encouragement and opportunities to take responsibility and to learn to make choices. Monitoring their development is largely informal but quite satisfactory. The comments on personal and social development in the pupils' annual reports are of good quality.

43. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and all statutory requirements are met. Needs are identified early and outside agencies are used effectively. The level of care and support given by teaching and non-teaching staff is very good. Gains in academic and personal progress are recorded efficiently and details are reported to parents and guardians. Pupils with statements of special educational needs are also given very good support and they make good progress towards their individual targets.

44. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory, though there is variation from subject to subject. In English and mathematics assessment is good with useful data being collected and pupils' progress being effectively tracked. Whilst some assessment is made in science, this is not as comprehensive as in the other core subjects. Assessment in the remaining subjects is inconsistent. Procedures to track the systematic development of skills and knowledge in these subjects require improvement. School managers are aware of this need and have clearly written development plans to bring assessment in all subjects to the same good quality found in English and mathematics.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

45. The school has continued to maintain the effective partnership with parents found at the previous inspection.

46. Parents have a good opinion of the school. This view is based on a good response to the questionnaire and a well-attended pre-inspection parents' meeting. Overwhelmingly, parents report that their children enjoy going to school. Parents particularly like the approachability of the staff, the good quality of the teaching, the high expectations the school has of their children, the way their children become mature and responsible learners and the good behaviour. The inspection team has no hesitation in agreeing with these positive views.

47. Some parents would like to be better informed about the topics included in the curriculum each term. The school meets the statutory requirements in this area by sending home a report once a year and having a meeting for parents to discuss this report with the teacher. These reports are of good quality. They contain a statement on progress, points for development and a clear indication of how well the child is attaining against national standards. The quality of these reports is better than in many schools. There is also an open evening for parents in the autumn term and the school operates an open door policy where parents are welcome to discuss concerns or progress with teachers at any time.

48. The quality of general information is satisfactory. The prospectus and the governors' annual report are well written and easy to read. Occasional newsletters are informative.

However the school misses an opportunity to involve parents in their children's learning by not sending home more detailed outlines of future work. Most parents have signed the home/school agreement and this has consolidated what is already an effective partnership.

49. Some parents think that amounts of homework are inconsistent. The school's philosophy is that homework should be firmly linked to what is being taught in the classroom and not necessarily set to a strict timetable. The inspection team finds that levels of homework are satisfactory.

50. Parents and carers of pupils with special educational needs are involved at all stages of the Code of Practice and are fully involved in review procedures. There are regular opportunities provided to review progress. Parents are supportive of the work of the school, with some parents actively supporting in class. Clear guidelines are provided for parents working in school.

51. Parents make a significant contribution to the work of the school. There are a good number of parents (and friends) who help regularly in the classroom. Help ranges from listening to children read, to making a direct contribution such as talking about Jewish festivals in a lesson observed during the inspection. This help is very well organised and much appreciated by the teachers. It is having a positive impact on the pupils' learning. Parents who are governors are fully involved in the running of the school. There is an active parent-teacher association that is successful both in fundraising and arranging social events. Inspectors do not agree with the few parents who thought that the school could work more closely with parents.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

52. The strengths of management and leadership identified at the previous inspection have been maintained and built upon successfully. The headteacher leads the school very well and all staff and the governors are committed and effective in the partnership to manage the school. The many strengths of the school stem from this shared educational direction that places pupils at the heart of the school.

53. The headteacher is very well supported in school management by the hard working and very successful deputy headteacher. Together, they form a strong partnership that has ensured the school is a very effective place of learning. The morale of staff is high and everyone works hard for success.

54. All teachers have a role in management as co-ordinators of subjects and they put in very good effort to bring about improvement. There is considerable management talent amongst them and it is clear that co-ordinators are ready for further responsibility. At present, they are not as involved in the monitoring of teaching, learning and standards as are many colleagues in other schools. Additionally, they do not have as much involvement in budgetary matters relating to their subjects as many other co-ordinators do. Senior managers acknowledge that these are areas for development and have incorporated plans for the enhancement of co-ordinators' roles in the school improvement plan. There are already good monitoring procedures in school that can be developed to support this enhancement of co-ordinators' roles and the prospects for future success are very positive.

55. The co-ordinator for special educational needs maintains the register of pupils efficiently. In addition to furthering her own professional development she shares her expertise with others and provides opportunities for colleagues to share concerns. She has a clear understanding of her role and manages the role of special educational needs co-

ordinator very well, in addition to her role as deputy headteacher and Year 2 teacher. Outside agencies are involved as required and the governing body is well informed by the headteacher, the co-ordinator and the responsible governor who works closely with the co-ordinator and monitors provision.

56. The governors are well involved in the management of the school and give valuable support, encouragement and advice. Many governors are able to visit school during session times and they have good knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Formal communication through the system of written reports and discussion in committees serves the process of judging school performance effectively. The governors are developing helpful means to check and evaluate what the school does and they ensure that it meets all statutory requirements.

57. There is good recognition of the principles of best value in school. Senior managers and the governors make the necessary checks and comparisons to establish that the school provides challenge and is competitive in relation to the performance of other schools. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have good grasp of school self-evaluation and improvement. They collect valuable data to show how pupils are progressing and interpret this well to pinpoint where improvement is due. The school sets sensible targets for pupils to achieve in the Year 6 national tests. These are based on careful analysis of past progress, and they are realistic and achievable targets. These global targets are at the centre of school efforts to bring about improvement. Staff know them well, and within their own classes they make a good contribution to their achievement.

58. Senior managers accept the need now to set out clearly the expectations for individual pupils in the tracking process so that staff can judge more completely whether individual pupils have worked successfully towards their personal goals. Teachers set, and share clear learning objectives with the pupils at the beginning of lessons but the reviews of learning outcomes at the end is less consistent. There is good determination to work on these things in order to strengthen further the already good evaluation of school performance that takes place.

59. There are no shortages of any form of resources. The school uses its funds very carefully to provide best levels of support for pupils. Additional finance, including that for pupils with special educational needs is put to effective use to ensure that pupils do well in school.

60. The staff of the school, like the pupils themselves, are amongst the school's major assets. Teachers and support staff alike, are directed very well in the task of providing good quality education. The system of performance management is geared well to improvement. All staff ensure that school aims and priorities are fulfilled very well. The quality of the accommodation and learning resources are other strengths that are used well in the interests of the pupils. The facilities, especially outdoors, for children in the Foundation Stage are much improved and imaginative use is made of the building and outside space to provide the children with stimulating learning experiences. School library provision is in a state of flux at present, but there is a good core of books that is well used to develop personal research and study skills, especially amongst older junior pupils. The school uses new technology satisfactorily; staff are in mid-course in their training for ICT use and improvement here is already apparent.

61. The school has built well on the strengths identified in the previous inspection report. It remains a place of good teaching and learning, standards are good and leadership and management most effective. Overall, it gives good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

62. Sandiway Primary School is a very effective place of learning. In order to move closer to excellence, school managers and the governors should:

- Enhance the role of subject co-ordinators to include the monitoring of teaching, learning and standards and responsibility for appropriate budgetary matters.

(Paragraphs: 7, 54, 87, 100, 105, 109, 113, 120 and 136)

- Extend the system of assessment to all subjects and use the resulting information to set personal targets for all pupils.

(Paragraphs: 8, 27, 44, 84, 87, 95, 98, 101, 104-5, 108-9, 120, 124 and 130)

Lesser issues for the governors to include in their action plan are:

- Ensure that registers are marked first thing in the morning in order to meet statutory requirements and discourage late arrivals.

(Paragraphs 17 and 40)

- Review the time devoted to geography, history and the use of mathematics and ICT across the curriculum in order to build skills and knowledge more systematically.

(Paragraphs 81, 89, 94, 113, 120 and 124)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	61
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	32

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	3	16	36	6	0	0	0
Percentage	5	26	59	10	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 one percentage point.

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)	184
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	22
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	3

English as an additional language

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	12
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	1.9
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	13	12	25

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	12	13
	Girls	10	10	10
	Total	22	22	23
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	88 (92)	88 (92)	92 (96)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	13	13
	Girls	10	10	11
	Total	22	23	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	88 (92)	92 (96)	96 (96)
	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	9	8	17

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	8	8	9
	Girls	8	8	8
	Total	16	16	17
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	94 (83)	94 (75)	100 (88)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	8	9	9
	Girls	8	8	8
	Total	16	17	17
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	94 (83)	100 (75)	100 (88)
	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	184
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.0
Average class size	24.4

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	5.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	70.0

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1.0
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
	£
Total income	354814
Total expenditure	355394
Expenditure per pupil	2063
Balance brought forward from previous year	11859
Balance carried forward to next year	11279

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	184
Number of questionnaires returned	108

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school	68	30	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school	51	35	6	3	6
Behaviour in the school is good	55	41	2	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home	34	36	24	8	2
The teaching is good	64	27	4	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on	30	42	22	5	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem	67	27	4	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best	56	36	4	0	5
The school works closely with parents	33	48	15	0	4
The school is well led and managed	44	42	5	1	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible	57	37	1	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons	34	43	9	3	11

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

63. Children are admitted to the reception class at the start of the school year following their fourth birthday. At the time of the inspection there were 28 children in the reception class. Early assessment information in the reception class indicates that attainment on entry is above average overall, although some aspects of learning, such as early writing, are below average.

64. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good. Very good teaching through a range of high quality experiences enables the children to make good gains in their acquisition of early skills and knowledge. As a result, by the time they enter Year 1 many of the children have exceeded the early learning goals for the Foundation Stage and are working within level 1 of the National Curriculum. The teacher's secure knowledge and understanding of the early learning goals, high expectations and effective planning, well informed through on-going assessment, together with very effective team work are some of the main factors contributing to the good progress being made. Carefully matched tasks ensure the right level of challenge for all. Learning objectives in planning reflect the stepping stones leading towards the early learning goals for children in the Foundation Stage. The rich experiences motivate children well and lessons proceed at a brisk pace. Outcomes of assessments made by the adults are used to determine the next steps of learning in the reception class. This is good.

65. Learning resources are good. They make an effective contribution to children's learning. Since the previous inspection the good provision has been maintained, and provision for physical development has greatly improved. A newly developed outdoor area provides very good opportunities for a wide range of activities, including balancing, climbing and crawling. This high quality provision enhances pupils' physical development as well as enriching other areas of learning.

Personal, social and emotional development

66. Teaching in this area of learning is very good. Children are confident, with good self-esteem. They have very positive attitudes to learning and are happy to come to school. They learn to share and take turns, for example when using the large wheeled vehicles in the outdoor area. They are friendly to each other and behave very well. The children enjoy very good relationships with the adults who work with them, learning to listen carefully to instructions and carrying these out obediently. The good attitudes to learning and positive behaviour reflect the high expectations of the teachers and support staff. Many are eager to engage in discussions and respond to questions. For example, in a lesson focusing on number all eagerly contributed to the discussion and the teacher skilfully turned the children's comments into learning opportunities, increasing the difficulty of the number problems. Children move confidently about the classroom, the outdoor play area and into the hall for assemblies or physical development. They select activities with confidence and good independence. They are helpful outside, pouring drinks and tidying away resources at the end of a session.

67. Children having special educational needs are identified early. The very good support provided for the lower attainers helps them to gain confidence and participate fully in all of the activities. Most children make good progress in this area of their development

and have achieved the level expected by the time they enter Year 1, with many exceeding this level.

Communication, language and literacy

68. Skills in speaking and listening are good. Most children speak confidently to adults or the rest of the class because the adults encourage this through the many opportunities provided. Through role-play in the fish and chip shop the children take orders, use the telephone and give instructions to each other.

69. In a quiet reading session children shared books enthusiastically, chatting amicably with visitors and each other, and some children were reading their books. When exploring initial sounds the children joined in enthusiastically, identifying 'e' sounds from a range of objects that the teacher produced from her bag. This learning was fun, with well-chosen resources that held the children's interest and fostered early reading skills very effectively. Basic writing skills are carefully taught with attention given to pencil control and purposeful writing tasks. Skills in this aspect of literacy are slightly below average but children are keen to learn. In a writing lesson, higher attainers, writing to their Year 6 partners, combined numbers and letters with mark making, understanding that print carries meaning. For the majority, developmental writing is at an early stage. Most children write their first name independently. All children enjoy books and demonstrate good book handling skills. They are eager to read and many behave as readers, re-telling stories and recalling from memory. Higher attainers are beginning to read for themselves. Very good book resources contribute to the children's learning well. The very good teaching promotes a love of books and a strong desire to be a reader. Most children make good progress in developing skills in this area of learning and many will attain the final stepping stones towards the early learning goals, with a significant proportion likely to exceed these by the time they start in Year 1.

Mathematical development

70. Attainment in this area of learning is above average. The majority count confidently to 5 and many count beyond this, counting reliably to 10 every day objects and recognising numerals to 9. Children are transfixed by the animated telling of the story, *Night Time Numbers*. Skilful questioning by the teacher engages the children in simple problem-solving and finding different ways of making five using their fingers. They use number fans to respond to problems such as 'How many wheels does one car have?' with the majority shouting the correct answer. The good role-play in the fish and chip shop provides opportunities for children to handle coins, give change and reinforce counting skills. Most children recognise and name basic shapes such as 'square', 'circle', 'triangle' and 'rectangle'. They acquire and extend their mathematical vocabulary as they explore sand and water, understanding terms such as 'full', 'empty', 'more' and 'less'. Good use is made of songs and number rhymes to reinforce mathematical skills. This area of learning is taught well and the good opportunities lead to most children making good gains in their learning and many achieve above the levels expected for their age.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

71. A very good range of rich practical experiences helps children to make good gains in their knowledge and understanding of the world. Attainment in this area of learning is above average. In one very good lesson, the teacher, dressed as Percy the park keeper, encourages care for the environment as children prepare the ground, plant bulbs and make a wormery. Scientific knowledge and understanding of floating and sinking is gained as

children use a range of fruit and vegetables in the water tray, testing which will float or sink. Good links are made to other areas of learning such as mathematics as well as extending the children's scientific vocabulary. They explore the sand in their search for 10 acorns, learning to work together and reinforcing counting skills. Resources are used well and contribute effectively to children's learning. The use of a light box for example, enables children to examine and investigate a range of natural objects, using magnifying lenses. The children look closely at similarities, differences and patterns and are encouraged to ask questions as they investigate. The children use the overhead projector with confidence to project underwater creatures into their role-play area 'under the sea'. They know how to control the mouse showing good skills as they drag and drop numbers when ordering to 5. When making clay fish, the children select appropriate tools and techniques to create scales and patterns on their models. Visitors such as grandparents help children to understand the passage of time as they talk about their lives long ago and how things have changed. Through stories and assemblies the children learn about celebrations in their own and other cultures. In one such assembly focusing on Harvest Festival the teacher makes very good use of the resources to promote recognition and naming of the various fruits and vegetables. Her questioning helps them to see similarities and differences. The majority follow a simple sequence of instructions during the prayer, thinking quietly, with eyes closed. Many children are likely to exceed the expected levels by the time they start in Year 1, being well on the way through the stepping stones to the early learning goals, as a result of the very good teaching.

Physical development

72. Attainment in this area of learning is above the level expected for children of this age. The very good outdoor provision enables many skills to be developed well. The children enjoy a range of wheeled vehicles that they push, pull and pedal, filling up with fuel and observing signs to 'stop' and 'go'. They use the logs, ramps and tyres to climb over, under, round and through, travelling in a variety of ways. Many show good control as they throw and kick large balls, and move with increasing co-ordination. They travel over the apparatus in the hall with confidence and considerable skill, many showing good imagination as they do so. They use the space appropriately, control their movements well and show a good awareness of others around them.

73. Support staff make a strong contribution to the sense of purpose in learning, and help to ensure all children are fully included. The teacher focuses very well on skill development and encourages children to work sensibly and with increasing independence. The children work with enjoyment, most making good gains in their learning as a result of the very good teaching. Fine motor skills develop well with increasing pencil control, and confidence when using scissors, crayons and brushes. Most children make good progress, showing good co-ordination and control of their bodies by the time they join Year 1.

Creative development

74. Standards are above average in this area of learning. The many good opportunities for children to paint, model, draw and use collage and construction materials result in good progress for many children. The children select tools such as brushes and modelling tools with confidence. For example, when modelling fish using clay, they use a variety of tools to create scales and patterns confidently and competently. They show a good understanding of form when focusing on line and shade to record fish in the goldfish tank. They respond well to the nursery nurse's direction in shading. Supportive intervention in many of these activities enables children to express their ideas creatively, without over-direction. The children enjoy singing and music making. The teacher makes good use of singing in other

areas such as mathematics and as a means of gaining children's attention. The children are acquiring an increasing repertoire of songs and rhymes and gain experience of a range of untuned percussion.

75. By the time they start in Year 1 most children will have achieved the 'expected levels and a significant proportion will exceed these as a result of very good teaching.

ENGLISH

76. Standards by the age of seven are above average in speaking and listening, reading and writing. By the age of eleven standards are well above average. This pattern of standards at the age of eleven is similar to the results of the most recent national tests. This is due to good teaching and learning. Everyone in the school, adults and pupils alike, are committed to hard work and high standards. Basic skills are very well taught. Pupils are encouraged to use their initiative and become independent learners. These are some of the factors influencing their successful achievements. The positive picture found at the time of the previous inspection has been maintained and indeed, improved upon by the time pupils leave the school.

77. In Years 1 and 2 the good progress is maintained so that by the age of seven, standards in English are above average for speaking and listening, reading and writing. This good progress continues with some accelerated learning for the oldest pupils so that by the age of eleven standards in reading are above average and in speaking and listening and writing they are well above average.

78. Since the previous inspection the National Literacy Strategy has been successfully implemented with improved resources to support this. The introduction of tracking sheets monitoring the progress of higher attainers and lower attainers, including those pupils with special educational needs, and the introduction of target setting and pupils' self-evaluation in English are among the more recent improvements which are contributing to the high standards.

79. Speaking and listening skills are above average by the age of seven and well above average by the age of eleven. Pupils make good gains in learning because throughout the school teachers adopt a consistent approach to learning. Rich opportunities are provided for pupils to engage in extended conversations and effective questioning extends pupils' use of English, promoting confidence in speaking aloud. Pupils are encouraged to express their opinions and ideas about texts used in literacy hours. In an outstanding lesson, Year 2 pupils were enthralled as they listened to their teacher read the poem *Talk about Caves* whilst *Fingal's Cave* played quietly in the background. The teacher's sensitive and exciting delivery inspired pupils greatly. They were eager to volunteer suggestions for the meaning of complex vocabulary and to share their ideas about what the dragon might be like. The teacher drew the analogy to their recent visit to Pooles Cave. Pupils' responses included using stalactites to draw on cave walls and bats sharing the cave with the dragon. Higher-attaining pupils explained phrases such as 'The enemy of night is day'. One pupil described the whirlpool as 'carving out the rock'. Pupils thought carefully about the vocabulary used, working hard to define the meanings of more complex vocabulary. Many expressed their ideas articulately, using the text to support their ideas.

80. Very good opportunities are provided through drama for pupils to extend their speaking skills. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils used their thorough knowledge of the story of *Beowulf* to improvise the long journey to find Hrothgar. The whole class was caught up in the role-play, putting their hearts into the work. Timely interventions by the teacher moved

the storyline on. The pupils' speech is well adapted to the purpose with very good descriptions of events. It is well rooted in Standard English. Virtually all pupils are already at the expected level with a number of higher attainers particularly proficient, including a gifted and talented pupil identified for his skills in drama.

81. Pupils attain above average standards in reading by the age of seven and well above average levels at the age of eleven. Average and many below average pupils in Year 2 have a good understanding of initial sounds helping them to tackle unfamiliar words with confidence. They lack the fluency and expression of the higher attainers, who make effective use of punctuation for emphasis, reading confidently and with good understanding. Older pupils and higher-attaining younger pupils are eager to discuss their reading and express their preferences, having a good knowledge of authors and are familiar with a wide range of reading including fiction, poetry and non-fiction books. Very good use is made of early morning reading. Teachers use this opportunity to extend pupils' range of reading, introduce new authors and promote enquiry and research skills. However, the amount of time given to this is sometimes at the expense of other areas of the curriculum. The oldest pupils know and understand how books are classified in the library and locate books and information easily and quickly. The very good library provision and exciting range of good quality books contribute very effectively to these skills and to pupils' very positive attitudes to books and reading. Library provision also enriches opportunities provided through the literacy strategy to develop reading skills further. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported in lessons and this enables them to make good gains in their learning towards their specific targets. The very good focus on language in other areas of the curriculum reinforces these important skills and contributes very well to pupils' confidence in reading.

82. Standards in writing are above average by the age of seven and well above average by the age of eleven. The very good standards are a result of very good and some outstanding teaching which inspires pupils to learn. Excellent links are made to all areas of the curriculum and teachers present pupils with a wide range of exciting and purposeful writing experiences. For example, Year 6 pupils studying *Beowulf* used imagery and alliteration as they wrote in response to a wall hanging a pupil had made using natural materials, as a gift to Hrothgar's people. They had a very good insight into the Anglo-Saxon way of life, having dyed the sheep's wool with damson juice and onion skins, corded it, experienced spinning wool and used skills such as plaiting and weaving. Natural materials gathered included leaves, shells and twigs. The very high expectations of the teacher were reflected in the quality of writing produced as pupils worked with very good creative, intellectual and physical effort. They chose exciting vocabulary often making use of dictionaries in their search for powerful language. One pupil wrote "We bring forth pebbles of strength and security against the ghastly Grendel, we bring feathers for you to swoop and soar from fear, pain and agony, we bring forward flames to signify the end of death, darkness and despair and the beginning of hope, heart and light". Others chose "Wool for shielding against the perilous winds of the cold, evil, gruesome Grendel", "Floating feathers from the sensuous spring water that shall soon grace your now despondent and sorrowful life", and another chose "Shells, so evil is cleared and washed by the salty sea – into a solitary spirit". In this lesson pupils critically appraised their writing, re-drafting to improve the end result. The teacher used every opportunity to reinforce powerful, exciting vocabulary. Pupils were very proud of their writing.

83. Pupils write for an increasing range of purposes as they move through the school. In Year 2 for example, they write interesting stories, accounts of Van Gogh's life and personal responses to the music *The Carnival of the Animals*. Poetry and descriptive writing, instructions for making butter and an account of a theatre visit to see *The Nutcracker* also

show the effective development of a range of imaginative vocabulary. Sensitive writing reflecting on the terrorist attack in America contributes to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, as does so much of the writing, which is particularly strong for spiritual contribution. They write accounts in the first person as an Anglo-Saxon craftsman, summarise *Beowulf*, write persuasive posters to 'save the turtles', stories, poems and instructions. Pupils are developing good skills in self-evaluation identifying where they could improve. In all classes there is an emphasis on extending literacy skills through subjects other than English. Throughout the school, work is displayed to a very high standard creating rich and exciting learning environments. This enhances the learning taking place because pupils' efforts are valued and successes celebrated.

84. Standards of handwriting are good throughout the school. Skills are developed systemically so that by the time they leave the school most pupils have developed a fluent cursive style. The good attention to punctuation, spelling strategies and spelling patterns ensures good standards in these areas. Work is regularly marked with appropriate comments for improvement. The next step is to incorporate target setting within the marking process consistently across the school to further pupils' knowledge of their own learning.

85. Teaching is good throughout the school. In many lessons it is very good and on occasions, it is excellent. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and many inspire children to learn through their own love of language. Pupils are clear about what is expected because learning objectives are shared at the start of lessons. The brisk pace to lessons ensures pupils cover a good amount of work. Skills are systematically developed and opportunities to extend learning are created. Additional support is well deployed and this ensures all pupils are fully included in lessons. Higher attainers are usually well challenged through exciting and demanding tasks. Good use is made of plenary sessions to reinforce teaching and learning and to promote speaking skills. Areas for development include the wider use of computers to support learning in English, extended writing in a variety of forms, including non-fiction and attention to higher order skills such as note-taking when developing research skills.

86. Pupils with special educational needs have clearly identified targets within well-written individual education plans, which are carefully followed. This results in well focused teaching. Very well targeted use of support enables pupils to succeed. As a result many of these pupils achieve well and make good progress, given their prior attainment.

87. English is soundly managed, with the co-ordinator providing a strong lead through her exemplary teaching. The headteacher gives a good lead through her personal interest in the subject. However, the role of the co-ordinator is not yet as strongly focused on standards and school performance as in most primary schools. Further development of the use of assessment information and target setting, together with continued monitoring will enable the very good standards to improve even more, particularly for the higher-attaining pupils. The quality and range of learning opportunities is very good with particular strengths in writing, speaking and listening and cross-curricular links.

MATHEMATICS

88. Standards of work at the time of the last inspection were reported to be above average for pupils in Years 2 and 6. Pupils in these year-groups are also currently working at above average standards suggesting that the school has maintained its position. The results in the 2001 national tests were higher, being well above average in Year 2 and very high in Year 6. The school was placed amongst the top five per cent of all primary schools for its results in mathematics at the age of eleven. The difference between the results last year and those found at present is due to differences in the pattern of academic achievement between the two years. The school itself predicts that results will not be as high this year because fewer pupils are expected to achieve the higher level 5.

89. The National Numeracy Strategy is now well embedded in the school and teachers plan and deliver lessons that follow the recommendations. It has proved effective in raising standards, particularly in the ability of pupils to calculate mentally and has encouraged teachers to provide different work within the activity session to meet the needs of all pupils. In a Year 5 lesson, for example, the above average pupils are given a distinctive challenge involving everyday problems expressed in words, while other groups practise their understanding of equivalent fractions using examples of varying complexity. The school intends to emphasise the development of numeracy in other subjects, including ICT, as a future priority. Some use of mathematics was found in other subjects, but this was not as frequent as in some other schools.

90. Pupils in infant classes are generally quick to calculate the answers to real-life problems posed by the teacher and Year 2 pupils hold up the correct number from the collection that they have in their hands. They quickly work out answers involving addition and subtraction involving numbers to ten. The teacher is particularly adept at setting specific groups their own problems, thus challenging the above average to work with higher numbers. These higher attaining pupils are confident with a range of work – naming two-dimensional shapes, telling the time to the hour and half-hour, weighing objects to find which is lighter and realising that each numeral in such numbers as 55 or 88 have different values.

91. Pupils make good progress in the infant classes. At this early stage of the school year, most pupils in Year 1 are becoming adept at counting to 30, at counting up in twos to 20 (though not back) and at using a variety of methods to add small numbers (using fingers or a number-line). Higher attaining pupils explain patterns that appear on a number square when they colour in multiples of 2 to 30 and are therefore developing the ability to look for strategies to solve problems. Due attention is given to developing this skill. Younger infant pupils for example are used to applying their mathematical knowledge to sort out everyday shopping problems, adding up items and deciding on the change needed.

92. Pupils in Year 6 are also challenged regularly to work out everyday problems using their mathematical knowledge. They study timetables, for example, and calculate how long it takes to get from one place to another. Mentally, they are able to quickly calculate answers involving squared numbers. Their teacher too is adept at setting questions for each ability group without losing the attention of those not involved. Thus the higher attaining pupils work out what 11^2 minus 3^2 is, whilst the lower attainers calculate $3^2 + 3^2$. The results of optional mental maths tests at the end of Year 5 show that three-quarters of these pupils achieved above average scores. In other aspects of mathematics, they also show good levels of understanding. The higher attaining pupils create Carroll diagrams to classify shapes, convert millimetres to centimetres, read scales and add, subtract, multiply and divide numbers over 1,000. Average pupils have sound number and arithmetic skills.

For example, they can add several numbers over 1000 having estimated first what the answer is likely to be. They name different types of triangle and draw angles accurately. The lower attaining pupils successfully glean information from a graph, calculate the area of a rectangle (but not a triangle) and round numbers to the nearest 100.

93. Progress in the juniors is good. Pupils generally complete a good volume of work over time and presentation is usually neat. In number work, they progress from an understanding of place value involving tens and units in Year 3 to hundreds, tens and units in Year 4 and work with numbers over 1,000 in Year 5. Progress is good, too, when working with shapes or when measuring. The ability to collect and represent data is well developed so that by Year 5 pupils produce frequency graphs to show the number taking a school dinner. Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress, particularly when support staff are available to help as in a Year 2 lesson with a dice-game finding two numbers that equal 10. This practical activity is enjoyable and helps to advance the pupils' learning. In Year 4, a computer program is being tried which sets a number of questions each day so that confidence is boosted and learning is effectively reinforced. Gifted pupils are also identified and there are plans for those in Year 6 to be offered extra help outside school to boost their attainment, if parental support is forthcoming.

94. Pupils respond well to the subject. They enjoy the challenges that are set and are busily engaged for most of the time. Teaching is good across the school. Teachers prepare their lessons thoroughly and use resources well. Teachers in the infant classes are aware of the importance of practical activities to aid understanding and they control these activities well. Skilful questioning is a feature throughout the school and praise is used effectively to boost confidence. In a Year 5 lesson this is especially important when pupils experience difficulty in understanding equivalent fractions. Teachers have high expectations, not least in requiring pupils to use correct mathematical terms. They maintain a brisk pace – “We must speed up,” says the teacher in Year 3. Time limits are set for work to be completed. Because of the timetable, however, some maths lessons are not allotted enough time. A lesson in Year 1 overruns and the RE session scheduled to follow does not take place. Similarly the concluding part of a Year 5 lesson has to be rushed to allow time for a class assembly.

95. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and keen to support her colleagues. She undertakes termly monitoring of standards, including the evaluation of the commercial textbooks in use in mathematics lessons. This has been a worthwhile exercise and has shown that teachers find them helpful and that they are good value for money. She also organises training for her colleagues, including rigorous preparation for the National Numeracy Strategy, and is currently evaluating, with the governor responsible for mathematics, the possibility of undertaking ‘Springboard’ training. A suitable action plan for this year has been drawn up. One of its aims is to raise the profile of mathematics throughout the school by improving the quality of displays. This is already happening. In every classroom there is a good interactive display where problems are posed for pupils to solve and the apparatus is provided for them to have a go. The action plan for mathematics includes sensible priorities for improvement, though the focus on how assessment data is used could be clearer. The school has good systems for analysing test results to determine the level, at which each pupil is working and is ready to use this data in setting future targets for improvement that will enhance the school's procedures to track progress.

SCIENCE

96. Standards are good, teaching is good across the school and the overwhelming majority of pupils make good progress. They show very good attitudes to learning and all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs, are fully engaged by the learning opportunities their teachers plan for them. These aspects of the subject have all been maintained since the last inspection.

97. The results of the 2001 national tests show that attainment by the end of Year 6 was above that expected. This year, inspectors' observations in lessons and their scrutiny of pupils' work both confirm that standards in science at the age of eleven are above average.

98. In all the lessons seen during the inspection, teaching was good or better. Lessons are well planned using the national guidance from the new scheme of work for the subject, and activities are well resourced and prepared. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported by teachers and support staff. This enables all pupils to settle quickly to their tasks and lessons are characterised by a good pace of learning. For example, in a Year 2 lesson on electricity, a range of tasks are set for the class, which enable all groups of pupils to contribute. More able pupils are able to make a series circuit and explain why bulbs in this circuit are not as bright as in a single circuit. A similarly successful lesson was seen in Year 4, where pupils were investigating a range of temperatures from a variety of different materials. This lesson has a clear focus on accurate recording, which helps to develop pupils' skills of investigation. Scrutiny of teachers' planning shows that there is a good emphasis on developing skills progressively as pupils move through the school. The new scheme of work is proving to be particularly helpful in this aspect of teaching and learning in the subject. Teachers show a secure knowledge and understanding of the subject, which they use particularly well in the way they frame and target their questions, so that all groups of pupils are able to explain and expand their answers. Although most teachers have clearly defined objectives for their lessons, the sharing and reviewing of targets with pupils could be further improved.

99. Pupils learn well and make good progress because teachers expect much from them. The level of challenge in their work is very good and this is true for all groups of pupils. In lessons, girls and boys are equally well involved in the activities. They work as hard as each other and maintain interest and enthusiasm. For example, in a Year 1 lesson where pupils are investigating the differences in sound, the majority of pupils concentrate well when experimenting with making their own sounds with a variety of materials. Year 6 pupils were observed making good use of their knowledge and understanding of the changes in materials caused by burning to design a safety poster for the home. All lessons seen supported the views of parents that children enjoy science.

100. The leadership and management of the subject at present are satisfactory. It could be enhanced by enabling the co-ordinator to take part in direct monitoring of teaching and learning in the subject. The school has already identified the closer monitoring of standards by subject co-ordinators as one of its main priorities in a bid to keep standards strong. Some assessment has recently been started for science but has yet to have an impact. More use could be made of numeracy and information and communication technology skills in the recording of data for example. These remain areas of development for the school. At present resources for the subject are good and their use has had a positive impact on the raising of standards.

ART AND DESIGN

101. Many parts of the school resemble a professional art gallery, such is the high quality of much of the artwork on display. Standards in the subject are very good in infant and junior classes. On a number of occasions, inspectors remarked in their evidence that the pupils were working at a level that was one or two years above their actual age. Thus, Year 1 pupils were observed to draw Victorian washday implements with an eye for line and tone that would not be out of place in a Year 3 class. The calibre of artwork is similar in many classes, but Year 3 work on Chinese folk tales about the creation, Year 5 work on African textiles and Year 6 weaving using natural materials to represent the age of *Beowulf*, stand out as first class examples. Art and design has been improved and promoted well during the years between the previous inspection and the current one.

102. If the visitor to school takes a walk around the buildings from the reception class to Year 6, she or he would be impressed by the systematic building of skills and techniques, and the appreciation and understanding of a wide range of artistic images. Pupils are aware of the qualities of different materials, styles and techniques and adapt and improvise in order to produce outstanding work such as the three dimensional models based on the ceramic designs of Clarice Cliff displayed in the entrance hall.

103. Art and design lessons are sessions when pupils concentrate well, try hard and produce good amounts of work. Older pupils are encouraged to cast a quizzical eye over their work in order to identify ways to improve. They talk confidently of features that catch the attention and those where refinement is possible. Thus, pupils are skilled not just in the creation of artistic images, but also in appreciation of what makes a good composition and what constitutes well executed work. The very good quality of pupils' artwork is more than reflected in the professional way in which it is displayed. Care given to display shows the high expectations of staff and gives other pupils something to aspire to. In this way, the artwork has a presence that influences progress in positive ways.

104. The quality of teaching is very good and is a particular strength of the school. Teachers have high expectations; they have thorough knowledge of the subject, teach skills very successfully and use resources in original ways to stimulate pupils to really good quality artwork. The setting and sharing of personal learning targets is not yet consistent and the review of what has been learned by the pupils at the end of lessons is not seen in school as much as it is elsewhere.

105. The management of art and design is in good hands. The co-ordinator has ensured that standards are high and enjoyment common. She does not have opportunities to monitor teaching, learning and standards in the subject and has little responsibility for the art and design budget. Assessment and the use of ICT to enhance pupils' knowledge and skills are other aspects for improvement in the subject. All these have been recognised by the school as part of its improvement plan and the prospects for success are good, given that art and design has such a high profile in the school and staff and pupils alike take much benefit from their work in the subject.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

106. Standards in design and technology (DT) in Years 2 and 6 are above those expected by the ages of seven and eleven. Pupils develop the full range of DT skills from the plan and design phase through to evaluating and improving their work. Infant pupils set down their plans in straightforward ways, but they include lists of materials and tools, and show ways to join materials. Their models are constructed carefully and the finished

product is usually attractive. Infants talk about what they like about the product and say what could be made better. They have the enthusiasm to have-a-go and are not daunted by problems.

107. Junior pupils develop these skills and knowledge well. They make good progress because the work is well planned to allow for the systematic development of the more advanced skills of tool manipulation, jointing, decoration and evaluation necessary for the products to become more sophisticated. In a good Year 3 class lesson, for example, a group of pupils was working on the investigation of simple pneumatics prior to designing a pump to inflate a balloon. They were attempting to produce a design where the plastic bottle at the heart of the pump could be prevented from collapsing due to the build up of excessive pressure and repeated pump-action. The pupils agreed that some form of sleeve, probably made of card might be helpful in applying uniform pressure to the bottle sides and thus avoid the creation of pinch-points. They set about recording their ideas on a draft plan with enthusiasm and keen anticipation of the next lesson.

108. DT is taught well in all classes. Teachers have good subject knowledge, high expectations and use stimulating and involving methods to enthuse their pupils into hard work and good levels of productive learning. The setting and sharing of learning targets in lessons is less well developed than in some schools, but DT lessons have good sense of purpose and enjoyment.

109. The subject is managed well and improvement has kept up with the pace of change over the last four years. The co-ordinator has ensured that DT takes its rightful place in the curriculum and she supports and advises her colleagues well. The co-ordinator has worked to link the DT scheme and that for ICT so that pupils' computer skills are promoted effectively across the curriculum. This development is a model for other subjects. The monitoring of standards and teaching and learning and the development of a systematic scheme for the assessment of skills are both at the early stage of development. These priorities are included in the overall school improvement plan and there is every chance that the rate of improvement will continue to be good.

GEOGRAPHY

110. Standards in the last report were judged to be in line with those expected for pupils at the end of year 2 and year 6 and progress was sound. Standards in geography are as expected now, although the emphasis given to the subject in thematic work is not as strong as for other subjects.

111. Inspectors saw some satisfactory work in the subject, but this is not as consistent across the school as in the other work. From a scrutiny of previous work by all age groups across the school, looking at teachers' planning and talking to the co-ordinator, it is possible to make the following judgements.

112. Current standards by the end of year 2 and year 6 are about average. The majority of pupils achieve as well as expected and make reasonable progress. This is more marked in some aspects of the subject than others. For example, most pupils are able to develop their mapping skills satisfactorily as they move through the school. Year 1 pupils have recorded their journey to school as a picture map, while year 3 pupils use symbols and a key to record physical and human features on their maps. By the time pupils are in Year 4, they use compass directions to locate major cities in the British Isles. In year 2, pupils draw upon secondary sources of information such as photographs and pictures to identify the climate and landscape of places. Older pupils in year 6 make use of CD-ROMs and the

Internet for research on mountain ranges around the world. The subject is well supported by a series of visits to such places as the Llangollen Canal, Manchester Airport, the Albert Docks in Liverpool and walks along the Mersey and Weaver rivers. Some other countries such as South Africa and Australia are also studied but not in sufficient depth to be meaningful.

113. The school has just adopted a new scheme of work to support teaching and learning in geography. This will enable it to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum in a more systematic and planned manner and to check that there is enough time to develop the necessary skills and knowledge. The school has identified the closer monitoring of standards by subject co-ordinators as one of its main priorities in a bid to improve standards. Another is the greater use of ICT in geography. The new co-ordinator is well qualified and enthusiastic to raise the profile of the subject.

HISTORY

114. Standards in history in Years 2 and 6 are above those expected by the ages of seven and eleven. Since the previous inspection, standards have been improved. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make at least satisfactory progress throughout the school.

115. By the age of seven, pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of home life in the past. They know that technological improvements have occurred through their exploration of household objects from long ago such as flat irons, the mangle, dolly tub and washboard. They recognise that toys have changed a great deal and can identify the differences in old and new toys. Pupils show an increasing sense of chronology, sequencing old and new bears in Year 1, while in Year 2 they sequence rock samples, fossils and magma according to their age. Many pupils recognise the fossil amongst the rocks and minerals and higher-attaining pupils give a very good explanation of how a fossil is formed.

116. Through simple observations of photographs and first-hand knowledge from a recent visit to caves pupils answer questions about the past confidently. A visit to the salt mines enables them to discuss clothing worn, tools used and how rock salt was transported in the past. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of famous people from the past such as Grace Darling and Florence Nightingale. They write in chronological order about their lives, and formulate questions for discussion from a picture of Grace Darling. Using books, pictures and the Internet they develop simple research skills to make an information booklet on her life. Similar research is undertaken for the life of Paul Klee making good links with art and mathematics. Pupils are confident when using historical terminology such as 'past' and 'present'.

117. Year 2 pupils experience a residential visit linked to their visit to Beeston Castle as part of their study of Anglo-Saxons. This opportunity enriches their learning opportunities well.

118. By the age of eleven, pupils have a sound knowledge of a range of historical periods such as the Romans, Anglo-Saxons, Tudors, Egyptians, Vikings, Ancient Greeks, Victorians and wartime Britain. They have a good sense of chronology, being able to place events and periods on a time line for the Millennium. They are able to understand how times change and can compare aspects of periods studied. In their current study of the Anglo-Saxons, for example, they know how work and trade were different from present times. They have first-hand experience of some of the skills such as spinning, dyeing

sheep's wool using natural materials, cording the wool and weaving. Through literacy they extend their knowledge and understanding of the Anglo-Saxon period as they study *Beowulf*. They know that Anglo-Saxons lived a long time ago in the past and understand terms such as 'settlement' and 'invaders'. Pupils use a range of sources to gather historical information.

119. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. Teachers present work in a lively and imaginative way, involving pupils often in rich first-hand experiences. This results in effective learning taking place. The very good cross-curricular links mean that pupils have a very broad knowledge base. For example, in art they study the history of Clarice Cliff using their enquiry and research skills to good effect. Other cultural links are made such as in Year 5 where pupils cover some South African history, learning about Nelson Mandela and understanding terms such as 'apartheid'. The use of television programmes helps pupils to understand events and remember key facts. For example, the programme 'Anglo-Saxon treasures' fascinated pupils in Year 4 and 5. There were gasps of wonder from one girl when she learnt that 4,000 garnets were found at Sutton Hoo! Pupils recalled the artefacts found on the ship and knew that these gave clues to how people lived in Anglo-Saxon times. Good use of open-ended questions such as 'why?' and 'what do you think?' challenges pupils' thinking well. Resources are very well used, supporting pupils' learning very effectively. Year 6 work is imaginatively presented with role-play and literacy links such as the letters home to parents about life on board ship with Captain Cook, and a newspaper obituary for Helen Keller. Well maintained journals on Captain Cook show a clear understanding of the roles on board ship and the style of writing for a journal.

120. The four-year rolling programme for the curriculum where everyone is studying the same period of time results in some repetition between year groups. A further drawback is that whilst very good cross-curricular links extend the learning, sometimes history becomes secondary to literacy or art and design, for example, and coverage is too superficial. The role of the co-ordinator has yet to be extended to direct monitoring of the curriculum, teaching and learning, though the school has firm plans to develop this aspect of her role. The absence of any formal procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress sometimes results in underachievement by higher-attaining pupils. Satisfactory use is made of computers to support research skills. The very good library provision enriches the learning experiences for all pupils. Good attention is paid to developing skills required for history and also to developing literacy skills and mathematical skills. There are excellent opportunities for exciting visits, as well as visitors into school, which brings history alive for pupils, increasing their desire to learn.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

121. By the end of year 2 and year 6 the majority of pupils are achieving standards in line with those expected for pupils of a similar age. This is a reflection of the findings of the previous report. Progress is much more regular, particularly in the development of computer skills, than previously. There is more careful monitoring of the time that pupils have to develop their skills, and the new scheme of work is helping the school to address all the requirements of the National Curriculum. The co-ordinator is well qualified and enthusiastic and has worked hard to raise the profile of the subjects across the school. These are all improvements from the previous inspection.

122. Scrutiny of pupils' previous work and the evidence from lessons seen during the inspection show that the majority of pupils in all year groups are developing their ICT skills well. For example, in the reception class, children are introduced to the use of the mouse to

select, drag and position images to make their own picture. With support they are able to use the keyboard to type their name and save their work. Year 5 pupils, on the other hand, are able to use the mouse to re-size, position and rotate shapes to make a plan of their classroom. Year 2 pupils were observed learning to program a 'Roamer' to move around the classroom avoiding an obstacle. More able pupils are able to combine series of instructions to make a simple control program. Year 6 pupils are able to make a set of traffic lights and control them through a computer program. Scrutiny of previous work shows that word-processing skills are developed well as pupils move through the school. Year 3 pupils can change the size and style of different fonts to create emphasis and effect in their writing. There is a similar picture in the development of data-handling skills. For example, year 1 pupils are able to collect data on the colours of eyes and hair of the class and make a graph of their findings. They can also construct pictograms of their favourite pets. By the time pupils are in years 5 and 6, they are using spreadsheets to record results at the sports day.

123. This progress in developing skills has been brought about by the good teaching seen during the inspection. No unsatisfactory teaching of ICT was seen and much of it was good. Teachers' confidence and competence have improved as a result of recent training and further training has already been agreed for the immediate future. This was very evident in a year 5 lesson where the focus on clear instructions enabled all groups of pupils to consolidate their existing knowledge and then extend this through good opportunities to practise their skills. Teachers show a good understanding of the programs they use and on the specific skills they are teaching. The majority of pupils are responding very well to the opportunities presented by their teachers. They listen very well to instructions, share resources fairly and take turns and support each other when working on the computers. When working alone, as in the 'Starspell' sessions at the beginning of the day, pupils persevere and concentrate well.

124. The new scheme of work, based on national guidance, is helping the school to plan the systematic development of skills in all the strands of the National Curriculum for ICT. Inspectors saw some very satisfactory work in the use of these skills in other areas of the curriculum but this is not yet as extensive and well planned as it might be. For example, the co-ordinator has recently linked the ICT scheme of work with that for design and technology, so that all opportunities to use ICT skills are clearly identified in a planned and systematic manner. This is a way in which the use of ICT in other areas of the curriculum might be extended and remains an area of development for the school. The school has recently started to look at ways of assessing the attainment of its pupils in ICT but this remains an area of development for the school. Current resources are being used well to develop ICT skills but more use could be made of specific programs to support teaching and learning in other areas of the curriculum.

MUSIC

125. Standards in music overall are good. There has been significant improvement since the last inspection when standards were judged to be only just satisfactory. Singing in assembly is pleasant and tuneful. Pupils take account of the mood of the song, for example when singing 'Shalom' in Hebrew, and everyone participates. No singing was heard in the individual junior classes but pupils in Years 1 and 2 sing enthusiastically, enunciating the words clearly. Year 1 pupils practise their song 'Mr Giant' and then stand to perform it, showing a marked improvement in a short time. A voluntary pianist comes to school and supports all classes for singing and she is a real asset.

126. No composing activities by the younger pupils were seen so standards cannot be judged. However, 11-year-olds display good standards in their lesson, composing music to interpret different parts of the story of *Beowulf*. They record their ideas first and improvise melodic and rhythmic phrases in their groups before deciding on a sequence of sounds that they then perform. They suggest ways in which their own performance and that of others can be improved. The understanding of how compositions evolve is well developed through the juniors. Year 4 pupils, for example, use a computer program to compose a melody that can be relayed back using a variety of instruments.

127. The real strength of music in the school is the way in which pupils listen and respond to music. Standards are good for pupils in Years 2 and 6 and progress is good across the school. A wide variety of music is played and this exposure contributes very well to pupils' cultural development and represents an improvement since the last inspection. Their spiritual development is also fostered very well in that they are encouraged to reflect on the mood created by composers. Year 5 pupils, for example, consider the contrasts between 'Mars' and 'Neptune' in Holst's *The Planets* suite. They listen very carefully – some have heads in their hands – and use expressive vocabulary in their response. The subject contributes well to the development of literacy skills. Poems are often written in response to music – “Lonely is the sad and unloved soul/Wandering thoughtlessly in endless evil” - and computers are often used to present work neatly. Teachers are becoming increasingly aware of the benefits to music of information and communication technology.

128. Pupils have positive attitudes to music. Those in Year 6 co-operate very well in their composing activities and show great respect for their classmates as each group performs. All pupils listen very carefully to their teachers and to music as it is being played. They are confident about using musical terms, for example in Year 5 – referring to 'staccato' 'legato' and 'piano' when comparing contrasting pieces of music.

129. Only three lessons were seen. One of these was judged excellent because of the teacher's confidence and knowledge of the subject, her impeccable control of the pupils and organisation of the activity and her sensitivity to the needs of all pupils so that everyone is involved and busily engaged. The other lessons, too, were well planned and executed with resources being used productively. In a Year 1 lesson, for example, all pupils had brought a home-made shaker to accompany their singing and they all played enthusiastically.

130. The co-ordinator supports her colleagues well and is anxious to develop their levels of confidence so that, in particular, the quality of singing in the junior classes can be improved. This is identified in the school improvement plan. A helpful booklet has been produced listing the resources for listening to music, with examples from different periods of time and suggestions on how to conduct lessons. Teachers have a list of musical skills that they can focus on when assessing standards and progress, but there is at present no formal way of recording pupils' achievements. The school choir and recorder groups enrich the subject but they did not perform for the inspectors, partly because they have not yet met often enough to prepare anything at this early stage of the school year. Parents consider that music is strong in the school and the choir in particular has a good reputation locally. Pupils regularly take part in events such as Clonter Opera Company and the annual school carol service.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

131. Standards are good in physical education (PE). By the end of both Years 2 and 6, pupils develop skills and knowledge that are better than expected for their age. They move

with confidence and poise and use space sensibly. Pupils in the infant classes are thoughtful about the movements they are making in gymnastics and dance and many are capable of moving in original ways. In a very good Year 2 gymnastics lesson, pupils moved around hoops laid on the ground in almost as many different ways as there were pupils in the class. They took a pride in giving a flourish to the movement, so for example, one pupil jumping with two feet gave an impressive backward flick of both legs as she did so.

132. Older pupils take these good skills and build on them very successfully. Not only do they work well in pairs and small teams in games, but they also show increasing skills of evaluation of their work. When questioned by the teacher or in discussion with other pupils, they indicate what they like or see as strengths in the observed movement and contrast these with the elements that they would like to improve. The use of pupils to demonstrate good or improving movement is a feature of most PE lessons, such as the Year 5 games lesson to develop the skills of rugby. Put together, these features allow pupils to work for self-improvement and to develop smooth sequences of movement that allow them to manoeuvre around, over or under apparatus or play attack and defence games.

133. The school ensures that all pupils in junior classes have ample opportunity each year to go swimming. By the time they leave school, most pupils can swim the desirable 25 metre length. In all aspects of PE, safety is put first, and the need for confidence and safety in the water is put before performance. In the gym and on the games field, teachers ensure that pupils work safely, land carefully from a height and do not take risks when moving heavy objects or attempting movements such as forward rolls.

134. The school has had modest success in competitive games against other schools, but staff also emphasise the need for pupils to take part, achieve their personal best and enjoy what they are doing. Pupils respond well to these values and show positive attitudes to PE. The school sports day, or 'Sandiway Olympics', is a well supported event where pupils demonstrate enjoyment of competitive sports. Behaviour is very good in lessons and relationships are a strength.

135. PE is taught well in the infant and junior years. Teachers have good subject knowledge, they teach with confidence and use a good range of methods to motivate pupils to good learning. Lessons are energetic and briskly paced and pupils sustain their physical effort. Many pupils develop good levels of stamina. High expectations are the number one reason why teaching and learning quality is good.

136. The co-ordinator has ensured that PE is resourced well and that staff have the knowledge to teach the subject effectively. For the future, enhancement of her role to include direct monitoring of the subject and a greater element of budgetary control would help build on existing strengths, and result in very good subject development. Nonetheless, the co-ordinator is hardworking, an enthusiast for the subject and is committed to improvement. The subject is secure under her management and she leads it very successfully.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

137. Standards in religious education (RE) for seven and eleven-year-olds are similar to those outlined in the local programme of work for Cheshire schools. Standards have therefore been maintained since the last inspection. Year 2 pupils understand the importance of Jesus' teachings for Christians and know that a church is a special place – "it is God's house". When visiting the local church, they take a moment to soak up the atmosphere and then quiz the vicar about his job, learning that he spends more time in the

community than in the building and that he helps people. They know the features of the church and the symbolic nature of, for example, a candle – “it reminds us of Jesus”. Year 6 pupils also have a sound understanding of Christianity, of the important events in Jesus’ life and of His teachings and miracles, such as the feeding of 5,000 people. As at the last inspection, understanding of Christianity and of its significance to believers is soundly developed through the school.

138. Progress over time is satisfactory across the school in other aspects of RE too. Pupils in the infant classes learn about Judaism and last year visited a nearby Jewish school and synagogue to see the Torah in its place and learn that it is sacred because it contains the Word of God. The juniors continue to develop this understanding, learning about Jewish festivals such as Sukkot from the parent of a pupil in the school. By building a model of a booth decorated with the fruits of harvest, they understand the traditions surrounding the festival. Pupils also learn about Islam though, as one Year 6 pupil says, “we are not rock solid about that.” Nevertheless, with prompting, it is clear that a basic knowledge is present: that the mosque is the place of worship, that there are certain rituals when praying and that there are traditions of dress for men and women that all are expected to observe.

139. Pupils show a real interest in the subject. The visits and visitors make a significant impact and bring the subject alive for them. Year 6 pupils, for example, recall enthusiastically their trip to the two cathedrals in Liverpool and knowledgeably compare the two buildings. Pupils show proper respect and have a deep longing to understand how and why religion is important for some people. In a lesson about worship, for example, Year 6 pupils are keen to discuss the recent tragedy in New York and to explain why people turned to prayer – “to seek comfort and an explanation for the actions of the terrorists”. One boy says, “Religion gives a structure to people’s lives.” This indicates profound spiritual thinking. RE makes a significant contribution to pupils’ spiritual development.

140. During the inspection, lessons were well taught and learning was good. The scrutiny of work and discussion with Year 6 pupils indicate that teaching over time is more often satisfactory and that progress is sound. In the lessons seen, good teaching is characterised by warm relationships and by an ability to ask questions that do not suggest the answers to pupils. Teachers try to include everyone in the discussions and cater for different needs. In most cases, they succeed. In the Year 2 visit to the Church, for example, everyone has prepared a question for the vicar and there is time for all of them to be answered. In Year 5, the teacher has secure control of an animated discussion about whether or not pupils would help a person in trouble or walk on by, as the priest and the Levite did in the story of the Good Samaritan. In this way, the subject contributes well to the development of speaking and listening skills. Writing skills are also well promoted, for example in Year 3’s accounts of the Easter Story. However, information and communication technology is not often used to support work in RE.

141. The subject is well led. Teachers have a clear framework within which they plan lessons but they have no way yet of recording the standards and progress that pupils achieve. They have adequate resources – reference books and religious objects for example – to deliver the curriculum.