

INSPECTION REPORT

BEECHWOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Crewe

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique reference number: 111211

Headteacher: Mr David Walden

Reporting inspector: Mr Graham R Sims

28899

Dates of inspection: 4th – 7th February 2002

Inspection number: 198025

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 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Gwyn Evans
Date of previous inspection:	13 th October 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
28899	G R Sims	Registered inspector	Information and communication technology	Information about the school The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
13786	S Walsh	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?
27292	J Calvert	Team inspector	Science Physical education Equality of opportunity Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	
22352	F B Gaywood	Team inspector	Areas of learning for children in the foundation stage Art and design Design and technology Provision for pupils with special educational needs The work of the speech and language unit	
27285	J D Taylor	Team inspector	Mathematics Music Religious education	
25560	B Wigley	Team inspector	English Geography History The role of the teaching assistant	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is situated close to the centre of Crewe, an area of significant social deprivation which receives additional funding for urban regeneration. It has recently become a participant in the government's 'Excellence in Cities' project. There are 308 boys and girls on roll between the ages of 3 and 11. Four weeks prior to the inspection, the school opened a Nursery which caters for 26 children who attend only in the mornings. The school is larger than most primary schools and numbers have risen since the previous inspection. It is a popular school and is over-subscribed. Most pupils come from the housing estates which surround the school, where social and economic circumstances are well below average. Over a third of the pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is well above the national average. Very few pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds, and none have English as an additional language. These proportions are below the national average. Around ten per cent of pupils either join or leave the school other than at the usual time. Over a third of the pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, which is above average. The special needs cover a wide spectrum of learning, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Around five per cent of pupils have statements of special educational needs, which is well above the national average. Most of these pupils attend the school's specialist speech and language development unit, which is funded by the authority and caters for pupils from a much wider catchment area. Few children have attended privately run playgroups or nurseries before they join the school, and attainment on entry is generally well below average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Beechwood Primary School is a very good school. It is very successful in helping children who start school with poor levels of skill to make very good progress and achieve much-improved standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave the school. The overall quality of the teaching is very good, enabling pupils to achieve particularly high standards in their art and topic work. The quality of care and support provided by the staff helps pupils to make very good progress in their personal development. The headteacher's very good leadership is seen in the many improvements which have been made since the last inspection. Although its income is above average, the school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The quality of some of the artwork produced by pupils and the care and attention given to the presentation of their topic work is quite exceptional.
- From a low starting base, pupils make very good progress in their learning, achieving standards which are average overall in English, mathematics and science, but well above average in some subjects.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good, particularly in Years 5 and 6.
- The provision for all aspects of pupils' personal development and the standard of care provided by the school is very good.
- The headteacher provides very good leadership and the staff are very committed and work very hard to provide a high-quality learning environment.

What could be improved

- The provision for and standards achieved in religious education.
- The school's procedures for obtaining a clear picture of the standards achieved by pupils.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has not only maintained the strengths noted in its last inspection in October 1997, but has also instigated a very good range of improvements. The school responded well to the key issues from the previous inspection. Priority has been given to improving standards in pupils' reading. Evidence of the effectiveness of the measures implemented is seen in the way the school's results in English have improved at the end of Years 2 and 6. Arrangements for pupils taught in the Speech and Language Unit are much better than they were and are now very good. The governors' annual report now fulfils statutory requirements. In addition to the previous key issues, the school has shown improvement in other areas. Standards of behaviour have improved as a result of consistent application of the school's procedures for behaviour management. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is much better than it was, and standards in this subject have risen. Many improvements have been made to the school's accommodation and the security of the buildings, and the recent addition of the Nursery unit is an important improvement to give children a better preparation for starting school. Academically, there has been considerable improvement in the standards achieved by pupils. In the period from 1997 to 2000, the school was the 55th most improved school in the country. The quality of the teaching has continued to improve. There is a much higher percentage of very good and excellent teaching than before. With the excellent commitment shown by the staff, the school has very good capacity for further improvement.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	D	D	E	C
mathematics	B	D	E	D
science	C	C	C	A

Key

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

In 2001, the school's overall results were well below the national average in the tests for eleven-year-olds, although they were average when compared with similar schools. The results in 2001 were lower than those in 2000 and were affected by the fact that half of the pupils in this year group were on the school's register for special educational needs and over a third were late entrants to the school. Even so, the school's results are higher now than they were at the time of the last inspection. The school received an achievement award in 2000 for standards which were improving at a much faster rate than the national trend. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 2 were below average in reading and writing and average in mathematics, but were well above the average for similar schools. The school sets itself challenging targets and works hard to achieve them.

The table of results does not give full credit to the standards achieved and the progress made by the pupils. The overall level of attainment when children join the school is well below average, and the school admits a very high percentage of pupils with special educational needs, including an above average proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs who are catered for in the school's Speech and Language Unit. The Nursery has only recently opened and has yet to have an impact on standards achieved later in the school. Although good progress is made in Reception, standards are still well below average when

children enter Year 1. The inspection findings show that pupils currently in Year 2 have made very good progress and that they are achieving average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Equally, the overall progress of pupils currently in Year 6 has been very good. Standards in this year group are better than those achieved in 2001 and are average in English, above average in science, although still below average in mathematics. The strongest feature of pupils' work is their achievement in cross-curricular topic work and art and design. Half-termly topics, with a specific focus on science, history or geography, but also encompassing work in art and design, design and technology, and ICT, result in project books whose presentation is of the highest standard and in which the work produced is of high quality. Very good artwork is produced throughout the school, and some of the work produced in Years 5 and 6 is quite exceptional. Standards in ICT have improved and are now above average at the end of Year 6. Standards in religious education, however, are below expectations throughout the school.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are interested and involved in lessons and activities. A significant number of pupils have difficulty concentrating, but teachers manage these pupils well and ensure that they work hard and do their best.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Most pupils behave well, both within lessons and around school. Staff have high expectations regarding behaviour and use the school's behaviour strategy to good effect. As a result, the school is a well-ordered community.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Many pupils are very immature when they start school. The school's strategies encourage pupils to develop well socially and personally and to carry out responsibilities sensibly. Many pupils, however, have yet to become less dependent on adults' help. Relationships between pupils and staff are very good.
Attendance	Satisfactory. The levels of attendance are very similar to the national average. Rates of unauthorised absence are above the national average, especially amongst younger pupils.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	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 overall quality of teaching is very good and, as a result, pupils make very good progress in their learning. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 5 and 6 is exceptionally good. All of the teachers demonstrate great commitment to their work and strive to create a high-quality learning environment for the pupils. Teachers have very high expectations with regard to the way pupils present their work, and this results in some exceptionally good project work and some excellent artwork. The school caters well for pupils of all abilities. The very good work of the Speech and Language Unit enables pupils with learning difficulties to make very

good progress and become well-integrated members of the school. More able pupils are provided with sufficient challenge to enable them to achieve above average expectations in their National Curriculum tests. Less able pupils and pupils with special educational needs are given good support to help them make progress towards the targets which are outlined in their individual education plans. The organisation of the curriculum allows teachers to develop subjects and topics in greater depth than is normally found, and they integrate work in one subject very well with work in another. The teaching of English and mathematics is good, and the teaching of English in Years 3 to 6 is very good. Much additional help is provided through booster and additional support groups, as well as the good support provided for pupils on a one-to-one basis by the special educational needs coordinator. This well-coordinated additional support is helping lower-achieving pupils to make substantial gains in their learning. Literacy and numeracy skills are developed well through aspects of work in other subjects, and especially through the integrated topic work undertaken in the afternoons. The teaching of ICT skills has improved significantly, and computers are used to promote learning in all subjects. Although the teaching of individual lessons is satisfactory, little emphasis has been given to the teaching of religious education, and pupils' progress in this subject is unsatisfactory.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum meets statutory requirements. The overall range of learning opportunities is good. Additional activities, visits, links with the community and partner institutions, all enrich the normal curriculum. The breadth of integrated topic work is a particular strength.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school makes good provision for pupils with special educational needs. Additional help for these pupils is well organised and is carefully targeted to meet their needs. The work undertaken by the Speech and Language Unit is particularly successful in helping pupils to become integrated members of the school.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school makes very good provision for the pupils' personal development. Pupils develop from immature pupils with few social skills, to responsible and responsive pupils. The pupils are taught important values of respect and tolerance, and staff reinforce these through personal example and the respect with which they treat the pupils.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The attention given to pupils' welfare is of a very high standard. This is a very caring community in which the needs of every pupil are given careful consideration. The school keeps track of pupils' progress, although assessment procedures need to be simplified and made more accurate.
How well does the school work in partnership with parents	The school has a very good relationship with parents, and they value the support which the school provides for them.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides the school with very good leadership and has instigated many improvements since the last inspection. He sets high expectations and has a particular concern to ensure that the school provides well for all pupils and for all aspects of their education. He is very well supported by the deputy and assistant headteachers. The school is very well staffed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their statutory obligations well. They are very supportive of the school, and have a clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. They maintain effective oversight of the school's development and finances.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school evaluates its own performance well, identifies appropriate areas for development and works hard to bring about improvement. Although all aspects of the school are monitored and evaluated regularly, subject co-ordinators are given insufficient opportunity to monitor teaching and learning in their subjects.
The strategic use of resources	The school manages its finances very well. Administrative procedures are efficient. The school seeks good value for money when taking spending decisions. Specific grants and additional funding are used very effectively to promote pupils' learning. The accommodation is good, largely because of modifications made since the last inspection. The school has a satisfactory range of learning resources overall, and is very well equipped to teach ICT.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are very happy with the education provided for their children and feel that children are making good progress. • The school promotes the right values and attitudes and achieves good standards of behaviour. • The school's approach to homework is just about right. • The school keeps them well informed and staff are very approachable. • The school is well led and managed. 	<p>Very few parents expressed any concerns, but these included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The wish for more information about their children's progress. • The widening of the range of activities outside lessons.

Very few parents made their views known to the inspection team; 5 parents attended the parents' meeting and 40 (12 per cent) returned the questionnaire. The inspection findings endorse all of the positive views expressed by parents. The school provides appropriate opportunities for parents to meet formally with staff and is always open and receptive to informal consultations with parents. The team is unable to comment on the quality of written reports sent to parents, as the school does not keep copies. The school accepts the need to keep copies in the future. The inspection team feels that the school offers pupils a good range of activities outside normal lessons.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Standards at Beechwood Primary are higher now than they were at the time of the last inspection and, overall, pupils are making very good progress and achieving very well. After the national tests in 2000, the staff received a School Achievement Award, as the school's results over a three-year period were amongst the most improved in the country. The results in 2001 were lower than those in 2000 and were affected by the fact that half of the pupils in this year group were on the school's register for special educational needs and over a third were late entrants to the school. A particular strength of the school is seen in the standards achieved by pupils in other areas of the curriculum which are higher than those obtained in many schools. Some of the topic work, which centres on science, history and geography, but includes significant input from art and design, design and technology and ICT, is of a very high standard.

2. In the 2001 national tests for seven-year-olds, the school's results were close to the national average in writing and mathematics and below average in reading. However, when compared to the results of schools in similar contexts¹, they were above average in reading and well above average in writing and mathematics. Most pupils achieved the national expectation of Level 2 in writing and mathematics, and almost a quarter achieved the higher Level 3 in mathematics. In reading, one in seven pupils did not achieve Level 2, but one in five achieved Level 3. Although results have fluctuated, standards have improved at a faster rate than the national trend and are better now than they were at the time of the last inspection. Given the low standards of attainment when children enter the school, these results represent good achievement for all pupils. The inspection findings show that the standards of attainment at the end of Year 2 are somewhat better than the picture painted in the 2001 test results and that standards are now average in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers and teaching assistants work very hard to provide the additional support necessary to enable less able pupils to reach the expected standard in reading, and this has also had a beneficial effect on standards in writing.

3. The national test results for eleven-year-olds were just above average in science, but well below average in English and mathematics. When compared with schools in similar contexts, the results were average in English, below average in mathematics, but well above average in science. In comparison with results achieved by these pupils in their tests at the age of seven in 1997, pupils made very good progress through Key Stage 2 in science, satisfactory progress in English, but, according to the test results, unsatisfactory progress in mathematics. Two-thirds of the pupils achieved the national expectation of Level 4 in English, but only a half achieved this level in mathematics. In science, almost all pupils achieved Level 4, and over a third achieved the higher Level 5. One in five pupils achieved Level 5 in English and one in ten in mathematics. The inspection findings show that standards are continuing to improve and that pupils are achieving average standards in English and above average standards in science. Standards in mathematics are improving, but are still below average.

¹ The school's results are compared both to the national average (ie the average of the results of all schools in England, where pupils took National Curriculum assessment tests at the end of Key Stage 1) and to the average for similar schools (ie the average of the results for all schools whose pupils come from similar socio-economic backgrounds, determined by the eligibility of pupils within the school to receive free school meals).

4. After the last inspection, the school's results improved rapidly, and reached an overall high point in 1999. Standards in English and science improved again in 2000, but the results in 2001 were not as good as those in 2000 in English and mathematics. The profile of pupils from this year group revealed that a very high percentage of the pupils had special educational needs, that a third of the pupils had joined the school within the last three years, and that a number of lower-achieving pupils had poor records of attendance. Despite the drop in attainment in 2001, the school's results have improved at a faster rate than the national trend and are better now than at the time of the last inspection. The greatest improvement has been in science, but there have also been significant improvements in English. Results in mathematics, however, have fallen significantly since 1998, when they were above the national average. The inspection findings reveal an improving picture, as the school has been working hard to enable pupils to achieve better results. The quality of teaching and learning observed during the inspection was good, pupils' books show good coverage of the curriculum, and pupils have positive attitudes to the subject and demonstrate sound standards in lessons.

5. Based on the previous year's results, the school set itself challenging targets for 2001, but failed to reach them. The targets for the coming year are more realistic, but, nevertheless, represent an appropriate level of challenge in the light of pupils' prior attainment. The school analyses its results and pupils' performance very carefully, gaining a clear understanding from this analysis of which aspects need to be covered in greater depth. Previously identified needs, such as the need to improve the standard of writing at Key Stage 1², have been tackled successfully. However, the school's own assessments of pupils' attainments at Key Stage 2 present a confusing picture. From the data provided, it appears, for example, that standards are lower in Year 4 than they were in Year 2, or that pupils have made little progress from one year to the next, when this is clearly not the case. There are also marked discrepancies between the teachers' assessments in English and science and the results achieved in the national tests.

6. Over the last few years, girls have achieved better results than boys at Key Stage 1. At Key Stage 2, girls continue to achieve better results than boys in English, reflecting the national trend, but in mathematics and science there is very little difference in the results achieved. The school is aware of these differences and is working to eliminate them. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils in the school. Thus, by the end of Year 2, they achieve well and, by the end of Year 6, they achieve very well in relation to the individual plans and targets set for them. Standards are carefully monitored, and there is no evidence of underachievement, because their work and support are well matched to their needs. Teachers and teaching assistants work very effectively with the pupils, often in small groups, and occasionally on a one-to-one basis, which is of particular help in enabling these pupils to make progress in literacy and numeracy. Pupils who attend the Speech and Language Unit also make very good progress because of the support and attention they receive, and they are also learning to integrate well by attending normal classes at certain times in the day. The more able pupils are given plenty to challenge to stimulate them, particularly through the topic work in the afternoons. In previous years, a small number of pupils have achieved Level 6 in English and mathematics, which is a considerable achievement. The school has no pupils for whom English is an additional language.

² The words 'Key Stage' refer to the different stages of learning in schools. Children start school in the Foundation Stage, which caters for children aged 3 to 5 and generally refers to children who are in the Nursery, Reception or Early Years classes. Key Stage 1 is the first stage of compulsory primary education. It caters for pupils aged 5 to 7 and refers to pupils who are in Years 1 and 2. Key Stage 1 is also frequently synonymous with the term Infants. Key Stage 2 is the second stage of primary education. It caters for pupils aged 7 to 11 and refers to pupils who are in Years 3 to 6. Key Stage 2 is also frequently synonymous with the term Juniors. At the age of 11, pupils start Key Stage 3, which marks the beginning of their secondary education.

7. Observations made during the inspection and the school's own assessments show that most children have very low levels of skill when they join the school. In this context, the opening of the Nursery is of significant importance in the school's efforts to raise standards and to ensure that pupils are better prepared for when they start compulsory education. The early indications are that the Nursery is already helping the school's youngest children to become accustomed to school, to learn important social skills and to develop initial concepts of reading and number. Children currently in the Reception year have not had the benefit of attending the Nursery and, although they make good progress in all areas of learning, standards are still well below average by the time they start Year 1. The staff have to spend a considerable amount of time in helping the children to cope within the school environment, and paying particular attention to the children's personal, social and emotional development.

8. Since the last inspection, there has been considerable improvement in reading and writing. The school has devoted substantial resources to the improvement of reading and given additional time to extended writing activities outside the daily literacy sessions. Careful analysis of National Curriculum results has highlighted areas of weakness, on which the school has then concentrated. Most pupils read competently, and the best read with expression and good understanding. Good teaching during the literacy hour is helping pupils to look critically at texts and to learn how language works. Pupils at Key Stage 1, for example, are becoming more confident to work out for themselves the structure of new words. At Key Stage 2, pupils understand the value of punctuation and are able to anticipate the text and to read for meaning. The quality of pupils' writing is satisfactory at the end of both key stages. At Key Stage 1, pupils are developing confidence in writing sentences, and appropriate handwriting activities help them to present their words correctly and neatly. The use of spelling books is helping them to develop greater confidence when writing. At Key Stage 2, the abler pupils write well and are beginning to develop their own style. Pupils present their work well, and the quality of their handwriting is good. Literacy skills are also developed very well through topic work each afternoon, where the school's cross-curricular approach and emphasis on high-quality presentation lends meaning and purpose to the pupils' writing. The weakest aspect of English is speaking and listening. Pupils start from a very low base and, although good opportunities are provided for pupils to participate in whole-class discussions, standards in both aspects are below average at the end of both key stages. Many pupils have difficulty in maintaining their concentration and listening to the explanations offered by teachers and other pupils, and have a restricted oral vocabulary. The more able pupils, however, are articulate and often respond to teachers at length.

9. The picture in mathematics has improved since the last inspection, but not to the same extent as in English and science. The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy has had a positive effect on the way pupils learn, and most pupils achieve the nationally expected standard by the end of Key Stage 1. At Key Stage 2, pupils greatly enjoy their mathematics lessons and are becoming much more confident in handling numbers and using different methods to carry out calculations. After the rapid rise in standards following the last inspection, and the subsequent decline over the last two years, standards are rising again as the effects of the National Numeracy Strategy become more firmly embedded. In lessons in other subjects, pupils demonstrate that they have sound numeracy skills and that they are able to apply them in different circumstances.

10. Standards in science have risen significantly at Key Stage 2, from well below the national average to just above the average. Improvements continue, and the inspection findings are that standards are now above average at the end of Key Stage 2. During the half-term of the inspection, most afternoons were devoted to the teaching of a science-based topic, and this favourable time allocation enables teachers to deal with topics in depth and to relate pupils' science work to that carried out in other subjects. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make very good progress and are achieving well. Much of the pupils' learning derives from practical work, and pupils enjoy and learn well from this style of teaching. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of an appropriately wide range of scientific topics. Standards at Key Stage 1 are average, indicating good progress from the low starting base at the start of the key stage.

11. There has been significant improvement in the school's provision for ICT since the last inspection. Pupils of all abilities are making good progress at Key Stage 1 and very good progress at Key Stage 2, where the use of new technology is integrated particularly well into the pupils' topic work in the afternoons. Standards are in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1 and are above expectations at the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils have a good range of key skills and, by the time they leave the school, they are confident in using a good variety of computer programmes.

12. The weakest subject is religious education, and the school acknowledges that further attention needs to be given to the subject throughout the school. In particular, very little time is allocated to religious education at Key Stage 2, and pupils do not have enough opportunity to acquire a sufficient range and depth of knowledge, understanding and insight into religious beliefs and practices. Standards are below the expectations outlined in the locally agreed syllabus at the end of both key stages. Although some animated discussions were observed in lessons in Key Stage 2 during the inspection, outside lessons, pupils expressed little interest in the subject and showed poor retention of the material which had been covered.

13. The picture is very different in other subjects. Strengths in nearly all other aspects of the curriculum are already emerging at Key Stage 1. Pupils have progressed a long way from the poor knowledge and understanding of the world displayed when they start school, and standards in history, geography and music are similar to those expected of pupils at this age. Emerging strengths in art and design, and design and technology are already in evidence, and standards in these two subjects are above average. Standards in physical education are average, as they are at the end of Key Stage 2.

14. By the end of Key Stage 2, standards in geography and music are above those found in most schools and, in art and design, design and technology, and history, standards are well above average. This marks considerable achievement by the pupils, and is the result of some very careful planning and some excellent cross-curricular work. Topic work each half-term centres around history, geography or science. Other subjects are carefully woven into the topic work, and the result at the end is very carefully and beautifully presented topic books, with evidence of high-quality work and in-depth understanding of the topics covered. Some of the artwork produced by the pupils is quite outstanding, and evidence of this is seen in some striking displays of pupils' work around the school. Pupils show a high degree of motivation and great pride in their work.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. Pupils have very good attitudes to school and to their learning. This is similar to the situation at the time of the last inspection. Parents report that their children really enjoy school and that school is a wonderful place for them. Pupils come into school each morning happy and smiling, eager to see their friends and teachers. As they get older, they settle quickly to their work and are eager to learn. They are very involved in after-school activities. A large number of pupils are involved in the dance class, and both boys and girls attend football practice. Over 50 pupils from Years 5 and 6 regularly attend the school's homework club, which helps pupils with their learning.

16. Most pupils start school in the Nursery and Reception class with very poorly developed social skills. Their levels of concentration are low, and they are very easily distracted. Pupils want to work hard and try their best, but some of them do not know how. The school works hard, and very successfully, at teaching pupils how to learn and how to relate well to other people. Rapid improvement in pupils' attitudes and response to work is evident as pupils move through the school, and the school's efforts have a positive impact on pupils' learning.

17. Teachers continue to manage pupils' attitudes and behaviour well when they start Key Stage 2. For example, during an English lesson in Years 3 and 4 about fables, pupils were very interested and involved, but a small number of pupils often forgot to put up their hands and called out in excitement. The teacher had to remind them frequently to wait for their turn; they were not allowed to dominate the lesson. When they were working independently, some pupils were often restless and easily distracted from their task, so that the teacher had to remind them frequently about what they were supposed to be doing. The patient, respectful, but firm way in which teachers tackle these situations is effective in helping pupils to develop better concentration and thus make progress in their learning.

18. As pupils get older, they work even harder, although teachers still have to remind some pupils not to be distracted. They are encouraged to take great pride in their work. This is evident in the stunning artwork that is displayed all around school and the attractive topic books which they have made. Pupils treat the school environment and resources, such as computers, with a great deal of respect. They are proud of their school and appreciate the high quality environment and the work that their teachers and other staff do.

19. Pupils with special educational needs contribute well in lessons generally, because teachers target their questions well. Worksheets and support techniques, such as spelling strategies, enable pupils to make good progress. Other pupils have very mature attitudes and are very tolerant, for instance, of those pupils with speech difficulties who work with them in the afternoon sessions. This enables pupils with special educational needs to be fully included in all areas of the school's work.

20. The overall standard of behaviour is good. Many pupils are not naturally well behaved, and the good behaviour seen is a consequence of the school's behaviour strategy being consistently applied by teachers and support staff. As a result, inappropriate behaviour by pupils rarely disturbs lessons and pupils are able to learn well. The school does not tolerate behaviour which disrupts lessons, and there have been seven exclusions involving two pupils. In some cases exclusion has led to improved patterns of behaviour.

21. Behaviour around school is often very good. Pupils move sensibly around school, and behaviour in assemblies is very good. Lunch-times are pleasant and orderly. Pupils continue to behave well during wet playtimes when they have to stay indoors. Behaviour on the playground is lively and boisterous but not inappropriate. The school is aware that bullying occurs occasionally, but works hard to ensure these issues are quickly resolved. Pupils are welcoming to visitors. They are confident and chat pleasantly about school life. They have good manners towards adults and each other. They hold doors open and say 'please' and 'thank you'.

22. Relationships between pupils are good. Pupils mix well together and show consideration for others. As a result, pupils who have speech difficulties can answer questions, secure in the knowledge that no one will laugh at them. Relationships between pupils and staff are very good. These very good relationships give pupils the confidence to ask questions and to make mistakes without fear of derision. Pupils have low levels of independence and often require sensitive adult support. However, relationships between classroom assistants and pupils are warm and supportive, providing the right environment to promote pupils' learning.

23. Pupils' personal development is good. They are starting to understand the need to respect the views of others and to realise how their actions might affect others. There are many opportunities for older pupils to demonstrate responsibility. Pupils are extremely proud to be prefects. They value this role very much and learn to exercise their responsibility in an appropriate manner. Older pupils provide good role models for younger pupils. The capacity for personal study is less well developed. The homework club provides an environment where pupils can work independently in a less formal situation, but adults are readily on hand to help with tasks like learning spellings.

24. Attendance is satisfactory. Attendance rates for the last school year were very similar to the national average, although rates of unauthorised absence were above the national average. Pupils in infant classes have substantially more time off than those in the junior classes. Unfortunately, a minority of parents condone their children's absence. Pupils also miss lessons through holidays in term time, and this has an adverse effect on their learning.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

25. The overall quality of the teaching is very good, as a result of which pupils make very good progress in their learning. Parents feel that their children are being taught well and that they are making good progress, and the inspection evidence endorses these perceptions. Four out of every five lessons observed during the inspection were good or better, and a quarter were very good or better. There was a very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching and learning are strongest in Key Stage 2, and are exceptionally good in Years 5 and 6, where the more open layout of the classrooms and the way the curriculum is planned help the three teachers to work together in a very collaborative way. The teaching and learning in Key Stage 1 and in the Foundation Stage are good, but there are also examples of very good teaching and learning in these key stages, as well as a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching. The learning environment throughout the school is good, but it is particularly stimulating in Key Stage 2, where high-quality displays keep examples of good practice constantly before the pupils and reinforce the teachers' expectations. In most lessons, the pupils' very positive attitudes to school and to their work complement the teaching and result in very good learning at Key Stage 2. The seeds for this response are sown in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, as teachers in these key stages devote considerable time and attention to helping pupils to settle into school routines and concentrate on their work. Throughout the school, there is plenty to challenge the more able pupils, and careful consideration is given to those with special educational needs. Through

the care and attention given by the staff, pupils who attend the Speech and Language Unit are integrated into the daily life of the school, whilst also having separate lessons for part of the day.

26. The quality of the teaching has improved since the last inspection. Although the previous inspection judged teaching to be a strength of the school, now, a much higher percentage of lessons is good or better. The weaknesses mentioned in the last report have been rectified. The teaching in the Speech and Language Unit has improved considerably and the pupils who attend the Unit are making very good progress in their learning. Much greater attention is now given to developing pupils' reading skills. Monitoring visits carried out by the local education authority acknowledge that very good teaching has resulted in very good progress. Other evidence, such as the significant improvement in standards of attainment at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2, indicate that the teaching is more rigorous than it was and that pupils are learning well. All of the positive aspects noted in the last inspection, such as the teachers' knowledge and understanding of the National Curriculum, their expectations with regard to pupils' handwriting and presentation, the quality of their planning, the variety of teaching methods and the way teachers use their time, have been maintained. The school, as a whole, is conscious of the need to seek improvements wherever possible. Many of the staff have joined the school since the last inspection, but their induction has been carried out well, and many good lessons were observed being taught by relatively inexperienced teachers. The teachers are committed and very hard-working, and are prepared to take on board new initiatives.

27. The overall quality of teaching and learning in English is very good. The school has implemented the National Literacy Strategy effectively, but has also adapted its teaching methods to take account of pupils' abilities and needs. Considerable attention is given to the teaching of reading skills. Much additional help is provided through booster and additional support groups, as well as the good support provided for pupils on a one-to-one basis by the special educational needs coordinator who runs the school's Reading Recovery programme. This well-coordinated additional support is helping lower-achieving pupils to make substantial gains in their learning. The skills of writing are taught carefully, frequently preceded by animated discussions in which the pupils participate enthusiastically. Pupils' writing is also integrated carefully into the topic work which pupils undertake in the afternoon, and careful attention is given to the drafting and redrafting of pupils' written work, so that the end products which appear in the pupils' topic books are not only well written, but also well-presented and, generally, accurate. The development of pupils' literacy skills thus permeates all other aspects of the curriculum.

28. The overall quality of teaching and learning in mathematics is good. The school has implemented the National Numeracy Strategy effectively, and the teaching methods advocated have had a positive impact on pupils' learning. Well-paced mental mathematics sessions at the start of each lesson have helped pupils to improve their ability to carry out calculations quickly and accurately in their head. Pupils comment on enjoying mathematics more and, for some, it is one of their favourite subjects. Careful analysis of previous test results has identified those aspects which pupils undertake less successfully than others, and extra attention is given to these aspects. Pupils' numeracy skills are developed effectively through other subjects, particularly in science. During the inspection, for example, pupils were using their numeracy skills to calculate distances and speeds when testing buggies which they had made. The overall impact, however, has not been translated into improvement in the school's results at Key Stage 2 which, in 2001, were lower than those achieved in 1999. No logical explanations were found during the inspection to account for the discrepancy between the quality of teaching and pupils' response in lessons, and an apparent decline in standards over the last two years. Teachers point to the difficulties pupils have in applying their numeracy skills under test conditions, so the development of greater

independence and confidence to tackle mathematical problems on their own could be a clue to bringing further improvement.

29. Basic skills in other subjects are taught well. Evidence from pupils' topic books show that pupils learn skills of historical and geographical enquiry, the ability to make different artefacts in design and technology, and a wide range of artistic skills. There has been a significant improvement in the teaching of ICT skills, and most pupils leave the school with the ability and confidence to use a range of computer programs and a good awareness of how computers can help them with their work. Although speaking and listening skills are below average, the teachers pay particular attention to the development of pupils' speaking skills, by providing opportunities for discussion, drama sessions and techniques, such as hot-seating. As a result, pupils have the confidence and the desire to participate in discussion in all subjects and are not afraid to air their views. Some pupils still find it hard to listen, although the stimulating nature of much of the work provided, particularly in the afternoons, helps to overcome this weakness.

30. There are no subjects in which the teaching is weak. Indeed, the quality of the teaching in Key Stage 2 in English, science, art and design, design and technology, geography, history, and ICT is very good and, in mathematics, music and physical education, it is good. At Key Stage 1, the teaching of all subjects, with the exception of religious education, is good. The school has not given as much attention to the planning and teaching of religious education as it has to other subjects, and the time allocated to it in Key Stage 2 is too low. Although the teaching of individual lessons in religious education during the inspection was satisfactory, pupils are not making enough progress in their learning of this subject. In contrast, teachers have improved their expertise in teaching ICT since the last inspection, as a result of the excellent training opportunities provided by the school, and standards are rising. The overall quality of the teaching for children in the Foundation Stage is good, with particular strength in the management of children's behaviour, which can be very challenging at times. In the Nursery, the staff have worked very hard at establishing good relationships and routines to ensure that the children feel safe and confident to learn. They have been very successful in this in the very short time since the Nursery opened.

31. The school works hard to meet the needs of all pupils. In order to match work more closely to pupils' needs, the school groups pupils by ability for English and mathematics in Key Stage 2, although there is still a very wide range of ability and ages within each of the sets. Teachers use their own knowledge of pupils' abilities as well as formal assessments in order to group pupils. However, the school's assessments do not give a clear picture of how pupils are progressing through the school and are not a reliable enough indicator on which to base the setting arrangements. Mixed-ability and mixed-age groupings do not inhibit pupils' learning in the afternoons. Teachers are conscious of the needs of the more able pupils and provide them with sufficient challenge. Indeed, in the recent past, they have enabled a small number of pupils to achieve Level 6 in English and mathematics. Teachers provide appropriate tasks for pupils with special educational needs, using pupils' individual education plans well. They give as much support as they can, asking well-directed questions, so that all pupils can join in at all levels, and make progress in their learning. Close cooperation with the special educational needs coordinator, and her expert notes of guidance, ensure that work is well matched to the needs of the pupils for whom the school has concerns. Teachers and assistants work well together, as a team, to support pupils with special educational needs, for instance, by careful action planning and close consultation. All teachers discuss pupils with special educational needs, termly, to ensure that all staff are fully up to date with any programme or change in situation. As a result of the school's attention, pupils with special educational needs make good progress in their learning.

32. The inspection of this school included a focused view of the contribution of teaching assistants to teaching and learning in literacy and mathematics. Teaching assistants play a very important role throughout the school and contribute significantly to pupils' learning, particularly in literacy and mathematics, but also in the topic work which pupils undertake in the afternoons. Teaching assistants share in the planning process with the teachers, so that they are well briefed and know what is intended in each lesson. At times, assistants work with small and medium-sized groups of pupils on specific tasks; at others, they support groups of pupils within the classroom or help individual pupils. The effect is nearly always positive in helping pupils to learn. In the mixed-year class with children from the Reception and pupils from Year 1, the assistant's contribution to each lesson is crucial in ensuring that different levels of work can be provided for the different age groups, so that pupils' learning is not held back by other pupils' needs. In literacy and mathematics lessons, teaching assistants generally sit with identified pupils whilst the teacher is conducting whole-class sessions. Their quiet intervention frequently helps these pupils to maintain their concentration and their questioning and discussions with them avoid teachers having to repeat explanations, thus enabling them to maintain the momentum of the lesson for other pupils. During group-work sessions, teaching assistants follow the teacher's guidance carefully and, again, have an important impact on pupils' learning, helping to focus their attention, asking pertinent questions to stimulate their thinking, and giving clear explanations when pupils require extra help. Overall, the teaching assistants provide very good quality support for both teachers and pupils and have a positive impact on pupils' learning.

33. The quality of teachers' planning is very good, especially during the afternoons when work from different subjects is integrated into the overall half-termly topic. Teachers collaborate very well, not only in their planning, but also in their teaching, particularly in Years 5 and 6, where they are able to concentrate on teaching areas in which they feel most competent, to pupils from all three classes. The way afternoons are organised gives teachers sufficient time to cover topics in depth and enables pupils to learn well and develop good insight into the topics covered. Occasionally, the sessions last for too long, and the pace and pupils' concentration slow towards the end of the afternoon.

34. At Key Stage 1, many pupils still find it hard to concentrate for a sufficient length of time, both during whole-class sessions and when given individual tasks, and the behaviour of some pupils can be quite challenging at times. These factors inevitably affect pupils' learning, although teachers generally manage the pupils very well and pupils make good progress in learning to cope within the school environment. In Key Stage 2, the pupils are much more settled, even though their concentration lapses at times, and their positive attitudes, combined with a wide variety of well-planned and stimulating activities, generates an interest in learning. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are very good throughout the school, and this also helps to create a positive learning environment. Pupils are confident about making suggestions and sharing their ideas, and are secure in the knowledge that their views will be valued and respected. Discussions are often lively, with many pupils participating and eager to contribute their views. Very high expectations with regard to the way pupils present their work are fostered from the very beginning, and the quality of pupils' presentation improves as they move through the school, culminating in some exceptionally good project work and some outstanding artwork in Years 5 and 6. The school has a sensible approach to homework, and parents feel that the balance is about right. Homework tasks, when set, relate to work pupils have carried out in class or prepare them for a future activity, and make a good contribution to pupils' learning. The school also provides a homework club which is enthusiastically attended by many older pupils.

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

35. The school provides a broad and relevant curriculum that fully meets statutory requirements, covering all National Curriculum subjects, and religious education in accordance with the guidelines of the Cheshire Agreed Syllabus. The curriculum provided for children in the Foundation Stage is good. They receive a broad, balanced and relevant education that is appropriate to the children's ages and needs. All pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, have equal access to the curriculum. The school is very aware of the need to include all pupils in what it offers and, in this respect, its curricular provision is very good. For instance, the school sets aside a certain sum of money to meet any shortfall for residential trips and to supplement other school trips.

36. The school has made improvements to the curriculum since the last inspection. It has given considerable attention and the highest priority to its strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy. Extra time is made available in Key Stage 1 for pupils to attend additional lessons as part of the Early Literacy Strategy and, for the less able pupils, additional sessions with the special educational needs coordinator who runs the school's Reading Recovery scheme. In Key Stage 2, extra time is made available for selected pupils to participate in the additional literacy and numeracy strategies. These additional sessions, at both key stages, are effective in raising pupils' achievement in literacy and mathematics, and the pupils are making good progress. However, the large amount of time allocated to English and mathematics reduces the amount of time for other subjects, affecting, in particular, music and religious education and, to a lesser extent, physical education. In religious education, there is insufficient opportunity for pupils to develop appropriate skills and understanding of the curriculum outlined in the locally agreed syllabus.

37. The school has been creative in its timetabling of afternoon sessions, alternating the half-termly focus through history, geography and science, and successfully integrating work in art and design, design and technology, and ICT. This has allowed teachers to cover many aspects of the syllabus in greater depth than is found in many schools, to the benefit of pupils' learning. Occasionally, however, the sessions are too long, particularly for those pupils who find it hard to sustain their concentration over extended periods.

38. The curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and has improved since the last inspection. The curriculum planned for these pupils is now much more demanding and builds well on their existing skills. Pupils have benefited greatly from the extra one-to-one reading sessions provided by the special educational needs coordinator. In science, mathematics and reading, pupils with special educational needs in Key Stage 2 now have much more structured tasks that challenge their thinking and build upon their existing skills. They have full access to the curriculum and all arrangements are fully inclusive. Pupils' needs are established at an early stage, and individual education plans are clearly focused, with manageable academic or behavioural targets. These are reviewed, updated and revised regularly, and parents are kept fully informed of the actions to be taken.

39. Subject policies and schemes of work, based on national recommendations, are in place for all the subjects of the National Curriculum. Since many of the coordinators have only recently been appointed, the school has yet to undertake an assessment of how useful the new schemes of work are to the school's circumstances and needs. The teachers' medium- and long-term curricular plans are well structured, with clear objectives and specific guidance on how to implement cross-curricular links and how to use new technology across the curriculum, especially in topic work. The plans also contain advice on identifying learning objectives to ensure that pupils with different levels of attainment are sufficiently challenged with appropriate tasks. The choice of topics is based on a two-year cycle to cater for the mixed age grouping of classes, and this arrangement is effective since it allows for progression and continuity in teaching. The planned curriculum provides a very sound basis for pupils' learning.

40. The provision for pupils' personal, social and health education, including the teaching of sex education and drugs education, is satisfactory. At the present time, most of the curriculum for personal, social and health education is integrated into other subjects, mainly science and religious education. As very little time is devoted to religious education, the range of topics covered in this subject is limited. However, many aspects are covered in depth in science, including sex education, where pupils learn about body changes and the dangers of smoking and of substance misuse. In Year 6, the community nurse comes into the school to speak to the boys and girls separately about the topics of puberty and body changes. Some, but not all, classes have introduced circle time³ into their timetables, and many aspects of personal, social and health education, such as caring for others and considering people in less fortunate circumstances, are covered in assemblies. The prefect system gives older pupils responsibility, such as lunchtime duties, running the tuck shop and monitoring pupils as they leave assembly. Throughout the school, pupils have jobs within their own classes, which help them to develop a sense of personal responsibility. All of these elements together help pupils to develop good personal and social skills.

41. A good variety of extra-curricular activities significantly enhances and enriches pupils' learning experiences. The school's visits to places of educational value are extensive and include visits to residential centres, music festivals, Manchester airport, a nearby community technology school and the city of Chester. The pupils' local study project of Crewe is a notable feature. After-school activities are varied and range from dance, music, ICT, to sports and swimming clubs. Such activities are well attended, and pupils participate enthusiastically.

42. There are good established links with the community, for instance, with Rolls Royce, as part of a new Connexions initiative. This allows older pupils to discover how industries work. The local Soroptimists support the school annually by arranging a week of science activities. The local football team provides coaching for pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils support the community with various charitable activities, by carol singing at Christmas and by fundraising for local hospitals. Members of the community, including many parents, visit the school regularly and offer their support in lessons. The school has good relationships with other institutions. It works with the Manchester Metropolitan University for school-centred ICT. There are strong links with the local high school and the college of further education. Every year, pupils in Year 5 visit the South Cheshire College for a week to undertake a vocational curriculum programme. Pupils in Year 6 make preliminary visits to the high school before they transfer. The high school links have a significant impact on pupils' progress in ICT. Some year groups use the high school's computer suite, and staff from the high school staff are actively involved in the school's computer club. The high school also provides significant technical support and high school students undertake work experience in the school. Pupils benefit enormously from these good links and the additional dimension they bring to their learning.

43. The very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has been maintained since the last inspection and is a strong feature of the school. The school's overall provision for pupils' spiritual development is promoted effectively throughout the whole curriculum and through the people, relationships, ethos and culture of the school. For example, there is the chance for pupils to express their feelings in artwork of a very high quality. In the acts of collective worship, which meet statutory requirements, pupils have the opportunity for prayer and reflection, and to explore and share beliefs. The school makes many contacts with local churches and invites their workers to share in assemblies and

³ During Circle Time pupils discuss a wide range of personal and general issues. All pupils agree that no interruptions should occur and only one person at a time will speak. Respect for other pupils' views will occur at all times and, therefore, pupils feel confident that they can talk with ease and free from any form of interference of interruption from other children.

lessons. Regular reward assemblies help pupils to acquire a sense of self-worth. Through their positive examples, teachers are very good at providing opportunities for pupils to consider the beliefs, values and views of others. However, because of the limited amount of time devoted to the teaching of religious education at Key Stage 2, the impact of this subject on pupils' spiritual development is not as strong as it could be.

44. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. The understanding of right and wrong is reinforced consistently throughout the day, as are good manners and the school's positive code of conduct. In this way, teachers create a positive environment for learning. The school rejects bullying, cheating, deceit, and cruelty in a very positive way. Although the school has few pupils from different ethnic minority backgrounds, racial harmony is promoted in a positive way and through the general ethos of the school. Staff encourage pupils to be responsible and tell the truth. They have high expectations of pupils' conduct and self-discipline and cultivate a positive climate of tolerance and support. The staff show pupils respect, and this is clearly and consistently reciprocated. They encourage pupils to examine their feelings, their responses to situations and the implications of their actions. The school places emphasis during assemblies, for example, on pupils taking responsibility for their actions and caring for others. The school is a sensitive and caring place which provides a secure and happy learning environment where everyone's feelings are respected. Some of the classes experience opportunities to offer views and opinions as they discuss moral issues in circle time.

45. Provision for pupils' social development is very good. There are regular opportunities to develop collaborative and team skills in a wide range of lessons, such as ICT, science, and design and technology. Topic work in Years 5 and 6, for example, enables pupils to work within different groups with one of five adults. These differing contexts and social groupings not only promote pupils' social skills, but also contribute positively to their learning. The good range of extra-curricular activities, school visits and residential visits experienced in Years 3, 4 and 5 also help pupils to learn how to relate to one another in other social contexts. Pupils are also taught to think about others. In a whole-school assembly, for example, one of the governors raised pupils' awareness of the needs of others who are less fortunate than they. Money saved from the sale of crisps is used to support a young African girl. The staff provide pupils with very positive role models. This has an impact on the overall atmosphere in school, which is very calm.

46. The school's provision for cultural education is promoted successfully through lessons, particularly in subjects such as art and design, music and history, which raise pupils' awareness of different cultures and the lives of others. The appreciation of world music is promoted in lessons, assemblies and extra-curricular activities. There has been an Art Week in which the pupils have experienced and enjoyed the ideas, support and expertise of a number of visiting artists. The school recognises and promotes values of its own heritage and draws upon its immediate locality to support learning in science, history and geography. Very good provision for ICT, particularly in Key Stage 2, helps pupils to appreciate the technical culture of today's society. Visitors to the school make a significant contribution to the pupils' cultural development, as do visits to, for example, a mosque or synagogue as part of a comparative study of religions. The current study of light in science in Years 3 and 4 incorporates the celebration of Diwali. However, more could be done to raise pupils' awareness of the multi-cultural nature of contemporary British society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

47. The school provides a very caring environment. It takes pride in valuing every individual child and striving to meet individual needs. There are extremely supportive relationships between pupils and both teaching and support staff. The careful attention given to the upkeep and presentation of the accommodation, including exciting displays of pupils' work, helps to raise pupils' self-esteem. A measure of the care and attention the school gives to its pupils is the introduction of a breakfast club which is available each morning for pupils who do not eat before they come to school. From the very strong base of care reported at the last inspection, there have been further improvements in the standards of care, which are now very high and a particular strength of the school.

48. Child protection procedures are very good. The school is extremely conscientious about monitoring children who are at risk, and regularly reports concerns to social services. The school provides a safe, secure environment. There are regular risk assessments, and no health and safety concerns were identified during the inspection. There are regular fire drills, and pupils who need first aid are looked after carefully.

49. The school has very good procedures to encourage good behaviour and discipline. Teachers apply the school's policy consistently, and most teachers are extremely skilled at managing pupils' behaviour, which helps to ensure that the environment within the school is conducive to learning. Rewards are given to pupils, regardless of age, gender or ability, for hard work, improvements in standards of behaviour and making good progress. Most pupils want to please their teachers, and the school's range of rewards motivates pupils to do well. Sanctions are used more rarely; occasionally, very difficult pupils have been excluded for short periods of time. The school has very good procedures to prevent bullying and harassment. The school takes all perceived incidents of bullying seriously and investigates them thoroughly.

50. Procedures to monitor attendance are satisfactory. Most parents ring the school on the first morning of absence, but if a parent has not rung, the school tries to make contact by telephone. The headteacher also makes enquiries when he sees parents in the playground. However, many parents are difficult to contact and the unauthorised absence rate is just above the national average. When the school is very concerned about a pupil's lack of attendance, the school makes contact with the educational welfare officer who tries to encourage parents to send their children to school.

51. Action plans and individual education plans are well drawn up to support pupils with special educational needs. Teachers frequently remind pupils of their targets, especially those set for behaviour. Teachers ensure that pupils are well organised in their work and

belongings, in order to foster better levels of independence. Teachers have high expectations for work and behaviour. All teams assess the work of their pupils with special educational needs well, because of the expert guidance of the specialists in the school. This enables the pupils to succeed at an appropriate rate and level.

52. The monitoring of pupils' personal development is satisfactory, but the procedures are very informal and could be improved. Unless a pupil has particular behavioural problems, few records are kept of pupils' personal development. The school does not keep copies of the reports which it sends to parents each year and so teachers are unable to refer back to see what progress pupils have made. Nevertheless, teachers know their pupils very well and provide appropriate support and guidance which help pupils in their personal development.

53. Procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' academic performance are satisfactory, as they were in the last inspection, but there is room for further improvement. The assessment coordinator has worked hard to provide a detailed analysis and interpretation of national test results at Key Stage 2. This is informative in that it analyses strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning. On the basis of this analysis, teachers address specific areas of weakness within English and mathematics. A simpler, but nevertheless useful, analysis has been made of results at Key Stage 1. However, the results of the school's own assessments of pupils' attainment in the year groups which do not take statutory tests provide a confusing picture and are not consistent with the assessments of pupils' attainment in the national tests. The picture gained from the school's assessments shows, for example, that pupils in Year 4 are attaining lower standards than they attained when they were in Year 2. This is clearly not an accurate picture, and means that teachers do not have an accurate idea of how much progress pupils are making as they move from one year to the next. It also provides an inaccurate basis on which to group pupils into teaching sets for English and mathematics or on which to base targets for future achievement. The school needs to reappraise and simplify its procedures in order to provide a clearer and more accurate record of pupils' attainment as they move through the school in order to help teachers with their planning and with the organisation of the curriculum.

54. Procedures for assessing pupils in subjects other than English and mathematics are largely informal although, because the teachers work well together as teams, the lines of communication between staff are good in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. The teachers know their pupils well, and the standard of marking is good and informs pupils of what they need to do in order to improve. These factors enable teachers to set work at an appropriate level for the pupils. Some teachers keep detailed records of pupils' attainments, and are starting to set individual learning targets in order to help pupils make further progress in their learning, but the practice is not yet consistent through the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

55. The school works very hard to sustain its very good relationships with parents. Informal contact is very good, and many parents visit school regularly to speak to teachers or support staff. The headteacher continues to make a point of talking to parents in the playground at the beginning and end of the school day. Parents report that the school is very easy to approach should they have problems or questions to ask. The few parents who attended the parents' meeting and responded to the questionnaire were delighted with the quality of education offered by the school. They were saddened by the apathy shown by many parents. For a significant number of parents education is not their first priority. The school works hard to support parents in difficulties, who are grateful for the help the school provides for them and for their children.

56. Parents report that their children like school. The children are expected to work hard and make good progress. Parents appreciate the good teaching and feel the school is well led and managed. The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views of the school. Parents have no particular concerns about the quality of education offered by the school.

57. The school provides parents with good-quality, cheerful leaflets to supplement the prospectus. These leaflets reflect the positive atmosphere of the school. There is a sensible home-school agreement. The governors' annual report to parents has improved since the previous inspection, but it is still somewhat dry and many sections are very brief. Parents are able to discuss their children's progress at any time, and there are two formal parents' evenings each year. Parents are pleased with the quality of information they receive about their children's progress. However, the inspection team was unable to comment on the quality of the reports parents receive about their children's progress, as the school does not keep copies in pupils' files, and records had been deleted from the computer. This practice is unsatisfactory.

58. A significant number of parents find it difficult to make a contribution to their children's learning at home. To compensate for this, the school runs a well-attended homework club where older pupils are able to complete their homework in an informal setting. Pupils work independently, but adults are always available to offer support. Parents value these arrangements, which are helping their children to make progress.

59. The school recognises that many parents need guidance and support in order for them to help their children and provides various opportunities to help them in this. A parent-partnership group is run each year that promotes early reading, mathematics and ICT. Parents are able to get accredited qualifications from North Cheshire College. A number of reliable parents offer valuable help in the classroom, and many more offer help with school visits. An active parents' association provides support for the school and raises funds which are used for the benefit of the pupils.

60. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept fully informed of their children's progress and are consulted when necessary. Many support their children by attending meetings and with homework. The school has recently prepared very clear, informative new leaflets to aid parents' understanding of the problems and procedures. The school's efforts to involve parents have a positive impact on pupils' learning.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

61. All of the positive features regarding the school's leadership and management which were noted at the time of the last inspection have been maintained. The leadership and management provided by the headteacher are very good, and he is very well supported by the deputy and assistant headteachers. The three of them share a commitment to the same values and educational approach, which seeks to maintain a good breadth to the curriculum and to ensure that all pupils are fully included. As a senior management team, they reflect carefully on what the school is offering, are open to new ideas, but also have the courage to pursue different directions if they feel these are in the best interests of the pupils. Two good examples, of areas in which the school has decided to operate differently from most schools, are seen in the management of the curriculum and the school's use of its training days. The school continues to plan the curriculum in the afternoons around topics. The arrangements allow subjects to be developed in greater depth and, through the many cross-curricular links, pupils can see purpose and meaning in what they are asked to do. Last year, the school decided to group its five days for in-service training into one block, and ran a week-long course for staff to improve their skills in ICT. As with arrangements for the curriculum, this gave staff the time to learn new skills, without having to fit their training into the pressures of

daily life. The experience was enjoyed by all, and the pupils have benefited because of the increased enthusiasm and expertise of the teachers in this area, which was previously recognised as an area for further development.

62. Management structures are good. The headteacher is extremely well organised and management systems run smoothly and unobtrusively. The coordinators for each key stage have a secure understanding of their roles and have a positive impact on planning, helping to improve standards and dealing with any problems which occur in their respective areas of responsibility. New staff have been integrated successfully, and are supported well by the more experienced teachers. Groups of teachers work together very well, and the collaborative work in Years 5 and 6 is particularly successful in providing well planned work and helping pupils to make very good progress. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and subject coordinators fulfil most aspects of their role well. The assessment coordinator has worked hard to produce very clear, detailed and helpful analyses of national test results, but the school recognises the need to review its own assessment procedures in order to gain a clearer picture of pupils' progress as they move through the school.

63. Overall, the school evaluates its own performance well. Targets to improve teachers' performance have been established, focusing on the school's identified areas for improvement for the current year, ICT and writing, along with a professional development element personal to each individual teacher. The monitoring of teaching and learning by senior staff, and particularly the headteacher, has led to improvements in teaching and learning. Members of staff evaluate the teaching of other colleagues informally by virtue of the organisation and timetable arrangements for topic work. However, not enough opportunities are provided for subject coordinators to monitor within their subject areas, and this aspect is unsatisfactory. National test results are analysed carefully and the information is used to identify weaknesses in English and mathematics. The school generates a very good system of support for newly qualified teachers by assigning an experienced mentor and providing appropriate training and opportunities for them to observe good practice. The headteacher also monitors their classroom practice. The school's support helps them to become effective teachers.

64. The school's development planning is very good. The headteacher and senior staff have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and devise appropriate action plans to bring about improvement. The effectiveness of the school's leadership is seen in the very good range of improvements which have occurred since the last inspection. The school has not only maintained the strengths noted in that inspection, but has improved in many areas and is now an even better school than it was. The school's response to its previous key issues was good. Priority has been given to improving standards in pupils' reading. Evidence of the effectiveness of the measures implemented by the school is seen in the way the school's results in English have improved at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 since the last inspection. Arrangements for pupils taught in the Speech and Language Unit are much better than they were and are now very good. The unit is an important feature of the school, which enables pupils with particular difficulties to become very well integrated into the life of the school. The governors' annual report now fulfils statutory requirements.

65. The headteacher's leadership has led to other improvements. Attention has been given to improving standards of behaviour, and the improvements noted at the time of the last inspection have continued as a result of consistent application of new procedures. Considerable investment has been made in resources for ICT. New technology is now integrated well into most areas of the curriculum, and pupils' ICT skills are much better than they were. Problems caused by the open-plan layout of the school buildings have been rectified, and, at Key Stage 2, the school now has a good balance of enclosed or semi-enclosed teaching areas, with larger communal areas which are used to good effect.

Attention has been given to the security of the building, which has helped to cut down vandalism and unwanted intrusion. The recent addition of the Nursery unit is seen as a vitally important improvement to give children a better preparation for starting school. The quality of the teaching, and consequently pupils' learning, is better than it was. There is a much higher percentage of very good and excellent teaching than before. Although results in 2001 were not as good as in 2000, the school's results have improved markedly since the last inspection, and, in the three-year period from 1997 to 2000, the school was the 55th most improved school in the country. The headteacher has been very successful in building a cooperative, hard-working team of teachers and support staff who are fully committed to the school and the needs of the pupils. Their good team spirit and positive attitudes show that there continues to be very good capacity for further improvement.

66. The coordinator for special educational needs is expert, thorough and knowledgeable and has improved the leadership of this aspect of the school's work since the last inspection. She has re-organised the paperwork, practice and expectations in the school, very effectively and has already begun appropriate action planning for the introduction of the new Code of Practice. New software is now in use to support the writing of individual education and behaviour plans. Many pupils in the school need support of varying degrees, and the coordinator provides very good guidance to teachers and support staff about preparing action plans and how to be flexible and imaginative in their approaches. Her leadership has had a positive impact on the progress made by pupils with special educational needs.

67. The inspection of this school included a focused view of how effectively teaching assistants are managed and trained to contribute to the teaching and learning of literacy and mathematics. The school has a good number of well-trained and very effective support staff. They are deployed effectively by the headteacher, generally being assigned to help in one class so that they become familiar with the class teacher's requirements and have the opportunity to get to know the pupils. Their roles and responsibilities are set out clearly, and the teaching assistants are well aware of them. Day-to-day management of teaching assistants is delegated to the teachers who work very closely with them and involve them in their daily planning, evaluation of lessons and assessment of pupils. Various training opportunities are provided for teaching assistants. Some of these are for individual assistants who have responsibilities for providing additional specific help for identified groups of pupils for literacy and mathematics, others are for all of the teaching assistants. Recently, for example, all teaching assistants participated in the week-long training programme for ICT. All benefited greatly from this; they raised their own levels of confidence and expertise, and this has enabled them to be of greater help to pupils in their learning. Because they are considered to be a very important and integral part of the staff team and are managed effectively, the teaching assistants not only feel valued, but also feel that they have an important part to play in pupils' education.

68. The governors fulfil their statutory obligations well. They are not only supportive of the school but are genuinely interested and recognise the school's strengths and weaknesses. They take an active interest in different aspects of the school's work. Many know where the school is heading and are very aware of the needs and dynamics of the school because they are actively involved in the daily life of the school as valued members of staff. Through their links to different areas of the curriculum, governors are developing a greater understanding of how the school operates. The whole governing body is responsible for monitoring the progress of pupils on the school's register of special educational needs. The governors are keen to undertake specific training, which is available to them. The governors' involvement has a positive impact on the management of the school, and the way they act as critical friends helps to provide a sense of direction for the school.

69. The school's finances are managed very well, as is the school administration. The school clerk contributes effectively to the orderly and smooth running of the school. The governors' finance committee keeps careful control of the school's budget, which is used wisely to improve resources, facilities and opportunities which promote pupils' learning. For example, there has been significant expenditure on resources for ICT which is now used extensively to support teaching and learning in many subjects. The headteacher is ably supported by governors in securing specific grants for designated purposes and very good use is made of such grants to promote pupils' learning. The school has recently made a successful bid to receive a generous grant which will pay for the development of the school grounds within the near future. The school has used its budget well to increase staffing levels, which are currently generous and, as a result, enable the school to maintain good levels of support and continuity of teaching and learning. Other services are thoughtfully and wisely employed to ensure that the school's budget and other funds are used to maximum effect and that best value is achieved when purchasing goods or services.

70. Staffing is very good; there is a generous number of well-qualified, hard-working teaching staff, complemented by a good number of very effective support staff. The school has two members of staff without a class responsibility. These teachers provide extremely effective support and also reduce the need to employ supply staff. The high staffing ratio helps pupils who come into school with very low levels of attainment and poorly developed learning skills to achieve very well.

71. The accommodation is good. The school has made significant improvements to its quality. Open-plan classrooms have been screened off to make individual teaching areas, but shared areas still exist and are used very well by teachers in Years 5 and 6. Some of the classes for infant pupils are housed in mobile classrooms and this limits some activities. It also isolates staff from the main body of the school. The newly established Nursery is an important addition to the school, which is already having a positive impact on preparing young children to enter the Reception class. The school is extremely clean and well cared for, and the caretaker does a sterling job. The standard of display is excellent, reflecting the high-quality of artwork produced by the pupils.

72. The good level of resources supports pupils' learning well. The school has a very good number of modern computers, with appropriate software. Although some of the books are dated, there is a good library which is used well. There are very good resources for practical subjects such as science, art and design, and design and technology.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

73. In order to improve the quality of education provided and the standards pupils achieve, the governors, headteacher and staff should work together to:

- (1) Improve standards in and provision for religious education* by:
 - devoting more time to teaching religious education;
 - ensuring that all staff are familiar with the local agreed syllabus and are aware of what they are expected to teach.(Paragraphs: 12, 36, 40, 16-162)

- (2) Refine the school's existing procedures for assessment and monitoring pupils' progress by:
 - ensuring that the procedures for tracking pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science are simplified and provide a more accurate picture of pupils' progress through the school;
 - ensuring that there are appropriate procedures for assessing pupils' progress in foundation subjects;
 - keeping copies of and making better use of pupils' annual reports to parents.(Paragraphs 5, 31, 52-54, 57, 62, 108, 116, 122, 130, 136, 158)

In addition to the key issues for improvement, the school should consider the following areas for improvement:

- Provide more opportunities for subject coordinators to monitor teaching and learning within their subject areas. (Paragraphs: 63, 122, 130, 136, 158)
- Developing a greater independence in the pupils; (Paragraphs: 22, 28)
- Reviewing the allocation of teaching time; (Paragraphs: 33, 36, 37, 120, 151, 156)

* *These issues have already been identified as priorities in the school's development plan.*

THE WORK OF THE SPEECH AND LANGUAGE UNIT

74. The Speech and Language Unit provides very good support for the pupils who are referred to its specialist care. The school's provision for these pupils has improved significantly since the last inspection. At present, there are places for 15 pupils to attend the Unit, from ages 5 to 11, but no pupils were below Year 3, at the time of the inspection. Pupils are referred from schools around the area and attend daily.

75. A strong, very effective, expert team of teachers and support assistants, including a nursery nurse and a speech therapist, work with the pupils in the Language Unit. They plan and teach as a close-knit team and, because they know the pupils' needs very well, they provide very effective teaching and support which enables the pupils to make very good progress. The team leader is an excellent teacher, who believes, wholeheartedly, in the integration of the pupils who attend the Unit into the full life of the school. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are taught literacy and numeracy in the Unit in the mornings, working alongside pupils with special educational needs from the mainstream school; they are fully integrated back into classes for topic work with their peers in the afternoons. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are integrated with mainstream classes in the morning, whilst working on topic work in the Unit with other pupils with special educational needs in the afternoons. These arrangements work extremely well, providing very good support and attention which meets the needs of these pupils, whilst helping them to integrate with other pupils. During the inspection, for example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 from the Unit were assimilated seamlessly into groups of other pupils, working, for example, on making buggies with electrical wiring, making sequences for traffic lights, or experimenting with different electrical circuits, and making very good progress.

76. The team from the Unit liaises very well with the special educational needs coordinator, to decide which mainstream pupils should work with those from the Unit, and what work will be provided. Both leaders are fully committed to the process of inclusion, for the benefit of all pupils. Both leaders keep excellent records of their pupils; those in the Unit have their own assessment book which is filled in by the staff daily, in order to ensure that they keep up to date with the full educational plan. Books are reviewed each week by the whole team, to enable them to stay on track with the work to be set and to help the pupils to improve.

77. Because the Unit is now so well linked with the work and life of the school, it has become a central feature of the way the support works within the whole school. Pupils of all abilities are very well served by the ethos of inclusion and success. The social benefits are apparent for all concerned, as pupils mix freely with each other, with no fear of ridicule. Indeed, pupils in mainstream classes were observed being very helpful to pupils who were having a problem with expressing themselves, by providing them with vocabulary or an idea. The pupils' attitudes are very good, because they know what is expected of them. They work hard to be attentive, even though they often find it difficult. Very good relationships and a quiet, opportune word, often defuse a difficult situation. Expectations are very high, but realistic, and are based upon the team's knowledge and understanding of the individuals; the pupils rise to the challenge.

78. The physical area of the Unit is used very well, and the environment is stimulating and colourful, with pupils' work displayed in an attractive and sensitive way. However, the room is rather narrow and, sometimes, one-to-one sessions are squashed for space; a little more space would enable small group work to be carried out even more effectively. The team leader has set up effective, efficient systems to ensure that pupils practise organisational skills, alongside academic work, and they must learn to be responsible for their own books and papers. Very good support structures, relationships and very well planned activities ensure that pupils have the confidence to make mistakes and succeed in work, as well as on a personal level. Thus, standards are sufficiently high, given the prior attainment of each of the pupils, and progress is generally very good, academically, socially and emotionally.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	64
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	45

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	3	14	34	11	2	0	0
Percentage	5	22	53	17	3	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)	13	308
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A	113

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	18
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	116

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

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	13

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.2
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
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	22	15	37

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	20	20	21
	Girls	12	14	14
	Total	32	34	35
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	86 (58)	92 (65)	95 (79)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	20	21	19
	Girls	13	14	13
	Total	33	35	32
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	89 (63)	95 (79)	86 (81)
	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	18	16	34

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	11	9	16
	Girls	10	8	14
	Total	21	17	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	62 (68)	50 (71)	91 (92)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	7	10	12
	Girls	6	8	10
	Total	13	18	22
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	38 (30)	53 (59)	67 (62)
	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	2
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	12
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	292
Any other minority ethnic group	2

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	7	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)	13.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19
Average class size	26

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	176

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26
Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	20
Number of pupils per FTE adult	13

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	632 078
Total expenditure	630 761
Expenditure per pupil	1 952
Balance brought forward from previous year	40 432
Balance carried forward to next year	41 749

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1.5
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.5

Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	323
Number of questionnaires returned	40

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	68	30	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	69	26	5	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	63	28	5	5	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	63	30	3	3	3
The teaching is good.	75	20	0	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	40	50	5	5	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	73	23	5	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	65	35	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	43	45	5	8	0
The school is well led and managed.	68	23	5	0	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	60	33	3	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	58	25	13	5	0

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

79. Education for children in the Foundation Stage is provided in a new, separate, twenty-six place Nursery setting, where children attend part time, and in a Reception class. A small number of older Reception-aged children are also catered for in a mixed-age class with pupils from Year 1. The Nursery provision is very new and had only been open for approximately four weeks at the time of the inspection. The school has been chosen to take part in a new local project, designed to support young children and their families. The team in the Nursery comprises a teacher and a classroom assistant, who work very well together. Although there are plans to have mothers and students to help in the Nursery, it is currently under-staffed, making it very difficult, at times, to meet the needs of all of the children, especially when one of the adults needs to give individual attention to a child, leaving the other adult to deal with a very large group of children, many of whom are still learning to cope with their new surroundings. Provision for children in the mixed-age class is good. The teacher plans very carefully to ensure that learning tasks are differentiated for the two age groups, and the presence of a very capable teaching assistant, in addition to the teacher, ensures good adult supervision and teaching for both groups of pupils.

80. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good, with some strong features. Despite this, because of the very low level of skills of most children when they start school, only a very small percentage of children are likely to attain some of the Early Learning Goals⁴ by the time they start Year 1. Most children are working below, or well below, this level in most areas. The results of the children tested at the beginning of the Reception year show that only three were reaching expected levels for their age group, and the rest were below, or considerably below, the levels expected in all areas of their development. Few children have any significant pre-school experiences before they start school. Children with special educational needs are identified at an early stage and are given good support for their needs. In the Nursery, the teacher has already liaised with the speech therapist from the Speech and Language Unit about a few of the children who are having difficulties. In the Reception class, children have individual action and educational plans, some for academic reasons and some for behavioural reasons.

Personal, social and emotional development

81. Although the teaching designed to promote children's personal, social and emotional development is very good, standards in this area of learning are well below what is expected for the age group, and few children will achieve the Early Learning Goals by the time they start Year 1. When they start school, many children are very immature for their age. Progress is slow, but perceptible. Because of the patience, care and continual efforts of the staff to promote all aspects of the children's personal development, good attitudes to work and personal care are emerging slowly.

⁴ The Early Learning Goals are a set of standards which it is expected that most children will achieve by the end of the Foundation Stage. They are set out into six areas of learning: personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; creative development; physical development.

82. In the Nursery, most children separate from their parents and carers quite well, although some still have comforters or need considerable help with toileting. A few are very confident, want to explore, and show an increasing independence in selecting and carrying out some activities. However, many others need support to move away and to post their names in the box, or begin to play. One or two put on their own coats successfully and are willing to help others with arms or zips. Because their language skills are poorly developed, many try to communicate with body language, and most lack the skills to converse in sentences, or to express themselves adequately to other children.

83. In the Reception class, children have been in school a while longer and are more eager to participate. However, most cannot speak clearly, and respond only with one-word answers. They are unable to talk freely about their feelings, experiences or homes. The adults provide good role models. They are always respectful of each other and courteous with the children, who learn, slowly, to follow their example. Staff provide as many opportunities as possible for the children to share and think about others, for example, when playing with water or sand. Because the children come with such under-developed social skills, there is a constant struggle to teach tolerance, maintain attention or develop quiet listening. In the Reception class, it was possible to see these skills slowly developing.

84. A very strong feature is the management of the children's behaviour, which can be very challenging at times. In the Nursery, the team has worked very hard, and successfully, at establishing good relationships and routines to ensure that the children feel safe and confident to learn. During the inspection, children were making noticeable progress in settling in and understanding the routines and conventions of the classroom. In the Reception, the teachers have devised many strategies to deal with children who find it difficult to be well self-controlled. A very good example of this was seen in a physical development lesson in the hall. One or two children were not behaving well, but the teacher and her classroom assistant persevered with their approach, and the children calmed down and worked well, with more self-discipline than before. All of the staff, in both Nursery and Reception, expect a high standard of behaviour. This ensures that the children are secure, and know what is expected of them, which helps them to begin to think for themselves and make decisions about what to do and how to behave.

Communication, language and literacy

85. The quality of teaching and learning in the area of communication, language and literacy is good. Children make noticeable progress but, because of the poor language skills with which they start school, few are likely to achieve the Early Learning Goals by the time they start Year 1.

86. In both the Nursery and Reception classes, children enjoy listening to stories. In the Nursery, few children offer comments, but confidence is growing, especially during the reading sessions, where they are beginning to respond to the adults. They enjoy 'reading' books on their own. The staff provide many opportunities to speak about a variety of things, such as putting clothes in order according to their size, what happens at the baby clinic or talking about colours when threading beads. However, many children do not know their colours, and some do not know words such as 'bigger/biggest', 'smaller/smallest'. Snack times are used profitably to introduce different vocabulary. The staff promote listening skills well, insisting on quiet when someone is speaking. The children are offered many opportunities to practise their pencil skills, to trace, to colour or use stencils, for instance. About three successfully write their own names, quite legibly, but most make marks, indicating an emerging understanding that print has meaning.

87. Children in the Reception are beginning to understand the structure of books and know that books tell stories as well as give information. The teachers link activities well to reinforce pupils' language development. During the inspection, for example, a story about the sinking of a boat was discussed very well, then used later in the week as a basis for work on mathematical and creative development and to develop knowledge and understanding of the world. In this way, the children practise the skills they need in many different ways and make good progress. At the time of the inspection, no children in the Reception class could read, but a few were starting to recognise the initial sounds of words. However, their basic lack of vocabulary and listening skills still pose problems for their teachers, even though these are practised with regularity and vigour. There is a strong emphasis on the development of communication skills, self-esteem and confidence, in order to build an effective base for learning in the next stage of education and the staff work hard to achieve this. Singing games and counting rhymes are used well to extend mathematical and sequencing vocabulary. Some children write words quite well, but most have poor letter formation. The teachers provide plenty of opportunities for the children to practise on white-boards, and this strategy is effective, as children like the fact that they can have several attempts and rub out the ones they do not like.

Mathematical development

88. The quality of teaching and learning in the area of mathematical development is good. The staff work hard to offer as many opportunities as possible for children to use mathematical ideas and vocabulary. Children start school with little knowledge of singing games and nursery rhymes, and with very little mathematical understanding or language, such as 'above', 'below', 'biggest'. Despite good progress, few are likely to achieve the Early Learning Goals by the time they start Year 1.

89. In the Nursery, the staff develop children's concepts of number through a good variety of number rhymes and counting activities. The children are beginning to enjoy singing and counting, but many are unable to count accurately without a great deal of support from the adults working with them. Some children, however, remember and recognise which number they have on their house. In the Reception, many children still cannot count reliably as they forget when counting on their own. They find it hard to continue patterns of beads or counters accurately. However, many children are starting to write numbers to eight well, forming them in the correct way. Some children recognise simple shapes, such as square and circle. Older children in the Reception are quite accurate in their predictions about weight and are able to compare items of shopping that will be heavier or lighter, even though not all talk of them in those terms. Some predict well, for instance, that the balance will go up or down.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

90. Children start school with little knowledge and understanding of the world. The teaching of this area of learning is good. Children are given many opportunities to develop, and achieve well from a very low base. Some are likely to achieve the Early Learning Goals in this area by the end of the Reception, but most will not.

91. The staff in the Nursery skilfully guide children's play, providing them with a wide variety of opportunities which enable them to discover the world around them. Many of the children have not had opportunities to explore using simple equipment before, and they learn to enjoy simple activities such as drawing and painting, making shape pictures, sticking and gluing. When exploring with cutting and using scissors, there have been one or two instances where children were cutting inappropriately, such as a skirt, or the teacher's hair. They develop curiosity about the new games and experiences, and are becoming more adventurous in their play. They are beginning to concentrate well on completing jigsaws, and

construct cars and buildings, using blocks and kits. The children are becoming curious about the world and interested in how things work.

92. Children's curiosity develops well through the Reception class, and they build well on their experiences. Some are able to describe what they are making in play dough, with support from the assistant, and others play cooperatively with construction kits, or are able to talk about their work, albeit with limited vocabulary. Through work on the topic of 'ourselves', they are developing an understanding of how human beings develop as they look back at themselves as babies and compare how much they have grown. The children are developing their skills in ICT very well. A computer is always available, and children use it very confidently, alone, watching the screen carefully and using the mouse accurately.

Physical development

93. The teaching provided for pupils' physical development is good. The teachers plan appropriate tasks and teach them well, so that all children make good progress. Children's physical achievements are better than in other areas of learning, and several children are likely to reach the Early Learning Goals by the time they start Year 1.

94. Children enjoy their outdoor play in the Nursery. The staff plan and organise the activities well, so that there is enough space for children to play without too much crowding. There are sufficient big toys, hoops, balls and other equipment, for children to explore well. The staff teach children to play games and sing songs, such as 'The farmer's in his den', which help the children to learn to play together. The children enjoy singing and are learning the words quickly and well. The staff plan to take children to the main hall on a regular basis, when they have settled in a little more.

95. In the Reception, children are confident in the sessions held in the hall and move freely into spaces. During the inspection, a very good lesson was based upon the movement of balloons and bubbles, and the teacher gave very good examples using bubble mixture and a helium-filled balloon. When they sat to listen to the music, thinking about their movements, many spontaneously moved hands in the air and were graceful and discerning in their movements. An excellent session developed, as they stood to use their whole bodies, indicating a growing maturity in their levels of understanding. This experience was carefully planned by the teacher, but the children's response was even better than she had hoped. Her very good management of the children meant that all groups were able to benefit from this experience. Dressing and undressing was also undertaken with the minimum of fuss and support.

Creative development

96. The teaching for children's creative development is very good. As for other areas, the starting base is very low. Many children cannot hold a pencil or a brush, and have not had opportunities to colour, stick, paint or draw, before they come to school. The teachers provide very good opportunities for the children to develop their creative abilities through a variety of tasks, including exploration of colour, texture and three-dimensional structures, and construction using different types of kits and materials. As a result, the children make very good progress. In some aspects of their creative development, many children achieve standards expected for their age group, and a few will exceed the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Reception, because they are encouraged to use their imaginations well.

97. In both the Nursery and the Reception, the teachers start to develop children's ability to draw. During the inspection, children drew themselves quite accurately, and the use of mirrors helped them to develop their powers of observation. They mixed paint to the colour of

their own flesh tone, and many paid particular attention to painting their hair. Careful collage work of teddies in different types of materials, and folded paper legs and arms on people, indicate good creative development. Children make very good progress in combining different media and selecting from a limited amount of material. The teachers show the children how they can use new materials and this helps them to learn well. During the inspection, children in the Reception designed and learnt how to make a diverse range of boats, and showed great anticipation as they waited to test them to see if they would float or sink.

ENGLISH

98. In the national tests at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2001, the school's results were below the national average in reading and close to the average in writing. When compared with the results of schools in similar contexts they were above average in reading and well above average in writing. Although there have been fluctuations, the results have improved at a faster rate than the national trend and are significantly better than those at the time of the last inspection. From the evidence available from this inspection, pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 remains below expectations in speaking and listening, but has improved in reading and writing and is now in line with the national expectations. Pupils of all abilities make good progress, and levels of achievement are being raised as a result of new initiatives to teach reading skills and a systematic phonic programme to improve spelling.

99. The national test results at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2001 were well below the national average, but were average in comparison to schools in similar contexts. These results were lower than those in 2000 but, even so, the progress since the last inspection has been marked, and results have improved at a faster rate than the national trend and are significantly better than those at the time of the last inspection. The inspection findings show that there has been considerable improvement in reading and writing, with the older and more able pupils achieving good standards and making good progress. Overall, pupils' levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 are in line with the national expectations in reading and writing. In speaking and listening, they are below the national expectation. The main reasons for the improvements are the ways in which the school has targeted reading and, in particular, writing, implemented the Literacy Strategy and given additional time to extended writing activities outside the daily literacy sessions. Another contributory factor to the improvement in standards is the way the school has used its analysis of its National Curriculum test results. The analysis at Key Stage 2 indicates that the weakest areas in English are pupils' ability to interpret language and their writing technique. The school is continuing to target pupils' writing techniques and, towards the end of Key Stage 2, abler pupils are beginning to develop personalised writing styles. Given the fact that pupils' literacy skills when they start school are poor and there is an above average percentage of pupils with special educational needs, pupils' achievements are good, and they are making good progress.

100. Overall, standards in speaking and listening are below average. In both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, pupils with average or below average ability have unsatisfactory speaking and listening skills. Many pupils, including those with special educational needs, have difficulty in maintaining their concentration and in listening to the explanations offered by teachers and other pupils. Too often, pupils talk across each other and, when given an opportunity to speak, do so only briefly. Abler and older pupils, however, are articulate and often respond to teachers at length. Standards in speaking are below average because pupils have a restricted vocabulary. Nevertheless, they are improving because of the opportunities for pupils to read out loud and to participate in whole-class discussions and drama.

101. Most pupils read competently, and pupils with special educational needs also make progress commensurate with their ability levels. The school has a number of reading

strategies that are helping pupils in positive ways to improve their reading skills. Pupils' appreciation of the structure and characteristics of stories is consolidated by the use of the Big Book approach, along with group reading, when pupils read out aloud, and partnered reading, when older and abler pupils are able to enthuse those who are less fluent. All these approaches contribute towards pupils' understanding that they must read for meaning rather than mechanically. Pupils make good progress in developing their reading skills. The best read with expression and are able to anticipate the text well because they understand the rules of punctuation.

102. Pupils' progress in reading is reinforced by the way they are taught, for example, in literacy sessions in Key Stage 1, to appreciate how stories develop and how to make predictions about endings. Whole-class discussions at the beginning of the literacy sessions enable pupils to look critically at texts and to learn how language works and can be used for different purposes. Pupils at the beginning of Key Stage 1 become more confident to work out for themselves the structure of new words, as a result of their increasing competence in recognising the letters of the alphabet and common simple sounds. Pupils' interest in reading stories is also kindled by the work they do in trying to understand the role played by characters in stories. Most pupils, irrespective of their ability, are keen to read and are encouraged to do so regularly to the class teachers. Pupils are using their knowledge of phonics to good effect and can decode unfamiliar words with increasing confidence.

103. In Key Stage 2, most pupils are developing greater confidence in reading. The introduction of a systematic phonic programme has been effective in improving pupils' ability to read with meaning. In both key stages, the abler pupils read fluently and with expression. They have fully grasped the value of punctuation and, in this way, are able to anticipate the text and to read for meaning. Pupils' reading journals show that they read a good range of books over a period of time; in some cases, the lists are impressive. Care is taken to ensure pupils select books at a level that matches their ability. The range of books now available has been greatly broadened in order to motivate the boys to read more and to raise their standard of fluency as well as their appreciation of books. Pupils make good use of the library and visit it frequently during the day. The library is generally well stocked, but many of the reference books are dated.

104. At the end of Key Stages 1 and 2, the quality of pupils' writing is satisfactory. Older and abler pupils write well and are beginning to develop their own style. Younger pupils in Key Stage 1 are developing confidence in writing sentences, and there are appropriate handwriting activities to help them present their words correctly and neatly. The younger pupils undertake regular handwriting activities to increase their knowledge of letter patterns, sorting words into their right patterns and breaking down words into their respective syllables. Many pupils can sequence three or four sentences accurately. Similarly, the use of the spelling journals, where pupils enter words they misspell in their classwork or homework, ensures that they develop more confidence when writing.

105. In the previous inspection report, the school was criticised for not developing pupils' independence, since the pupils did not check their own spelling errors. The regular practice now in both key stages is to allow pupils to test each other's spelling ability regularly, and this is proving to be of positive benefit. In some cases, older pupils attain very good standards in their ability to spell as many as twenty difficult words, such as 'improbable', 'impossible' and 'uncertainty', at any one time.

106. A constructive range of language activities in both key stages helps pupils to improve and raise the standards of their writing. The quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation is good, and the style is generally consistent throughout the school. Pupils play language games to help them appreciate the importance of using dictionaries. The drafting and re-drafting of work helps pupils in both key stages to understand how to improve on the original and how language can serve so many different purposes. In both key stages, pupils use their word processing skills effectively to improve their writing skills.

107. In writing book reviews, pupils are encouraged to evaluate the plot and the author's purposes, and to express in writing their reasons for liking or disliking the books read. The use of extended texts, including interesting poems, has a beneficial effect in helping to improve pupils' own compositions. Older pupils look at the structure of complex sentences and conditional sentences and, subsequently, they write their own set of sentences. Such activities provide an effective framework for them to develop their own writing styles. Pupils write for different purposes; they write letters, stories, instructions, mini plays, character sketches, poems, their likes and dislikes, short reports, paragraphs for an autobiography and re-write extracts from a Shakespearean play. All of these activities enrich pupils' understanding of language usage and enhance their language experiences in looking at the characteristics of good quality writing.

108. The quality of teaching and learning is good at Key Stage 1 and very good at Key Stage 2. Teachers make good use of purposeful questioning techniques, for example, to elicit pupils' views about the characteristics of a traditional story. They use good models of speech that are of positive benefit to pupils whose overall speech is limited. In many classes, the teacher's clarity of interpretation and explanation is based on good knowledge and understanding and helps pupils gain a good appreciation of how stories develop and of how to make predictions about story endings. Lessons are carefully planned and structured, and pupils fully understand what they need to do. Teacher-led discussion is aimed at extending pupils' appreciation of how language works and how important some words are in maintaining meanings. Regular intervention by the teacher during group-reading activities also helps pupils realise the need to read for meaning. The excellent choice of poems by the teachers, especially for the older pupils, encourages pupils to enjoy poetry and to create their own anthology booklets of poems that they have enjoyed reading. Pupils' positive attitudes contribute to their learning. They enjoy the literacy sessions and most maintain their concentration well. They are improving their speaking and listening skills but, although they respond with enthusiasm, few are able to offer extended responses or are prepared to listen at length to each other's contributions. When pupils are involved in group activities and are left unsupervised whilst the teacher is with another group, their pace of work is slow and their concentration lapses. Teachers make appropriate use of ICT to promote pupils' literacy skills. Pupils enjoy playing language games on the computer. They cooperate with each other and concentrate well on these activities and, as a result, learn well.

109. The subject coordinator has been in charge of English for many years and provides a good lead to other members of staff. She provides staff with detailed assessment schedules and has been involved with the assessment coordinator in analysing and interpreting previous National Curriculum test results. However, the discrepancy between the national test results and teachers' assessments, and the confusing picture given by the school's own assessments in their attempts to track pupils' progress, indicate a need to revise the school's assessment procedures in order to provide a clearer picture of pupils' progress and to help teachers with their planning. Although the school does not follow all aspects of the National Literacy Strategy slavishly, initiatives related to the strategy have been very effective and are helping all pupils to make good progress.

MATHEMATICS

110. In the National Curriculum assessment tests at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2001, the school's results were the same as the national average and were well above the average for similar schools. Almost all pupils reached the nationally expected Level 2, and a quarter achieved the higher Level 3. Standards have improved since the last inspection, at a faster rate than the national trend. The inspection findings show that standards are average by the end of Key Stage 1. Considering the low standards demonstrated by most pupils when they start Key Stage 1, pupils of all abilities make good progress and achieve well.

111. In the National Curriculum assessment tests at the end of Key Stage 2, the school's results were well below the national average, and were below the average for similar schools. Only half of the pupils achieved the nationally expected Level 4 and, of these, a fifth achieved the higher Level 5. Standards in mathematics rose sharply after the last inspection, but have fallen back over the last two years, although they are higher now than they were at the time of the last inspection. The decline in standards over the last two years is puzzling, as the teaching of mathematics is good, pupils' respond positively in their lessons and are keen to learn. The school is providing extra support for identified pupils through the Springboard Mathematics scheme, and the inspection findings show that standards, although still below average, are now better than those indicated by the previous year's results.

112. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils count forwards and backwards in fives and tens to one hundred. They know the term 'multiple' and what it means. Using a Carroll diagram, they can sort numbers accurately into different categories, such as a multiple of 5, less than 50, not a multiple of 5, or more than 50. They are making good progress in identifying the attributes of two-dimensional shapes and are beginning to use the correct mathematical vocabulary to describe the shapes. Pupils know what they must do to improve, as numeracy targets are written in their books. More able pupils are using standard units to measure the length of basic items like pencils.

113. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils identify a wide range of two-dimensional shapes and describe the attributes of the shapes. They are improving their mathematical vocabulary; they describe a square, for example, as a regular quadrilateral. The pupils are making good progress in using mathematical equipment, including protractors. They manipulate numbers well, adding and subtracting numbers which bridge thousands. More able pupils confidently explain their strategies and perform appropriate checks to ensure the accuracy of their answers.

114. The teaching of mathematics is good, and in some cases very good, and pupils learn well. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use a range of questioning techniques to involve pupils in the lessons. Open questioning is used to good effect to challenge pupils to think mathematically. The consistently good teaching at the end of Key Stage 2 has a positive effect on pupils' attainment, despite the large proportion of pupils who have special educational needs. Teachers work collaboratively on planning to ensure all pupils have equality of opportunity. The setting arrangement in Key Stage 2 provides an element of differentiation but, in some lessons, further differentiation is needed to accommodate the wide range of ability within the set and to challenge the more able pupils further. The support assistants in Key Stage 1 provide good levels of support for pupils with special educational needs, allowing them to access the mathematics curriculum and to make good progress.

115. Throughout the school, the pupils' very positive attitudes to the subject contribute to their learning. They enjoy their lessons and respond very well to the teachers because they make the lessons interesting. They support each other in their work and cooperate well in group activities. They are proficient in the use of computer programs, which reinforce their learning. Most pupils make good progress, including a significant number of pupils with special educational needs who are well supported by teachers and teaching assistants. Relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent; they share mutual respect. These good relationships encourage pupils to become actively involved in lessons and remove any fear of failure. Many pupils stated that mathematics was their favourite subject.

116. Pupils use their mathematical skills well in a cross-curricular context. In science, for example, they make accurate measurements in their investigative activities; in geography, they represent data graphically and, in music, they look at musical notation, tempo and rhythm. The teachers make effective use of ICT to support pupils' learning. In a lesson for pupils in Years 5 and 6, for example, the teacher made very effective use of a computer program, projected onto a large screen, to help pupils learn how to use a protractor.

117. The coordinator manages the subject well, ensuring that the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum are fulfilled. The National Numeracy Strategy is used to good effect to improve pupils' attainment. Results of the national tests have been analysed very carefully. Weaknesses have been highlighted and the additional focus given to these aspects has helped pupils to make good progress. However, the school's internal assessments, used to track pupils' progress, present a confusing picture, varying considerably from the results in the national tests at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. The school needs to revise its procedures for keeping track of pupils' progress, so that teachers have a simple and clear picture of where pupils are, and what they need to do to improve. Resources are sufficient to support teaching and learning, but the range of mathematical computer software is good and is used very effectively to promote pupils' learning.

SCIENCE

118. In the 2001 national tests at the end of Year 6, the school's results were very close to the national average and were well above average when compared with similar schools. Most pupils reached the national expectation of Level 4, and over a third achieved the higher than expected Level 5. The school's results have improved significantly since the last inspection, when they were well below the national average; they have improved more than in most schools. At Key Stage 1, the proportion of pupils reaching Level 2 or above, as assessed by their teachers, was below the national average, although this represents an improvement upon the previous year.

119. The overall quality of teaching and learning in science is very good and is the main factor accounting for the rise in standards since the previous inspection. In addition, the school provides a generous amount of time to the subject, with the result that pupils acquire a good understanding of scientific principles. Overall, the inspection findings show that pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, make very good progress throughout the school and that, overall, they achieve above average standards in science by the end of Year 6. Standards by the end of Year 2 are in line with those expected for pupils of their age. Teachers' joint planning and organisational arrangements to provide a stimulating range of activities, particularly in Years 5 and 6, are very good. Staff use an appropriate range of resources to support teaching and learning consistently well. The curriculum for science is very good and has been carefully devised and structured to allow all pupils to develop their scientific thinking. It takes into consideration all abilities in mixed-age classes, so that pupils cover all aspects of science on a two-year rolling programme. The emphasis on practical work and investigative activities is likely to continue the trend of improving standards. Pupils in Year 6 are not given regular science homework, although some is given to reinforce their understanding of various aspects of the science curriculum in preparation for their National Curriculum tests.

120. Where teaching and learning are seen to be very good in lessons, it is because teachers have very good subject knowledge and are confident in their teaching of basic skills. They use varying strategies to meet pupils' needs, are very clear about what pupils are expected to learn and plan activities very well to enable them to do this. For example, pupils in Year 2 describe the properties of chocolate and begin to predict how it will change when heated, because the teacher generates positive responses through very good questioning, whilst encouraging the pupils to use prior knowledge and experiences. In the mixed groups in Years 5 and 6, pupils extend their understanding of electrical circuits using knowledge acquired previously. They use the opportunities provided by the teacher to discuss and predict which circuits will work and then construct them in small groups. They record their findings, explaining what happened and why. Time is generally used well throughout the long sessions, the objectives for the lesson are reinforced appropriately and pupils' learning is assessed. All staff in Years 5 and 6 are deployed well to provide all pupils with their science entitlement during the period of the topic, which includes clear links with other subjects, such as design and technology. During the inspection, for example, pupils used their scientific skills and knowledge to plan an experiment to find out how different surfaces affected the movement of the buggies they had made. Other groups designed an original poster, incorporating a simple electrical circuit with a light or buzzer, to warn others of the dangers of electricity. Most of the pupils' learning derives from practical work. By the time they reach Year 6, most pupils have a very good understanding of the meaning of a 'fair test'. Pupils acquire new skills, knowledge and understanding very well, as they move up through the school. Given their prior levels of skill, their overall level of achievement is very good.

121. Pupils throughout the school, and particularly within the juniors, are well motivated by the challenging approach and range of interesting practical activities. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 studying light and shadows worked very well together and helped each other, in groups, to develop their scientific understanding because they demonstrated a very good attitude towards their learning, coupled with a very high level of interest and curiosity. They were keen to and confident in sharing their findings with the rest of the class. In Years 5 and 6 most pupils sustain a high level of concentration and positive attitude towards their learning for most of the afternoon session, although occasionally the sessions are a bit too long. Pupils use carefully and thoughtfully prepared frames to instruct and guide them through scientific stages of investigation. These enable pupils to record their work neatly and recognise and enjoy their achievements and improvements. Pupils throughout the school take a great pride in their science work. It is carefully and neatly presented in a variety of colourful, stimulating and interesting ways to produce high-quality finished topic folders. As

the pupils move up the school and become more mature, they present their topics in a more detailed and sophisticated style.

122. The school has a good policy for science in which it aims to develop interest, enjoyment and self-confidence in learning science and to help pupils achieve their potential in scientific thinking. The school is successful in achieving these aims. A nationally recognised scheme of work is adapted to meet the needs of the pupils. An analysis of pupils' work shows very good use of worksheets produced by staff, investigative science prominent throughout the school, examples of good cross-curricular links, the developing of an enquiring mind and promotion of research skills to improve scientific thinking. Work in science benefits from and is used to promote pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, and to develop further understanding in ICT. For example, pupils use and interpret graphs and use computers to present their work.

123. Although some assessment takes place, there are no formal procedures, which allow the school to methodically record performance, track individual pupils and monitor their progress. National test papers are analysed in detail to identify and improve areas of weakness. Teachers currently evaluate their teaching and learning together, especially in Years 5 and Year 6, and these evaluations are then used to inform the organisation and planning of future activities. They also meet to discuss and agree levels of attainment in samples of pupils' work. The newly appointed coordinator is suitably trained to lead science, and undertakes most aspects of her role well. However, there are few opportunities at present for her to visit classrooms to monitor teaching and learning and thereby extend her understanding of work in Key Stage 1 and have a greater influence upon the further development of science throughout the whole school. Although resources are very good overall, it is planned to match infant resources specifically to the scheme of work and make them more accessible for use. The school looks forward to the development of the school grounds, including an environmental area, in the very near future.

ART AND DESIGN

124. Standards in art and design are above those expected at Key Stage 1, and well above expectations at Key Stage 2. This is mainly because the school has continued to value the subject and its contribution to pupils' learning. It has maintained the development very well, through a time of change and new initiatives. The subject adds greatly to the aesthetic, spiritual and cultural education of the pupils throughout the school. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, achieve very well; their work is sensitive and often very mature. Work in art and design is a major strength of the school.

125. From their earliest time in school, pupils experience a very good range of media and techniques. They study different textures and use colour and monochrome well for effect, for example, in press-printing work in Year 1. Work is bold and confident, in collage and paint, too, in their study of line and form. Older pupils use colour and line meticulously, to build patterns using gingham, stripes and plaids, decorated with buttons and sequins. Pupils in Year 2 also carry out very careful studies of themselves and their friends, in their figurative work. Here, they use, for example, a digital image they have taken, cut it in half, then pencil-draw their interpretation, very perceptively. The finished images of themselves or their friends are well observed and full of character. This is because the teachers plan very well, and devote time and space for the work. The pupils also study artists, such as Arcimboldo, and make small cameo drawings and sketches in his style, which capture his ideas very well. Good use is made of computers, to make careful pattern work, based on Aboriginal bark painting. The colours are very striking on a black ground. This naturalistic feeling is then carried through into their work on materials, where they design Wedgwood pots and make collage using man-made or natural fibres. Teachers offer such good variety of techniques

and plan such interesting studies, with sufficient time built in to practise and also to complete more lengthy projects, that pupils have success at every level. This is a strong feature of the teaching throughout the school, and enables the pupils to take time and pride in their finished work.

126. An excellent feature of the school's work is the presentation of the front covers of topic books, with appropriate art work. These cameos are of a consistently high quality and appropriate to each individual subject contained within. Thus, history books about Egypt have fabric drawings or printing, depicting scenes or hieroglyphs; topic books on the Victorians have sepia prints of the pupil in costume, decorated around with sensitively drawn flowers in water colour, or by beaten panels of copper. Books about 'Myself' have delightfully painted self-portraits, executed in fabric paint and outlined in gold relief; books about water or planet Earth have computer-generated pictures of suitably wet images, or cut out shapes in marbling technique. Colour, texture and technique are all equally important, whether for the walls or for the covers of the books. Pupils can be justifiably proud of their work.

127. At Key Stage 2, pupils continue to develop their skills in all areas very well. This is because teachers expect very high standards of commitment. Textiles work is developed very well in Years 3 and 4, where pupils use tie-dye techniques and fabric to create very careful pictures of Tudor personalities, using good observational skills as part of their figurative work. This aspect of artwork culminates in stunning work in the style of William Morris by pupils in Years 5 and 6. Batik work of the highest quality is further enhanced by embroidery; appliqué and soft sculpture. Work on line and form is carried out in studies of animal skins, with very good use of different media and the combining of ideas; still life is drawn with great attention to detail and a study of wheels and spokes demonstrates very good colour work and striking ideas. Three-dimensional work is well represented, spotlighted by a study of 'buttons and bows', that uses many different techniques, but is especially suited to the subject, with curving and straight lines moving across the paper. Work of such high quality needs careful planning and time to be worked. The teachers plan so well for that to happen and link their work very carefully to the topics being studied at the time. Thus, work on the Victorians includes a beautiful set of pieces, carried out from life drawings and sketches of the row of period buildings outside the school. Pupils of all abilities have been encouraged and given much guidance, in order for them to produce such dramatic work. Pupils with special educational needs and those in the Speech and Language Unit also produce work of a consistently high quality, for instance, their pencil studies of Van Gogh's room.

128. No lessons were seen being taught during the inspection, but planning, outcomes, and listening to pupils talk about their work, indicate that teaching is very effective, in order for pupils to concentrate and learn skills so well. The coordinator is new to the role. She follows on from a colleague who has developed resources very well, to support the staff. The policy and scheme of work are very well planned to develop skills and techniques, and use art across the curriculum very effectively. Displays throughout the school are eye-catching, tasteful and well done, enhancing and valuing greatly what the pupils achieve. The coordinator leads the subject very well and has very good knowledge of what needs to be done to improve and develop. Overall, the subject has maintained its very positive status since the last inspection, and continues to offer pupils excellent, creative outlets for their senses and abilities.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

129. Pupils attain standards in design and technology that are above those expected at the end of Key Stage 1 and well above expectations at the end of Key Stage 2. The subject has reached a high level, since the time of the last inspection, when standards were found to be above expectations, but with some strands being less well developed. Pupils, including those

with special educational needs and those in the Speech and Language Unit, make very good progress overall, because appropriate tasks are set to include pupils of all abilities. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 who attend the Speech and Language Unit are fully integrated into the school's mainstream activities in design and technology, and derive great benefit from working alongside their peers. They concentrate well, and persevere very well.

130. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school, and is very good in Key Stage 2, with some excellent teaching in Years 5 and 6. Teachers have very high expectations for the whole process of designing and making, but especially for the design element. Thus, when pupils design a buggy, a pot, cakes for a Victorian high tea or Egyptian mummy cases, the teachers ensure that they consider the purpose of the finished article, from the very beginning. Work in design and technology is integrated very carefully into pupils' topic work and very good links are made to other subjects. A very good example was seen during the inspection in Years 5 and 6, where, as part of their detailed study of electricity, pupils designed and made an electrically powered buggy. They formed hypotheses about how certain elements they had chosen would affect the performance of the buggy, such as whether it would go fast or climb well. The teacher led the session with excellent questioning and discussion about the investigations they would carry out; pupils then carried out their own tests and compiled charts of their findings. This thorough process ensures that the pupils cover all elements of the subject's programme of study. Because the work is planned very well to build upon existing skills and understanding, pupils quickly become confident with ideas, and they achieve well throughout the school. Very good use is also made of computers. Pupils are taught to consider how they might change or modify a design and how to evaluate a finished product. Some of their evaluations are reasonably critical and analytical, but this aspect of the pupils' work is not as well developed as others.

131. The subject has been well led. The work is planned and organised well, and integrated very effectively into the school's topics. Skills are developed progressively, and this is why the pupils' achievements are so good, especially at the end of Key Stage 2. Not enough opportunities have been provided, however, for the subject coordinator to monitor teaching and learning within lessons, and this has been identified as an area for improvement. A new coordinator has recently taken over the role of subject leader and has good ideas of how the subject should be developed in the future, including plans to provide more formalised assessments of pupils' attainments.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

132. No lessons were observed in either history or geography during the inspection since the school curriculum plan did not include them on the timetable for this term. Nevertheless, evidence was gained by talking to the joint coordinators for history and geography, by looking at the work pupils produced in the previous term, and by talking with pupils.

133. Pupils' attainments in history are in line with the expected levels at the end of Key Stage 1 and are above the national expectation at the end of Key Stage 2. In both key stages, pupils of all abilities are making good progress and, towards the end of Key Stage 2, are making very good progress and achieving very well. In geography, pupils are attaining the standards expected of their age and are also making good progress. More use of photographs, especially aerial ones, would help pupils to develop a better understanding of landscapes and contours. Since the last inspection, standards have been maintained in geography, but there have been considerable improvements in history.

134. In history, pupils in Key Stage 1 learn about old and new in relation to their family tree with parents and grandparents and younger brothers or sisters. By the end of the key stage, they have a simple grasp of chronology as a result of the teachers creating a time-line using

familiar objects such as old and new teddy bears. Some effective cross-curricular work helps pupils to develop their literacy skills. Through listening to historical stories, pupils are beginning to develop a historical vocabulary and to understand concepts such as 'long ago', 'before' and 'after'. Pupils' work is neatly presented and generally of good quality. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have a good understanding of various periods of history, including the Ancient Egyptians, the Tudors and the Victorians, as well as more recent historical events such as World War Two. They know how to use primary and secondary sources of evidence to find out about the past. Aspects of human history are a strong feature in pupils' work; they show a good understanding, for example, of the everyday lifestyles of the Egyptians, including their religion and occupations. Pupils produce work that is outstandingly well presented and covers a broad range of cross-curricular skills including English, science, art and design, geography, and design and technology.

135. In geography, pupils at Key Stage 1 have undertaken a project on their locality. Practically based activities, such as conducting a traffic survey, in which they plot the direction in which the traffic is moving and produce block graphs to represent their results, helps them to develop skills of geographical enquiry, as well as reinforcing learning in mathematics. The subject also contributes well to the development of their literacy skills, as they write, for example, about themselves and describe the area in which they live. They develop satisfactory mapping skills as they design their own maps to locate their home area and plot a route from their homes to school indicating, by using their own map symbols, places they pass on the way. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have a good knowledge of their locality and nearby areas. They also have a good grasp of environmental issues and appreciate the problems associated with pollution. Themed studies, such as their study of the water cycle, help them to develop an appropriate range of geographical skills, as well as knowledge of some of the major cities, rivers and hills of Britain and other countries. They have a satisfactory ability to interpret Ordnance Survey maps; for example, they use different scaled Ordnance Survey maps of Crewe to focus in on their immediate environment.

136. From the scrutiny of pupils' books, it is clear that the teaching in both subjects is good and that pupils, including those with special educational needs, learn well. Teachers have a good grasp of both subjects. There is evidence of much careful planning, with very good cross-curricular links, and very good use of a two-year planning cycle to develop pupils' skills progressively. In talking with older pupils about their work, it is clear that they enjoy learning in history and geography and are able to empathise in a very mature fashion with the conditions and lifestyles of people in the past and have a good understanding of location and place in geography. They recall in detail some of the enquiries they have undertaken using the Internet and CD-ROMs, and are clear about why certain events happened and how the past has influenced us to live the way we do today. Although they had a certain understanding of chronology in terms of more recent times, such as the Victorian era, they were uncertain of precisely how long ago other historical periods occurred. Field trips make an important contribution to pupils' learning.

137. The two coordinators for history and geography are relatively new appointments, who have appropriate plans for developing the subjects and designing new schemes of work. The coordinators are aware of the need to monitor teaching and learning in order to ensure that there is appropriate progression and continuity in pupils' experiences and they have an expectation that more formal assessments of pupils' strengths and weaknesses will help teachers to improve their future planning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

138. The school's provision for ICT has improved significantly since the last inspection. The school has made a determined effort to improve the level of resources, to provide helpful

training for the staff and to make much greater use of new technology. Discussions with staff and pupils, and observations of work currently in progress show that standards have risen. The school does not have a computer suite, but there is a very good ratio of one computer for every seven pupils and, in most classes, pupils can have access to a number of computers at the same time. Good use is made of computers in all subjects and the teaching of ICT skills is carefully linked to the topic work undertaken in the afternoons, as a result of which, pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, are making very good progress in acquiring new skills and developing their ability to use a range of software. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils are achieving the standards expected for their age and, by the end of Key Stage 2, they are exceeding them.

139. By the end of Key Stage 1, most pupils reach the national expectation of Level 2 in all aspects of the curriculum. Pupils of all abilities are making good progress and achieving well. They acquire an appropriate range of skills which enable them to exchange and share information. For example, they type short sentences using a word processor, and they know how to alter the colour, size and appearance of the text. They show good technical competence in producing graphic work. Pupils in Year 2 showed that they knew how to use a variety of tools and select different colours as they produced paintings in the style of Mondrian, although the end results showed they had not fully understood the essential characteristics of the artist's style. They are learning how computer programs can be used to find things, although there was not a great deal of evidence during the inspection of pupils using CD-ROMs to find out information or data-handling programs to collate information and answer questions. Pupils are beginning to appreciate how computers can help them to review and modify their work. They know, for example, if they make a mistake when typing their text, that they can correct it quite easily. They are learning how to save and retrieve their work, but there is little evidence, at this stage, of pupils producing initial drafts of their work and then going back to improve them after discussion with others or with the teacher.

140. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils reach the expected standards in almost all aspects of the subject and exceed them in a number of areas. Overall, standards are above average. Pupils of all abilities are making very good progress and achieving well. Pupils are developing a good range of skills in using new technology to find things out. After a visit to Chester Cathedral, for example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 entered all of the details from their tomb survey into a database, which they then used to analyse the information they had gathered. Although pupils are using databases confidently, they have yet to develop the skill to construct databases of their own. Pupils know how to search the Internet, and pupils are increasingly using this vast source of information for their work in various subjects. Pupils have a good understanding of how computers can be used to control events. As part of their science project, pupils were learning how to interpret and produce complex sequences of instructions in order to move from one point to another whilst avoiding obstacles. In another session, pupils made very good progress in learning how to write a sequence of instructions to control a set of traffic lights. Pupils are very good at exchanging and sharing information through technology. A display of poems produced by pupils in Years 5 and 6 shows very good awareness of audience and very good mastery of a range of skills to lay out text in an interesting way. The pupils are starting to learn how to develop multimedia presentations, although they have only recently been introduced to the concept. The organisation of the afternoon teaching provides pupils with long enough sessions to make real progress in developing their skills and gives them the opportunity to review, modify and evaluate their work, something at which they are becoming increasingly skilful. This was seen to very good effect when pupils were trying out the control sequences they had written and were then modifying and improving their sequences to get a perfect finished result.

141. There is clear progression in the acquisition of skills as pupils move through the school. A result of the training undertaken by all staff, is that pupils are learning skills at an

earlier age than before. For example, the youngest pupils in Year 1 are already at ease using a computer. In an English lesson, four pupils typed their sentences into a word processor and printed them out to show the rest of the class at the end of the lesson. They were familiar with the routine, and quite happily went to fetch their printouts which had appeared on the central printer in another part of the school. From an early stage, pupils know how to locate and open programs, and save and print their work. Pupils in Key Stage 2 know how to retrieve work, which they have previously saved, in order to edit it. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 subconsciously transfer skills, which they have already learnt, from one program to another, which helps them to become familiar with new programs quite quickly. There is clear progression as pupils move through the school. In Year 1, for example, pupils type short sentences but, by Year 3, they produce longer pieces of text, which they are starting to format in different ways. By Year 6, pupils have a very good awareness of how to present their text attractively, and various pieces of well-presented work, incorporating different graphic elements, show that they have mastered these skills well.

142. The quality of the teaching has improved since the last inspection and is good at Key Stage 1 and very good at Key Stage 2. The teachers' confidence and expertise has improved considerably as a result of the highly motivating in-service training organised by the school. A brave decision was made to block the school's five annual in-service training days together and to run a week-long training course, which was attended by all of the teachers and teaching assistants. This allowed staff the time to learn, experiment and consolidate, and, more importantly, provided considerable motivation to apply the newly acquired skills in their teaching. The teaching of ICT is integrated very effectively into the teaching of other subjects. In a very good lesson for pupils in Years 5 and 6, the teacher integrated work in English, science and ICT seamlessly in a task to produce an information page about electricity, aimed at 8 to 10 year-old readers. The quality of learning mirrors that of the teaching, as pupils respond to the teachers' input with enthusiasm. The pupils are highly motivated when given the opportunity to work on computers. Their behaviour is very good and they concentrate well and, as a result, make good progress. They work well with each other, taking turns when sharing a computer, and offer constructive help and advice to their partner or to others in need of assistance. The teachers are skilful at helping pupils to look critically at their own work and to learn from their mistakes. In a very good lesson, in which pupils were learning to write procedures to control traffic lights, the teacher helped pupils to develop the skill of analysing where their procedures had gone wrong, with the result that all pupils had solved the problem by the end of the lesson.

143. The teachers make good use of the school's resources. In Years 5 and 6, for example, a number of sessions were observed in which the teacher made very good use of a video projector connected to a computer. In one lesson, it helped the teacher to demonstrate new ICT skills, enabling the pupils to see very clearly how to enter their procedures for controlling traffic lights, and they were able to use their time more effectively when they dispersed to use computers in groups of three. In another lesson, it was used as a very good visual aid, providing a very effective demonstration of how to use a protractor. The digital camera has also been used very effectively to illustrate pupils' work in drama and swimming, to record visits to places of interest, or special occasions within school, such as the occasion when pupils sampled a variety of Indian foods supplied by a local Tandoori restaurant in connection with their study of a southern Indian village.

144. The curriculum for ICT is very good, largely because skills are taught within a meaningful context. All subjects benefit from the use of ICT from time to time. Computers are used very effectively to reinforce pupils' literacy skills. Various programs are used to help pupils develop their mathematical skills. In Year 2, for example, pupils were using a program to sort shapes according to different characteristics. The use of a computer counter program projected onto the whiteboard captivated pupils' attention in Years 5 and 6 and helped to

reinforce their understanding of numbers to two decimal places. Complementing some outstanding artwork in the style of William Morris, pupils have learnt how to create repeated symmetrical patterns, and a stunning display using a wide range of different media, such as textiles, black ink, pastels and computer-generated graphics, shows an appreciation of the characteristics and merits of different media. In another lesson, pupils used computers to compose musical tunes, experimenting with the tempo and different instruments. Following their excellent training session, the teachers themselves now make much greater use of technology for their own purposes. Much of their planning is carefully produced on the computer, thus making it readily accessible for the following year. Classroom displays, notices, rotas and labels all indicate that the teachers have good skills.

145. The subject has been led and managed very well, as evidenced by the significant improvements which have taken place, the imaginative way training has been organised and the way the teaching of ICT skills and the use of computers are integrated across the curriculum. A weakness at present is the way pupils' attainment is assessed, and the school acknowledges that this is an area for further development so that, as pupils' skills increase, teachers can ensure that the work they plan caters for all needs and abilities. Some introductory steps have been taken, but these do not give a very clear picture of what pupils can do or what they need to do to improve. Few pupils have the opportunity to use computers at home, so the school's provision for ICT is vital. Older pupils are allowed to use the computers during their own time. A teacher from the local secondary school comes to the school once a week to run a computer club for pupils in Years 5 and 6, in which they are currently learning to create a school newspaper, use cameras and multimedia packages.

146. The school is now very well resourced and this, along with the increasing expertise of the teachers, has also helped to raise standards. Thirty-seven computers are now networked and linked to the Internet and there are additional free-standing computers in some parts of the school. The ratio of one computer to every seven pupils enables all pupils to have frequent and regular access to computers. Although installation has not been without its problems, the value of the school's two networked laser colour printers is seen in the quality of the displays around the school, and is measured in the time and costs saved through having high-performance equipment. With the commitment and enthusiasm of the staff, the motivation of the pupils and the considerable achievements to date, the school is very well placed to make even further improvements in this subject.

MUSIC

147. Pupils' attainment in music is in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1 and is above expectations at the end of Key Stage 2. Standards in both keys stages have been maintained since the last inspection. The school has adopted a published music scheme since that time, which is being used systematically throughout the school.

148. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils know a range of songs and perform them well and with great enthusiasm, adding movement and animation to the songs. They make appropriate choices of percussion instruments to accompany songs and play them in time to the music, demonstrating a good sense of rhythm. They listen well and can recognise a song when the teacher claps just the rhythm, or different voices when listening to a recording. Some pupils find it difficult to finish a rhythm pattern at the right time. At the time of the inspection, there was little evidence of the pupils using or acquiring composition skills, but an element of this is planned within the scheme.

149. In Years 3 and 4, pupils make good progress in identifying the pitch of sounds, having completed work on pitch in science lessons. Pupils listen attentively and discuss the different sounds, which instruments create. They record their work effectively by using different

symbols to identify a variety of tuned and untuned percussion instruments. Some younger pupils find this difficult, but older pupils are able to adjust their symbolism to identify when the pitch or volume is changed.

150. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have made good progress. Their performance is less enthusiastic than that of pupils in Key Stage 1, but it is more tuneful and accurate. They play percussion instruments in time and display a good sense of rhythm and tempo. Pupils use a computer program very effectively to compose tunes. They are able to identify patterns within the music, review the piece they have composed, evaluate it and select the phrase of music which finishes the piece in the most pleasing way. Their listening skills are developing well, allowing them to appraise music and express opinions about the music. They willingly express their ideas and talk coherently about how the music makes them feel and how the music affects them. Investigating whether changing the tempo of the music changes their mood created an animated discussion in one lesson.

151. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers use the scheme of work well, adjusting and amending it where necessary. They offer good models of singing and performing throughout the school and create a good working atmosphere in which pupils participate willingly. The teachers' subject knowledge is good, explanations are clear and demonstrations are a strength of the teaching. Pupils learn well and are making good progress. They display good attitudes to the subject. Pupils in Key Stage 1 perform with a great deal of fervour. Pupils in Key Stage 2 listen, appraise and compose well.

152. The music curriculum is supported well by the use of ICT to assist pupils in composing. The subject also contributes well to pupils' speaking and listening skills. Pupils in Key Stage 1, for example, could relate that the word 'elephant' has three syllables. Discussion in Key Stage 2 is of a high standard. Counting beats and identifying patterns in music further develops their numeracy skills. There is limited opportunity at the end of Key Stage 2 for pupils to record work or to develop their skills and knowledge further, due to the limited amount of time which is allocated to music in the curriculum.

153. The coordinator has developed her role well and has a positive input into the music for assemblies where pupils listen to music of different composers or different types of music. The music curriculum and pupils' learning is enhanced by visitors to the school, including a strings group, Manchester Camerata Brass, a Korean choir and by high school pupils supporting the school. Music and recorder clubs take place after school; both are well attended and pupils display an enjoyment of music.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

154. Standards in physical education are in line with national expectations for pupils' ages at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 and remain unchanged since the last inspection. The school has introduced national guidance to support the teaching of skills and this is beneficial. Pupils are enthusiastic towards the subject and all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress.

155. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have developed an appropriate range of basic skills and actions such as travelling, rolling and balancing. They choose and practise movements, showing good control as they produce different sequences. When practising, they look to improve their performance with a clear beginning and end as they respond positively and keenly to the teacher's high expectations. Nearly all pupils are able to explain how their partner helped make their performance better.

156. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils demonstrate a satisfactory range of skills in games activities, such as hitting, pushing and stopping the ball with a hockey stick, with reasonable control and accuracy. They know how to adjust their handgrip to improve techniques in order to stroke or stop the ball effectively. Their positive response to the teacher's demonstration in lessons and their active participation help them to learn and develop skills and tactics, which they transfer confidently into playing small-sided games. Limited hall space restricts the opportunities for them to develop tackling and defensive tactics. The pupils have appropriate insights into what makes their performance effective and how it could be improved. Pupils achieve well at swimming by the time they leave the school. During the inspection, pupils in Years 3 and 4 produced a dance of a very high quality for pupils of their age. The class responded very well to very good teaching which enabled them to create and perform, in small groups. They used a range of movement patterns and responded extremely well to the teacher's guidance and especially to the very good choice of musical stimulus.

157. The quality of teaching and learning in physical education is good. The teaching of basic skills, the management of pupils and the use of effective teaching methods represent very good features which are helping the pupils to learn and make good progress in lessons. However, insufficient time is currently allocated to the teaching of physical education across the school, and this restricts pupils' access to the curriculum and reduces the quantity and quality of provision in the subject. In most lessons, pupils have positive attitudes, where they show a willingness to listen and participate. They respond well to advice and benefit from good quality demonstrations by the teachers. The relationship between teachers and pupils is very good in these lessons. This enables all pupils to improve their performance as they thoughtfully answer teachers' questions or react to clear instructions and advice. Good organisation is evident and resources are used well to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Where teaching is very good, the teacher continually guides and challenges pupils who show they know and enjoy what they are doing because they control movements in an imaginative way and express themselves well. The teacher remains sensitive to the pupils' needs and stage of physical development, whilst maintaining a purposeful pace to the lesson.

158. Since the previous inspection, the school has continued to provide a good range of after-school activities, led by teachers, which include a well-supported dance club and a football club for pupils in Year 2. The school has also established links with Crewe Alexandra Football Club, whose coaches visit to work with pupils. Clubs and competitive football matches are well supported by parents. Older pupils also have the opportunity to experience adventurous activities whilst on a residential visit. The extra-curricular programme covers an increasing number of activities and provides opportunities for many pupils to extend their talents and interests into other aspects of their learning and personal development, either in school or beyond. The programme helps to raise pupils' self-esteem and increases their self-confidence.

159. The coordinators have insufficient opportunities to influence the development of the subject across the whole school. Although the school has identified the need to provide time for the coordinators to monitor teaching and learning, currently their role is underdeveloped. A manageable assessment system to enable teachers to identify the progression of skills has yet to be introduced. The amount of space available to pupils for physical activities indoors is unsatisfactory and reduces learning opportunities because the school hall is used to store an extensive range of other resources and dining furniture.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

160. Standards in religious education at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 are below the expectations of the agreed syllabus. At the time of the last inspection, standards were in line

and have, therefore, declined. The time allocated to the subject is inadequate and prevents pupils attaining the required standards.

161. There is very little recorded evidence, and pupils have insufficient opportunity to develop their knowledge and understanding of religion. In Key Stage 1, pupils have a weak knowledge of Judaism, as the resources available to teach the subject are inadequate.

162. In Key Stage 2, pupils are developing a good understanding of the festival of Diwali in Hinduism; they can discuss aspects of the festival and make comparisons to the Christian festival of Christmas. They recall the story of Rama and Sita and discuss the concepts of good and evil. Some pupils ask very challenging and demanding questions of the teacher, displaying a depth of thinking about religious issues. However, a lack of resources and artefacts prevents the teachers from bringing the subject to life for their pupils. Older pupils in Key Stage 2 discuss well and sensitively the concept of things that they value. The quality of discussion is good and contributes effectively to the development of their speaking and listening skills. Downloaded websites from the Internet have been used to give the pupils further information about Hinduism. Although most pupils contribute well in lessons, pupils have a negative attitude to the subject and display very little knowledge or understanding of previous work.

163. The coordinators are newly appointed to their posts. The school is now following a national scheme, but recognises a need to amend and adjust this to suit the school. They have made an evaluation of the subject and they have strong ideas and a clear vision of the way forward, but they have not yet had time to implement their ideas. They recognise that their resources and the allocation of time to the subject in Key Stage 2 are inadequate.