

INSPECTION REPORT

PRESCOT PRIMARY SCHOOL

Prescot

LEA area: Knowsley

Unique reference number: 104425

Headteacher: Mr S Jorgensen

Reporting inspector: Mr T Comer
15109

Dates of inspection: 1 – 5 July 2002

Inspection number: 196857

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 - 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Maryville Road
Prescot
Knowsley
Merseyside

Postcode: L34 2TA

Telephone number: 0151 4778200

Fax number: 0151 4778201

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs L Eaton

Date of previous inspection: June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
15109	Mr T Comer	Registered inspector	Mathematics	The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? How well is the school led and managed?
14214	Mrs G Smith	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
7994	Mrs P Weston	Team inspector	Art & design Design & technology Physical education Special educational needs Equal opportunities	
22740	Mrs M Leah	Team inspector	English Music	
80935	Mrs K McArthur	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Geography History	
3191	Mr J Curley	Team inspector	Science Information & communication technology Religious education	

The inspection contractor was:

North West Education Services Ltd
Cheshire House
164 Main Road
Goostrey
Cheshire
CW4 8JP

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33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Prescot Primary School is a large school, with 384 boys and girls on roll in roughly equal numbers in Reception – Year 6, and another 74 children part-time in the nursery. Three pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds but these pupils are not at an early stage of learning English. The pupils are a broad social mix and come from a much wider area than the school’s immediate neighbourhood. The proportion of pupils entitled to a free school meal is average. The attainment of the children on joining the nursery is average overall but their development in language and number is below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is rising and is just below average - the majority of these children have moderate learning difficulties and two have formal statements of need. The school participates in the local Excellence in Cities programme for gifted and talented children.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an excellent primary school, which has greatly improved since the previous inspection. All pupils have an equally good education, regardless of their home background or ability, and achieve high standards, both in their learning and in their personal development. The school achieves these standards because its excellent leadership ensures that teaching is high in quality and that its distinctive values permeate all of its work. The school is bright, clean, welcoming and well equipped. It is very efficiently managed and gives excellent value for money. The children are enthusiastic about their school and said to the inspectors that it is ‘the best school ever’.

What the school does well

- The school’s inspirational leadership ensures a high quality of education for all of its pupils.
- The school’s values underpin pupils’ personal development and relationships.
- Plans are always carried out successfully and targets are met.
- The teaching is very good and pupils learn quickly and achieve high standards, particularly in English, mathematics and science.
- Pupils’ personal development is excellent and their attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- Pupils are very enthusiastic about school and greatly enjoy it.
- The school looks after its pupils well.

What could be improved

- Standards in most subjects are not as high as they are in English, mathematics and science.

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 an excellent improvement since its previous inspection, in June 1997. The vast improvement in standards has been a major achievement, which reflects credit on the teachers and other members of the teaching staff. Teaching is now very good and standards have risen from barely average to well above average. The school has made very good progress with the issues for improvement raised by the previous inspection. In particular, the school’s aims and values can be seen in all that it does, and this is one of the principal reasons for its success.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	All schools			Similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
English	A*	B	A*	A*	Well above average A Above average B Average C Below average D Well below average E
Mathematics	A	C	A	A*	
Science	A*	B	A*	A*	

[Note: in the above table, the A grades indicate that the school performs in the top five per cent of schools.]*

Children make very good progress in the nursery and reception classes. Because they are so well taught they overcome their early weaknesses in language and number and nearly all reach the standards expected of them by the end of reception, and some pupils exceed them.

Pupils continue to achieve very well in Years 1 and 2, and overall standards are well above average by the time they are ready for Year 3. The results of the 2001 national tests were above average in reading and mathematics, and average in writing. The teachers' own assessment of science was below average in 2001. The results improved in each of the three national tests and in the science assessments in 2002 and the greatest improvements were in writing and in science. The teachers' assessments in science showed that all pupils reached the expected standard.

Pupils achieve very well in Years 3 – 6 and overall standards in Year 6 are well above average. Boys and girls achieve broadly similar standards. The results of the national tests in English, mathematics and science have risen in line with the national trend over a period of years and consistently meet the governors' targets which are very challenging and reviewed annually. In 2001, the test results were very high in each subject and, overall, were the fourth highest of all primary schools in the country. All pupils reached the expected levels in each of the three subjects and many pupils exceeded them. A few pupils identified by the school as gifted achieved very high results in the mathematics tests. The 2002 results have not yet been released; they are expected to be well above average but not quite as high as those of the previous year.

Standards in subjects other than English, mathematics and science are average or above average throughout the school. There is no underachievement but the school is keen to raise standards in all subjects to the same very high level, and has plans to do so.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy school and lessons and are keen to learn and succeed.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils behave very well in lessons because they want to learn and because they are very well taught. Outside of lessons, their behaviour is impeccable: they are a credit to themselves, their parents and their school.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Pupils develop well as mature and sensible young people. They are keen to help and to take responsibility; they comply with teachers' requests and complete their work on time. This is a very happy school: pupils get on well with one another with hardly any disagreements. There is an absence of aggressive behaviour and pupils say that there is no bullying. The relationships between teachers and pupils are caring and constructive. Pupils are confident in their teachers and trust them to resolve their personal problems.
Attendance	Slightly above average overall.

The school's values, which are well known to all pupils and their parents, can be seen in all that the school does. Consistent upholding of these simple and clear principles is the chief reason for the pupils' excellent personal development and a major reason for the pupils' high achievement.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good	Very 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 quality of teaching has greatly improved since the previous inspection and meets the needs of all of its pupils very well. Teachers carefully match the work to pupils' attainment levels and pupils with special educational needs, and those identified as gifted or talented, therefore make very good progress. Teaching assistants and nursery nurses make a substantial and positive contribution to the quality of teaching by supporting pupils, aiding teachers and helping to plan lessons.

Children are very well taught in the nursery and in the reception classes. They make very good progress towards national early learning goals in their personal development, in language, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, and in their creative and physical development. This is because the teachers are skilled practitioners and have high expectations of the children.

The teaching of English, mathematics and science is very good throughout the main school and the teaching of literacy and numerical skills is also very good. The special strengths of teaching are high expectations and the exemplary way in which the teachers mark their pupils' work and guide them. Teachers plan lessons meticulously. Pupils work hard, concentrate on their work and make very good progress. Because the marking of their work is done so well, the pupils know how well they are doing in each subject and what they need to do to improve. Teaching is as good as it is because the headteacher and deputy headteacher work hard with all teaching staff to make it so. The teaching of other subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education is not quite as good as in English mathematics and science, although it is at least satisfactory in all of them.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good overall. The curriculum is well planned, provides equally for all pupils, and meets legal requirements. The school's strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are effective. Now that standards in English and mathematics are so high, the school can afford to give more time and emphasis to other subjects, and it already intends to do this. The teachers provide an excellent range of extra-curricular activities in which many children take part.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Provision for these pupils with special educational needs ensures that they enjoy the same opportunities as other pupils. High quality support ensures that pupils' learning, behaviour or emotional needs are met fully.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good, overall. The provision for moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils clearly understand and adopt the school's values. The school's programme of personal, health and social education is excellent. Spiritual education is good and pupils experience many valuable occasions for reflection, although daily collective worship is not explicitly Christian.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good overall, with many excellent features. The school safeguards pupils' welfare and health and safety. Teachers measure pupils' attainment regularly and accurately and monitor their progress against individual targets. The school monitors pupils' personal development carefully and takes immediate action when behaviour gives cause for concern.

The school knows its pupils well. The monitoring of individual pupils' progress and their personal development is excellent and is a key feature of the school's daily work. The school has a very good partnership with parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work together as a team to provide strong leadership and exceptionally clear educational direction for the school. As a consequence, teachers are confident in the quality of their work and their morale is very high. The management of the school as a whole is excellent and the management of curriculum subjects is very good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Excellent. Statutory requirements are met and governors take a leading role in planning and shaping the direction of the school. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and give firm support for the head and deputy headteacher.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. The school's assessment system enables the governors and staff to compare its performance with that of others and indicates where to take action to improve.

The strategic use of resources	Excellent. Financial management is excellent. The school spends its money very effectively in pursuit of its aims, values and priorities. The school is highly efficient and its administration works very smoothly.
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The school is very well staffed. Class sizes are manageable and teachers are well qualified, experienced and well trained. Resources for learning are very good. The accommodation is spacious, clean, bright and well maintained.

Governors, head and deputy headteacher apply the principles of best value consistently well and constantly compare the performance of the school with that of others in their drive to ensure that the school is doing as well as it can. The school attracts considerable extra funds, for example, through sponsorship. Money is spent wisely when placing contracts for goods and services.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is well led and managed. • Their children like school. • Expectations are high. • Pupils behave well, become mature and responsible and are expected to work hard. • Children are well taught and make good progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very few parents have any negative views about the school's work.

The inspectors entirely agree with the parents' views.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Standards have risen considerably in nearly all subjects since the previous inspection, especially in English, mathematics and science. Pupils achieve very well and standards are now well above average by Year 2 and Year 6. The boys tend to outperform girls in the early years but, by Year 6, boys and girls achieve roughly equal standards.

Nursery and Reception Classes (The Foundation Stage)

2. The overall attainment of the children when they first join the nursery is average but many children have weaknesses in the key areas of language and mathematics. They make very good progress in the nursery and in their reception class and achieve very well. By the time they are ready to begin Year 1, they have caught up in the areas of relative weakness, language and mathematics, and overall standards are above average. All children meet the expected early learning goals in all areas of learning, and some are working at the next level, particularly in reading.

3. The children's very good achievement is due to the high quality of teaching together with a wide range of interesting and exciting learning activities. Children who have special educational needs are carefully monitored and very well supported, which assists them to make the same very good progress as other children.

Years 1 and 2 (Key Stage 1)

4. Pupils continue to make very good progress in Years 1 and 2. Although the national test results in reading, writing and mathematics vary from one year to another, when aggregated over the past three years, the results were above average on each of the three tests. Boys tended to do better than girls. The results of the national tests in 2001 were above average in reading and mathematics but average in writing. However, the inspection shows that standards reached by the present Year 2 pupils are well above average and this is a very good achievement for these pupils. The results of the 2002 tests, available during the week of the inspection, are higher than those of previous years and are consistent with what the inspectors found. Standards in science are also well above average and have greatly improved. Standards in writing and science have risen because the school has made these particular priorities for improvement.

5. Although standards are high in English, mathematics and science, they are not quite as high in other subjects. This is because, as in nearly all other schools over the past few years, the lion's share of the teaching time has been spent on raising standards of literacy and numeracy.

Years 3 – 6 (Key Stage 2)

6. Pupils continue to achieve very well throughout Years 3 – 6 and, by the end of Year 6, their overall standards are well above average. The results of national tests in English, mathematics and science reflect these high standards and, in 2001, all Year 6 pupils achieved the standard expected nationally of children of their age (level 4) in each of the three subjects and high proportions reached level 5. These high results placed the school fourth nationally amongst all schools. Gifted pupils are set work in mathematics beyond what is normally seen in primary schools. These pupils rise to challenges enthusiastically and greatly benefit, a small number of them reaching level 6 in mathematics.

7. Though standards of the current Year 6 pupils are well above average, the 2002 test results are expected to be very good but not quite as high as the excellent results of 2001. This is because this year's Year 6 contains more pupils than usual with learning difficulties. Nevertheless, such pupils make very good progress throughout the school and most of them reach expected standards, as all did in 2001.

8. The standards in other subjects are again not as high as they are in English, mathematics and science. Standards are above average in art and design, geography, ICT, music and physical education, and are average in design and technology, history and religious education. In some subjects there is a tendency to rely heavily on worksheets; for example, in history, pupils need more opportunities to research evidence for themselves from different sources, such as the library or the Internet. In religious education, the main weakness is that pupils have a shaky grasp of the main features of the major religions of the world, aside from Christianity. Although pupils are not underachieving in any subject, the school recognises in its planning for improvement that it is now time to raise standards in the other subjects to equal those now achieved in English, mathematics and science. Standards could be raised further through more strategic use of ICT in most subjects, and the school plans to do this.

English and mathematics

9. Standards are high in English and the school has been particularly successful in its drive to improve the standard of writing. Standards are above average in reading and are well above average in speaking and listening, and in writing, throughout the school. There is some inconsistency in pupils' handwriting and even in Year 6 pupils sometimes revert to printing. The school has plans to remedy this.

10. Pupils' number skills are well above average throughout Years 1 – 6. They build on the work done in the foundation stage and, by the end of Year 2, the vast majority of pupils are secure with problems involving addition and subtraction. A majority of these pupils know the multiplication tables for 2, 5 and 10 and, during the course of Years 3 and 4, pupils consolidate and extend their knowledge of number and mental arithmetic skills. Year 5 pupils generally have good recall of multiplication tables up to 10 x 10. They are extending their knowledge of decimals and fractions, and of ratio and proportion. They use written methods of multiplication and division effectively and calculators when appropriate. Pupils' good numerical skills assist them in their work in science and in technology and are extended in ICT, for example, through the use of spreadsheets.

Pupils with special educational needs

11. Pupils make very good progress, in particular in personal and social skills. They make good progress towards targets set for them in their individual education programmes, especially in English and mathematics, in which they benefit from effective teaching of literacy and numeracy. These pupils also benefit from the very strong commitment that the school has to equality of opportunity and social inclusion and to ensure that they enjoy the same lessons as other pupils.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. The previous inspection found that pupils had good attitudes to their work and were polite and well behaved. Over the intervening five years, this already positive picture has improved further. Children in the nursery and older pupils now have very good attitudes to school and to their work. Pupils' personal development is excellent and they relish taking part in the wide range of opportunities that is available. Relationships between the pupils and with adults are excellent. Overall attendance is very similar to the national average and there are very few unauthorised absences.

13. Just over one quarter of parents returned the pre-inspection questionnaire and almost everyone agrees that their children enjoy coming to school. Parents also feel that their children work hard and that they are well behaved during the school day. Their confidence is very well placed; pupils of all ages are very loyal to their school and told inspectors that it is the best school in the world. They are very proud of their work and trust and respect their teachers. There is a very strong sense of school identity and, when asked what they would like to change, pupils struggled to think of anything at all they would like to alter.

14. In the nursery and reception classes, the children are very enthusiastic about their learning. All teaching and support staff work effectively to create a secure environment in which each child is valued, inspired and respected, and their achievements celebrated. Well-established routines help the children to feel secure. They share equipment, play together, and take turns. The children behave very well and are beginning to develop initiative and responsibility and to make decisions, for example, when to have their

snack. They learn good manners, and say 'please' and 'thank you' without prompting, and begin to take responsibility for their own clothes and books and get themselves ready for lessons. Children are considerate and helpful towards one another and are beginning to consider the feelings of others.

15. The agreed code of values permeates the entire school and pupils respond very warmly to the very positive and supportive atmosphere. A particular feature of this school is the infectious enthusiasm of its teachers and the way in which they inspire a zest for learning. By presenting lively and interesting lessons, teachers create a purposeful atmosphere that is very conducive to learning. They make learning fun and the pupils enjoy lessons. Pupils know exactly what is expected of them and their keen and enthusiastic approach to learning helps to create a lively and vibrant atmosphere. For example, teachers' questions are usually met with a forest of hands, all cheerfully giving the thumbs up sign. Pupils with special educational needs have positive attitudes to their work and make very good gains in self-confidence.

16. During lessons, pupils of all ages settle down quickly and work very hard. Teachers use praise to very good effect and gently coax those who lack confidence. Their warmth and support encourages pupils of all abilities to use their initiative and to persevere with work they find difficult. For example, during a mathematics lesson when Year 2 pupils were learning about money, their teacher used every minute of the lesson to reinforce and extend the pupils' knowledge of numbers and tables. She skilfully created a fast moving atmosphere and the pupils knew that they had to pay attention in order to keep up. The pupils were utterly entranced and enthused with an almost urgent desire to learn.

17. Pupils behave very well during the school day. They are confident, out-going and very friendly. During lessons, pupils can be relied upon to behave themselves; their conduct only deteriorates if the standard of teaching falters; for example, if they are unsure of what it is that they should be doing. Teachers address the pupils with the respect and consideration they deserve and relationships between pupils and with adults are excellent. Pupils know that their teachers are sincere in their desire for them to do well and each is comfortable in the other's company. Pupils of all ages mix freely and are well mannered and polite. Pupils' behaviour at lunchtime and playtimes is very good and pupils automatically consider each other's needs. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and the school has a very successful policy of social and educational inclusion. All pupils get along well together and play a full part in the day-to-day life of the school. They say that there are very few incidents of bullying or any other anti-social behaviour. Exclusion is very rare.

18. Pupils respond exceptionally well to the school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their personal development is excellent. As they move through the school, pupils become increasingly mature and perceptive. Pupils enjoy the many extra-curricular activities and participate with enjoyment and enthusiasm. Pupils also benefit from educational visits to nearby places of interest and Year 6 pupils to a residential outdoor activity centre in Wales. They take part in adventurous sports, such as canoeing and abseiling, and these experiences encourage pupils to use their initiative and to become increasingly self-reliant. Pupils of all ages willingly undertake a wide range of responsibilities, such as participating in the school council or acting as various monitors.

19. Overall attendance is a little above average and the level of unauthorised absence is below the national average. Pupils usually arrive in good time for the start of the school day and lessons get off to a prompt start. When pupils are absent, it is usually because they have been ill or have had a medical appointment. Some of the absences, however, are the result of pupils being taken on family holidays during the school term. Although these absences are usually less than 10 days, they inevitably mean that the pupils concerned miss the work done by the rest of their class.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

20. The quality of the teaching and of pupils' learning is very good. The teaching meets the need of all pupils very well and accounts for their high overall achievement. The teaching has improved very substantially since the time of the previous inspection, in 1997. It has greatly improved in reception

classes. A concerted emphasis on improving the standard of writing, particularly in Years 1 and 2, has resulted in higher standards and improved test results in English. In 1997, teachers' expectations were not high enough for older children in mathematics and this has been transformed. There was a lack of subject expertise in design and technology and in information technology and this shortcoming has now been made good. Similarly, the school has worked hard and successfully to improve the teaching of science, which is now very good. The teaching of religious education, which was unsatisfactory in 1997, has improved substantially and is now satisfactory.

21. The key to the school's improvement has been the rigorous monitoring of standards and lessons by the head and deputy headteacher. The outcomes of their monitoring have led to action by the whole school to improve pupils' learning further and to raise standards. Subject co-ordinators also monitor standards and the effectiveness of subject provision and this has also led to action, which has substantially improved teaching and learning.

22. During the inspection, an unusually high proportion of lessons was rated very good or excellent. Analyses of samples of pupils' written work also strongly indicated a high quality of teaching and learning. The teachers are very receptive to opportunities to improve. A very small number of lessons (two) were unsatisfactory. These were not typical of the teaching and are not therefore significant, though the teachers made it clear that they intended to learn from them.

23. The quality of teaching is very good in the nursery and reception classes. Lesson planning is very well organised, with a wide range of exciting and varied activities. Relationships are warm and caring and all members of staff have a very good knowledge of the learning needs of young children. The monitoring and assessment of progress are very good and contribute to the high quality of teaching and learning. The children are interested in their lessons and listen to their teachers with great concentration. Writing is slower to develop but is consistently improving. The learning activities stimulate children's natural curiosity in the world around them through practical, first-hand exploration.

24. In Years 1 – 6, teaching is very good in English, mathematics and science. It is not quite as good in other subjects but the school is planning to make improvements in order to raise standards further.

25. The overall strengths of the teaching are high expectations, the effective teaching of basic skills of literacy and numeracy, the skilled planning of lessons, the clarity of the lessons' objectives, and the excellent, purposeful marking of the pupils' written work. Pupils' work is displayed prominently in the 'school values corridor'. Good work is celebrated in this and in many other ways and this reinforces the school's values and high expectations of achievement.

26. Teachers develop pupils' good literacy skills in nearly all subjects, although this could be done better in mathematics lessons for older pupils. It is a good feature, however, of geography, history, religious education and science lessons. The new school library is run by two parent governors. Pupils use the library well for fiction but not as much for independent research.

27. Teachers provide opportunities in science to apply mathematical knowledge, such as measurement and graphs. In ICT lessons, pupils create a range of graphs and pie charts and use spreadsheets.

28. Pupils learn quickly and effectively. They rise to the teachers' expectations of them, work hard and concentrate on their work. Good basic skills of literacy and numeracy enable them to tackle their work in all subjects confidently. Because the teachers mark their work so well, pupils have a clear idea of the progress that they are making and, in English, mathematics and science, they know what they must do to achieve a higher National Curriculum level. Pupils show great enthusiasm for learning and respond very well when lessons are interesting and varied. On the rare occasions when this is not so, pupils tend to lose interest and motivation and do not make the progress that they should do. Pupils know what is expected of them and what they are to achieve. Homework is set each week in English and mathematics for pupils in Years 3 – 6; pupils complete their homework and take it seriously.

29. Teachers and teaching assistants provide very effective support for pupils with special educational needs. Teaching assistants are well deployed and have a very good understanding of individual pupils' learning needs.

30. Especially in English and mathematics lessons, teachers carefully match the work to pupils' attainment levels. Pupils with special educational needs and those identified as gifted or talented, therefore make very good progress in these subjects.

31. The teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the teaching of English. Their high expectations encourage pupils do their best and to reach high standards. The teaching of literacy skills is effective. Lessons build progressively on what pupils know and are planned to meet the differing needs of individuals and groups within the class. All pupils, therefore, make the same very good progress. Reading and writing are taught very well and pupils learn to speak clearly and confidently. The teaching of writing has greatly improved and the work of the school's author in residence is a great asset. Older pupils write vividly, for example, to convey emotion, and use figures of speech effectively, such as simile and metaphor, to enliven the writing. Despite this very good picture, teachers could teach handwriting to a more consistent standard throughout the school. Even in Year 6 many pupils do not always use 'joined-up' writing and often revert to print.

32. The teaching of mathematics is very good. The teaching of basic numerical skills is very good. Teachers have high expectations and match work well to the pupils' differing needs. Lessons are planned meticulously and pupils' work is marked thoroughly. Pupils learn at a brisk pace and build up a very firm foundation of basic arithmetic. Mathematics lessons cover topics in Year 6 not normally taught in depth in primary school, such as algebra. However, more opportunities could usefully be given for pupils to clarify and explain the logic of their mathematical thinking in short pieces of writing.

33. The teaching and learning of history are satisfactory. Lessons are well planned, and visits, for example to Chester, photographs and historical objects help to interest the pupils. However, too much evidence is presented to pupils on photocopied sheets so that they lack opportunities to use reference books and to research wider sources of evidence. As a consequence, older pupils are not fully aware of the difference between first-hand and second-hand sources of evidence. The breadth of topics taught to Year 6 is too narrow, consisting mainly of the study of Ancient Greece.

34. The co-ordinator for ICT teaches every class in the school, and the teachers are supported by the expertise of a computer consultancy agency. Overall, the teaching of ICT is good and the teachers' expectations are high. However, the teachers do not make enough use of the pupils' skills to consolidate their learning in other subjects, for example, to develop composing skills in music through the use of specific computer programs.

35. The teaching of religious education is satisfactory. Teachers have a good knowledge of the teaching of religious education and provide interesting lessons, which motivate the pupils to learn. However, teachers need to give more emphasis to the major religions of the world.

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

36. Pupils enjoy full equality of opportunity to learn. The school provides a very good curriculum for all pupils regardless of background, aptitude or ability. An accelerated learning programme is in place for all pupils and is becoming embedded in the curriculum. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The provision for pupils with special gifts and talents, especially in mathematics and in writing, is excellent.

Nursery and Reception Classes (the Foundation Stage)

37. Since the previous inspection, the curriculum for the nursery and reception classes has been transformed. It is now very good: it is rich and diverse and all activities are carefully planned effectively around the six 'areas of learning' and national early learning goals expected for children of this age. The teachers and support staff appropriately emphasise the importance of learning through play, and this was a delight to see. Very good support ensures that all children can participate in all activities.

Years 1 – 6 (Key Stages 1 and 2)

38. At the time of the previous inspection, some subjects lacked detailed long-term planning and did not provide teachers with the necessary guidance for planning lessons. The long-term planning of subjects has greatly improved since that time. Subject co-ordinators are in post for all subjects: these middle managers provide effectively for long-term planning and guidance, through detailed schemes of work. They constantly and effectively monitor the quality of provision by sampling pupils' written work and by checking lesson plans, taking action when necessary.

39. The curriculum for Years 1 – 6 meets legal requirements and includes all of the National Curriculum subjects, religious education taught according to the Local Agreed Syllabus, and sex education taught according to the governors' policy.

40. The curriculum is reasonably well balanced. The total time given for teaching in Years 1 – 6 is in line with national recommendations. Enough time is given for pupils to have a worthwhile learning experience in each subject although English, mathematics and science take the largest share because of the national emphasis of the past few years on literacy and numeracy. The range of topics in Year 6 history could be widened.

41. Subject planning is monitored rigorously. A programme of personal, health and social education (PHSE) is provided and citizenship is taught as a separate subject. At certain times of the term, the class timetables are suspended and all pupils experience lessons in PHSE and in citizenship. The planning of the programme is excellent; however, there were no lessons in PHSE or citizenship during the inspection week.

42. The curriculum planning for pupils with special educational needs is very good and ensures that these pupils enjoy the same opportunities as other pupils. High quality support assists the pupils to make very good progress. Close collaboration between class teachers and the special educational needs co-ordinator ensures that pupils' learning, behaviour or emotional needs are met fully.

43. Gifted and talented pupils receive appropriately challenging tasks to develop their skills to the full. In mathematics, the Year 6 curriculum is extended to cover some of the material usually taught in secondary school and a few gifted pupils are assessed at levels more usual for secondary pupils in Year 9. Some pupils gifted in science achieve awards from the British Association of Young Scientists. The work of the author in residence has had a substantial effect on gifted pupils' writing. These pupils' progress is tracked rigorously, as part of this special project.

44. The school's plans for teaching basic skills are very effective overall. The strategy for literacy is a good one and literacy skills are generally very well taught. The teachers have received training for literacy and implement the school's policies well. However, pupils' handwriting varies in quality and more emphasis is needed to improve its consistency. The strategy for numeracy is very good and is consistently implemented.

45. The school provides an outstanding wide range of extra-curricular activities in which most pupils participate and greatly enjoy. Pupils have very good opportunities to develop an interest in musical performance by taking part in the choir or the school's orchestra. Pupils become used to performing both music and drama in public and are proud of the standards they reach. In the recent past, pupils have performed at a number of high-profile events and this has helped to raise their self-esteem. Many pupils play regularly in organised team games and sports and pupils have a very good choice of clubs and interest groups.

46. Excellent relationships with the wider community make a very strong contribution to the overall quality of the curriculum. The school has partnerships at leadership level with major banks and other commercial organisations and successfully seeks sponsorship.

47. The school enjoys constructive relationships with other schools, which help to enrich the curriculum, especially in sporting activities. During the inspection week, the school hosted a well-organised festival of sport which involved the participation of a number of other schools; for example, cricket teams from nine other schools visited the school for coaching.

Pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

48. Overall, pupils' personal development is very good. The school's values are applied consistently in everything that the school does. This strong feature is one of the chief reasons for the school's success.

49. Spiritual development is good. Pupils experience many occasions, such as planned periods of collective worship, in which they meditate or reflect, for example, on those who inspire them, or on their feelings for the natural world and the environment. These occasions are often accompanied by music and the lighting of candles. As moments for reflection, they are impressive, enjoyed by pupils and very sincere. However, they are not predominantly Christian.

50. The provision for social development is outstandingly good. Pupils are expected to take responsibility, for example, as classroom helpers, or as members of the school council. The school's 'values' ensure that pupils collaborate effectively with one another in and out of lessons, share their ideas and make friends easily and that they work and play happily together, regardless of social or ethnic background. Pupils are taught to become confident, articulate youngsters able to express their views. They are taught about healthy living and know that smoking, alcohol and certain drugs are harmful to health. The school raises pupils' confidence and self-esteem by displaying and celebrating their artwork prominently in the school's 'values corridor'. Pupils benefit from participating with pupils from other schools in festivals and concerts.

51. The pupils' moral education is excellent. Pupils are taught right from wrong and to be considerate to others. Pupils learn that the natural environment, for example, the equatorial rainforests, can be seriously damaged by mankind and are taught how they can be safeguarded. Pupils are taught, through role-play, for example, to consider serious ethical, social and moral questions of the day, for example, asylum seeking.

52. The pupils' cultural education is also excellent. They have opportunities to visit art galleries and museums. The pupils' appreciation of great works of art is fostered through studying and emulating great artists, such as Henri Matisse and Vincent Van Gogh. In history, pupils learn about their heritage. They use their mapping skills to trace the journeys of the Romans and the Vikings who invaded Britain in the past, and about the influence of the ancient Greeks' democracy on our own form of government. In English, cultural development is supported through a wide range of literature and drama. The school holds special science days each year. In mathematics lessons for older pupils, teachers sometimes add interest by linking the lesson to the work of great mathematicians of the past, such as Pythagoras. All pupils in Years 3 – 6 who wish to join the choir do so, and many pupils play musical instruments and join the school orchestra. All pupils in Years 3 and 4 are offered 'taster' sessions of instrumental lessons. Pupils' learning about the religious diversity in modern Britain, and its characteristics, could be stronger.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

53. The previous inspection found that the standard of care was satisfactory. Over the intervening five years, procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare have improved and are now very good. All members of

staff share a wholehearted and sincere commitment to pupils' well-being. They work very closely as a team and this helps to ensure that the pupils are well looked after during the school day. The standard of personal support and guidance provided is very good and the time that pupils spend at school is very happy and enjoyable. Children joining the nursery receive a warm welcome which helps them to settle in quickly. Procedures for health and safety are good and local authority requirements are met. Arrangements for child protection are satisfactory although some additional staff training is needed.

54. The school is keen to recognise and celebrate pupils' academic success and teachers constantly praise pupils' efforts and achievements. The monitoring of pupils' academic performance is excellent; it is very closely monitored and this helps pupils of all ages to make very good progress.

55. In the nursery and reception classes, the staff know the children well, and make careful, regular assessments in order to track their progress and personal development, and to plan future learning activities. Teachers, nursery nurses and classroom assistants have very good relationships and act as excellent role models for the children, helping them to improve their self-esteem and social skills. The classroom assistant gives very good support to a child with special physical needs, enabling her to participate confidently in all movement activities.

56. Procedures for assessing pupils' knowledge, understanding and achievements are excellent. All children who enter the nursery are assessed. All children in reception are assessed on entry, and again at the end of the school year, using nationally recognised systems. This assessment provides a clear picture of individual strengths and weaknesses and enables the school to plan an appropriate curriculum for the younger children. In Years 1 – 6, there is a wealth of assessment data available, in particular in English and mathematics, which enables teachers to identify underachievement or special educational needs and to challenge gifted and talented pupils.

57. Teachers use assessment information constantly to guide their planning of lessons so that every pupil can make very good progress. Each class teacher maintains individualised pupils profile sheets, which record assessment data and results and are used effectively to identify pupils who need more support. Very good procedures to discuss individual targets with pupils on a regular basis provide them with a clear idea of their progress and what they need to do to improve. The procedures for placing pupils on the special educational needs register are very effective. Such pupils have individual action plans which match their needs and are based on careful initial assessment and well-staged reassessment thereafter.

58. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are excellent. All assessment information is carefully analysed and this enables predictions to be made about likely pupil achievement. An individual pupil's progress is tracked from reception through to Year 6. and enables progress to be measured against the expectations of the National Curriculum and allows adjustments to be made to planning and provision. There is an excellent understanding of how the school's performance compares with national standards and with schools in similar social circumstances. There are plans to store assessment information on a computer program. This will enable trends in the progress of individuals and groups of pupils to be more easily tracked and will identify pupils who are underachieving and those who are potentially higher achievers. By this means assessment information can be used to raise standards even further.

59. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very effective. The school's code of conduct forms the cornerstone of the school's daily life. Teachers are very consistent in the way in which they manage behaviour and pupils know exactly what is expected of them. They are pleased to have their efforts recognised through the class reward system and during the weekly achievement assembly. If the standard of pupils' behaviour slips below that expected, the 'ladder of consequences' is used to very good effect. Pupils say that those who misbehave are managed firmly but very fairly and that the procedures for eliminating bullying and other oppressive behaviour are very good. Such incidents are indeed very rare. When they do occur, they are dealt with effectively so that they do not happen again. There are only a few pupils from ethnic minorities and racial harmony is excellent. This is a testament to the school's very successful policy for educational and social inclusion.

60. Procedures for monitoring pupils' personal development are excellent. Each pupil has his or her own personal targets and these are regularly reviewed with their teacher. In addition, assistant teachers regularly monitor the way in which pupils respond in lessons and teachers use this information to see how each individual is developing. Relationships between pupils and members of staff are excellent and teachers are very sensitive to pupils' ups and downs. This helps to ensure that any emerging personal or academic problems are identified and addressed at an early stage.

61. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are very good. Teachers complete the class registers carefully and a computerised system allows the school to track closely the attendance of individual pupils. The school keeps a close eye on the standard of each pupil's work and compares this with his or her level of attendance. Teachers spot trends quickly and are quick to follow up any unexplained absences and parents are invited in to school in order to discuss the situation. The school has introduced a scheme which rewards pupils certificates for excellent attendance and this has been very successful. There has recently been a four-fold increase in the number of pupils with perfect attendance. Although the school regularly reminds parents of the importance of regular attendance and discourages them from booking holidays during the term, some parents continue to do so. A small number of pupils also have unsatisfactory attendance and punctuality. The school recognises that more time needs to be spent on these pupils and, in order to facilitate this, the school is in the process of appointing a learning mentor.

62. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported by their teachers and staff. All support is well planned to take account of the provision outlined in pupils' statements and individual programmes of work. The school makes very good use of a range of visiting specialists. There is a very effective and consistent procedure for placing pupils on the register for special educational needs, which is known to staff and ably implemented by the special needs co-ordinator in collaboration with class teachers. Pupils' targets are reviewed regularly and when necessary further advice is sought from the local authority. All pupils experience equal opportunities in a very caring environment.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

63. The previous inspection found that this school enjoyed a good partnership with parents. Over the intervening five years, this has strengthened further and links between home and school are now very effective. This school enjoys an excellent reputation and parents hold it in exceptionally high regard. Parents provide wholehearted support for the aims of the school and encourage their children to work hard and to achieve their very best. The strength of this collaborative and mutually supportive relationship is reflected in the high standard of pupils' work and in the very good progress they make throughout their time at this school.

64. Views expressed by those who attended the pre-inspection parents' meeting and by those who returned the questionnaire are exceptionally positive. There are no particular areas of concern and parents are very pleased with every aspect of the school's work. They see Prescott County Primary School as being at the very heart of their community and are delighted that their children get off to such a good start. Every single parent who returned the questionnaire feels that their child is making good progress and parents are especially pleased with the standard of teaching and with the way in which the school is led and managed. Parents like the school's open approach and, in particular, they appreciate being encouraged and helped to play their part in their child's education. The inspectors endorse the parents' very positive views.

65. The information provided for parents is very good. The school keeps parents closely informed about day-to-day events and organises regular curriculum information evenings. Not only are parents advised on how they can help their children at home, with reading for example, they are kept up to date with national initiatives, such as literacy and numeracy hours. The school also provides regular opportunities when parents are able to discuss their child's progress with the class teacher. These meetings are very

well attended and are supplemented by pupils' annual reports that are very clearly written. Although the reports give a comprehensive picture of what each individual can do in each subject, they do not always tell parents how their child could improve.

66. Parents feel very much at home in the school and their involvement in their children's learning brings many benefits. They ensure that their children attend regularly and complete their homework on time. Consultation meetings and open evenings are exceptionally well attended. Parents regularly read with their children at home and keep their children's records fully up to date. They often write useful comments about how their child is getting on and this joint approach ensures that pupils make very good progress with their reading. Although there is no official parents' organisation, many parents are ready and willing to provide practical and moral support when it is needed. Several parents regularly come in to help during the school day and their expertise is put to very good use; several have recently installed a computer network while others have re-decorated the library. Despite the best efforts of the school to discourage it, some parents book holidays during the school term and this means that their children miss the work that the rest of the class is undertaking. Such absences could well place their children at a disadvantage.

67. The school values parents as the child's first teachers. The school provides good information for parents, for example the interesting nursery prospectus describes the child's day at school and gives ideas of how parents can help their child at home. Before children start in the nursery, teachers make home visits, to meet parents and children and to ease the transition from home to school. Some parents help regularly in school. Two parents who work as nurses came to tell the nursery children about their work. They encouraged the children to try the uniforms and examine X-rays, an excellent enrichment of learning activities and good links with parents.

68. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept fully informed and involved in the progress of their children. Parents of pupils with a statement are always invited to attend review meetings. Termly meetings with parents enable staff to share current individual educational programmes of work and reports with parents.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

69. The leadership is excellent. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work together to provide exceptionally clear direction for the school, improving teaching and raising standards. The school has vastly improved since its previous inspection in 1997. Consequently, staff morale is high, pupils respond well to their teachers and to the school's expectations of them. Parents are very satisfied with the school's work.

70. The school is very well managed. It is well organised and duties and responsibilities are clear and effectively delegated. The administration runs very smoothly and makes good use of modern technology.

71. The governors do their work exceptionally well. Governance is very effective; the governors are well organised; their committees meet regularly and they receive reports from the headteacher and subject leaders, which give them a clear picture of the school's work and a good understanding of its strengths and what it needs to do to improve. Governors are involved in all areas of the school's work and take a leading role in the school's planning for improvement. Assessment data is used effectively to analyse school performance against local and national standards and very challenging targets are set for performance at the end of Year 6.

72. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and very well managed. The co-ordinator provides outstandingly good leadership and benefits from the strong support of the governors. The school makes very effective use of assessments and tests to identify pupils with special educational needs and to set them suitable, individual targets.

73. Leadership and management of the provision for pupils in the nursery and reception classes are very good. The co-ordinator has a very good understanding of the curriculum for young children. The planning is very effective, and lessons and standards are monitored very effectively.

74. The management of subjects is effective. Subject co-ordinators have a key role in the organisation of their subjects, especially in policy-making, curriculum planning, training and the provision of resources. They monitor pupils' written work to check standards, the quality of the planning of lessons, marking, assessment, and the setting of homework. The literacy and numeracy co-ordinators also monitor teaching and learning in lessons.

75. There are two main reasons for the school's success. Firstly, the head and deputy headteacher have established a very positive climate for learning which embodies the school's distinctive values. The school's values permeate all that it does. These values are *personal growth through valuing the individual, and respect, security, challenge, inspiration, and celebration of achievement*. All pupils know them, even the younger ones, and inspectors saw them practised everywhere – in lessons, in assemblies, and around the school.

76. The second reason is that the school's evaluation of its own performance is exceptionally rigorous. Action resulting from self-evaluation has led to the school's improvement and to the achievement of high standards. An effective and rigorous system to manage the performance of teachers is in place. Annual appraisal rests on performance found by observation and leads to agreed targets and points for improvement.

77. In order to identify where improvements can be made, the head and deputy headteacher monitor the quality of teaching and standards at first-hand, through observation of lessons. They monitor each teacher's lessons at least once a term, of a balance of subjects, on agreed criteria. The teachers receive feedback after each observation which helps to set a personal agenda for even better teaching.

78. The school's planning for improvement has greatly improved since the previous inspection and is now exemplary. The school now has a four-year strategic plan with annual school development plans. The planning is linked to the local authority's objectives which the school links closely to its own priorities. The plan is linked to the outcomes of performance management, the review of the previous year's plan, the school's self-evaluation, consultation with parents and external aids to assessment of performance such as those provided by the government. The main priorities currently are

- educating the whole child through consistent application of the school's values,
- continuing to improve teaching and raise standards,
- review and update curriculum planning in subjects other than English, mathematics and science,
- realisation of equal opportunities for an inclusive school,
- an earlier move to the National Curriculum in the reception classes,
- and improving writing throughout the school.

79. The school's review of the previous year's plan indicates that teachers have made excellent progress with the school's plans to improve English, mathematics and science, good overall progress with most other subjects but satisfactory progress with design and technology, geography, art and design, homework and the library.

80. The pupil-to-teacher ratio is favourable and the average class size is a manageable 25. Teachers and teaching assistants are well qualified and well trained. The school is bright, clean, welcoming and in good order. The teaching accommodation is good overall and the school has plenty of green space for play and games. Learning resources are very good.

81. Excellent financial management and use of resources, coupled with an enterprising approach, has enabled the school to spend considerably more on its pupils than most other primary schools. The school

holds a surplus or contingency fund of around four per cent of the budget, which is reasonable. Special funds, such as those for pupils with special educational needs are spent on their designated purposes.

82. The school applies the principles of best value in an exemplary way. Governors and senior staff rigorously compare the school's performance with those of similar schools and take action to ensure that standards are as high as they can be. The school consults parents about changes and the quality of education, generally. The school works in close collaboration with the officers of the local authority. Governors maintain an oversight of finances and ensure that money is spent wisely when placing contracts and when making major spending decisions.

83. This is an excellent school, taking account of its broadly average intakes of pupils, the high quality of education it provides, pupils' excellent personal development, their progress and the high standards they achieve, and the school's excellent leadership and management. It gives excellent value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

84. In order to improve the school's performance still further, the governors, headteacher and staff should implement their intentions to raise standards in the foundation subjects and religious education to equal those in English, mathematics and science. (*paragraphs 5,8,24 and 78*)

This could be done, for example, by

- improving the consistency of handwriting (*paras 9,31,44 and 104*)
- making more use of ICT in lessons (*paras 8,34 and 146*)
- pupils making more use of the library and Internet for research (*paras 8,26,33 and 142*)
- widening the topics taught in history to Year 6 (*paras 33,40 and 141*)
- more emphasis in religious education to the major world faiths (*paras 8,35,161 and 162*).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	80
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	30

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	7	28	29	14	2	0	0
Percentage	9	35	36	18	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	37	384
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	-	75 (21%)

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	95
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	7	2

English as an additional language

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	16
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	20

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.7
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	29	28	57

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	26	27	28
	Girls	26	26	24
	Total	52	53	52
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	91 (87)	93 (96)	91 (96)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	26	28	27
	Girls	26	24	24
	Total	52	52	51
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	91 (96)	91 (96)	89 (94)
	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	20	30	50

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	20	20	20
	Girls	30	30	30
	Total	50	50	50
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	100 (85)	100 (77)	100 (98)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	19	18	20
	Girls	28	29	30
	Total	47	47	50
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	96 (87)	96 (83)	100 (95)
	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	2
White	324
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	15
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.6
Average class size	25.3

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	20
Total aggregate hours worked per week	295

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	37
Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	15
Number of pupils per FTE adult	25

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2002
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	£
Total income	892843
Total expenditure	893182
Expenditure per pupil	2179
Balance brought forward from previous year	35204
Balance carried forward to next year	34865

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	458
Number of questionnaires returned	121

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	73	26	1	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	75	25	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	61	33	2	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	52	37	8	2	1
The teaching is good.	78	21	1	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	43	47	8	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	75	19	4	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	72	26	0	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	50	37	11	1	1
The school is well led and managed.	75	23	0	1	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	68	29	2	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	50	33	7	2	8

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

85. The school makes very good provision for children in the nursery and reception classes, and gives them a very good start to their education. The combination of very good teaching, a rich and diverse curriculum and a wide range of interesting and exciting activities ensures that the children make rapid progress in the acquisition of skills and knowledge and to achieve very well in all areas of learning. The teaching staff (teachers, nursery nurses and classroom assistants) know the children well, and make regular and accurate assessments in order to track their progress and personal development, and to plan future learning activities. The teaching staff have very good relationships with children and are very good role models for them, helping them to improve their self-esteem and social skills. The children who have special educational needs are carefully monitored, and are very well supported, which enables them to make very good progress.

86. Children enter the nursery soon after their third birthday, and move into the reception classes at the beginning of the autumn term of the school year in which they become five. During the inspection, 37 children attended the nursery every morning, and a similar number attended in the afternoon. There were nearly 60 children in the two reception classes. The school values parents as the child's first teachers. Some parents help regularly in school. The school provides good information for parents, for example the nursery prospectus describes the child's day at school and gives ideas of how parents can help their child at home. Before children start in the nursery, staff make home visits, and children are welcomed on visits to ease the transition from home to school.

87. When children join the nursery, their attainment is average overall, but lower in the key areas of language and mathematics. All activities are carefully planned around the six areas of learning for children in the foundation stage. Children work through 'stepping stones' in each area towards the early learning goals which they are expected to achieve by the end of their year in reception. There is an appropriate emphasis on learning through play, and very good use is made of the garden area outside the classrooms. When they reach the end of their time in the nursery, standards are just above average in all areas of learning. By the end of the reception year, the great majority of children meet the national early learning goals in all six areas of learning, and a good proportion are working into the next level. Children experience a daily literacy and numeracy session, and are fully prepared for the next stage of education by the end of their reception year.

88. The quality of teaching is very good in the nursery and reception classes. Planning is very well structured, with a wide range of exciting, varied activities using high quality resources. Relationships are warm and caring and all the staff have a very good knowledge of young children and their learning needs. The systems for monitoring and assessing progress are very good. This all contributes to the high quality of teaching and learning.

Personal, social and emotional development

89. Most children's personal, social and emotional skills are not well developed when they start in the nursery, and this is often their first experience outside the home. All staff work very effectively as a team to fulfil the school's aim of creating a secure environment in which each child is valued, inspired and respected, and their achievements celebrated. They create a secure, happy and welcoming environment. The children love coming to school, and are very enthusiastic about their activities, for example, imaginary correspondence with characters from fairy tales. They willingly share equipment, play well together and learn to take turns. Well-established routines help the children to feel secure, and they quickly tidy up the nursery when they hear the signal for the end of a session. They decide when they wish to have their snack, and self-register to show that they have done so. Children learn to use good manners, and to say 'please' and 'thank you' without the need for prompting. They change into their kit for physical education

lessons, and begin to take responsibility for their own clothes and books. Children are helpful towards one another; they consider the feelings of others, and learn moral values, for example, through well-chosen stories. They make very good progress because of the strong teaching in this area. By the end of the reception class, all children meet the early learning goal for personal, social and emotional development.

Communication, language and literacy

90. All the children enjoy stories, and listen with great concentration because the teachers bring the story to life by reading with great expression. Children learn to speak clearly and confidently, with constant encouragement to describe what they are doing and to support their answers with reasons. By the end of the reception classes, the children have a wide vocabulary.

91. Reading skills are carefully developed, using a very good range of activities and resources. Children in the nursery can retell the main events in stories correctly, and understand that 'the pictures help you to know what the story is about'. By the end of their time in reception class, the children have developed a range of strategies to help them read, and can 'sound out' two letter blends at the beginning of words, such as black or green, and read simple words and phrases. They recognise the difference between upper and lower case letters, know what an adjective is, and can identify full stops and question marks. About half the children are reading to a standard higher than that normally seen at their age, and they enjoy taking their reading books home each day. Each class has a well-stocked library area, and space to sit quietly and enjoy reading the books.

92. Writing is slower to develop, so the children are encouraged to write freely in the well-resourced 'mark making' areas in each room. In the nursery, children can pick out their own name card, and practise writing it each day. There are good examples of print, and words and letters are clearly displayed to help the children when they write. By the end of reception class, the children write legibly and clearly, they write for different purposes, and many are writing independently. Higher achieving children are able to write their own account of a story, introducing some full stops correctly. Very good teaching ensures that the children achieve the early learning goal, and many are working at a higher level.

Mathematical development

93. Children start nursery with limited mathematical understanding but achieve very well because they engage in a varied and interesting range of well-structured, practical activities to develop their number skills. The resources for counting, matching, shapes, building and pattern making are good. Nursery children learn to match numbers when they put their cars into the parking space that has the same number as their vehicle. They sing number songs and rhymes, and through them are introduced to money and coins. They count and recognise numbers from 1 to 5, and many can count on further than 20. As yet, however, most nursery children do not count back confidently. Outside, in the garden area, they learn to compare and order toys by size, finding the longest or shortest. Reception children can quickly spot the missing number in a sequence from 1 to 20, and they are taught to explain their answers, using the appropriate vocabulary in practical activities and discussions. Very good planning links the curriculum to the National Numeracy Strategy, and children in reception classes enjoy the 'mental warm-up' session each day. They learn the names and properties of flat and solid shapes, and can name a circle, a triangle and a cylinder. Sand and water trays provide early practical experience of weighing and capacity, and the children begin to use comparative language to say which container holds more or less. Very good teaching ensures that all children make very good progress in their acquisition and development of skills, and meet the early learning goal at the end of reception class.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

94. The very good teaching in this area ensures that all activities are well planned, very interesting and stimulate the children's natural curiosity about the world around them through practical, first-hand experiences. Children in the nursery celebrated the Chinese New Year by making cards, and the role-play area became a Chinese restaurant, complete with menus and food items. Only three computers are

available to the children, so their experience is very limited. They can operate simple programs and use the mouse well. They enjoy valuable opportunities to investigate the natural world, and make good use of the outdoor areas. The nursery children carefully observed snails in a glass tank, using hand magnifiers to watch their movements. Reception children grew beans, linking this with the traditional story *Jack and the Beanstalk*. They made good use of their senses to feel and smell different sorts of beans, and made written notes to record growth. The many visitors who come into school enrich the children's experiences, and the children have enjoyed meeting the park warden with an owl, the nurse and the dentist, and the ambulance service paramedic. Two parents who work as nurses came to tell the nursery children about their work. They encouraged the children to try the uniforms and examine X-rays, an excellent enrichment of learning activities and good links with parents. By the end of reception class, all children meet, and some exceed, the early learning goal in this area.

Physical development

95. The children make very good use of the nursery's outside area every day. They develop greater balance and control their movements on the slide and the large equipment. They learn to control the vehicles by following the bends and corners on the roadway, and can vary the speed at which they move. Children in the reception class know it is important to warm up their muscles before their physical education lesson in the hall, and they move confidently around the large space. Throwing, catching and bouncing balls help them to improve their hand-eye co-ordination. The classroom assistant gives very good support to a child with special physical needs, enabling her to participate confidently in all movement activities. Fine motor skills are developed by using small tools such as scissors, pencils and brushes, threading and lacing, by using 'small world' apparatus to build and make models, and by manipulating jigsaws. The very good teaching ensures that their physical development progresses very well, and all children meet the early learning goal by the end of the reception year.

Creative development

96. A strong emphasis on role-play enables the children to express their ideas and encourages the development of language. The children in the reception class enjoy dressing up and acting out traditional children's stories, such as *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. Lower attaining children show limited imagination and say very little, but higher and middle attainers enter into role with great enthusiasm. Children in the nursery adopt the appropriate voice, reading the words spoken by a character in a story, and use their imagination, for example, when making a journey in a 'boat'. All children are given many good opportunities to express their ideas through a variety of media and colour. The children have many opportunities for free painting and their work is celebrated in bright displays in the school's art gallery. An example of particularly good work is the nursery children's bright, woven wall-hanging decorated with ribbons, fabric and tinsel. The children use simple musical instruments to compose accompaniments to dances and enthusiastically take part in singing. They can follow a simple rhythm, understand that sounds can change, and respond to changes in tempo and pitch. All children make very good progress in their creative development and meet the early learning goal by the end of the reception class.

ENGLISH

97. Standards in Year 2 and Year 6 are well above average, and show very good improvement on the standards seen in the previous inspection, which were only average. This is due to the school's tremendous commitment to improve teaching and the curriculum. In Year 2, standards in reading are above average and are similar to those indicated by national tests in 2001. Standards of writing are well above average and show much improvement on the results of the national tests in 2001. This is particularly evident in the percentage of pupils who are working at the higher level. The school's performance in 2001 in reading and writing was well above the average for similar schools.

98. In Year 6, standards in English are well above average. Standards are not quite as good as indicated by the very high results of the national tests in 2001, because of the higher number of pupils with special

educational needs in the present Year 6. National test results in 2001 were very high and all pupils reached the standard expected. The results were also very high when compared with similar schools.

99. The vast majority of pupils respond enthusiastically to the challenging targets set and overall they achieve very well in English. Pupils with special educational needs are supported effectively in class and in withdrawal groups. They make very good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans.

100. Standards of speaking and listening are well above average in Year 2 and Year 6. This reflects very good achievement. In Year 2, pupils are confident and articulate to ask and answer questions in group and class discussions. They listen attentively to their peers and to adults and show good understanding in their response. They display wide vocabularies, for instance, in their imaginative choice of words to compose a poem. They make good use of rhythms and speech patterns when reciting their own poem with expression. The teachers' use of specific subject vocabulary across the curriculum is a strength in most classes and so pupils are confident, for instance, in discussing *rhythm* and *pulse* in music or comparing *specimens* or discussing how they are adapted to their *habitats* in science. By the end of Year 6, pupils adapt their language to talk purposefully in argument and debate as well as to give clear explanations, for example, of how things work or why they happen. They are clear in expressing their own points of view about such topics as pollution in religious education lessons or on improving playground provision in the school council. Most pupils take account of the views of others. They adapt their talk carefully according to the specific audience they are addressing.

101. Standards of reading are above average in Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils achieve well. Through the teachers' good examples, many pupils are developing a love of books. Strong teaching of letters and their sounds in Year 1 classes enable most pupils to have good word building skills by the time they join Year 2. By the end of Year 2, the vast majority of pupils read accurately and fluently with some independence. They tackle appropriate unfamiliar non-fiction texts confidently with a good range of skills to decode new words. All are enthusiastic in practising at home and this parental help supports their progress effectively. They have good knowledge of book layout, using contents, glossary and index adeptly. In Year 6, pupils enjoy the works of a wide range of children's authors from Roald Dahl to J K Rowling, and are familiar with extracts from the works of famous writers like Shakespeare and Dickens. They express their individual preferences for genre such as science fiction or mystery stories. Many pupils particularly enjoy the books of the Author in Residence. When discussing their favourites, pupils show good understanding, beyond the literal, of characters and plot. In class, higher attainers are adept at retrieving information from detailed non-fiction text in books or on screen. They are becoming sophisticated in recognising bias, for instance, in a newspaper report. Most pupils know how the classification system in the library is organised but do not have enough regular opportunities to practise skills of independent research to support their learning in other subjects and further develop advanced reading skills.

102. In Year 2 and Year 6, standards in writing are well above average. Pupils' achievement is very good. This is due to the effective deployment of the talented Author in Residence, and to the focused teaching of skills in dedicated writing lessons. In Year 2 the vast majority of pupils write clearly for a range of purposes, for instance, to retell a familiar story, write a letter or compose a poem. They organise their accounts of a visit to Formby to describe the trip in chronological order, developing their ideas in several sentences with generally correct use of basic punctuation. Each pupil uses their good knowledge of letters and their sounds to make reasonable attempts at spelling. When writing stories and poems most pupils are beginning to choose words for effect, as in 'My legs began to flutter and tingle'. Higher attainers use adverbs and adjectives with some imagination and join sentences interestingly as in 'Suddenly the diamond door slowly started to open'. There is some variability of handwriting in Year 2. Most pupils write in well-formed print but few write consistently in joined script. Pupils in Year 6 are purposeful and imaginative writers who plan and edit their work thoughtfully. They write for specific purposes, for instance, to persuade or report and for particular audiences. In Year 5, for example, pupils adapt a Tolkien text to read to Year 2 pupils. Pupils choose words and phrases carefully as when creating an atmosphere of tension and fear. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils demonstrated good understanding of how effective arguments are constructed. Lower attaining pupils modified sound bites and organised

headlines to present a cogent case on behalf of asylum seekers. Higher attainers wrote a balanced argument using headlines and facts from the Internet to outline contrasting points of view. When writing imaginatively, pupils use words and figures of speech very precisely for effect as when describing, ‘bushes which at a touch explode into shrimps’, ‘nerves like guitar stings’, the *lazy* road or *clasp*ing cold. Sentences are complex but clear. Almost all use correct punctuation within and between sentences. By the end of Year 6, most pupils can write clearly and legibly in joined script, but many do not always use joined writing naturally in their work across the curriculum. They often revert to print.

103. The quality of teaching and learning is very good with some excellent teaching seen in Year 2 and Year 6. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of the subject, which is further enhanced by the support of the Author in Residence. The teachers’ high expectations ensure that pupils do their best and produce high standards of work. For instance, in Year 5, pupils are expected to use figures of speech such as similes and metaphors to enliven their writing. They write vividly to convey fear, contrasting the ordinary ‘I was scared’, with their own more developed ideas, ‘My head was spinning like a roulette wheel’. Teaching is clearly focused and teachers ensure that all pupils are made aware of the learning objectives at the beginning of each lesson. As a result, the pupils are purposeful learners who make every effort to succeed. Relationships are very good. Teachers use praise effectively and respect pupils’ efforts. This encourages pupils to contribute ideas confidently to class and group discussions. In the positive learning environment, teachers use questions effectively to help pupils develop their own ideas. Teachers assess progress and mark pupils’ work very thoroughly. These day-to-day assessments clearly show pupils how to improve. Assessments are used very effectively to set targets and plan future work. As a result, lessons are planned carefully to build on what pupils already know, and so meet the differing needs of individuals and groups within each class. This leads to very good progress. Lessons are brisk and lively so that pupils enjoy learning. Teaching assistants make a very valuable contribution especially through their well-focused work with groups of pupils, and through the specific support they provide for pupils with special educational needs.

104. The school’s strategies for teaching literacy are good and support the pupils’ progress well. The National Literacy Strategy has been thoughtfully and successfully adapted to meet the school’s needs, and forms an effective basis for learning. Particular attention is currently being given to the teaching of extended writing and this is reflected in rising standards particularly in Year 2. There are, however, two areas for further development. There is a lack of consistency in the way handwriting is taught which results in variable progress. Also, whilst the school library is used regularly to promote enjoyment of fiction, insufficient planned opportunities are provided for pupils to use the library for independent research. The school is aware of these shortcomings and has plans to remedy them.

105. The excellent use of well considered assessment procedures to monitor attainment and set challenging targets gives a very clear focus to the school’s work and is an important factor in its success.

106. Management of the subject is excellent. Through careful monitoring of individual and group progress, the curriculum co-ordinator has a very clear overview of the school’s performance. She has an inspired vision of the way forward.

107. Opportunities are regularly planned to promote literacy in other subjects. Good and often imaginative links exist between geography, history, religious education, science and English. In science, for instance, pupils in Year 2 make up nonsense jingles like, ‘We don’t want a jelly teapot’, when studying the suitability of materials. Whilst satisfactory use is made of information technology to support literacy, particularly in developing secretarial skills, computers in the classroom are not always used as efficiently as they could be.

108. The subject makes a very good contribution to social development in the opportunities it provides for pupils to collaborate and share ideas as well as to take part in dramatic performances. Cultural development is supported effectively through the wide range of literature studied.

MATHEMATICS

109. Pupils achieve high standards in mathematics because they are well taught and because they are keen to learn. Standards, teaching and learning in mathematics, and the subject's management, have all greatly improved since the previous inspection in 1997. At that time, standards were only average. Teaching was satisfactory overall but some lessons were not up to the mark, mainly because the work was not matched well enough to pupils' attainment levels. Consequently, the more able pupils found their work too easy whilst the less able pupils struggled to keep up. This is no longer the case.

110. The results of national tests taken at the end of Year 2 have been above or well above average for the past four years, and are well above those of most other schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. In 2001, the results were above average and they rose further this year (2002) by a substantial margin.

111. The inspection shows that the standards of the present Year 2 pupils' work are well above average. Building on the good foundations laid down in the nursery and in reception classes, pupils make very good progress in number work because the school's strategy for numeracy is implemented very well in each class. By the end of Year 2, the great majority of pupils have a thorough grasp of addition and subtraction and a growing understanding of multiplication. They can solve number problems, including problems involving money, and are beginning to apply their knowledge of the 2, 3, 5 and 10 times tables. Most pupils can tell the time using o'clock, halves and quarters; they measure length and weight and draw simple block graphs to illustrate numerical data from their investigations. A small number of less advanced pupils have a sound understanding of number and counting, and hundreds, tens and units; these pupils can solve simple addition and subtraction problems and generally reach the standard expected for their age. The more advanced pupils can solve problems involving numbers greater than 100; they are slick at mental arithmetic involving addition and subtraction, and are beginning to understand division.

112. Pupils sustain their very good progress throughout Years 3 – 6 and achieve very well. Boys and girls do similarly well. The overall standards reached by the present Year 6 pupils are well above average. High standards are reflected in outstandingly good national test results at the end of Year 6, which are often in the top five per cent of all schools and are still rising at a similar rate to the trend found nationally. In 2001, all pupils reached the standard expected for children of their age (National Curriculum level 4) and a high proportion exceeded that standard (achieving level 5). A small number of pupils reach a higher level still. The 2002 results are not yet available.

113. Mental arithmetic is a strong feature of the pupils' work throughout Years 3 – 6, again because the school's strategy for numeracy is effectively taught. Most pupils know their multiplication tables up to 10x10 by Year 5 and can make accurate calculations using paper-and-pencil methods and, when more convenient, with calculators. Pupils have a good grasp of decimals, fractions, ratio and proportion. By the end of Year 6, most pupils can calculate percentages or fractions of quantities. They have a very good understanding of negative and positive numbers, factors, multiples and prime numbers and can find decimal equivalents of simple fractions. Pupils' work in algebra is a particularly strong feature and goes considerably beyond what is usually seen in a primary school. Most Year 6 pupils can use equations of straight lines, such as $y = 3x - 4$, to find co-ordinates and draw graphs of the lines, and many pupils can solve a pair of simultaneous linear equations algebraically. The more advanced pupils have worked with inequalities involving fractions and their work in statistics involves collection and grouping of data, making frequency tables, frequency diagrams and calculating the mode, median and mean of a distribution. Year 6 pupils plotted values of a quadratic function, the higher attaining pupils doing so for both negative and positive input values, before drawing a graph of the function. Pupils acquire very good foundations in plane geometry. They understand both rotational and line symmetry and, by Year 6, can measure angles and know, for example, that the sum of the interior angles of a triangle is 180° . They accurately apply the formulae for the areas enclosed by rectangles and triangles.

114. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. The work set for these pupils is very well chosen. Nearly all of these pupils achieve the standards expected of

children of their age because they are well taught by their class teachers and, when they need help, it is provided effectively by the assistant teachers who plan their work in close collaboration with the teacher.

115. Pupils enjoy their work in mathematics because they know that they are making very good progress, and this motivates them further. They have very good attitudes towards the subject and they work hard to complete the tasks set for them. Their behaviour is very good overall and sometimes excellent.

116. The teaching is now very good and ensures that pupils' learning is very effective. There are no major areas for improvement in teaching although more opportunities could usefully be given for pupils to explain the logic of their thinking through short pieces of writing. The particular strengths of the teaching throughout Years 1 – 6 are high expectations, accurate matching of work to the pupils' differing needs, consistently effective implementation of the school's strategy for numeracy, meticulous planning of lessons and very effective marking of pupils' work. Homework is set regularly in Years 3 – 6 and has a positive effect on pupils' progress. Pupils use ICT effectively, for example, to consolidate number work and for data handling. The strengths of the pupils' learning are the brisk pace of their working, a very firm foundation of basic arithmetic, their rapid gains in knowledge and understanding, and their ability to work independently. Because the teachers mark their work so effectively, pupils have a clear understanding of their own progress and what they must do to improve. The mathematics curriculum is enriched for many pupils through opportunities to study topics not normally taught in depth in primary school, such as algebra. Teachers also add interest to the topics by linking them to great mathematicians of the past, such as Pythagoras, although even more could be done to strengthen the cultural aspect of the subject in this way.

117. Teachers provide opportunities in science to apply mathematical knowledge, such as measurement and graphs. In ICT lessons, pupils create a range of graphs and pie charts and use spreadsheets. However, there are few planned opportunities in other subjects.

118. The subject is very well led and managed and, of course, this is the major reason for the high standard of teaching. The teaching is as good as it is because lessons are monitored rigorously and constructively by the head and deputy headteacher, and because lesson plans and the pupils' work are also monitored effectively by the co-ordinators for mathematics. When matters for improvement come to light, the teachers take swift and effective action to deal with them. Standards and pupils' learning are monitored rigorously by the co-ordinators through regular checking of written work, homework and marking. The co-ordinators also observe numeracy lessons in all classes to ensure consistency and effectiveness of the implementation of the numeracy strategy. This monitoring has a very positive effect on the overall quality of teaching; for example, a new focus on plenary sessions at the ends of lessons ensures that pupils understand what they have learned. A diary is kept of staff meetings to discuss mathematics and outcomes of the meetings are turned into action plans for improvement. Resources are generally good.

SCIENCE

119. Pupils are achieving very well in Years 1 and 2. Although the results of the teachers' assessments of Year 2 pupils in 2001 indicated that standards were below average, the results were much higher in 2002. Standards have risen and those achieved by the present Year 2 are well above average and consistent with the results of the 2002 teachers' assessments, which showed that all pupils reached the expected level. The main reason for the rise in standards is the improved teaching and emphasis on practical, investigative science, which develops the pupils' understanding of the key features of the subject and motivates them to learn. In year 2, for example, pupils successfully investigated what conditions plants need to grow from a seed to mature and healthy plant. Pupils are familiar with the concept of a scientific fair test, control and variables; for example, when investigating friction, pupils conducted a fair test to see how a toy car, released from the same height on a ramp, would travel on different surfaces. They deduced correctly from the experiment that the smoother surface had the less friction and understood that that the test was fair. Pupils' work embraces the full range of topics specified in the National Curriculum: they investigate living things, such as animal habitats. Pupils know

what animals need to live healthily and can talk about habitats and explain why fish live in water and why worms like damp soil. Pupils know the main parts of a plant and that the roots anchor the plant into the ground and draw water and nutrients from the soil, and that the leaves collect energy from the sun to make food and that their bright colours attract insects. Pupils explore materials and their properties, such as electricity or the change of state from water to ice. They have a good scientific vocabulary.

120. The results of the national tests for Year 6 pupils very high in 2001. All pupils reached the expected standard and, many exceeded it. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection, when standards were only average. The present Year 6 pupils' standards of work are well above average. Pupils achieve very well throughout Years 3 – 6 and make particularly good progress in organising investigations and presenting their findings. For example, when pupils investigated whether dandelions would grow better in shady wooded or in open grass in full sun, they planned their own experiments and collected essential data, such as the width of the leaves, the number of leaf spikes, the plant height and depth of leaf colour. Pupils displayed their findings effectively in a series of graphs produced on the computer. Again, when Year 5 pupils were designing burglar alarms they solved their difficulties confidently, applying very good knowledge of electric circuits. When Year 3 pupils were investigating forces and gravity, they made parachutes, of different sizes but carrying the same weight and falling from the same height, ensuring that the experiment was scientifically fair. They found, correctly, that the parachute with the largest canopy area fell to the ground more slowly. Through talking to the pupils it is evident that besides acquiring very good investigative skills, the pupils learn a wide range of scientific knowledge. For example, they can suggest a fair test to investigate which of three balls would be the best bouncer.

121. Pupils have very good attitudes towards learning and behave very well. Boys and girls achieve equally and pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. Science makes an excellent contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. When talking about healthy living, pupils show that they understand that smoking, alcohol and certain drugs are harmful to health. They can discuss how the environment may be damaged and how it can be safeguarded.

122. Overall, the quality of teaching is very good throughout the school and accounts for the pupils' very good learning and progress. This is an improvement since the last inspection when teaching was only satisfactory. The teachers set out to teach the pupils how to think and investigate in a scientific way; they are successful and pupils' progress in investigative science is a strength. In the majority of lessons, the teachers create a scientific atmosphere and the pupils become absorbed in their investigations. Teachers' knowledge of science is good; lessons are interesting, well planned and equipment is ready, whereas at the last inspection resources were inadequate. As a result, no time is wasted and teachers' high expectations of the pupils, and appropriate challenges for them, motivate them to succeed. Teachers make sure that pupils understand the progress they are making. The teachers also ensure that the pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are practised and consolidated when using calculations in investigations, presenting findings on graphs and writing up their experiments. However more use could be made of the pupils' good computer skills.

123. Management of the subject is very good. This is an improvement since the last inspection when management was underdeveloped. There is a now comprehensive scheme of work and an overall plan so that the teachers know what to teach and when. Every half term the topics are evaluated and pupils' progress is assessed and recorded. Pupils' books are also scrutinised each half term. The result of this excellent monitoring is improved teaching and higher standards. Test results are analysed question by question so that the teachers can ascertain which parts of the curriculum the pupils find most difficult in order that future planning can be focused on these areas. Pupils go to scientific and technological workshops out of school to widen their experience. The school also takes part in the British Association of Young Scientists Awards. The school also holds special science days with a fun theme each year.

ART AND DESIGN

124. Standards throughout the school are above average by Year 2 and by Year 6 and pupils achieve well. This is a good improvement since the previous report. The teaching promotes the development of practical skills and techniques as well as the progressive appreciation of the work of a wide range of artists. Pupils' experience of art and design becomes more challenging as they move through the school. All pupils have access to the full curriculum, develop their skills and gain a good understanding and enjoyment in the subject.

125. Pupils explore colour by mixing paint and experimenting with a range of techniques, such as wax resist and washes, and use a variety of media, such as chalk, pastels and watercolours. They work with clay, experiment with texture, and explore the use of a range of materials in presenting their work. They plan their work carefully, making sketches in their sketchbooks, and sometimes experiment on paper before completing the finished design; for example, Year 5 pupils completed their designs and initial explorations and built containers from clay. They show increasing control of materials, tools and techniques used.

126. Evidence from the large variety of good quality work on display and in pupils' sketchbooks indicates that pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress because the teaching is good throughout the school. Teachers demonstrate techniques effectively, keep pupils on track and allow time in lessons for pupils to review and modify their designs. Pupils know their own personal targets and how well they are making progress and reflect at the end of the lesson on what they have achieved. Staff are very supportive and encourage pupils to develop their own ideas. They raise pupils' confidence and self-esteem by displaying their work, from nursery to Year 6, in the school's art gallery. Pupils work well in small and large groups and share ideas, whilst at the same time they listen attentively with consideration and respect to others' views. Information and communication technology is used effectively, for example, for pupils to research information about artists.

127. The pupils take pride in their work. Their attitudes and behaviour are very good. Teachers are very skilful at linking art and design to other subjects and this develops a sense of purpose in what pupils do. For example, in religious education the pupils record the story of Moses in an attractive wall display, using a variety of materials to good effect. In one lesson, pupils' artwork was linked to their study of J R R Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils reflect on their feelings and moods, producing, for example, poetry presented on paper as a 'shape poem' with a softly shaded background adding a spiritual dimension to the words. The pupils' appreciation of great works of art is fostered from the start when, for example, Year 2 pupils study the work of Henri Matisse and Vincent Van Gogh. Visits to galleries, such as Liverpool's Walker Art Gallery, enhance the quality of pupils' learning. Very good relationships give the pupils confidence to express ideas and opinions because they know they will be valued. The pupils consider art in a number of other cultures, for example, Year 4 pupils learn about the artistic context of the Hindu festival of Divali.

128. The subject is well managed. Art and design is seen as a valuable resource to enrich pupils' learning and, because of this, the decision was taken to raise the profile of the subject by timetabling it in the morning. Lessons are monitored to ensure consistency. Very good use is made of the community. Every effort is made to involve parents in the subject. There are pottery clubs for parents as well as clubs for the pupils after school. The school runs an art and design competition and parents are invited to participate; for instance when the school recently celebrated its 50th birthday, parents were invited to design a hat which symbolised a period during those years.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

129. Standards have improved well since the time of the previous inspection, when they were below average throughout the school. An important step forward since the last inspection has been a new scheme of work, which plans for progression in the pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding as they move through the school. Because of this, the teachers now introduce and consolidate new skills in a

systematic manner. They regularly assess how well pupils are learning and, where necessary, alter the focus of teaching to make sure that all tasks are tailored to individual needs. Staff are now more confident in their teaching of the subject and have higher expectations of pupils' achievement. Good foundations have been laid down and standards should, therefore, continue to rise.

130. Standards are above average in Year 2 and pupils are achieving well. Pupils design and make effectively, as seen, for example, in a project on hand puppets. They designed and made the puppets from felt, developing their skills with needle and thread when joining the material, and evaluating their work, showing through their design work in simple diagrams what has worked well and what could be improved. Year 1 pupils enjoy their lessons, for example, making attractive models of houses, using materials such as cardboard boxes which they strengthen and finish by painting.

131. Standards are average in Year 6 and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils are learning how electrical circuits with switches can be used to achieve particular results; they evaluate each other's work and discuss problems and possible solutions. Year 3 pupils have a good understanding of the components and tools needed to assemble a pneumatic system, as shown in their sketches and models, which show their designs in detail.

132. Teaching and learning are good in Years 1 – 2, and satisfactory but improving in Years 3 – 6. Teachers plan interesting activities, which pupils enjoy. Pupils work very well together and are very interested in each other's achievements. They have good opportunities to develop their skills; for example, with glue, scissors, and masking tape, and also with pivots and levers. Teachers evaluate previous lessons carefully and are very clear about what pupils of differing levels of attainment will do and achieve; for example, worksheets are well thought out and matched to the pupils' various needs. Because of this, all pupils are engrossed in their work, and are challenged at the right level for them as individuals, and pupils with special educational needs make the same progress as other pupils.

133. The inspection coincided with the school's Options Week, which is planned as part of a curriculum enrichment programme. Some Year 4, 5 and 6 pupils chose baking as one of their options. This was a very good lesson, well taught and greatly enjoyed. Pupils were able to follow a recipe to make a chocolate cake with fudge icing.

134. The management of the subject is good and is responsible for bringing about the improvements since the previous inspection. The subject co-ordinator monitors standards and is planning to improve standards further, by, for example, greater use of ICT for design and research. Pupils say that they enjoy designing and making. Displays of their finished work show a good coverage of the skills necessary to develop the subject further. The subject makes a very useful contribution to pupils' social development. Pupils collaborate effectively in small groups, learning teamwork and making shared decisions.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

135. Pupils study one unit of geography and history each term. During the inspection, four geography lessons and two history lessons could be observed. Pupils' geography and history books and the work on display around the school were carefully scrutinised, and discussions were held with the co-ordinator and with pupils during lessons.

136. Pupils achieve well in geography. Standards are above average, both at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. At the previous inspection, standards were average, so there has been good improvement since then. Pupils' achievement in history is only satisfactory and there has been no improvement since the previous inspection. Standards of work in history are average in both Year 2 and Year 6, which was also the case at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in both subjects because they receive help and support that enables them to participate fully in all activities.

137. From the beginning, pupils are taught to use correct geographical vocabulary, such as locality and atlas. Year 1 pupils learn geographical skills through a study of the locality of the school, and then look at ways to make it safer. When they are in Year 2, the pupils begin to develop mapping skills. For example, they made very good use of the information they gathered during a recent visit to Formby beach and produced a simple plan to show different features, including the shore line and the dunes. Lower attaining pupils, who found this difficult at first, were able to participate fully because the teacher effectively deployed the classroom assistant to help them. Pupils built on their knowledge well by comparing the differences between Formby and Prescott, observing that Prescott has many roads and buildings, whilst Formby does not. Pupils develop their skills well, and can use simple co-ordinates to locate towns and cities in Britain, and identify map symbols by using the key. They look at the wider world and the issues that affect the environment by studying the equatorial rainforests, and are learning that humans can influence on the environment in both positive and negative ways.

138. In Year 1, pupils develop their understanding of the passage of time by putting photographs of seaside towns in order, looking carefully for clues in the buildings and styles of dress. The teacher provides a useful vocabulary list, and pupils learn to use 'the past' and 'most recent' correctly. They discuss their ideas co-operatively, and enjoy comparing changes in holidays over time, finding it strange that in the past, adults would sit on the beach wearing their 'Sunday best' clothes. Pupils in Year 2 studied the effects of the Great Fire of London by reading Samuel Pepys, and writing imaginatively as if observing the fire as it burned. Pupils communicate their ideas well, retelling the sequence of events clearly. Useful links with geography, for example, the study of Florence Nightingale's journey to the Crimea, enliven both subjects.

139. Maps are displayed prominently around the school: local maps of Prescott and Merseyside and world maps. Pupils learn how Prescott has changed since the 15th century, from a rural area to part of a large conurbation. The locations of Japan and South Korea are clearly marked on a world map, building on the pupils' keen topical interest in the countries hosting the football World Cup. In Year 3, pupils can compare the climate of the Caribbean and Cyprus with mountainous regions by researching various sources, including the Internet and travel brochures. They illustrate their findings well with maps, flags and descriptions of the locations. In history, pupils use their mapping skills to locate Italy and Scandinavia, and trace the journey of the Romans and the Vikings who invaded Britain in the past.

140. In a good practical geography lesson that also promoted citizenship well, Year 4 pupils discussed the importance of caring for their environment and recycling materials. They put this into practice by planting seeds in recycled containers to grow plants for the school grounds. The pupils develop a greater understanding of places by comparing their highly developed town with a contrasting location, a village in rural India. They investigate ways of purifying and filtering water, learning the importance of a good, clean water supply, and know how their environment affects the quality of people's lives. These pupils were given an opportunity to become real archaeologists in an excellent history lesson, which was part of a series on the Ancient Egyptians. They enjoyed carrying out 'excavations', and were very excited to unearth scarabs, papyrus and beads previously hidden in the soil by the teacher. Pupils wrote hieroglyphics, and used of their art and design skills well in models and paintings of tombs, mummies and a sarcophagus.

141. Year 5 pupils can locate places using the grid references on an Ordnance Survey map, and map their field study visit to Chester. This visit gave them useful information when deciding if busy city streets should be closed to traffic to make them safer for pedestrians. Pupils became very involved in a good study of the lives of children during World War 2. They did their research as homework, and made good use of their literacy skills by writing letters, imaginatively describing their feelings as evacuees separated from their homes and families. Year 6 pupils study rivers, and can describe the effects of water on the landscape as a river travels from its source to the sea. In one very good lesson about the causes of humans migration, higher attaining pupils traced the journey of asylum seekers from their various homelands; acting in the role of immigration officials, the pupils decided which of the asylum seekers had the most convincing reasons for being admitted to Britain, and used this as a basis for a whole-school assembly. Too little time has been given to history in Year 6 for pupils to have experienced a full range of

topics and their work has been confined to the study of Ancient Greece. Nevertheless, pupils learn that the origins of our democracy are found in Ancient Greek society; they know, for example, that the school council is run democratically, and understand how the past can directly influence their lives today.

142. Teaching and learning are good in geography. The strengths of teaching are effective planning for lessons, and a good range of meaningful and practical activities. Teachers ensure pupils can build on their own knowledge, gaining valuable first hand experience through field trips and visits out of school. They make good use of varied resources and deploy classroom assistants well to help pupils in lessons. This means that pupils enjoy their lessons and work well. Teachers make careful assessments of pupils' progress, and use the information effectively to further improve their lesson planning. In history, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons are well planned, and outside visits, photographs and historical objects are used well to sustain pupils' interest. A great deal of evidence is presented on photocopied sheets, and pupils do not have enough opportunities to use reference books and wider sources of evidence. Pupils in Years 3 – 6 are not fully aware of the difference between first and second-hand sources of evidence. There are now plans in place to review the scheme of work for history, to ensure that pupils are taught the full range of knowledge and skills they need to investigate and interpret evidence about the past.

143. The leadership of history and geography is good and has brought about a considerable improvement in geography although this has not been the case in history. Standards of work in both subjects are monitored, and discussions with pupils show the co-ordinator their knowledge and understanding of the topics they have covered. The co-ordinator monitors the class teachers' lesson plans, and has also carried out some observation of lessons. The subjects' management has prepared an action plan to review the schemes of work and to raise standards further.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

144. Standards in Year 2 are above average and pupils achieve well. This is a very good improvement since the previous inspection, when standards were below average. The pupils now have good ICT skills and the teaching covers all of the strands of the subject's National Curriculum. The reason for these good standards is that the pupils spend an hour each week in the computer suite, taught by their class teacher, the co-ordinator and an expert brought in from an ICT consultancy firm. Year 1 pupils understand the keyboard and can type in capital letters, and some pupils can change the font and the size of the letters. Year 2 pupils log on to the network and, when using a word-processor, they can type directly onto the screen, and edit their work. When they have completed their writing they can save, retrieve or print it. Most pupils can draw pictures using an art software package and insert it into their writing. Pupils make bar charts to record their statistical work in mathematics. Pupils can interrogate and retrieve information from a simple database. They have opportunities to use ICT for control, for example, when operating programmable toys. The school also has a range of programs to support pupils with special educational needs and to help these pupils to make good progress.

145. Standards in Year 6 are also above average, and again pupils achieve well. At the time of the previous inspection, standards were found to be below average and there has been, therefore, a significant improvement. The pupils have good word-processing skills and can write their first draft straight onto the computer, edit it, and cut and paste as necessary. In one Year 3 class, the pupils changed the font and the size of the text, centred it, use the bold icon, and underlined words when appropriate. Pupils can find and replace words, use speech marks and use the spell checker, and some pupils can also insert clip-art into their work. In mathematics, pupils use ICT to display data in a range of graphs and can use spreadsheets. Year 5 pupils used a light sensor in a science lesson to plot dusk, night and dawn when investigating the relative motion of the sun and the earth, and presented their findings on a line graph. Year 4 pupils used a sound sensor effectively to monitor the volume of sounds when investigating the muffling properties of various materials. Pupils know how to use a digital camera. The school is connected to the internet and the pupils locate websites and extract information. For example, Year 6

pupils downloaded information about various countries involved in the World Cup in order to make a brochure about a country. In one Year 4 lesson, the teacher and pupils communicated by e-mail.

146. The teaching is good and results in good learning and progress. Pupils with special educational needs are given extra support in the computer suite and the more able pupils are set a higher challenge. The teachers' expectations are high; lessons are well planned, well organised and run smoothly. The teachers have a warm relationship with their pupils, who are co-operative and behave very well. Pupils learn to use the Internet safely. There are occasions when pupils' skills are used effectively to support the work in other subjects; for example, in science, when pupils generated a range of graphs to present their findings when investigating the growth of dandelions. In general, however, ICT is not used enough in other subjects. The main reason for this is that the classroom computers are not connected to the school's network although the school has plans to remedy this.

147. The subject is well managed. There is a comprehensive scheme of work and an overall plan which indicates what each class will do and when. An effective assessment system ensures that the pupils' progress is evaluated and recorded each half term. Informal assessment is well used to modify the curriculum and individual lessons where necessary. The computer club gives the pupils the opportunity to use ICT for recreation, such as playing computer games.

MUSIC

148. Standards in Year 2 and Year 6 are above average and have improved since the previous inspection. This is due to the consistent teaching of skills in all classes by a specialist teacher, and to the high profile given to the subject. The vast majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. Some higher attaining pupils achieve very well in performance skills. Appropriate provision outside lessons enables one pupil who has been identified as talented to make very good progress.

149. The quality of singing is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and good in Years 3 to 6. Pupils particularly enjoy the weekly infant or junior phase singing sessions led by the choirmaster. They sing a wide repertoire tunefully with expression and enthusiasm. Pupils in Year 2 respond to vocal cues to control their voices and vary volume and pitch. In Year 6, pupils appraise their own work briefly, and identify ways to improve. Pupils in all year groups develop good composing skills using percussion. In Year 2, pupils know that different sounds can be made by striking or by shaking instruments. In small groups, they select and order sounds by dynamics and tempo to compose a sequence representing a storm. The structure of their sequence is not developed to show a clear beginning, middle or end. They listen attentively and higher attainers are articulate in saying what they enjoy in other people's work. By Year 6, pupils are aware of the complexity of a musical score and of the different strands linked to particular instruments. With percussion, they follow symbols to perform as a group, keeping to their own part to create a planned overall effect. In turn, pupils improvise to compose their own short sequence within the structure of the music.

150. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. The teacher has very good subject knowledge, which she uses to make teaching points clearly, for instance, through the accurate use of musical terms. Precise learning objectives are shared with pupils at the beginning of lessons and pupils know what is expected of them and try hard to succeed. The teacher prepares resources such as musical instruments well. This enables pupils to learn successfully through direct first-hand experience and experimentation with sound. Group tasks are carefully organised and pupils collaborate successfully. Occasionally tasks are not matched closely to the needs of the pupils. For instance, in one lesson in Year 2, the pupils were unable to concentrate sufficiently on their composing skills whilst at the same time writing down their ideas in an unnecessarily complicated fashion. The teacher does not always provide enough opportunities for higher attainers to move on at a faster rate, for example, when they carry out the same tasks as the rest of the class.

151. Management of the subject is good. The specialist teacher who works with all classes provides a clear overview of standards. Assessment procedures provide accurate information on pupils' attainment at the end of each unit of work and are used efficiently to plan new learning.

152. Whole school productions involving large numbers of pupils in choir and orchestra together with particularly good opportunities for individuals to learn to play an instrument, greatly enhance the pupils' enjoyment of music as well as their performance skills. All pupils have equal access to extracurricular activities. In the juniors, all volunteers are accepted in the choir and all pupils in Years 3 and 4 are offered 'taster' sessions of instrumental lessons. The broad curriculum in lessons and beyond makes a very good contribution to the pupils' cultural development through a wide range of visits and visitors. Social development is promoted very well through the frequent opportunities for pupils to work together in groups in class and across the school, as well as to meet and work with pupils from other schools in festivals and concerts. Pupils gain a sense of pride and responsibility through representing the school.

153. The subject makes a very good contribution to literacy and numeracy; for instance, pupils express their response to music in well-chosen words, and count beats and organise musical scores. Not enough use is yet made of information and communication technology to record pupils' work in class, either to improve appraisal skills or to extend individual composition through the use of specific computer programs.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

154. Owing to the lesson timetable it was only possible to observe a few games lessons. Pupils achieve well in games and, by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, pupils' attainment is above average in this aspect of the subject. At the time of the previous report, standards were average; however the school has made many changes and improvements since then.

155. In games lessons, the teaching is good and pupils learn effectively. The teachers have good subject knowledge, plan their lessons effectively and have high expectations of their pupils. Teachers manage their pupils well and lessons move at a good pace. Activities are well planned to ensure the progressive development of skills. These games lessons have a high level of challenge that inspires pupils to work hard. The teachers are determined to achieve high standards and urge pupils to give of their best. They make particularly good use of pupils' demonstrations to assess performance and to help them to improve. Pupils make good progress, for example, as shown by Year 1 pupils in a football lesson. Year 6 pupils collaborate well when working in groups and show an increasing awareness of tactics, for example, in basketball.

156. The teachers' planning shows a sound coverage of the National Curriculum. In athletics, a range of planned activities presents a challenge to all pupils, and boys and girls have opportunities to take part in out-of-school activities, such as soccer sessions organised by local professional clubs. They show a healthy competitive spirit in team games and the subject makes a very significant contribution to their spiritual, social moral and cultural development.

157. Throughout the school, pupils learn effectively about the importance of warm-up exercise. They understand very well the health-related benefits of exercise. In games, the pupils learn the need for rules. In swimming lessons, all pupils, from Year 2 upwards, develop their competence through a series of exercises designed to improve their basic swimming strokes. By the time they leave the school, the vast majority of pupils achieve the national standard in swimming. Some teams participate in festivals and competitive sporting events against other schools.

158. Assessment of pupils' performance is a very strong feature in lesson planning and is very well recorded. This helps pupils to know how they can improve their work. Older pupils have good opportunities to participate in a very wide range of outdoor and adventurous activities at a residential centre. A very profitable partnership with other primary schools and the local secondary school has

brought about improvements in staff training and curriculum development. The joint schools' project, The Festival of Sport, took place at the school during the week of the inspection and was thoroughly enjoyed by all who participated.

159. Leadership and management are very good. The co-ordinator has worked very hard to raise the profile of the subject and to improve policy and planning. Standards are monitored thoroughly and assessed accurately, from reception through to Year 6. These are improvements which have contributed to raising teachers' confidence in teaching the subject.

160. The school has very good facilities for physical education with a well-equipped hall, hard play areas and use of a large playing field.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

161. Year 2 pupils are reaching average standards and their achievement is satisfactory. This is similar to the findings of the previous inspection. The pupils learn about stories from the Bible and enjoy opportunities for role-play which these stories present, for example, the story of Daniel in the lions' den provoked the pupils to think seriously about Daniel's situation and to conclude that Daniel was punished unjustly. The pupils know about the disciples and about major Christian festivals, such as Christmas and Easter. Pupils are familiar with Christian artefacts, such as the font, holy water, pews, and the cross, and also know that christenings, weddings and funerals take place in church. Pupils know about rules for life and explained how they made classroom rules in order to make everyone safe, to help everyone to learn better, and to ensure that everyone is respected. However, their knowledge of other world religions is a weakness and, for example, they know little about the Hindu religious festivals.

162. Year 6, pupils reach average standards and their achievement is satisfactory. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when standards were unsatisfactory. Pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of Christianity; they are able to talk about Jesus as the Son of God and know, for example, that He healed the lepers and rose from the dead at Easter. They can recall some Bible stories, for example, the parable of the Good Samaritan. They are familiar with the liturgical calendar but their understanding of other religions is again a weakness. Although they have studied Judaism, they know nothing of Abraham or the Torah. Similarly, pupils have completed a topic on Islam but know little about it.

163. Religious education makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; for example, they consider Bible stories in the context of the school's values. The story of David and Goliath gave opportunities to investigate ideas such as challenge, security and respect. When pupils learn about Moses and the leading of the Israelites out of Egypt, and the ten commandments, they link this with the necessity for rules in school and society. Pupils learn to think about the natural world and their place within it. They know about Christian worship and can talk about prayer and hymns being prayer poems. In one lesson, when pupils wrote poems, prayers and short pieces of prose about caring for the environment; music and candles helped to create a atmosphere for reflection when their poems were read aloud to the class.

164. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory and pupils with special educational needs also make satisfactory progress. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when it was reported that teaching throughout the school was unsatisfactory. Teachers have a wide knowledge of the subject and are therefore able to provide interesting lessons to motivate the pupils. A special focus is being planned to give more emphasis to major world religions, which is currently a weakness, and it is hoped to improve the range of artefacts to support this area of the curriculum. Teachers have a warm relationship with their pupils and this gives them confidence to give of their best in lessons and to behave well. Teachers help to consolidate and extend literacy skills, through discussion and through wide opportunities to write about topics. A good feature is the place of drama in religious education lessons.

165. Management of the subject is satisfactory. The curriculum is soundly based on the Local Agreed Syllabus. The head and deputy headteacher examine planning and regularly check the standard of the pupils' work. Each half term, the teachers make an evaluation of the topics they have completed and of the pupils' progress. However, little use is presently made of information and communication technology to support pupils' learning of the subject.