

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ALMA PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Manchester

LEA area: Manchester

Unique reference number: 105389

Headteacher: Mrs P Treanor

Reporting inspector: Mr F P Ravey  
11371

Dates of inspection: 15-19 January 2001

Inspection number: 207254

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

School address: Errwood Road  
Levenshulme  
Manchester

Postcode: M19 2PF

Telephone number: 0161 224 8789

Fax number: 0161 225 2776

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr P McGuinness

Date of previous inspection: September 1998

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
F Ravey OIN 11371	Registered inspector	Equal opportunities English	What sort of school is it? Results and achievements How well pupils are taught Finance
J Smith OIN 9649	Lay inspector	None	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?
V Brittain OIN 21893	Team inspector	Areas of learning in the foundation stage Design & technology Geography History	None
T Elston OIN 20704	Team inspector	The work of the special educational needs unit Special educational needs	None
V Leary OIN 2319	Team inspector	Mathematics Art and design Music	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
S Power OIN 17767	Team inspector	Science Physical education	Assessment
T Watts OIN 20000	Team inspector	English as an additional language	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
R Willey OIN 28320	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Religious education	How well is the school led and managed?

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Nord Anglia School Inspection Services  
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The Registrar  
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The Office for Standards in Education  
Alexandra House, 33 Kingsway, London WC2B 6SE

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The school is situated in the Levenshulme district of Manchester and takes its pupils largely from the local area. Three hundred and fifty six pupils, aged from three to 11 years, attend the school. Forty-five of these attend the school's nursery class full time. Pupils come from a richly diverse mix of cultural backgrounds. Minority racial groups include Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian, Afro-Caribbean and African. Over six percent of pupils have statements of special educational needs, well above the national average figure. The school incorporates a unit for hearing impaired pupils and also educates other pupils with physical disabilities as part of Manchester's 'Barrier free' initiative. In addition, the school has a full range of other special educational needs, including pupils with moderate learning difficulties and some with behavioural difficulties. The number attending the school also includes a significant minority of pupils with physical disabilities. Just over half of pupils attending the school speak English as an additional language, with about a quarter of all pupils at the early stages of learning English. A significant number of pupils start or leave during the school year. In 2000, this amounted to about 36 percent of the total number on roll. The school has recently admitted several pupils whose parents are asylum seekers – three such pupils arrived on the last day of the inspection. Pupils are taught in 12 classes, two of which contain pupils from different age groups. Children's attainment when they start in the nursery class is well below average, being particularly low in the area of communication, language and literacy. Nearly half of those on roll are entitled to free school meals, well above the average for schools nationally.

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

This is an effective school in which standards are rising owing to good teaching and very strong and effective leadership. The school is very effective in the way it provides so well for such a wide range of needs and backgrounds. Whilst the cost of educating pupils is high when compared nationally, the school gives good value for money.

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

- The way in which all pupils are included in school life is excellent.
- Pupils make good progress in relation to their previous learning.
- Teaching is of good quality and results in pupils learning well.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- Relationships are very good.
- Provision for pupils with statements of special educational needs is very good; that for other pupils with special educational needs is good.
- Provision for pupils speaking English as an additional language is very good.
- The school takes very good care of its pupils.
- The leadership provided by the headteacher and key staff is excellent.

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

- Standards in writing and numeracy at ages seven and 11.
- Standards in science at age seven.
- The rate of attendance.

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

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

The school was last inspected in September 1998, when it was found to have serious weaknesses. It has improved greatly since that time. Standards in English, mathematics and science are rising at a better rate than nationally. The rate of attendance has risen, albeit only slightly. Some aspects of behaviour were highlighted as problematic in the previous inspection report; now behaviour is very good throughout the school. Good progress has been made in addressing the key issues raised in the previous report: teaching now has no significant weaknesses and many strengths; assessment

procedures are being used well; school leadership has improved greatly; standards in D&T and history have improved satisfactorily; the issue relating to collective worship has been addressed successfully.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	E	C	E	C
Mathematics	E	E	E	C
Science	E*	E	D	B

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

Standards attained by 11 year olds in last year's National Curriculum tests were well below the national average in English and mathematics; in science, standards were below the national average. The number of pupils with special educational needs mean that last year's results were generally lower than those in 1999. However, when compared with the results of pupils in similar schools nationally, pupils' performance was average in English and mathematics and above average in science. With so many pupils entering or leaving the school during the year and with such a combination of other additional needs, it is difficult to make accurate comparisons with other schools.

Inspectors found that attainment in work seen amongst the oldest pupils shows significant improvement on the 2000 National Curriculum test results. Pupils at present in Year 6 are attaining the nationally expected levels in reading and are close to the expected levels in writing and numeracy although still below average. In science, attainment is at the nationally expected levels. This amounts to particularly good performance in science as in 1998, pupils' performance in National Curriculum tests was amongst the lowest five percent in the country. At age seven, work seen during the inspection shows a similar picture. As attainment at the start of the nursery year is well below average, pupils are generally achieving well to reach so close to national standards by the age of 11. In other subjects, attainment is at the expected levels at ages seven and 11 except in religious education, where attainment at age 11 is above average. The school has set realistic targets in English and mathematics for the present Year 6 group of pupils. The good, and often very good, quality of teaching for these pupils and their present levels of work indicate that the school will achieve these targets.



## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are very keen to come to school and to learn. They are proud of their school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave equally well, whether in lessons or at other times.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils respond well to opportunities for personal and social development. Relationships throughout the school are very good and this contributes strongly to the very harmonious nature of the school community.
Attendance	Well below the national average although some improvement has been made. The school tries very hard to improve attendance but as yet has achieved only modest success.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching of English and mathematics is good, enabling pupils to achieve well in lessons and over longer periods of time. Teaching is strong throughout the school. Teachers plan carefully to provide work that challenges pupils to think carefully and hence to learn. The way in which teachers question pupils closely to check their understanding is a good example of how this challenge works in lessons. This challenge is evident for all groups of pupils, regardless of attainment, gender, race or special need. It results in good learning taking place in lessons as pupils concentrate hard and work productively. The key skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well, not just in literacy and numeracy lessons but also through work in other subjects. Teachers assess pupils work closely and use the information gained to help them plan future work. They have high expectations of what pupils should achieve. The very good use made of specialist teachers and support staff is a strong feature of the teaching, having a very positive impact upon the progress made, for example, by pupils for whom English is an additional language, pupils with hearing impairments and pupils with other physical disabilities. During the inspection, 30 per cent of lessons observed were very good; 47 per cent were good; 22 per cent were satisfactory; one excellent lesson was observed. No teaching was less than satisfactory.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a good range of learning opportunities for all pupils and for young children in the foundation stage of learning.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision for pupils with statements of special educational needs is very good. Provision for all other pupils with special educational needs is good.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Provision is very good, enabling pupils to acquire confidence and expertise in speaking and writing English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision is good overall, with particular strengths in the way the school promotes social and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school takes very good care of its pupils, promoting a great respect amongst pupils for differences in race, religion, culture and ability.

The school works well in partnership with parents, promoting good relationships that help pupils to be positive towards school.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and key staff provide excellent leadership which has helped take this school out of the Serious Weaknesses category and is making it an increasingly effective community for learning.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their responsibilities well. They keep close watch on the work of the school, supporting staff well whilst also making clear their high expectations of what should be achieved.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school makes careful analysis of test and other information in order to help plan for improvement. Close attention is paid to checking the effectiveness of teaching and of pupils' work. This results in a strong and effective focus on improvement.
The strategic use of resources	The governing body and senior staff plan well to ensure that the money provided for pupils' education is well spent. They take great care to ensure that the school gains best value from its spending decisions.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Their children like school</li><li>• The progress their children make</li><li>• Standards of behaviour</li><li>• The quality of teaching</li><li>• The fact that their children are expected to work hard</li><li>• The approachability of school staff</li><li>• School leadership</li><li>• The way in which the school helps their children to become mature and responsible</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Homework</li><li>• Behaviour at lunchtimes</li></ul>

Inspectors agree with the very positive views expressed by parents. They found that provision of homework is satisfactory although it could be more consistent between different year groups. Inspectors found that behaviour at lunchtimes was very good, aided by the good work of lunchtime supervisors and by the play equipment available for pupils to use.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

##### Starting school and attainment at the age of five

1. On entry to the nursery class, attainment is well below the expected level for children of this age. Children have a wide range of attainment but many have poorly developed skills, particularly in language, mathematics and in their personal and social development. Since the school was last inspected there has been a significant increase in the percentage of children starting school who are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. This has brought down the overall attainment on entry to the school. Children make good progress in the nursery and reception classes, due to good teaching and by the time they start Year 1, attainment is at the nationally expected levels in personal and social development, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and physical development. However, in literacy and in mathematics a significant minority of children do not reach the expected levels, due to their low starting point, and attainment at the start of Year 1 in these areas of learning is below average. Another factor affecting attainment adversely is the significant minority of children entering both the nursery and reception classes during the school year. These pupils often have poorly developed language skills.

##### Results at the age of seven

2. Attainment at age seven in reading, writing and mathematics rose from 1997 to 1999 but fell slightly in 2000, owing to a combination within the group of a high level of pupils with special educational needs and the number of pupils starting school with low attainment during Year 1 or Year 2. National Curriculum test results for 2000 show that attainment in reading and writing was well below the national average whilst attainment in mathematics was below the national average. However, when compared with similar schools nationally, attainment was above average in mathematics, average in reading and below average in writing. In relation to their low starting points in Year 1, pupils achieved satisfactory standards in reading and writing and, in mathematics, they achieved well. This is also indicated by the good proportion of pupils achieving high levels in their National Curriculum test results last year. Attainment to these levels was very close to the national averages in reading and mathematics and was above average in writing. In science, teachers assessed pupils' attainment as being well below average at the nationally expected level but as being above average in the proportion attaining the higher level.

##### Results at the age of 11

3. Attainment in English, mathematics and science at age 11 has risen at a greater rate than the national trend in recent years although attainment in English and mathematics fell slightly last year owing to the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and to the number of pupils with lower attainment entering school during Years 3 to 6. In science, attainment has risen particularly well in the last three years. In 2000, attainment in English and mathematics was well below the national average whilst attainment in science was below the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving high levels in English and mathematics last year was below national averages for these subjects but in comparison with their test results at age

seven, these pupils performed at average levels in English and mathematics and at above average levels in science.

#### The school's targets

4. The school achieved the targets governors agreed for pupils in last year's National Curriculum tests for 11 year olds in English and mathematics. These targets were realistic when the overall attainment of the 2000 group of pupils is taken into account. Targets set for 2001 are slightly higher. Work seen during the inspection indicates that the school stands a very good chance of achieving these targets.

#### Standards of work seen in literacy during the inspection

5. Standards amongst pupils at present in Year 2 are at the nationally expected level in reading and is below the nationally expected level in writing. The picture in Year 6 is similar. By the age of seven, most pupils read with understanding and can predict with reasonable accuracy 'what will happen next'. High attaining pupils know the difference between 'fiction' and 'non-fiction'. Most pupils read expressively, in a way that shows they understand what they are reading. By the age of 11, most pupils read accurately and with understanding whilst a few are very fluent readers and are very knowledgeable about books. Pupils of all attainments know how to find information in reference books, using an index or contents. The standards attained in reading, especially by the age of seven, indicate that pupils of all levels of attainment make good progress and achieve well.
6. In writing, standards are below the nationally expected level by age seven but pupils make satisfactory progress throughout Years 1 and 2. By the age of seven, most pupils spell simple words accurately. Their handwriting is usually well formed and easy to read although often it is not joined script. Most write stories and accounts made up of sequences of ideas but few are more adventurous in the language they use. Very few descriptive words are used when pupils write their own stories. Quite common words are often misspelt. By age 11, standards are still a little below average but great improvements have been made. Many in the present Year 6 produce lively, well-structured work. High attaining pupils write in a lively, imaginative way. However, spelling skills amongst average attaining pupils are not yet up to the expected standard. Pupils start Year 1 with lower than average attainment and their progress throughout the school is satisfactory. Comparisons between pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 and in Year 6 have to be treated with caution due to the high percentage of pupils entering and leaving school during that period.

#### Standards of work seen in numeracy

7. Standards amongst pupils at present in Year 2 is below the nationally expected level although pupils' low starting point in Year 1 means that standards are at satisfactory levels in relation to previous learning. Most pupils have a sound knowledge of the value of numbers but counting in 2s and 5s is less secure and only high attainers know some multiplication tables by heart. Many pupils have a sound understanding of tens and units. However, they generally struggle with strategies involving basic addition and subtraction to help them solve simple problems. Most pupils can identify common two-dimensional shapes and high attainers are able to recognise a shape from a list of its properties.
8. Standards amongst pupils at present in Year 6 is below the nationally expected level. By the age of 11, most pupils understand place value to 1,000. They use a variety of

written and mental computations, involving addition, subtraction and multiplication. They know how to work with percentages, decimals and common fractions. However, pupils find difficulty in explaining their methods of computation and some cannot confidently demonstrate the relationship between multiplication and division. In relation to their previous learning, pupils of all attainments achieve satisfactory levels although the high percentage of pupils entering and leaving school between Years 1 and 6 makes comparisons over such long periods of time difficult. In work seen during the inspection, all groups of pupils were achieving well.

#### Standards of work seen in science

9. Pupils at present in Year 2 attain below the nationally expected level but achieve high enough standards in relation to their previous learning. They are developing a secure fund of knowledge about their environment and how it functions. They make good observations, in simple terms, about the materials and events they investigate and can name some common characteristics of familiar materials. However their ability to classify and record these observations is less well developed and most pupils need high levels of support in order to communicate their findings and interpret their meaning. Those at present in Year 6 attain the nationally expected levels for pupils this age. They have a built up a good level of knowledge about the different areas of science they study and they have acquired a very good scientific vocabulary. They are able to make simple predictions about what they think will happen in investigations but they are not good at explaining their ideas. They record their data in charts and graphs but only a few pupils are able to carry out this work independently and with precision. Pupils of all attainments are attaining well in relation to their previous learning.

#### Other subjects

10. Standards are at the nationally expected levels and pupils are achieving high enough standards at ages seven and 11 in information and communication technology, art and design, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education. In religious education, standards are at the expected level at age seven and are above the expected level at age 11. This indicates good achievement in religious education for pupils in Years 3 to 6.

#### Pupils with special educational needs

11. Hearing impaired pupils make very good progress throughout the school. This is due to the very good provision made for them and, in particular, to effective teaching and support. The work they are given is pitched at just the right level of challenge to enable them to learn most effectively. Other pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their previous attainment, and many attain, or come close to, national standards by the time they take the national assessment tests in Year 6. Parents are very pleased with their children's rate of progress, and the extent by which they grow in confidence. Pupils make particularly good progress in literacy, numeracy and science, where the support in class, and extra work when withdrawn in small groups, enable them to learn important basic skills. Pupils with physical disabilities make good progress because the teachers have high expectations of their learning, and ensure that they are included in all school activities.

#### Pupils for whom English as an additional language

12. Pupils at the early stages of learning English make good progress, helped by good specialist and other support. Whilst standards mostly remain below nationally expected levels at age seven (except in reading, where they are at the expected level), pupils quickly acquire the skills of spoken English and are making good progress in literacy. By age 11, this good progress has been maintained. Pupils for whom English as an additional language make similar progress to other groups of pupils and attain nationally expected standards in reading but are still below the nationally expected levels in writing.

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

### Pupils' attitudes to school

13. Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development are very good and are a strength of the school. Pupils enjoy school. They are very keen to learn and show a high level of interest and involvement in their lessons. Parents' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire support this view. Pupils concentrate very well, are keen to answer questions and listen to each other attentively. The positive attitudes and motivation which pupils display are due to good teaching, particularly to the variety of challenge and activity which is a feature of most lessons and which helps to maintain pupils' interest and involvement. Another reason for these positive attitudes is the way in which pupils from varied backgrounds and with varied needs all feel equally valued within the school community. This is a major strength of the school. Pupils enjoy and benefit from the other activities which the school offers, for example, school trips, and clubs such as the popular and successful steel band. Pupils who presented the assembly celebrating Eid had clearly put a large amount of effort into preparing for this event, and the high quality of the assembly was due to the commitment of all involved.

### Behaviour, including the incidence of exclusions

14. Pupils' behaviour is very good both in lessons and around the school. Pupils' ready acceptance of school routines, their good level of self-discipline and teachers' calm and skilful behaviour management combine to provide a very good learning environment. Pupils move around the school in an orderly way and they queue very sensibly, for example, on the playground before returning to lessons at the end of break-time. It is to the credit of pupils and staff alike that at times such as lunchtime, when there is considerable movement around the school, this is accomplished without fuss or raised voices. Pupils are friendly and courteous to visitors and other adults in the school community. There were four fixed term exclusions in the last school year. The pupils who were excluded had serious behavioural and other problems and have now left the school. There have been no exclusions since September. This reflects accurately the high standard of behaviour.
15. Some parents expressed concerns about behaviour in the playground. However, the school has taken effective steps to resolve problems that did exist and behaviour now is very good. Pupils in both playgrounds enjoy playing with a varied range of play equipment and play together in a friendly and good-natured way. Minor incidents are quickly resolved.

### Personal development and relationships

16. The harmonious way in which the school knits together its richly diverse community has a very positive impact on pupils' personal development. It is impressive to see

how pupils of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds and with different needs work and play together in a friendly and natural manner. Pupils respect and value each other's differences and ensure that no-one feels left out. Many pupils can use sign language and it is a common sight in the playground to see pupils signing to each other. Pupils are very interested in each other's traditions and beliefs: a parent at the pre-inspection meeting commented that his son was "educating me in that area".

17. The school helps pupils to develop their level of self-esteem and confidence by listening to their views and by giving pupils responsibilities appropriate to their age. Pupils respond well. All, including younger ones, undertake routine tasks such as tidying or taking the registers to the office in a sensible manner. Year 6 pupils are given a higher level of responsibility. For example, members of the Year 6 Anti-bullying Council regularly help in the playground by playing with the younger children and helping them to 'make friends' again if they fall out with each other. Year 6 pupils also help in a mature and responsible way to entertain reception children during wet playtimes. Pupils show initiative in the way that some have started their own clubs. At present there are journal, art and Islam clubs which meet once a week at lunchtime.

#### Pupils with special educational needs

18. Pupils with special educational needs, including those with physical and hearing difficulties, enjoy school. Parents are particularly pleased by the way in which their children fit naturally into all of school life, growing in confidence, and relishing their considerable successes. It is notable that, in the playground, hearing pupils are keen to communicate with those having hearing difficulties, and relishing their own attempts at using signs and gestures in order to play games.

#### Attendance

19. The attendance rate for the last school year was 90.5 percent. This is slightly higher than in the previous year but is well below the national average. Some of the reasons for this low attendance rate are factors over which the school has little or no influence. For example, some physically disabled pupils are frequently absent for medical reasons. The high number of pupils leaving the school during the year is another factor which has a significant impact upon the recorded level of attendance as it takes some time before pupils who have left the school can be removed from the register.
20. A real problem for the school is the large number of pupils whose attendance falls below 90 percent either because their families take them on extended visits to Pakistan or other countries of origin, or because they are absent with illness or for religious festivals. The irregular attendance of so many pupils inevitably has a negative impact on their progress and attainment. The school is trying very hard to improve attendance and had taken a variety of measures with a limited degree of success. However, attendance remains at an unsatisfactory level although improved since the time of the previous inspection.
21. A large number of pupils arrive late at school each morning because parents have trouble getting them to school on time. Although most are only a few minutes late this unpunctuality sometimes disturbs the smooth start of lessons.

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



22. The good quality of teaching is a significant factor in the improvements in standards made at the school since the previous inspection. At that time, significant weaknesses were identified in the teaching and the school was required to address, as key issues, a wide range of matters relating to teachers' skills and professional development. The current inspection finds no such weaknesses. Over three-quarters of teaching was judged to be at least good whilst nearly a third of all lessons were judged to be at least very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Strong and effective teaching was observed throughout the school, leading to pupils learning well in lessons and often making good progress. The good impact of teaching is also evident in work in pupils' books. This good quality of teaching represents very good improvement since the previous inspection.

#### Teaching for children in the foundation stage of learning

23. Teaching in the foundation stage of learning (the nursery and reception year groups) helps children to develop their skills of early learning effectively. Teaching in one reception class was always at least good and often it was very good. Teachers, nursery nurses and support assistants plan, teach and evaluate activities together. They know the children well and understand their needs. This helps them to provide activities with just the right element of challenge and because of this, children make good progress. The way in which all staff talk purposefully with children and encourage them to reply is a major feature of their teaching. Many children start school with poorly developed speaking skills and this work helps them to develop both confidence and vocabulary. The effective use of talk is evident in all aspects of the curriculum and is especially effective for pupils who are at the very early stages of learning English as an additional language. Staff assess children's progress closely. This helps them to provide work which continues to interest and challenge children right through nursery and reception.

#### Teaching for pupils aged from five to 11 years

24. Teaching of English, mathematics and science is effective in helping to raise standards in these important subjects. Teachers understand the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies well and as a result they teach them effectively, helping pupils to recognise and develop new skills. Teachers question pupils closely to assess or deepen their understanding. The quality of questioning was a strong feature of many lessons seen during the inspection. Good use of resources in lessons helps to stimulate pupils' interest and to focus their attention on key learning points. Only occasionally, explanations are unclear, in a small number of numeracy lessons, resulting in some pupils not understanding the task and becoming restless. On these occasions pupils' progress in lessons is limited.
25. Teachers plan very carefully to meet the needs of all pupils. The school's practice of grouping pupils in Years 5 and 6 by attainment helps teachers to focus on specific levels of skills and results in good progress in these lessons. Very good use of specialist support also helps pupils to concentrate well and to get the most from their lessons. The support given for hearing impaired pupils and for those speaking English as an additional language is very effective, enabling these pupils to take full and effective part in lessons. In the vast majority of lessons seen, teachers provided work which matched pupils' learning needs and challenged them to learn more. This is true for the full range of attainments. Gifted pupils in Year 6 were at 'full stretch' when learning about the structure of complex sentences; a pupil with special educational needs was similarly challenged when good questioning from a specialist support teacher helped him to improve his understanding. Teachers mark work

conscientiously and often very rigorously. The quality of marking is especially high in Years 2 and 6, where pupils are given very precise instructions on how to improve their work. Most importantly, they take note of these and do so.

26. The very good relationships that teachers establish with their pupils leads to lessons in which pupils behave well and are eager to learn. It was very noticeable that not one single raised voice was heard during the inspection. Pupils clearly like their teachers and support assistants and want to do well for them. Combine this with good subject and specialist knowledge and a high level of skill in such techniques as questioning and assessment and it is clear why teaching is having such a positive impact on standards.

#### Pupils with special educational needs

27. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs is good, and much improved from the previous inspection. Teaching is well focused on pupils' needs, and the targets on pupils' individual education plans are clear and realistic. Teachers make good use of these targets to plan lessons, and those for reading and writing are monitored effectively by the literacy co-ordinator. The success in the teaching lies in the way teachers teach new work, carefully getting over the concept, reinforcing the idea through practice and then giving pupils the chance to apply their new learning in group work. Grouping by attainment for literacy and numeracy in Years 5 and 6 works well for these pupils. The careful planning of lessons ensures that they are set appropriate challenges. They are supported well in their work by knowledgeable teaching assistants. The school makes effective use of the co-ordinator for pupils with special educational needs and an additional teacher to provide a boost to pupils' literacy, numeracy and science skills. The impact of this support is illustrated by the improvement in pupils' results in the national assessment tests over the last two years.

#### Pupils for whom English as an additional language

28. Careful assessment of progress, very effective specialist support and a strong focus on encouraging pupils to speak English are key factors in making teaching effective. The good use of assessment means that staff are well aware of the next steps to be taken in pupils' learning. A very effective shared approach to teaching lessons is also a significant factor in the success of teaching when a specialist teacher supports pupils with English as an additional language. Teachers plan very carefully together and often take responsibility for different parts of lessons. On such occasions, each teacher is equally effective. An example of this was seen in a Year 5/6 grouping for literacy. The work of the specialist teacher in leading one session also has a good effect upon the motivation of pupils for whom English is an additional language.

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

#### The school curriculum

29. The curricular opportunities offered to the pupils are good. The school's diverse culture is very well understood by the school and is evident throughout the curriculum it provides for all its pupils. The curriculum covers a wide range of skills and meets the needs of all pupils. This results in pupils being prepared very effectively for life in a diverse society and for the next stage of their education. The

curriculum provision for children in the foundation stage is good, covering the recommended areas of learning fully. Children in the foundation stage are provided with a suitably planned range of learning opportunities that allow them to develop their skills well in the nursery and both reception classes.

30. For five to 11 year olds, the school provides a good range of learning opportunities. The curriculum includes all the required subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. At the time of the last inspection, statutory requirements for collective worship were not being met. The school has put in place a well-planned programme of assemblies and, as a result, collective worship is now well established. Planning for the curriculum is constantly being updated to improve the quality of provision for all pupils. The school has adopted nationally recommended guidelines for all National Curriculum subjects and is now in the process of adapting them to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. This ensures that pupils' learning opportunities cover the required ground, builds effectively on what they already know and that pupils in the same year group but in different classes have similar opportunities. Such opportunities are evident throughout the school.
31. Provision for personal, social, and health education is good. There is a detailed policy and a good programme of personal and social education, progressively meeting pupils' needs, is in place throughout the age range. There are appropriate elements of health and sex education, including learning about the dangers of substance misuse. Lessons, assemblies and 'circle' time make significant contributions to the sustaining of good behaviour and personal development. The school's very positive and inclusive atmosphere reflects the good provision in this area.

#### Provision to meet other learning needs

32. Curricular provision for pupils with statements of special educational needs, specifically those pupils who are hearing impaired or who have physical disabilities, is very good. The school has great success in involving such pupils in all aspects of school life. Very effective specialist teaching and support is a major strength of the provision. Provision for all other pupils with special educational needs is good, and greatly improved since the previous OFSTED inspection, when there were weaknesses in the assessment of pupils and their individual plans. Now pupils' individual targets are well thought out, and their progress is reviewed regularly. These include goals for literacy, numeracy and behaviour. The needs of pupils with statements of special educational needs are met very well, and their annual reviews provide a very good focus for further improvement. The school is particularly successful in the way teachers ensure that pupils with physical disabilities take a full part in all activities. Parents who had doubts at first whether the school could meet all of their child's needs speak highly of the provision and have full confidence in it.

#### Numeracy and literacy

33. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are being implemented successfully. Teachers' planning is consistently and securely based on these strategies. Medium and short term planning is generally good in all subjects. This provides a consistency of approach that was lacking at the time of the last inspection, and proving effective not only in raising standards achieved by pupils, but also in raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can do. In literacy, this is evident in pupils' growing competence in reading although skills in writing are not as

well developed, reflecting the national picture. In numeracy, pupils' are developing sharp skills of mental arithmetic although problem-solving skills are not as strong.

#### Activities outside lessons

34. The school provides a good range of activities outside lessons. There is a comprehensive range of after school activities for pupils in the seven to 11 age group. These include drama, recorder, cross-country, football and a computer club. Some pupils organise their own clubs at lunchtime under the supervision of lunchtime staff. Currently pupils run art, journal and Islamic clubs. These clubs help to develop pupils' initiative.
35. A significant contribution to the curriculum is the opportunity to play percussion instruments, including the steel pans, and to sing in the choir. This lunchtime activity is well supported by pupils from Year 4 to Year 6. Notable features are the involvement of hearing-impaired pupils and the playing and singing of multi-cultural music. This popular, musical experience, along with the other activities, enables pupils to practise their social skills, enhance relationships and develop their understanding of and sensitivity to cultural diversity. It also provides a good example of the school's excellent provision to ensure that pupils have full access to learning opportunities regardless of attainment, race, gender or special needs. The school also participates in local inter school sporting events.
36. A study support grant enables the school to operate homework and 'booster classes' for the Year 6 pupils. These are used effectively to help pupils who are performing below expectations. The school ensures smooth transfer from the primary to secondary school when teachers meet and discuss pupils' attainment and personal development so that Year 7 teachers have a good platform on which to build their knowledge of the new pupils.

#### Links with the community

37. A good range of links with the wider community contributes well to pupils' quality of learning and to their personal development. Useful visits are made to areas beyond their locality, for example, to Southport to carry out geography surveys and to the Manchester Science Museum to enhance scientific and historic knowledge. Younger pupils make visits to nearby Thornlea nature reserve and the local canal for environmental studies and to carry out geography surveys. Annually, for pupils in Year 6, there is a residential visit to Linnet Clough camp in Derbyshire. The school's steel band has played at local schools, summer fairs and at Christmas, at Levenshulme's illuminations celebration. The school also has useful and effective links with other organisations such as Manchester City football club, which provides soccer coaching and Manchester Giants basketball club who recently ran a three week basketball course for Year 6 pupils in the school. Other visitors to the school include the school nurse, pop bands and local leaders of different faiths.
38. Satisfactory links are made with the main receiving high schools. Year 6 pupils make visits to them and appropriate records are passed on. Teachers from the local girls' high school teach French in the school. This is a valuable contribution to strengthening relationships between the community's schools.
39. The school has refined and improved its homework practice. Parents are provided with guidance on the school's policy and expectations but are not always given sufficient information throughout the year on the details of the curriculum being

taught. Also, amounts of homework vary from class to class and the inconsistencies mean that pupils do not always benefit equally from opportunities for homework. This confirms the opinion of a significant minority of parents.

#### Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

40. The school's curriculum is enriched with good provision for the pupils' moral development and it is very good for their social and cultural development. The high quality provision noted in the last report has been maintained and, in some respects, enhanced and these aspects are considered to be a strength of the school. There are opportunities for pupils' spiritual development and this provision is satisfactory, and has improved in respect of collective worship since the previous inspection. Statutory requirements for collective worship are now met and assemblies provide appropriately for all pupils, often exploring social and moral issues that are linked to the everyday lives of pupils. Spiritual development is further enhanced effectively through several subjects, including religious education. In Year 6, for example, pupils considered the difficulties experienced by Martin Luther King and expressed opinions about the consequences of his death. During the inspection, one assembly celebrated the Festival of Eid, involving contributions from across the whole school community and provided good opportunity for reflection by pupils on their own lives and the lives of others. Assemblies are well used to promote pupils' knowledge and awareness of different beliefs.
41. The provision for pupils' moral development is good. The school is effective in explaining to pupils the difference between what is morally right and wrong. In all classes and around the school, there is clear evidence of the way that positive rules and expectations for behaviour are consistently reinforced. Many of the stories and texts that pupils work with have a clear moral focus, such as telling the truth and the possible consequences of certain courses of action. A Year 5/6 class has recently been debating the rights and wrongs of foxhunting and the murder of a young African boy. All staff provide a very good example for pupils and often class assemblies led by the class teacher are used to develop important values which include tolerance, trust and mutual respect.
42. The social development of pupils is very good and is a strength of the school. Co-operation between pupils is good and they are given plenty of opportunities to work together in pairs or small groups. Pupils are encouraged to move around the school in an orderly manner, are courteous, polite and prepared to help others who may be having difficulty. Responsibilities such as team captains and head boy and head girl change on a pre-determined rota to enable older pupils to benefit from the experience of leadership and to make a thoughtful contribution to aspects of school life. A key element in the school's provision is the excellent attention given to ensuring that all pupils are given equal opportunity to develop socially. Older pupils take responsibility for some organisational tasks to assist class teachers and often provide assistance and support for other younger or less able pupils whilst out at play. A noticeable feature of classroom behaviour is the way in which pupils listen with respect to others and appreciate their points of view. The very good relationships in all classes are a major feature of the school and contribute significantly to the very successful social development of pupils. Contributions from different year groups in the school have been used to produce 'Values of Alma Park', a banner displaying the shared aspirations of all at the school, namely sharing, friendship, well-being, family, happiness and good fortune.

43. The school celebrates its racially diverse population and uses it very well to enhance the cultural awareness of all pupils. This results in very good provision. It is supported by a range of festivals and assemblies that celebrate important times in the calendar of many world religions; parents regularly attend these. During the assembly celebrating Eid, pupils of all racial groups took full and active part. Songs were 'signed' by all the pupils and the whole celebration captured perfectly this school's excellent ability to include all pupils in its work whilst celebrating their cultural and religious diversity.
  
44. The curriculum provides a very good range of activities to extend the pupils' cultural knowledge. For example, in art, the work of painters such as Matisse and Picasso is studied. In music, pupils explore the differing characteristics of music from other cultures such as steel band and guitar music. Pupils develop an awareness of the culture of their city through visits to places of historical and geographical interest such as the Stockport Museum and Art Gallery and the Manchester Science Museum. A Year 6 class recently visited the Museum of Science and Industry to enhance their work in science. There are numerous and effective displays around the school to support this aspect of the school's provision.

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

### The steps taken to ensure pupils' welfare health and safety

45. This school cares very well for its pupils. The way in which all adult members of the school community care for pupils and work together to provide a secure and happy learning environment is a real achievement and strength of the school. Pupils thrive in an environment where all feel valued and where their different qualities and backgrounds are respected. Support staff provide consistently good care for pupils and are a significant element in the school's very good provision. This very good care provides pupils with the security and good motivation to learn well and, as such, makes a very strong contribution to the improving standards they attain.
46. The school has successfully addressed the key issue in its previous inspection relating to weaknesses in the behaviour of a small minority of pupils. The new behaviour policy is firmly rooted in the principles of mutual respect to which all staff are committed. Teachers' skilful management of behaviour and consistent expectations also help to foster very good behaviour. In the few cases where pupils have particular behavioural difficulties, individual education plans are used successfully. A few older pupils with behavioural problems are given special responsibilities, such as helping in the dining room, in order to raise their self-esteem and promote their social development.
47. Good procedures are in place for dealing with any incidents of bullying which might occur. With guidance from the school, some Year 6 pupils have formed an Anti-bullying Council and help to sort out the typical 'fallings out' amongst younger children which occur in any playground. There is a high level of racial harmony and no evidence of racial harassment. The previous inspection report criticised lunchtime supervision in the junior playground; at the pre-inspection meeting some parents expressed similar concerns. Inspection evidence indicates that there is no longer any foundation for these concerns. The school has taken effective action to improve playground behaviour, for example, by reorganising the play areas, purchasing playground equipment, increasing the number of lunchtime supervisors and giving them training. Pupils play together harmoniously and enjoy playing with the play equipment. Lunchtime organisers provide very good care for pupils and there are good procedures for dealing with playground incidents and accidents. The level of commitment which lunchtime supervisors show to their job can be judged by the fact that several are taking evening classes in sign language so that they can communicate more effectively with deaf pupils.
48. The school has very good procedures for helping children to settle happily in the nursery and in the reception classes and parents speak highly of these. Further good procedures are in place for ensuring health and safety and an annual risk assessment of the premises and school procedures is carried out. The governors' premises committee is closely involved in monitoring safety. Both school and parents are concerned about the crumbling and uneven surface of the back playground. Inspection of the playground confirmed that the surface is a health and safety risk. The school has effective child protection procedures. The deputy headteacher is the named person for child protection and she ensures that all staff are familiar with procedures.

### Pupils with special educational needs

49. The care and support of pupils with special educational needs is very good. Teachers and learning support assistants know the pupils they work with well. The school's values are well reflected in the way that pupils with special educational needs are given opportunities to take part in all school activities. Their contributions are valued highly and their achievements are well recognised. This is particularly true for those pupils who have statements of special educational need, including those with physical disabilities, and ensures that these pupils make very good progress. There are good procedures for the identification of pupils with special educational needs, which was an area of weakness reported in the previous OFSTED inspection. Their needs are quickly identified when they enter the school, and their placement on the register for pupils with special educational needs is appropriate. Good records are kept of pupils' progress as they move through the school, and this helps the pupils' new teacher to gain a quick grasp of their particular difficulties. There is good liaison with outside agencies, which provide valuable support.

### Attendance

50. Since the last inspection the school has worked hard to improve attendance through a number of measures. These include first day calls made to parents to check on unexplained absence; letters reminding parents of the importance of regular attendance when their child's attendance falls below 90%; certificates awarded for good attendance; headteacher interviews with parents who take their children on extended holidays, and the involvement of the educational welfare officer in cases of persistent absence. However, despite these useful measures, the school recognises that it has not yet succeeded in convincing all parents of the importance of regular attendance to their children's progress. Overall, the monitoring of attendance is satisfactory but the school should consider ways in which it can monitor attendance even more closely, including monitoring by racial origin. The school uses a late book to monitor latecomers and sends letters to the parents of regular latecomers to remind them of the importance of punctuality. However, there is no evidence that the school's efforts to improve punctuality have brought about any significant improvement.

### The effectiveness of the school's educational and personal support and guidance in raising pupils' achievements

51. The school population is exceptionally diverse and has a wide range of needs. The school closely monitors the achievement and attainment of different groups in the school in order to identify specific issues. As a result, appropriate support is given. The school values the good links it has with a wide range of external agencies and uses these very effectively to support pupils and raise their achievements. The numerous support staff are deployed well and provide skilled support for the pupils in their care.
52. A major strength of the school is the way in which it uses the diversity of its community to promote tolerance and understanding and thus pupils' personal development. These principles permeate everything it does and are promoted particularly effectively by means of assemblies and through personal and social education lessons. The school awards 'Golden Star Awards' for special effort or achievement in any area of school life and this helps to make pupils feel valued and to motivate them.



### Assessing pupils' progress

53. The procedures for assessing pupils' performance have improved considerably since the last inspection and they are now good. A formal testing programme has been put in place to assess the pupils against national expectations and this is yielding useful information for following the performance of pupils as they move through the school. In addition, the school also makes good use of other tests, for example, to identify pupils who may need extra provision or have special educational needs. The very thorough analysis of National Curriculum test results is having a very significant impact on the school's curriculum provision and the quality of its teaching through the identification of areas in need of development. However, the formal assessment programme does not extend to all subjects and in some, notably information and communication technology, there are still no established systems for assessing the progress of pupils.
54. The use the school makes of assessment information to guide its planning is much improved since the last inspection and there is some very good practice in some classes. However, there is still variation in the consistency and effectiveness with which the teachers use assessment information. There are some examples of very good practice, such as in a Year 2 science lesson when a teacher made excellent use of previous assessment to check present understanding at the start of the lesson. In another class some very astute notes about pupils' learning in English indicated what needed doing and when it would be done. The assessments of progress made by pupils for whom English as an additional language are very detailed and accurate. They play a very important part in helping staff to devise programmes for learning which help these pupils make good progress. In English, mathematics and science there are agreed systems for collecting and using on-going assessment information but in other subjects the use of assessment to guide planning is less well established.
55. The marking of the pupils' work has undergone some recent development and most teachers now make very good use of marking for assessment purposes. Some very good practice was seen where the teachers' comments told pupils what they could do well and what they needed to do to improve. The best examples of good marking link closely to the objectives for the lesson and are also used very well to involve the pupils in assessing their own progress against the targets set for them. The use of individual and group targets is a recent initiative and their impact on the progress of pupils has yet to be evaluated.

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

#### Parents' and carers views of the school

56. Parents and carers strongly support the school. The parents' questionnaire reveals parents' high level of confidence in almost all aspects of the school's work, particularly in the good teaching, leadership and communication. Parents are confident that their children are making good progress, both academically and in personal development. The parents' questionnaire and parents' meeting reveal that the only aspect of the school's work about which a substantial minority of parents has concerns is homework provision. Some parents consider that there are inconsistencies in the quality of homework and that it does not always play a significant part in enhancing pupils' learning. The school has sent a draft copy of its homework policy to all parents and has invited their comments. Overall the provision

of homework is judged to be satisfactory although there is some inconsistency between year groups in the homework provided.

#### The effectiveness of the school's links with parents and carers

57. The school communicates well with parents. A well-presented and informative prospectus ensures that parents are kept well informed about school news and events. Parents particularly appreciate the good day-to-day communication they have with their children's teachers; this enables them to discuss any problems which may arise and to keep an eye on their children's progress. Parents also appreciate the introductory meetings held for parents of nursery and reception children. A recent workshop on numeracy was well attended by parents. A bilingual member of staff helps very effectively by communicating in Urdu where this is necessary. Parents are invited to special assemblies and these are popular, well-attended events. The special Eid assembly was attended by almost a hundred parents from all communities. Annual written reports on pupils' progress are good. For numeracy and literacy, they give clear and full information about what pupils can and cannot do. Clear and precise targets for development are linked to the weaknesses outlined. However, except at the end of Years 2 and 6, attainment is not evaluated in relation to national expectations.

#### The impact of parents' and carers' involvement with the work of the school

58. An effective partnership exists between home and school. Most parents of younger pupils regularly hear their children read and the school encourages this through the provision of home reading booklets and by meetings for parents about how to support reading, including successful story workshops held by the nursery teacher. A thriving Parent, Teacher and Friends of Alma Park Group holds social and fund raising events. The annual summer fair raises a substantial amount of money which is well spent on resources such as computer software and playground equipment. Parents have helped by painting some of the school corridors and some parents help with visits or by hearing readers. The school invites parents and grandparents with special knowledge, for example, about the war or about their customs, to share this with pupils.

#### Pupils with special educational needs

59. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are well involved in supporting their children's learning. They are informed as soon as the school has concerns and they are consulted in all procedures. Parents are kept well aware of the school's targets for their child, and meet staff regularly to discuss how much progress is being made. Parents of pupils with physical disabilities speak highly of the way their children develop confidence as they are integrated into to all aspects of school life.

## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

### Leadership provided by the headteacher and other school staff

60. The leadership and management of the head teacher and key staff are excellent and are significant factors in the school's improvement since the last inspection. The headteacher has a clear view of what can be achieved at the school and central to this is the provision of high quality teaching to promote improving standards. The headteacher is keen to ensure that all pupils receive a wide and rich variety of experiences in order to develop their interests and to encourage positive relationships. As a result, a feeling of care and concern is evident upon entry to the school; pupils are very well behaved and demonstrate a mature and sensitive attitude towards the needs of others; there is a high degree of mutual tolerance and respect; racial harmony is exemplary.
61. The headteacher takes great care to include all staff in decision making. This has encouraged staff to work as a team, stimulated levels of motivation and set a very strong sense of common purpose. Members of teaching and support staff have clearly defined roles and responsibilities, which are understood by all. Staff feel secure, supported and valued. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work very well together and have complementary skills and duties that ensure success in the day-to-day organisation and management of the school. The deputy headteacher is the co-ordinator for special educational needs and does not have responsibility for teaching a class full-time. This arrangement affords both senior staff the opportunity to hold a very good overview of the work in school through direct contact with classroom practice. They lead a senior management team that includes co-ordinators for both the five to seven and the seven to 11 age groups. Although the present members of this team have only been working together since September, the team functions very well. As a result, staff are given a strong lead and are kept well informed about major issues for school improvement. Subject co-ordinators manage their subjects effectively. They show a good understanding of subject strengths and weaknesses and they help to devise strategies which are leading to improvements.
62. The school's aim of raising standards and improving educational provision and the quality of teaching is strongly reflected in its work. Effective systems to monitor pupils' progress and to evaluate the quality of teaching have been introduced since the last inspection. The headteacher and deputy headteacher check the quality of teaching in lessons and provide very useful feedback to staff observed. The school analyses pupil data and test results effectively. This is well used to identify particular areas for improving standards, for example, in relation to the standards attained by boys in writing. The school is developing a system which indicates pupil gains in learning and highlights the fact that the vast majority of pupils are meeting the targets set by the school. For example, school targets for 2000 in national tests for eleven-year-old pupils have been met in English and exceeded in mathematics.

63. The school has very successfully addressed all the key issues arising from the last inspection. This builds upon the progress noted in the OFSTED monitoring visit in February, 2000. It is also reflected in the views of parents. The vast majority of parents returning the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that the school was well led and managed. Those at the pre-inspection meeting for parents endorsed this, speaking very highly of the successful impact of school leadership in all aspects of school life.

#### Leadership provided by the governing body

64. The governing body gives full support to the school and governors are fully aware of the school's strengths and the areas in need of development. Governors deploy themselves well in order to ensure that their statutory responsibilities are fully met. They have monitored the improvement in arrangements for collective worship and statutory requirements are now fully met in this area. The school development plan is a comprehensive document and sets a clear agenda for school improvement, identifying very accurately the major areas for improvement. It is the result of a thorough consultation process between school and governors. Governors are well informed and this enables fruitful discussion to take place upon issues that the school needs to address. The chair and vice-Chair provide good leadership for the governing body. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities well.

#### The management of special educational needs

65. The management of the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs is good, and much improved since the previous inspection, when this was identified as a weakness. The co-ordinator carries out her responsibilities effectively and efficiently, and teachers value the quality of the support she provides. She has helped the school to address the issues from the previous inspection very well, providing training and guidance to teachers which have led to significant improvements in the assessment of pupils, the formation of their individual plans and the keeping check on their progress. The school fully meets the requirements of the code of practice for special educational needs. The governor responsible for special educational needs has a good involvement in the work of the school. A very good supply of teaching assistants, who are well qualified, have a significant role to play in pupils' progress. There is a good range of resources to support the learning of pupils with special educational needs, including useful computer programs to support their work in literacy and numeracy.

#### Staffing, accommodation and resources for learning

66. The school is well staffed. Staff are suitably qualified and experienced to ensure that the National Curriculum is fully implemented throughout the school. Procedures for introducing new staff into the school are good. Procedures for newly qualified teachers are particularly effective.

67. Accommodation is satisfactory for the number of pupils currently in school. Good, spacious provision in the computer suite aids pupils' learning. Outdoor provision is satisfactory. However, attention needs to be given to deterioration of playground surfaces, especially for the seven to 11 year old pupils, where the poor quality of the surface represents a potential safety hazard. Learning resources are good for pupils aged from five to 11 in mathematics, information and communication technology and physical education, and in mathematics for children in the foundation stage of learning. In other subjects, resources are at least satisfactory and improving. Funding for learning resources, previously very low, has improved recently. The school library has been substantially improved by the acquisition of over £6,000 worth of new books.

#### Financial management

68. The school has faced severe financial problems in recent years, largely due to extended staff absence. The governing body has faced this situation very realistically although as a result, spending on resources to support learning has had to be limited until recently. Governors' prudent financial management means that the large budget deficit which the school has carried in recent years has been quickly reduced and will have become a small surplus by the end of the current financial year. Spending on resources for learning has now improved to satisfactory levels. Good investment has been made in equipment for ICT. The governing body makes every effort to secure best value in its spending decisions. An example of this is the way in which great care was taken to secure a range of options for ICT support for teachers before a decision was made as to the best option for the school.

#### Improvement since the previous inspection

69. The school has successfully addressed all the key issues arising from the previous inspection. Some of these key issues are now strengths of the school. This is particularly true in terms of leadership and management of the school. The headteacher leads the school very effectively and is very well supported by the deputy headteacher, governors and a hard working staff who strive continually to improve the quality of educational provision for pupils and the standards that they achieve. At the time of the previous inspection statutory requirements in collective worship were not being met. The school has subsequently produced two documents which set out a pattern of class and school based assemblies that meets statutory requirements and meets with governors' approval.

#### The value for money provided by the school

70. The cost of educating pupils at the school is well above the average for primary schools nationally. However, taking into account the good quality of teaching, the very good level of behaviour and positive attitudes of pupils, the continuing improvement of standards and the excellent provision for ensuring that all pupils have equal opportunity in their education, the school gives good value for money. This is a significant improvement on the previous inspection, where the school was judged to give unsatisfactory value for money.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

71. In order to continue its good rate of improvement, the school should

### **Raise standards in writing and numeracy at ages seven and 11 to at least national average levels by:**

#### In writing

- developing further and sharpening its analysis of pupils' performance at ages five to seven so that great detail of information is available;
- using this information to help it in its targeting of individual pupils for improvement;
- further developing teachers' ability to help pupils' improve the quality of their writing in the five to seven year old age group, especially with regard to sentence structure and choice of words;
- developing strategies to improve the quality of pupils' spelling in the seven to 11 age group.

*(The main references to this issue can be found in paragraphs 98; 101; 106)*

#### In numeracy

- Providing more opportunities throughout all year groups for pupils' to be involved in solving mathematical problems;
- Helping pupils to develop more independent skills of problem-solving;
- using the plenary sessions in numeracy lessons more consistently as a means of making pupils aware of their achievements and areas for further work;
- Using homework more consistently throughout the school;
- Making teachers' marking of work more consistent across the school.

*(The main references to this issue can be found in paragraphs 109; 111; 115)*

### **Raise standards in science at age seven to at least national average levels by**

- devising ways to help pupils improve their ability to classify and record their scientific observations so that they communicate their findings and interpret their meaning more accurately.

*(The main references to this issue can be found in paragraphs 118; 123)*

### **Improve the rate of attendance by:**

- Raising awareness amongst different groups within the local community of the importance of regular attendance.

*(The main references to this issue can be found in paragraphs 20-21; 50)*

## Other areas which the governing body may wish to consider for inclusion in its action plan

- To make provision of homework more consistent between year groups.  
(*paragraph 39*)
- To improve the state of repair of the playground used by pupils aged from seven to 11.  
(*paragraph 67*)

## **OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES**

### **Provision for pupils speaking English as an additional language**

72. The current provision for pupils with English as an additional language is very well organised and the support provided is a strength of the school. The school puts very strong and effective emphasis on the development of English for pupils for whom English is an additional language and, as a result, they make good progress. The management of the bilingual provision within the school is very good. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Since that time, the Section 11 grant for funding this provision has been re-designated as the Ethnic Minorities and Travellers Achievement Grant (EMTAG). The current funding from this source is used very effectively to employ the full time equivalent of 1.0 teacher, together with a bilingual assistant. From time to time, the school also employs additional interpreters to support the learning of refugee or asylum seeking pupils; this funding is from the same source and is also used very effectively. The school is also involved in initiatives within the local area to increase parental and community awareness.
73. The teachers and bilingual assistant are appropriately qualified and experienced and they work in close partnership with teachers, sharing responsibility for planning, evaluating and teaching. A strength of the school is the manner in which the curriculum is taught through a 'team teaching' approach when English as an additional language is featured. During this process, class teachers are developing their own knowledge and understanding and skills in bi-lingual provision and it also ensures that pupils have full access to the National Curriculum and religious education. This has a positive impact on their acquisition of language skills in English as well as their levels of attainment in all areas of the curriculum.
74. The attainment of most pupils on entry to the nursery is well below that normally seen in pupils of their age. Overall levels of attainment by the end of the foundation stage are below the national expectation for this age group and a similar situation applies at the end of Key Stage 1. By the end of Key Stage 2, whilst attainment levels are still below average in English and mathematics, attainment in science is broadly in line with that seen nationally. Despite the bilingual support provided, a small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language experience difficulty in reading with understanding and with writing. Generally, however, standards broadly match those expected nationally for seven and 11 year-olds. In mathematics, pupils have difficulty understanding subject-specific vocabulary in problem solving; in science lessons, even though attainment is improved by the age of 11, pupils are dependent on further explanation by the teacher or support assistant. There is no significant difference in the levels of attainment between pupils from different minority racial backgrounds.
75. Through good emphasis on language development in all activities and the effective use of bi-lingual staff where appropriate, pupils soon gain confidence in speaking in

large and small groups. As a result, their rate of learning in lessons is usually good. Progress from entering school at age five to leaving at the age of eleven is good in all subjects and most pupils achieve better than average in relation to their previous learning. Progress and subsequent attainment are affected to a considerable degree by extended holidays abroad, especially when the return to school happens just before pupils are due to sit their National Curriculum tests. Another major factor impacting upon levels of attainment is the significant minority of pupils for whom English as an additional language who enter or leave school during the year. Such pupils join the school late in an age group or leave to go to another school midway through an academic year. For example, since the start of the current academic year, 72 percent of the 56 new entrants to the school qualify for EMTAG and, of these, 60 percent are on the school's special educational needs register.

76. All bi-lingual pupils entering the school at any stage are carefully assessed. Further assessments are carried out half-termly and targets for learning are set appropriately. This records pupils' achievements as they progress through the school; it is also passed on to subsequent schools as appropriate. This close attention to assessing pupils' progress helps teachers and support staff to devise and teach learning programmes that are very well suited to pupils' needs. Most support is provided in the classroom but extra support is given where needs demand. Great care is taken to distinguish pupils who have language difficulties and those whose special educational needs are masked by language inadequacy. The school has tried several different strategies over recent months to counteract the effect of the factors mentioned previously which have a negative impact on standards of attainment. These have included 'Extended Holiday' packs for pupils to take away with them. Currently, pupils returning from these journeys, receive additionally focused support to enable them to catch up on their learning. Thorough analysis conducted by the school indicates conclusively that where a pupil supported through EMTAG has completed all phases of education within the school progress is mostly good and at times very good, with standards matching those found nationally.

### **The Provision for Hearing Impaired Pupils**

77. The provision for hearing impaired pupils is very good, as it was in the previous OFSTED inspection. It is a significant strength of the school. The quality of teaching and learning for these pupils is mostly good, with a significant proportion very good. Because of this, pupils make very good progress in developing their skills and confidence. Teachers have very good signing skills, which they supplement effectively with gestures and facial expression. This gives pupils the best chance of understanding the work given to them, and accounts for their particularly good progress in communicating with others. Lessons are demanding, but pitched at just the right level to develop pupils' skills, whilst building up their confidence through success. Teachers are especially good at using questions to check on pupils' understanding, asking, for example, "But who do you *think* kicked the ball?" This enables them to go over concepts that pupils find difficult, ensure that firm foundations for learning are established and assess whether pupils have missed something crucial. Pupils enjoy their learning because teachers take every opportunity to praise them. All staff delight in pupils' successes, and make sure that they know it. Teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is particularly good. Teachers use lots of exciting resources in these lessons to interest pupils and maintain their pace of learning. They are careful to divide the lesson into manageable sections where pupils listen, answer question and then work on their own. This results in pupils making significant progress in every lesson.



78. A literacy lesson, which exemplified the strengths of teaching for these pupils when they are taught in separate groups, was a continuation of the previous day's lesson. The teacher started by probing pupils' memory by astute questioning to assess how much knowledge pupils had retained, and then helped pupils fill in the gaps. Pupils then started reading the new text, and grew in confidence as the teacher gave them just the right amount of help, for example, to build 'foot' and 'ball' to make 'football'. The teacher's animated style, sense of fun and excellent relationship with the pupils meant that pupils were happy to work hard throughout the lesson, until, at the end, the teacher said with a cry of triumph "Absolutely fantastic! You've done brilliantly!" and they had.
79. In class lessons, when pupils are taught alongside others of similar age, specialist staff provide very good support. They use signs to provide a clear commentary on the lesson, and assess when they have understood enough to answer teachers' questions. Class teachers are quick to ask hearing impaired pupils to contribute in this way, and this helps them fit securely into the class.
80. Pupils' progress is assessed methodically, and used well to plan future work. Pupils' annual reviews are used very well to measure progress and to set targets for the next year. Parents are an important part of this process, and speak highly of the quality of this information.
81. The specialist unit for hearing impaired pupils is an important part of the school's provision. Its success lies, not just in the progress that hearing impaired pupils make in lessons but also in the way they learn to work and play with other pupils. The school works very hard to ensure the unit's pupils are involved in all that it does, and it is no surprise that the provision here, particularly in the inclusion that it offers pupils, has such a high reputation in the area.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	86
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	37

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	30	47	22	0	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

### 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)	45	311
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	159

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	20
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	3	122

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	178

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	54
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	58

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.3
National comparative data	5.2

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	15	21	36

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	9	9	13
	Girls	15	15	19
	Total	24	24	32
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	67 (83)	67 (80)	89 (85)
	National	84 (82)	85 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	9	12	9
	Girls	15	19	18
	Total	24	31	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	67 (80)	86 (85)	75 (95)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	24	21	45

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	11	13	20
	Girls	15	12	17
	Total	26	25	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	58 (62)	56 (53)	82 (65)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	13	19
	Girls	16	15	18
	Total	28	28	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	64 (61)	64 (59)	84 (69)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	80 (75)

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

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

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	28
Black – African heritage	23
Black – other	15
Indian	4
Pakistani	134
Bangladeshi	12
Chinese	0
White	140
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	4	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	15
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.7
Average class size	28

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

Total number of education support staff	22
Total aggregate hours worked per week	532.5

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	45

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	65

Number of pupils per FTE adult	15
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	685,061
Total expenditure	622,425
Expenditure per pupil	1,785
Balance brought forward from previous year	-72,322
Balance carried forward to next year	-9,686

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	356
Number of questionnaires returned	54

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	72	28	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	78	20	2	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	61	39	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	48	30	20	0	2
The teaching is good.	85	13	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	74	19	6	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	78	20	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	76	22	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	57	35	6	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	72	26	2	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	72	22	2	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	69	22	4	2	4

### Other issues raised by parents

At the pre-inspection meeting, concern was expressed about the state of the playground used by pupils in the seven to 11 age group.

## **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**

82. On entry to the nursery class, children show a wide range of attainment but many have poorly developed skills, particularly in spoken language, mathematics and in their personal and social development. This results in attainment on entry being well below average overall and represents a change since the previous inspection, when attainment on entry was judged to be average. A major factor influencing attainment on entry has been the significant increase in the number of children starting school with poorly developed speaking skills.
83. Children begin nursery in September or January in the year in which they are four and they attend full time. They enter reception in the following year. Relationships with parents are particularly good in the nursery and this helps pupils to settle in quickly and begin learning. Useful booklets in two languages are produced to inform parents how to help pupils at home and close communication is maintained throughout the year. The work of specialist staff to support children for whom English as an additional language is particularly effective in this area. Open days have been held to show parents how children are learning mathematical and language skills.
84. The satisfactory provision for pupils in the foundation stage reported in the last inspection has improved and provision is now good. Detailed planning has been introduced to ensure that the early years curriculum is based on the six areas of learning appropriate for nursery and reception children. Short term planning has been improved and includes specific learning objectives for all the activities planned. This enables staff to focus their work sharply and effectively on developing specific skills.
85. Teaching in all the areas of learning is effective and this ensures that all pupils achieve well. During the inspection, it was good in 42 percent of lessons, very good in 32 percent and satisfactory in the remainder. Teaching in one reception class was always at least good and often it was very good. A strength of the teaching is the teamwork displayed by the teachers, nursery nurses and the support assistants as they plan, teach and evaluate activities together. They know the children well and understand their needs. Regular assessments are made of children's progress and these are used well to plan the next steps in learning. This results in children receiving work that challenges them and because of this they make good progress. The development of children's speaking skills is a teaching priority and is a major feature of all major learning activities. There is an appropriate balance between teacher directed learning and 'free choice' activities which are structured to allow pupils to develop their creative, imaginative and physical skills.
86. Children with special educational needs are identified early and are given specific support. This gives them the confidence to make good progress. Children at the early stages of learning English as an additional language receive very effective support by specialist staff who work in the school as part of the local education authority's Ethnic Minority and Travellers Achievement Service. As a result, these children quickly develop confidence in speaking English. By the end of the reception year, most pupils are in line to attain the early learning goals in four areas of learning. However in literacy and in mathematics a significant minority of pupils will not reach this standard due to their low starting point. Attainment on entry to Year 1 is below what is expected in these areas of learning. Another factor that affects attainment adversely is the comparatively high number of pupils entering both the nursery and reception classes

during the school year. These pupils often have poorly developed literacy and speaking skills.

### Personal, social and emotional development

87. The provision for personal, social and emotional development is very good. This area of learning is given a high priority by staff, who soon get to know the children well and responds to their needs. In the nursery there is a wide variation in children's development in this area and a few children show a mature degree of independence and confidence for their age. However, the vast majority of children are not at this stage. They can concentrate only for short periods in group or in class sessions and, whilst they are learning to share and take turns, many still choose to play alone. Children learn to say 'please' and 'thank you'. Routines are well established and children know what is expected of them. As a result of this and of staff's high expectations, their behaviour is good. They begin to take responsibility for themselves and others by helping to tidy up and clear away. Most of those in the reception class for older children concentrate and listen for an appropriate length of time. Children settling into the new reception class respond well to a system of rewards and sanctions and are quickly learning the routines. Almost all children are on line to achieve the learning goals expected of children this age. This is due to the skilful teaching in the nursery and reception classes which encourages children to develop their confidence and independence in a secure environment.

### Communication, language and literacy

88. On entering nursery, many pupils have poorly developed communication skills. A priority throughout the foundation stage is the development of their speaking and listening skills. All activities are planned with this in mind and key words are used to develop their vocabulary. In informal play settings, children are encouraged by staff to talk about what they are doing. The structured play areas are used well to develop spoken language. In the nursery, children listen to stories with increasing concentration and some are beginning to join in with the repeated refrains. Some pupils chose to 'read' books and know how to handle them correctly. Older pupils have more structured activities where they begin to learn the names and sounds of letters and how to write them. They practise writing their own names. The skills of early writing are developing when, for example, they 'write a postcard to mum'.
89. This good practice is carried through to reception where elements of the National Literacy Strategy are begun. During these sessions, children enjoy listening to stories and join in the reading of the 'big' book together and, as a result, some are beginning to recognise words and phrases. They like to discuss the story and what might happen. Teaching in the reception class for older children was particularly effective and some high attaining pupils have already reached the nationally expected learning goals for reading. High and average attaining children read simple books by themselves. They tackle new words confidently using sound and picture clues. Many pupils enjoy 'reading' well known stories to themselves and others and use appropriate story language. Almost all children in this class are on course to attain the expected learning goals in reading by the end of the year. Children's attainment in the younger reception class is lower. In both classrooms there are opportunities to develop writing, for example, through acting out parts, and children's early writing is developing well. Children practise line patterns and are learning to form letters correctly. High attainers are beginning to write simple sentences and to use phonic strategies to spell. One child wrote, " I got a camr and choclit." Teaching overall is good. By the time they enter Year 1 the majority of children will have achieved the

expected levels in their learning, particularly in reading, but a significant minority will not.

### Mathematical development

90. Pupils make good progress in their mathematical development and teaching is good both in nursery and reception. Number recognition and counting is taught in small groups in the nursery and assessment is used well to help staff build effectively on children's previous learning. Number songs and rhymes are used regularly to reinforce their learning and most children enjoy joining in. Sand and water play are structured to develop the concept of 'big' and 'little' and 'full' and 'empty'. As a result of these activities, children are eager to learn.
91. Through painting activities, children learn to recognise circles, squares and triangles. Aspects of the National Numeracy Strategy have been successfully introduced into the reception classes. In the class for older children, work is particularly well matched to their needs. As a result, for example, high attainers are beginning to recognise 'one more' consistently; they work accurately and confidently with numbers to ten, and they add together small groups of objects. Average pupils are beginning to understand 'altogether' and to add numbers with support. In the reception class for younger children most, but not all, are usually correct when counting three objects. The majority of children in reception will reach the nationally expected levels in their learning by the end of the year but a significant minority will not.

### Knowledge and understanding of the world

92. Provision for the development of children's knowledge and understanding of the world is good and ensures that all have a wide range of experiences that help them to develop their skills. Teaching is always at least good and sometimes it is very good. The theme for the half term is 'Water' and activities are well planned in relation to this. Good storytelling in the nursery, with the use of visual aids, gave children an understanding of how rainwater gets to our taps. In this lesson, children showed an appropriate awareness of water and its uses. Children have good opportunities to build boats using a range of materials. A group of children in the nursery were curious when watching what happened to substances in water and most could say what happened in simple terms. A high attainer predicted correctly that a cube would not dissolve because it was not 'a dissolving thing'. During the inspection, reception children were stimulated by a visit to a canal with a lock. After their visit they traced their route on a map and talked about what they had seen. Good use was made of a parent who talked to a reception class about Eid celebrations and this helped children to develop their awareness of cultural differences. When taking part in activities, children respond well to questions but rarely ask questions of their own. Despite the difficulty which children at the early stages of learning English as an additional language have in expressing themselves clearly in English, most children show an appropriate understanding and should reach the early learning goals.

### Physical development

93. The teaching of the skills for physical development is good. This results in good progress and most children will attain the expected level by the end of the reception year. Children in the nursery have access for most of the day to a secure outdoor area. This is also used daily by children from the younger reception class. Opportunities are provided for children to climb, jump and balance and, as a result, they do so with increasing confidence. They ride trikes competently. Ball skills begin



to be taught in the nursery. Children in reception are also taught gymnastics and dance. Two dance lessons were seen and these were well planned to develop the pupils' awareness of their own space. As a result, they danced with increasing confidence, imagination and safety. Older children show reasonable control as they move their bodies to make sweeping movements. They are beginning to respond expressively to music. The adults' enthusiasm for dance conveyed itself to the children and they enjoyed the lessons. Other physical skills are less well developed and some younger reception children lack control when using scissors and pencils. However, children are given regular opportunities to use pencils, paintbrushes and scissors and are taught to hold them correctly. This is helping them to develop these skills. Woodworking tools have been used well in the nursery to create collages of wood. Most children manipulate the computer mouse confidently.

### Creative development

94. Provision for creative development is good and a wide range of stimulating activities is provided to allow children to explore and create. In both nursery and reception, good quality opportunities are provided for children to act out parts, often with adult support to encourage them to play more imaginatively. Boxes and other materials are provided to allow children to make models and collages and there are opportunities provided for painting and drawing. When painting, children have experimented with adding white to create tints. All these resources and opportunities help make children positive towards learning and to make good progress in developing their skills. Children sing regularly, listen to music and play musical instruments. Older reception children can sing many songs and rhymes. They respond well to music when dancing and are beginning to recognise how sounds can be changed, for example, to create loud and quiet sounds. Most children are on target to reach the expected level in their learning, because of the good teaching they receive.

### **ENGLISH**

95. Standards attained by 11 year old pupils in National Curriculum tests have improved considerably over the past five years although they remained well below the national average level in 2000. That year, standards dipped slightly from 1999 but this was due to the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in the year group. When compared with pupils from similar schools across the country, the 2000 group of pupils attained average levels. They also made satisfactory progress in relation to their National Curriculum test scores at age seven. Work seen during the inspection in Year 6 shows that standards amongst the oldest pupils continue to improve. All groups of pupils make good progress in reading and satisfactory progress in writing. Whilst attainment remains below the nationally expected level in writing, it is now at the expected level in reading. All groups of pupils attain high enough standards in their work.
96. Standards of work seen at age seven show a similar picture. Pupils are attaining the nationally expected standard in reading but are achieving below the expected standard in writing. Most pupils start Year 1 with below average levels of attainment. They make good progress in reading and satisfactory progress in writing. The standards they attain by the age of seven are high enough in relation to their previous learning. Compared with pupils from similar schools nationally, pupils at Alma Park attain average standards. Girls do better than boys in their tests both at age seven and age 11. Whilst this reflects the national picture, the school has rightly identified it as a priority for improvement and is addressing the problem in several ways, for example, by considering boys' reading habits closely when buying books.

97. In reading, pupils of all attainments achieve the standards they should throughout the school. As many pupils, start Year 1 with below average attainment, this represents good progress. By the age of seven, most average attaining pupils read with understanding and can predict with reasonable accuracy 'what will happen next'. High attaining pupils know the difference between 'fiction' and 'non-fiction' whilst even those with lower attainment put expression into their reading. By the age of 11, most pupils read accurately and with understanding whilst a few are very fluent readers and are very knowledgeable about books. For example, one girl compared the style of writing in 'Harry Potter' with that of 'The Hobbit', making very perceptive comments about this. Pupils of all attainments know how to find information in reference books, using an index or contents. The good progress and the improvement in standards of reading are due largely to good teaching during literacy lessons and also to the way in which teachers and parents work so well together to encourage pupils to read at home as well as in school. This leads pupils to enjoy books and hence to practise and develop their reading skills. This was evident in the range of authors popular with Year 6 pupils. These included C. S. Lewis, J. Wilson, J.K. Rowling, U. Guin and J. R. R. Tolkein.
98. In writing, standards are below average by age seven but pupils make satisfactory progress throughout Years 1 and 2. By the age of seven, most pupils spell simple words accurately. Their handwriting is usually well formed and easy to read although often it is not joined script. Most write stories and accounts made up of sequences of ideas but few are more adventurous, for example, in the way they construct their sentences and in the language they use. Very few descriptive words are used when pupils write their own stories. Quite common words are often misspelt, an example being 'babby' instead of 'baby'. By age 11, pupils' attainment is still a little below average but teachers have made great improvements in the standards being attained. Many in the present Year 6 produce lively, well-structured work. High attaining pupils really know how to 'grab the reader's attention' with an interesting starts to paragraphs, including, 'Oh, by the way ....' and, 'You should have seen the look on my face ....!' Spelling skills are not yet quite up to the standard of punctuation, however, and this brings down the overall standard of work for many pupils. A further factor that prevents standards from being at average levels this year is the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in the group. These pupils work hard and achieve well but not always to nationally expected levels.
99. Standards in speaking and listening are at the expected levels at ages seven and 11. With 50 percent of pupils speaking English as an additional language, this represents good progress, especially from age five to seven. Teachers have high expectations of the accuracy of pupils' replies. Questioning in lessons encourages extended responses rather than single word replies.
100. A small minority of pupils in Year 6 are gifted in literacy skills. Very challenging teaching ensures that they achieve well, with some being on target to attain standards more commonly associated with thirteen year olds. The school's policy of grouping pupils by ability for literacy lessons in Years 5 and 6 works very well in enabling teachers to provide work at just the right level of challenge for pupils' attainments. This is evident for gifted and high attaining pupils but also for those with special educational needs.
101. Teaching of literacy is good. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils should achieve. The way in which they use questions to draw out meaning and develop pupils' understanding is particularly effective. In a Year 6 lesson, high attaining pupils

were really forced to think about how an author induced a certain sense of emotion. The teacher asked, "What *exactly* does the author do to engage us in feeling this way?" When pupils replied reasonably well, she exhorted them to look more closely until they really pinpointed the technique. At this point, she praised their efforts greatly – just one example of the way teachers establish very good relationships in lessons. In lessons where pupils of different attainment are grouped together, teachers plan work that matches pupils' attainment. As a result, pupils are challenged to learn. Those of lower attainment and those with special educational needs are very well supported by teaching assistants. The high quality of this support is a major strength of the teaching, enabling pupils of all attainments to achieve well. For example, in a Year 3 /4 lesson, a hearing impaired pupil was kept in close touch with the lesson and was able to develop her reading and writing skills through very effective signing by a specialist teacher. A pupil with physical disability was helped to work very enthusiastically when his support assistant wrote down ideas which he expressed orally. This good teaching results in pupils working hard and productively in literacy lessons. As a result, they learn well. Very occasionally, in the five to seven age group, the teacher takes rather long to settle pupils during whole class sessions and this results in less progress than usual being made. Teaching of spelling is generally satisfactory but does not consistently lead to improvements in pupils' written work.

102. Teachers assess pupils' progress very closely and effectively in lessons. This helps them to set challenging targets for improvement for individual pupils and groups of pupils. For example, a teacher's planning in Year 1 provided very accurate weekly evaluations of pupils' progress, with written comments about additional support needed. Marking of work focuses clearly upon what is needed to improve standards. The marking in Years 2 and 6 is particularly strong. In Year 2, frequent reference is made to pupils' individual targets for improvement whilst in Year 6 the marking is filled with evidence of high expectations, even in the use of technical terms such as 'parentheses' and 'connectives', which pupils are clearly expected to understand. The evidence of pupils' response is seen in the good quality of their work.
103. Teachers make good use of other subjects to help pupils develop their skills of reading and writing. For example, pupils in Year 2 wrote in their own words to compare past and present at the seaside as part of their work in history. Those in Year 5 wrote letters from the point of view of an evacuee in World War 2 whilst those in Year 5/6 were challenged to develop their reading skills through studying a written translation of biblical texts in religious education. In Year 1 science, a good level of challenge was provided for high attaining pupils when the teacher set extra written questions for them following investigations to develop their understanding of sound. This challenge was made all the better when the teacher focused pupils' attention sharply on what was needed – and not needed:

"There's no need for colouring in – we're doing science. Think about how to answer the questions!"

As a result, the pupils produced well-written answers.

104. The previous inspection identified many weaknesses in English. These have been addressed rigorously and effectively. The way in which test data is analysed, particularly in relation to 11 year olds, has helped the school identify very accurately just what needs to be improved. This has been followed by the development of well-designed strategies for improvement. The analysis of test data for seven year olds is not yet quite as detailed and does not contribute to improvement quite as effectively as that for 11 year olds. The number and quality of books has been improved, helping

to stimulate pupils' interest in reading. Very good attention is paid to helping teachers develop their professional skills. The subject co-ordinator has a very accurate understanding of what needs improving and of how to go about it. All this results in a strong and effective focus on improvement throughout the school, which is having a strong impact upon raising standards.

## **MATHEMATICS**

105. Pupils' attainment by the age of seven and 11 is below average. However, there is a clear trend of rising standards, which have exceeded national trends in the past five years. The 2000 National Curriculum test results for 11 year olds were well below the national average but were average for schools in similar circumstances. The percentage of pupils achieving the higher grades in the tests was also well below the national average. Taken over the last three years, attainment at the age of 11 was below the national average. However, in relation to their previous learning, pupils are achieving high enough levels. Results of national tests in 2000 show that at the age of seven, standards were below the national average but in relation to similar schools pupils achieved above average standards. Taking into account pupils' lower than average attainment at the start of Year 1, these results indicate satisfactory progress. A significant factor in explaining below average attainment at ages seven and 11 is that many of the pupils did not start their education at this school. The school's detailed analyses show that the attainment of many was lower than those whose places they took. The previous inspection judged pupils' attainment at 11 to be well below the average and at seven below average when compared to national standards. The school has made good improvement since then, particularly in raising standards at age 11 at a higher rate than found nationally.
106. A key issue from the previous inspection required the school to improve the general rate of progress and improve the overall attainment across the curriculum of pupils of above average attainment. The school has been generally successful in meeting this requirement. The recent practices of grouping pupils in Years 5 and 6 by attainment and the setting of individual targets for learning are effective means of improving the mathematical knowledge of all pupils and of extending the knowledge of high attainers. A higher number of pupils, than in previous years, are expected now to reach Level 5 in the national tests for age 11 this summer. Inspection evidence indicates that the school has high but realistic expectations in this regard.
107. By the age of seven, most pupils have a sound knowledge of the value of numbers and where they should be placed on a number line. Pupils in Year 2 were seen counting in groups of 10s confidently but counting in 2s and 5s is less secure and only high attainers know some multiplication tables off by heart. Many pupils have a sound understanding of tens and units. From early skills in counting in the reception classes, pupils in Year 1 learn the pairs of numbers that make 10, while pupils in Year 2 carry out simple addition and subtraction calculations. However, they generally struggle with strategies involving known number facts to aid calculations. For example, when adding  $12+6+8$  few pupils were able to pair together the appropriate numbers to aid quick calculation. Most pupils can identify common two-dimensional shapes and high attainers recognise a shape from a list of its properties. Pupils have a sound mathematical vocabulary.
108. By the age of 11, most pupils understand place value to 1,000. They use a variety of written and mental computations accurately, involving addition, subtraction and multiplication. They know how to work accurately with percentages, decimals and simple fractions. Pupils' progress in Year 6 is being improved dramatically in

numeracy through rigorous teaching of mental skills and good support by a specialist teacher. A significant number of pupils in the seven to 11 age range do not know enough number facts by heart and their speed of mental recall is slow. Some pupils in Years 3 and 4 find difficulty in recalling multiplication tables fluently; they count in their head in single digits. In Years 5 and 6, pupils find difficulty in explaining their methods of computation and some cannot confidently demonstrate the relationship between multiplication and division. Overall, pupils' understanding of measure, shape and data handling is satisfactory. Pupils use computers satisfactorily to help them record data.

109. The National Numeracy Strategy is being implemented effectively throughout the school. Teachers make very good use of its objectives for their lesson plans. As a result, pupils focus closely on what they should be learning. Pupils' understanding of mathematical vocabulary is well developed mainly because it is used to good effect by the teachers in lesson introductions. However, there are still too few opportunities for pupils' to solve mathematical problems. The presentation of pupils' work is good.
110. The quality of teaching in mathematics is good overall. Where the teaching is very good, pupils are clearly informed of the learning objectives for that lesson, there is pace and the teachers communicate strongly to all the pupils an enthusiasm and expectancy of success in a supportive environment. The quality of questioning is high, allowing pupils time for thought to explain their methods of calculation. Pupils and teachers are involved in mathematical dialogues. Throughout lessons, teachers assess pupils' work closely and set challenging work, resulting in very good progress. For example, in a Year 3|4 lesson, pupils, when demonstrating competence in doubling two digit numbers, were quickly challenged to work with three digit numbers. Similarly in a Year 6 oral session on fractions, high quality questioning and activities significantly advanced pupils' agility in number handling. Most pupils responded to the challenge and enjoyed working hard. This good level of challenge results in good behaviour and attitudes to mathematics. Pupils work independently without the need for adult supervision, working co-operatively in pairs and groups. Relationships are very good and set a positive atmosphere where pupils can join in class discussions with confidence.
111. Common features of the good teaching are good subject knowledge, well prepared lessons where the Numeracy Strategy is used as a basis for planning, sharing the objectives with pupils and making good use of the sessions at the end of the lesson to assess learning and point up future goals. Where teaching is occasionally less effective, lesson objectives are too complex; explanations are unclear, resulting in some pupils not always understanding the task and becoming bored and restless. Also, the plenary session at the end of the lesson is not always used effectively to provide pupils with sufficient information on what they have learnt and about areas requiring further development. On these occasions pupils' progress is limited. Overall, however, progress in mathematics is good.
112. Pupils with special educational needs are supported effectively, especially by means of grouping by ability for lessons in Years 5 and 6. Pupils who have English as an additional language also make good progress resulting from teachers' awareness and skills in ensuring these pupils understand the key language and concepts. Target setting, both class and individual, is an effective feature in helping to raise standards. Staff have a good knowledge of pupils' standards in mathematics and extra lessons are used to improve the performance of low attainers. There is very effective use of additional staff who skillfully support the diverse needs of all pupils. Teamwork is of a high quality, all staff working very well together.

113. Where homework is given it is effectively re-inforcing learning. However, the use of homework throughout the school is still inconsistent although improving. Marking of work is of a good quality with constructive comments in Years 5 and 6 but is only satisfactory in other year groups, where such comments are sometimes not as well focused on improvement.
114. Pupils develop their skills of numeracy in other subjects satisfactorily at both key stages. There are examples of work on data handling in science and geography. There is also symmetry and tessellation work in art and religious education. A limited amount of evidence is available to show that pupils are using information technology to help them develop their mathematical skills.
115. The mathematics curriculum is well planned. Comprehensive long, medium and short term planning ensures that pupils make good progress as they move through the school. The co-ordinator works closely with the headteacher, key stage co-ordinators, school improvement officers and the local authority mathematics advisor. This good partnership contributes strongly to the raising of standards throughout the school. There is regular checking of teachers' planning and monitoring of teaching, helping to ensure good quality of practice. Assessment procedures are good. There is a good range of resources, which are well organised and easily accessible to staff.

## **SCIENCE**

116. National Curriculum tests results for 11 year olds in 2000 show that standards were very close to those expected nationally and a significant minority of pupils are working beyond these levels. This is a much better picture than at the time of the previous inspection, when many pupils were achieving standards well below the national expectation for their age. At the age of seven, teacher assessments fewer pupils achieve the expected levels for their age than those found nationally, particularly in the part of the subject concerned with scientific enquiry. However, a significant number of pupils are reaching standards that are above those expected for their age. Work seen during the inspection confirms the 2000 test results and the continuing good rate of improvement.
117. By the end of Year 6, pupils have built up a good fund of knowledge about the different areas of science they study and have acquired a very good scientific vocabulary which the majority use accurately in appropriate contexts. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils displayed particularly good knowledge of how some materials change in state and they used the correct scientific vocabulary to talk about these changes. The pupils' scientific enquiry skills have improved since the last inspection but they are still less well developed than other parts of the subject, particularly when pupils are required to interpret the data they have collected in order to answer a question they have been investigating. The pupils make simple predictions about what they think will happen in investigations but they are not good at explaining their ideas. They are able to use a satisfactory range of standard measurement and can record their data in charts and graphs but only a few pupils are able to carry out this work independently and with precision.
118. By the end of Year 2, the pupils are developing a secure fund of knowledge about their environment and how it functions. They are good at making observations, in simple terms, about the materials and events they investigate and can name some common characteristics of familiar materials, sometimes using the correct scientific words. However, their ability to classify and record these observations is less well developed

and most pupils need high levels of support in order to communicate their findings and interpret their meaning.

119. The teaching was never less than good in all the lessons seen during the inspection and in one third of the lessons it was very good. The high quality of teaching and the secure subject knowledge displayed by the teachers are strong contributing factors to the significantly improving standards since the time of the last inspection. Teachers throughout the school have high expectations of their pupils and make these known to the pupils. They manage lessons very well and use very appropriate teaching strategies and styles that engage their pupils and command their attention. This creates a very positive climate for learning in which pupils are enabled to make good progress. Wherever possible, pupils are given opportunities to be involved in appropriately challenging practical activities that are effective in supporting their factual learning. For example, a Year 2 class learned about the sense of taste by tasting a well-chosen variety of food samples.
120. Some teachers use plenary sessions very effectively to check on learning in the lesson and to revise and extend learning in preparation for the next lesson. Many pupils in Years 3 and 4 are better at talking about their science understanding than they are at writing it down. An excellent plenary discussion in a Year 4 class helped to overcome this problem by enabling pupils to clarify their thinking about the characteristics of solids and liquids. The teacher further challenged their ideas by asking them to think about the nature of sand and rice grains.
121. All teachers use well directed questioning to check their pupils' existing knowledge and build on previous learning. In a Year 6 lesson, the teacher used some very high quality questioning to great effect to correct misapprehensions, to confirm and extend the pupils' existing knowledge and vocabulary and to prepare them very well for new learning.
122. A very good feature of every lesson is the provision made by teachers for the wide range of learning needs in their classes. High attaining pupils are appropriately challenged at a higher level of learning. The language needs of those pupils whose first language is not English are taken into account. Signers are used very effectively to support pupils with hearing impairment and pupils with physical disabilities are supported very well by specialist staff.
123. Although there is an appropriate level of practical work in the science teaching, opportunities are sometimes missed to practise and extend pupils' enquiry skills within the context of their factual learning. For example, where pupils were required to make close observations of materials or events, they could have been asked to classify the results into simple categories. Their observations could have been systematically recorded in tables or charts so that comparisons could be made and conclusions drawn, rather than simply writing about what they did.
124. The scheme of work for the subject, introduced in September 2000, uses an adapted version of national guidelines and makes good provision for the range of learning needs within the school. It provides a secure basis for ensuring that all areas of science are taught effectively. The school has already identified the need for greater emphasis in the area of scientific enquiry and the scheme has increased the provision for this area. The subject is well managed and satisfactorily resourced. The two co-ordinators work together well as a team and have a good understanding of how to develop the subject further. The various strategies put in place to improve standards, for example, structured revision and science booster classes, have

proved to be very effective. The co-ordinators have begun to monitor the teachers' planning and standards in the subject to good effect but their role has not yet been extended to monitoring the lessons. The use of information and communication technology is inadequate at present but has been correctly identified as a priority for development.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

125. During the inspection it was only possible to observe a small number of art lessons. However, taking into account other evidence, including a scrutiny of pupils' previous work and discussions with pupils and staff, standards are judged to be in line with expectations for pupils aged seven and 11. Most pupils attain the expected standards with a substantial minority at levels above this. Standards have been maintained despite the changes that have taken place in the curriculum since the last inspection and this is mainly the result of confidence of the teachers both in subject knowledge and the methods used.
126. By the age of seven, pupils have made satisfactory progress in their skills and understanding of art and design. They successfully learn a wide range of techniques and incorporate this knowledge into imaginative and lively work. Pupils have been investigating materials and exploring collage techniques. Younger pupils paint boldly using vibrant colours reflecting their interests in plants and houses. There are good cross-curricular links and these serve to reinforce and enhance pupils' work in many curriculum areas. Year 1 pupils have made papier mache masks of the main characters from the overture 'Peter and the wolf' as part of their work in music. Year 2 pupils have used clay to make Islamic tiles following a visit to a mosque. These older pupils create effective displays using a range of natural materials. They talk confidently about their work and record ideas and feelings. This contributes well to the development of their skills of speaking and listening.
127. By the age of 11, pupils have continued to develop their observational skills and techniques at a satisfactory rate. Older pupils have made still-life drawings of 'moving' figures using different thicknesses of hard and soft pencils and charcoal. Some of these drawings are of a high standard with good application of the techniques of shading, tone and accuracy of observation. Famous artists from many cultures are used as reference. For example, in a Year 4 class, aboriginal paintings were the stimulus for an investigation of line, shape and colour work. Work in sketchbooks shows a sound knowledge of perspective and shading. Three-dimensional work is also explored: pupils have created models of their own heads using clay. Most of the work seen shows strong links with other subjects. In Year 4 work on composing pictures of imaginary journeys, good use was made of aerial photographs to produce birds-eye view sketches.
128. The quality of teaching in lessons seen was mostly good and otherwise it was satisfactory. Planning is thorough and teachers are well prepared so the lessons run smoothly with all the resources very accessible. In the good lessons, demonstration is used well to introduce pupils to new techniques and experimenting is encouraged. For example, in a lesson where pupils were arranging individual displays of natural materials the teacher asked questions and suggested ways of looking at their arrangements from different angles. This resulted in the pupils experimenting and increased their understanding of the possibilities of materials and techniques. Effective learning is also linked to the teachers' high expectations of quality work and behaviour. This results in pupils taking initiative, being able to work individually and in groups and behaving well. They take responsibility for their learning and pride in their



work. Where teaching was less effective, a lack of clarity in what was to be done occasionally impeded progress.

129. The subject is well managed. The co-ordinator has clear views as to how the teaching of art should be developed throughout the school and has increased the range of resources since the previous inspection. Satisfactory use is made of information technology to research the work of artists and experiment with appropriate painting programs. The school's scheme of work is based on nationally approved guidelines. There is strong emphasis on using art to enrich the learning environment. The art displays around the school are of a high standard reflecting the cultural diversity of the school community and celebrating pupils' achievements.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

130. Standards are at expected levels for pupils aged seven and 11. Pupils in other year age groups are also achieving at the appropriate levels. This shows a significant improvement since the last inspection when standards were generally low throughout the school. Pupils are now taught the full design and technology process and making skills are being developed appropriately.
131. Design briefs, models and recent photographs show that pupils are given a wide range of experiences to develop their skills. Year 2 pupils were encouraged to evaluate a range of different types of hand puppets before designing their own. They drew or listed the materials they would need. Their puppets show sound scissors control and the ability to join materials using a simple running stitch. In a Year 5/6 lesson pupils' creativity and experimentation was at a level higher than the average as they investigated a wide range of materials to find out what sounds could be made. By combining materials, listening, then changing one variable at a time they were beginning to produce their own musical instruments. The standard of the finished work generally improves and making skills can be seen to develop as the pupils progress through school. Year 6 pupils have produced structures which show sound woodworking skills and accurate measurement.
132. Two lessons were seen in the seven to 11 age group. Teaching in both lessons was very good. Very good initial questioning focused pupils on the task, encouraging them to think through their own ideas. As a result, pupils in both lessons demonstrated confidence and creativity in their designs and, in Year 5/6, in their investigations. As pupils worked, teachers and support staff further enhanced their learning by asking such questions as 'What would happen if...?' to encourage further experimentation. A useful contribution to the pupils' language development was made in Year 5/6 as appropriate words to describe sounds were discussed. This very good support ensured that all pupils achieved equally well.
133. Pupils clearly enjoy their lessons and show very good attitudes to the subject. Their concentration and perseverance has a positive affect on their learning. In both lessons the pupils helped and supported each other, offering useful advice. They were able to clear up quickly and efficiently.
134. A new scheme of work for the subject has been in place since September 1999. This provides teachers with good support and guidance for planning and for teaching appropriate activities. This has been a major factor in the rise in standards. Another factor is the expertise and enthusiasm of the subject co-ordinator who has been in post only since last September. She has re-organised and extended resources to

ensure there are materials and tools available for each topic. Planning and pupils' work have been monitored to check pupils' progress and the results are told to teachers. A comprehensive portfolio of work has been compiled to show standards of work appropriate to each year group. This is a useful resource to enable staff to assess progress.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

135. Standards have remained the same since the last inspection, when they were at the expected levels at ages seven and 11. Work seen during the inspection shows that in the five to seven age group the lack of challenge for higher attaining pupils has been addressed. However, in the seven to 11 age group, since most geography is being taught in the spring and summer terms, the evidence available was insufficient to make a judgement on this.
136. Teachers in Years 1 and 2 make good use of the local area and, as a result, Year 2 pupils talk confidently about Levenshulme and what they would see on a walk around school. They talk about their visit to the seaside and about the difference between St. Anne's and their own locality. The display and regular use of local maps and maps of the United Kingdom and of the world is widening their understanding. Pupils know that they live in England. They know that 'Spain is hot' or 'We go to America by plane because it's across the sea'. Pupils in Year 2 draw recognisable picture maps. In the seven to 11 age group, work from Year 5 shows good use of atlases to plan a visit to Snowdonia. Pupils use the Internet to research the area and to download maps, pictures and information. Discussion with Year 6 pupils shows that appropriate activities in Key Stage 2 have given them a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the various elements of the geography curriculum.
137. Only one lesson was seen, in Year 4, and the teaching was good. The use of homework, a record of household rubbish thrown away over a single weekend, ensured that pupils were involved from the start. The lesson was well planned and organised with good open-ended questioning to make the pupils think about how materials could be recycled. The task, to categorise waste by the ways in which it could be recycled, led to much discussion, for example, how an egg box would be dealt with would depend on the materials which had been used to make it. Good support from the teachers and classroom assistants ensured that all pupils were able to talk through their ideas and participate fully. As a result, pupils had a good learning experience.
138. Pupils' attitudes to learning were good. They were very interested in the topic of pollution and became involved in the discussion. Their ideas on how to persuade people to recycle waste were thoughtful and sensible. A few pupils took time to settle down after the lunchtime break.
139. The introduction of a new scheme of work for geography last year led to money for new resources being made available. As a result, resources have improved since the previous inspection and are now satisfactory. The monitoring of planning and pupils' work has begun although it is too early to see its effect on standards.

## **HISTORY**

140. Standards in history are at expected levels for pupils aged seven and 11. Pupils in other year age groups are also achieving at the expected levels. Standards have improved since the last inspection, when standards at age 11 were low.

141. By the age of seven, pupils know that history is finding out about the past. Their awareness of time is good. They can say confidently that "One day ago is the past" and they know the significance of a year, a month and a year. They remember many details taught to them of what a seaside holiday was like in the past, showing their understanding of the changes between holidays 100 years ago and those 50 years ago. They compare these to their own experiences of the seaside. For example, they know that children would also have played on the beach fifty years ago but with a metal bucket and a wooden, not plastic, spade.
142. By the age of 11, pupils can order chronologically the periods they have studied and they show some awareness of the passage of time relative to the present day. They know some important events in British history and have some idea as to why events happened, for example, the Second World War. Their knowledge of life in Ancient Egypt, their current topic, is satisfactory and they understand the importance of the River Nile and how it influenced life then. From their own experiences, they understand the difference between first hand and second hand sources, for example, that the pyramids and artefacts found in them are primary sources. They have studied pictures of Egyptian artefacts to find out about everyday life. Pupils were weaker in their understanding of how history might be subject to differing interpretations, for example, that the evidence from a secondary source could be influenced by the person presenting it.
143. Two lessons were seen, one in each key stage, and the teaching was good in both. Teachers made sure that the pupils understood what they were going to do and find out. Good use was made of the locality when pupils from Year 1 went to investigate old and new houses. Carefully focused questions enabled pupils to distinguish between old (weathered) and new bricks and to understand that old houses could have new plastic windows. In Year 5, a short, well-chosen video about the River Nile extended pupils' understanding of its effect on the life and prosperity of Ancient Egypt. Well-focused questions after the video helped pupils to interpret what they had seen and to consolidate important facts to remember. Research tasks, supported by a good range of relevant books, enabled pupils to develop their knowledge. Tasks were well matched to pupils' attainment and this, coupled with very good support from teachers and other staff, ensured that all pupils made equally good progress. Good use of time lines is made in all classes and this is helping pupils to develop a sense of time.
144. The use of visits and visitors is enabling pupils to enhance their learning by the use of primary sources of evidence. Year 3 and Year 4 pupils have visited the Ashton World War Two museum and visitors to school have shared their experience of life in Manchester during the war.
145. Pupils' attitudes to their work are good and this helps them learn well. Pupils in Year 5 asked interesting and pertinent questions about the video and related what they saw to their own experiences. Year 1 pupils enjoyed learning from first hand experiences and were fully involved in finding out about different types of houses.
146. Good subject leadership has been a major factor in improving standards. A new scheme of work was introduced last year, which gave good support and guidance for teachers. This, with some staff training, has improved subject knowledge and teachers' planning. Resources have been improved and updated. The overuse of worksheets noted in the last inspection has been eliminated and pupils' work shows evidence of research and extended writing. Teachers regularly assess pupils'

achievement and use the results to plan future work. The co-ordinator samples completed work from all year groups and gives useful feedback to teachers.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

147. Standards match the nationally expected levels at ages seven and 11 and have been maintained since the previous inspection. The development of a computer suite represents an improvement in resources since that time. The computer suite has only been in use since November and there has been insufficient time for this to impact upon pupil attainment. The suite contains seventeen computers, which are networked and have e-mail and Internet access. Each classroom has at least one free-standing computer.
148. By the age of seven, pupils are competent in using the mouse and are beginning to develop Typing skills using the keyboard - identifying letters, use of space bar, capitalising and using delete and insert. Pupils save their work, use the computer to generate pictures and are able to 'log-on' and 'log off' in order to start and finish their work. They produce pie and bar charts of data; use 'cut and paste' and 'drag' techniques. They control the directions of a programmable device. By the age of 11, pupils are only just being introduced to the Internet for information retrieval, but successfully use e-mail to seek subject-related information. They use spreadsheets for construction of a rotational pattern in mathematics, use clip art and word art to enhance presentation of their written work and give directional instructions using a commercial CD. They use terms such as "icon", "clipart", "access" and "edit" with confidence and understanding. However, pupils are often frustrated by the lack of keyboard skills and many pupils type with their index finger only. An increasing number of pupils improve their keyboard skills because of having a computer at home.
149. Pupil attitude to lessons is good. They listen attentively to teacher instructions and act upon them enthusiastically. They greatly value the time they have in the computer suite and work very hard either independently or in pairs. Pupils throughout the school are very well behaved whilst using computers. They show great interest in their work and sustain concentration well. Pupils help each other very well and pupils with special educational needs benefit very well from the support of other pupils as well as support from adults. Hearing impaired pupils make particularly good use of computers in the suite and in classrooms. As a result of their very positive attitude towards the subject, they are beginning to make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs sometimes use computers during literacy and numeracy hours. Where they are well supported by classroom assistants, they make good progress. The computer club, initially for Year 3 and 4 pupils, is restricted to 20 members who have a fixed term membership in order to ensure equal opportunity for other pupils. Pupils here are establishing an e-mail link with a nearby school.
150. Teaching is effective in helping pupils develop their skills. All lessons observed during the inspection were conducted at a brisk pace, were well planned and teachers demonstrated very good subject knowledge. This ensured that pupils were given good opportunities to develop their skills. The good deployment of adult assistance in a Year 1 lesson ensured very good use of the timetabled half-hour. During Year 5 and 6 lessons in the computer suite there was an excellent focus on vocabulary to develop speaking skills. Discussion between teacher and pupils generated the use of relevant use of terminology. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and questioning is often challenging and always inclusive. Teachers know their pupils well and tasks are appropriately set in order to build on prior knowledge.

151. Since the time of the last inspection, the school has adopted national guidelines to support the policy document. However, there is no system in place to monitor pupil achievement or progress. The school is aware of this and the issue is addressed within the subject development plan 2000-2003. The co-ordinator is collecting examples of pupils work and is beginning to develop a school portfolio. This would have the dual purpose of a total school record of achievement in the subject and a resource bank for teachers. Planning is good and reflects teacher confidence in their subject knowledge, understanding and expertise. The subject co-ordinator has been in post for one year and has worked effectively to raise teachers' expertise and confidence in the subject.
152. The school has very recently subscribed to support from a commercial company. This affords the school hardware maintenance, support and training. The company has just completed a full audit in the school and one of their trainers was working alongside the class teacher in a Year 3 observed lesson. The potential for supported training for teachers is good and this will enhance teacher confidence and expertise especially as the computer suite is so new. This is a useful addition to the INSET arrangements envisaged in the subject development plan for 2000-2003. The co-ordinator has a monitoring role within the subject and sees teachers' planning, scrutinises pupil's work and co-ordinates support from the commercial provider. The co-ordinator's classroom is adjacent to the computer suite.
153. The cross-curricular application of computers is developing and this should accelerate with the advent of the new suite. Links with literacy, mathematics, history and geography were observed during lessons in the suite during inspection. The school possesses a range of control and modelling technology, which is very under-used, and this is a weakness. The school is aware of this and professional training is planned to acquaint teachers with usage and develop expertise.

## **MUSIC**

154. Standards at the ages of seven and 11 match the levels expected nationally. Pupils of all levels of prior attainment make satisfactory overall progress overall and standards have been generally maintained since the last inspection. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language make a similar rate of progress to others in their year groups.
155. By the age of seven, pupils sing clearly and in tune. They perform well together in singing practice. Pupils sing simple songs, making accurate changes in pitch and tempo. For example, in their singing practice they sang several songs, from memory, keeping good time and remembering that the chorus is repeated after each verse. They are developing an awareness of patterns in music. Most pupils remember and repeat a simple pattern by clapping correctly and keeping to the beat. Using untuned percussion instruments they make up their own short rhythms and sound patterns. For example, in a Year 2 lesson, pupils developed their ability to recognise the difference between pulse and rhythm by creating sequences of sounds on percussion instruments and can accurately identify high and low notes. However, composing is at an early stage of development. Pupils listen to a satisfactory variety of music, which includes music of other cultures and times. They are able to talk in simple terms about the sounds they hear.
156. Pupils in the seven to 11 age group listen to and respond to music from different times and places. They are introduced to a wide range of music from different

traditions and cultures, for example, Afro-Caribbean and Asian music, improving their cultural awareness. They are developing satisfactory listening skills being able to identify some of the instruments being played in an orchestral arrangement. They are able to perform their own rhythmic patterns and repeat them using a range of percussion instruments but the quality of this element of the curriculum is inconsistent across the age range. Using notation to support creative work is underdeveloped. However, in singing, progress is consistently good. Pupils sing clearly and in tune. By the age of 11, pupils sing with good expression, clear diction and good voice control.

157. A significant minority of boys and girls, from Years 4 to 6, learn to play instruments. Their attainment is good. They skillfully and confidently play their chosen instrument with a degree of competence. The steel pan band, which includes pupils, from Years 4, 5 and 6 working outside lessons, attain good standards. These skills, which are developed in their instrumental lessons, have a positive impact on their performances in class lessons. For example, pupils in the Year 5/6 music lesson demonstrated good skills in composing their own rhythms.
158. Teaching at both key stages is generally good and has a positive impact on pupils' learning. Lessons are well planned. Pupils' previous knowledge and understanding are used particularly well to extend and develop skills. Performing skills, in particular singing, are well taught. Teachers use time well, keeping pupils' attention by moving briskly from one activity to another and providing practical opportunities for pupil involvement. Teachers evaluate skillfully what the pupils can do and ensure that they improve on their earlier compositions. For example, pupils in a Year 4 lesson improved their rhythmic composition by adding the music elements of speed and louder and quieter notes. Where teachers are less secure in their subject knowledge, pupils make less progress in developing their skills.
159. Pupils' attitudes and enjoyment of the lessons enhance their learning. This is often a consequence of the teachers' own enthusiasm for the subject. They are well behaved, attentive and interested, and persevere to improve both their individual and group performances. The pupils are confident when performing in front of an audience, knowing that their contribution is valued. For instance, in both key stage hymn practices pupils sing two-part songs unaccompanied with competence and real enjoyment. They select and handle instruments with care.
160. Pupils benefit from the high profile given to music in the school in a variety of ways. Significant numbers take part in activities outside lessons, such as the steel pan band, choir and percussion groups. These are very popular activities and make an excellent contribution to developing pupils' skills in music, reflecting the diverse cultures of the families represented in the school. Hearing-impaired pupils enjoy taking part. The school's music provision is for all its pupils and this adds significantly to the high quality of the school's provision for all groups of pupils. Recorder tuition is available for pupils in the five to seven age range and guitar tuition is available for older pupils.
161. The subject is well managed. There is a good policy, effective guidelines and a development plan. The co-ordinator is clear about subject practice. However, there is no formal assessment and evaluation of pupils' work in music.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

162. Pupils of all ages work at levels that are consistent with expectations for their age. By the age of seven, most pupils attain the appropriate levels in games. They throw and catch with reasonable accuracy and are beginning to understand that games should have rules as they devise their own games and explain their rules. They continue to develop their games skills steadily during their time in school and become reasonably proficient in ball control skills and tactics in team games.
163. In gymnastics lessons, most pupils display high levels of enthusiasm and confidence as they practise a variety of movements on floor and apparatus. They perform jumps, forward rolls and curling and stretching movements with good body control and co-ordination, although some pupils are less good at bending knees and keeping control when landing. Pupils link a series of different movements in a sequence and strive to perfect their sequence through repetition and practice. In a Year 4 lesson, some pupils performed very well executed star jumps and cartwheels with good levels of control and spatial awareness.
164. Pupils of all ages understand the importance of warming up at the start of a lesson and the benefits of exercise for the body. They are very sensible and proficient when required to get out the apparatus and co-operate very well to carry large pieces of apparatus safely and quickly.
165. The quality of teaching in lessons seen was always at least satisfactory and sometimes good. Teachers prepare their lessons well and keep very good control of their pupils so that safety is maintained at all times. The focus of the lesson is made clear to the pupils and they are frequently reminded of this at each stage in the lesson. The lessons are well structured to include a warm up and wind down activity. A good pace is maintained and this ensures that pupils work hard and productively. Most teachers make effective use of good pupil performance to demonstrate their expectations. The pupils are told what they can do to improve but opportunities are often missed for them to evaluate the performance of others in order to improve their own performance.
166. The provision for physical education is appropriate and all areas of the subject are covered at various times in the year or key stage. Swimming lessons are given in Years 3 and 4 but records of the outcome of these lessons were not available during the inspection. Out-door adventurous activities are provided during the school camp in Year 6 and athletics takes place during the summer term. Some form of games lesson takes place weekly but due to pressure on the hall timetable, Years 4, 5 and 6 pupils alternate gymnastics and dance lessons on a half termly basis. This arrangement inhibits continuity in the development of gymnastics and dance skills.
167. The inclusion of all pupils in physical activity, including those with various forms of special need, is a particularly strong feature of the subject. The range of large apparatus and games equipment, including small equipment, is good. They are efficiently stored and accessible.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

168. Standards match the expectations of the local agreed syllabus at age seven and are above expectations at age 11. This represents an improvement since the last inspection at Key Stage 2. By the age of seven, pupils know many stories and traditions about the Christian faith. Their work on display in the school hall shows the breadth of their knowledge about festivals occurring around December. These displays include work about Christmas, Eid, Diwali, Hannukah and Chinese New

Year. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding that there are different kinds of sacred buildings.

169. Class assemblies are undertaken twice weekly and support the work in religious education well. The theme of courage was the focus for class assemblies throughout the school during the inspection week. Pupils in Year 1 enjoyed the big book on "Fire Fighters" and were aware of the courage shown by firefighters. The reading ended with a short prayer and a short period of reflection "for thinking about the bravery of firemen".
170. By the age of 11, pupils are familiar with stories from the Old and New Testaments, such as the Ten Commandments, the parables and miracles of Jesus. They know of celebrations, customs and festivals in all the major world religions. They have a satisfactory knowledge of sacred buildings and texts, special objects and signs and symbols within different faiths. A good number of visitors help pupils in developing their religious knowledge and understanding. Talking to them about their faith, celebrations and customs. Recently a Muslim parent had visited school to talk about the festival of Eid. Year 6 pupils have Buddhist workshops that involve drama and storytelling. Older pupils run an Islamic club during lunchtime. The quality of class assembly makes a significant contribution to the religious education curriculum. For example, the school theme of "courage" was focused on the Blue Peter "People's Award" which told the story of a 15 year-old's brave sea rescue. Year 3 and 4 pupils responded positively to teacher questions such as, "Was it a sensible thing for him to do?" Mature replies referred to confidence in one's own ability, self-sacrifice and helping others. Sessions end with a short prayer and a pause for reflection, helping to develop spiritual awareness.
171. In the five to seven age group, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress. In the seven to 11 age group, all groups of pupils make good progress. Progress is good where lessons are well focused and challenge pupils' thinking. In a lesson with Year 6 pupils, they were being introduced to "the Cyclic Path" in Hinduism. The teacher distributed photographs of Hindu religious activities, buildings and artefacts and asked pupils if they could explain what they thought was happening. Pupils were very challenged by the activity and were able to draw upon a good depth and breadth of knowledge from other faiths in order to attempt an explanation. A picture of holy text was identified with the Qu'ran, Torah and Bible; a picture of a holy place was likened to a church and mosque; Diwali to Hanukah and Christmas.
172. Teaching in lessons observed was largely effective in helping pupils improve their knowledge and understanding. Lessons are well planned. Pupils demonstrate good knowledge when teachers' questions recalled work of previous lessons. In a Year 5/6 lesson, the pupils were interpreting biblical texts. The texts were suitably challenging for high attaining pupils and, although the texts were shorter, low attaining pupils were struggling with the archaic language but were well supported to aid their interpretation. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and have high expectations of their pupils. Pupils develop a good knowledge of different faiths as a result. Teachers throughout the school make particularly good use of pupil knowledge and background, parents and guests to assist the sharing of religious experience and this is a strength. The close proximity of several faith celebrations has provided a good focus for the school's multi-faith work. This opportunity has been effectively used. The high quality hall display from all quarters of the school, made an excellent backdrop for the whole school assembly on Eid. Many parents attended the



assembly and particularly enjoyed the singing, and signing, of an Urdu song for Eid in which all pupils participated.

173. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable and enthusiastic. The co-ordinator has worked hard to promote the subject and has incorporated much material from the QCA scheme of work with the local education authority agreed syllabus. Long and medium term planning is good and incorporates all three strands of learning within religious education. The unsatisfactory progress in the area of religious and moral issues referred to in the previous inspection has been successfully addressed. The co-ordinator monitors the subject effectively through teachers' planning, scrutiny of pupils' work and monitoring displays. The school has no formal assessment practice in religious education and no portfolio of pupils' work. However, the school is aware of the deficiencies. Record keeping and assessment are to be addressed and the class books compiled in Years 3 and 4 make an excellent basis upon which a portfolio can be developed. The co-ordinator has clearly identified future resource acquisition to incorporate books, artefacts and computer software.