

INSPECTION REPORT

St Stephen's Catholic Primary School

Warrington

LEA area: Warrington

Unique reference number: 111310

Headteacher: Mr K. Nolan

Reporting inspector: Mrs J. Tracey
20270

Dates of inspection: 13th –17th November, 2000

Inspection number: 224739

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:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Sandy Lane Warrington
Postcode:	WA2 9HS
Telephone number:	01925 630100
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Father Gordon Abbs
Date of previous inspection:	January 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs J. Tracey 20270.	Registered inspector	Mathematics Information technology	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
Mrs J. Beattie 11457	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Mrs O. Cooper 10859	Team inspector	Under fives Music Physical education	How good are the curricular opportunities offered to pupils?
Mrs M. Leah 22740	Team inspector	English Geography History	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
Mr M. Bowers 17907	Team inspector	Science Art Design and technology Equal opportunities Special educational needs	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Stephen's is a larger than average, voluntary aided, Catholic primary school providing education for 348 pupils in the age range 3 -11 years. Children in the nursery attend part-time, either mornings or afternoons. Numbers are falling following the pattern of demographic change. Most pupils live in the vicinity of the school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals (27%) is above average. The number of pupils on the register of special educational needs (27% in the reception classes upwards) is above average and rising. Seven pupils have formal statements of need. There are very few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds; none come from homes where English is not the first language. Attainment on entry to the nursery is very low.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Stephen's is a very caring school, committed to providing well for its pupils' personal and educational development. Standards of work in English and science have improved in the past year and there is capacity for further development in all subjects. Teaching is satisfactory overall and has a positive impact on pupils' achievement and rising standards. The headteacher, staff and governors work well together. The school operates effectively and considering its relatively low income provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The school's Christian ethos permeates its work. Sound day-to-day management promotes a fertile climate for learning.
- Teaching is good in the nursery. It fosters appropriate development in early learning skills and gives children a good start to their education.
- By the time pupils leave the school standards of work in art and music are above average for their age.
- The school fulfils its mission to provide a caring environment in which each pupil's contribution is valued. A thriving community spirit is generated through good working relationships among staff, pupils and parents.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress when they are taught in small withdrawal groups.

What could be improved

- Overall attainment, through the continued development of literacy, numeracy and information technology skills.
- The use of assessment systems to make planning for lessons and target setting for individual pupils more effective.
- More adult help in the larger classes would enable teachers to allocate their time more evenly amongst pupils of all abilities during group activities
- The overall quality of teaching through the sharing of the best teaching practices.

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 January 1997. Since then:

- *standards in writing and science have improved in Key Stage 2(Years 3 to 6);
- *teaching has improved. It is more consistent throughout the school and a higher proportion is good;
- *provision for cultural development has improved, and is now good; and
- *the governing body has become more directly involved in the work of the school.

The school has made a satisfactory response to most of the Key Issues of the previous inspection. It has been slow to respond to those connected with the sharing the best teaching practices and the assessment of pupils' attainment.

There is good capacity for further improvement.

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	E	E	D
Mathematics	E	E	E	D
Science	E*	E	D	D

Key

well above average A

above average B

Average C

Below average D

well below average E

Overall, standards of work in English, mathematics and science are below average when pupils leave the school. However, when the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs is taken into account, attainment is closer to that expected for pupils' ages. This is confirmed by close analysis of pupils' results in national tests in 2000. The school exceeded the targets set by the governors in English and mathematics and should now consider whether those set for the current year are sufficiently challenging. The downturn in pupils' results in national tests in 1997 has been halted and standards are rising at a similar rate to those nationally, but faster in English and science than in mathematics. This demonstrates the effectiveness of the school's action in response to the identification of weaknesses in writing and the use of scientific language. Weak numerical skills and lack of mental agility account for slower progress in mathematics. Throughout the school the National Literacy Strategy is having greater impact than the Numeracy Strategy. This is because the introductory part of lessons, based on mental arithmetic, is not being delivered consistently. Pupils' results in national tests for seven-year-olds in 2000 were well below average in reading, writing and mathematics. The results, and their fluctuating pattern in recent years, accurately reflect the abilities of the cohorts and the rising proportion of pupils with special educational needs. Pupils who were capable of reaching the standards expected for their age did so, showing that the school is successful in meeting individual pupils' needs. Overall, standards of work are below average in reading, writing, mathematics and science by the time pupils are seven, but considering the very low skills on entry to the nursery this represents good progress. Standards of work are average for pupils' ages in design and technology, geography, history and physical education in both key stages, and in music in Key Stage 1. They are above average in music in Key Stage 2 and in art throughout the school. Standards of work are below average in information technology.

Most pupils are achieving well up to the age of seven. They achieve satisfactorily from their starting point in the later years.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils enjoy school. They respond well to praise and encouragement, and gain in confidence and self-esteem.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good overall. Pupils know what is, and is not, acceptable and most respond positively to the code of conduct.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Relationships are based on mutual trust and underpin pupils' satisfactory achievement.
Attendance	Below average

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged up to 5 years	Aged 5-7 years	Aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	Good	Satisfactory

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.

Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory and significantly better than at the time of the previous inspection. Some good and very good teaching was observed throughout the school, but mainly in the nursery and classes for seven and eleven-year-olds. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 96 percent of the lessons observed. It was good in 37 percent and very good in a further 17 percent. Teaching in English and mathematics is good in Key Stage 1 and satisfactory in Key Stage 2. The difference is linked to insufficient adult support for the large classes with high proportions of pupils with special educational needs in Key Stage 2. The National Literacy Strategy has been fully implemented and is contributing to rising standards, especially in writing. The teaching of the National Numeracy Strategy is having a greater impact in Years 1 and 2 where pupils have been introduced to it from the start of their schooling. In Years 3 to 6 pupils' mental skills for dealing with computational work are not sufficiently well developed. Particular strengths in the good and very good teaching are: specific learning objectives which are shared with pupils at the start of lessons and reviewed at the end; and strong management of behaviour so pupils know exactly what is expected of them. Weaknesses in teaching in some lessons are due to lack of pace and imbalance in the time teachers spend with individual groups in activity sessions. The school's assessment procedures are not yet fully effective in enabling teachers to identify and direct support to the specific needs of individual pupils. Consequently, although learning is satisfactory overall, it could be better.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a broad range of opportunities and experiences for learning, except in information technology where the full National Curriculum programme of study is not covered. The range of extra-curricular activities is satisfactory, but mainly confined to sport and music.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Overall, provision is satisfactory. It is good when pupils work in small groups with a specialist teacher and assistants. However, the majority of pupils with special educational needs work within whole classes, often without additional adult support – this slows their progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Pupils' personal development is given high priority and is central to the daily life of the school. Provision for spiritual, moral and cultural development is good. It is very good for social development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides a high standard of care for its pupils and relationships between pupils and adults are good. Pupils are highly valued as individuals. The secure environment promotes confidence and self-esteem. Assessment procedures for tracking pupils' progress are not yet used effectively to enable pupils to work towards personal targets.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership and management are satisfactory and have a positive effect on standards, which are rising. Teachers and non-teaching staff work closely together as a team and are highly committed to the pupils' interests.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are becoming more effective in the strategic development of the school and are fulfilling their statutory responsibilities, except in provision for information technology.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school accurately analyses its performance in relation to national and local standards. It makes use of the information to identify and remedy perceived areas of weakness, for example, in the past year, writing and science in Years 3 to 6. The monitoring of teaching and learning is insufficiently developed.
The strategic use of resources	The budget and specific grants are put to appropriate use. The school endeavours to ensure that funds are spent wisely on goods and contracts for services. Resources for learning are barely adequate in some subjects. The sharing of resources by classes in separate buildings is a disadvantage. The library facilities in Key Stage 2 are not good enough to stimulate reading and provide for pupils' independent research.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like school • Teaching is good • The school fosters pupils' personal growth and progress • Good relationships and caring ethos • Behaviour is good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few parents are concerned that the management does not take enough action to eliminate repeated misbehaviour • Homework • The range of extra-curricular activities • A minority of parents feel they are not kept well informed about their children's progress

Inspectors endorse the parents' positive views of the school. Investigation into the handling of behavioural problems revealed them to be dealt with appropriately and sensitively. It was recognised however that for reasons of confidentiality parents were not always aware of the outcomes. With regard to the exchange of information about pupils' progress, inspectors found the school provided good opportunities for parents to engage in regular communication. However, although written reports at the end of the school year are presented clearly they do not always include enough information about how well pupils are doing and what they need to do to improve. The quantity and quality of homework was considered to be satisfactory; pupils benefit when they complete it on a regular basis with the support of their parents. The range of extra-curricular activities, mainly sport and music, is similar to that found in most schools.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. On entry to the nursery children's speaking and listening, literacy, numeracy and personal skills are very low. Children make good progress overall in the Foundation Stage, particularly in the nursery. By the time they start Year 1, many have achieved, but rarely exceeded, the early learning goals in personal, physical and creative development. Communication and mathematical skills, and knowledge and understanding of the world, remain well below average. These standards reflect the significant proportion (41 percent in the reception classes) identified as having special educational needs. The children receive a good start to their education in the nursery. There is a good level of adult support in the nursery but less so in the reception classes.

2. In 2000, the pupils' results in national tests for seven-year-olds in reading, writing and mathematics were well below average when compared to all schools and those of similar background. Results were not as good as the previous year, especially in mathematics, but they accurately reflect the wide ability range of the cohort and the high, and rising, proportion of pupils with special educational needs. Following a decline in results to 1998 standards rose faster than the national trend in all subjects in 1999. Results were not as good in 2000 but close examination indicates that, excepting pupils on the register of special educational need, almost all pupils attained the expected levels for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. Few pupils attained higher levels. Scrutiny of pupils' work and lesson observations indicate that although standards of work in reading, writing, mathematics and science are below average overall compared to those found nationally, the majority of pupils achieve appropriate to their ability and starting points. Considering the well below average standards at the beginning of Year 1, pupils make good progress.

3. In the national tests for eleven-year-olds in 2000, pupils' results were well below average in English and mathematics, and below average in science, compared to all schools. They were below average in each of these subjects when compared to similar schools. The school has reversed the downturn which occurred in 1997. Since then, overall, results in English and science have risen at a similar rate to the national trend. This reflects the effectiveness of the school's action in targeting specific areas of writing and science following the identification of weaknesses. The improvement in mathematics in 1999 was not sustained in 2000. Evidence from the inspection indicates that pupils' numerical skills and mental agility are weak; this, together with lack of sufficient practice in problem solving and investigational work, accounts for the lesser rate of progress in mathematics. The school achieved, and exceeded, the targets set by the governors for English and mathematics in 2000. In the light of this consideration should be given to whether the current year's targets are sufficiently challenging. Scrutiny of pupils' work and lesson observations indicate that, overall, standards of work in English, mathematics and science are below average at the end of Year 6.. Taking into account the rising proportion of pupils with special educational needs (29 percent in Year 6 last year), and that a number of pupils transfer to other schools in Years 3 to 6 to gain access to secondary schools of their choice, progress is satisfactory. Pupils with statements of special educational need make good progress, and gain in concentration and attentiveness, when taught in small groups. This is not sustained when they are taught in whole classes because they do not have the necessary adult support to enable them to develop their skills further. The larger proportion of pupils on the register of special educational needs is taught in mainstream, often large, classes. Teachers often have to spread their time too thinly between pupils of all abilities. This hinders progress for all pupils.

4. In summary, over the past four years, the school's results have improved at a similar pace to that found nationally. This represents satisfactory achievement overall bearing in mind the very low starting point and the high, and rising, proportion of pupils with special educational needs. The number of higher-attaining pupils is small; they make similar progress to other pupils. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. Pupils achieve well in Key Stage 1 and satisfactorily in Key Stage 2. Progress for some could be accelerated if pupils were set more personal targets based on information obtained from assessment procedures. This is an area currently identified for development.

5. Standards of work are average for pupils' ages in design and technology, geography, history and physical education in both key stages, and music in Key Stage 1 (Years 1 and 2). Standards are above average in music in Key Stage 2 and in art throughout the school, in each case due to good teaching which reflects the teachers' enthusiasm and commitment. There has been a marked improvement in design and technology since the previous inspection when standards were found to be below average. Standards of work in information technology are below average in both key stages because the full National Curriculum programme of study is not taught. The school has only just received its allocation of new computers.

6. The introduction of the literacy hour is having a satisfactory impact on pupils' standards of work, particularly in writing in Key Stage 2. Pupils make good progress in developing speaking and listening skills as they move through the school. Teachers consciously promote these skills and there has been an improvement in them since the previous inspection. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils are keen to contribute to class discussion but sometimes find it hard to listen to each other. By the time they are eleven, they exercise more self-control and use thoughtful and creative language to express their ideas. The standard of pupils' oral skills is better than in reading. Phonic skills are taught well and consistently but not enough time is devoted to independent reading outside the literacy hour. This is reflected in overall standards of reading which are below average in both key stages. Many pupils enjoy reading but the quantity and range of books around the school is poor. This, coupled with the sparse library facilities in Key Stage 2, is detrimental to the development of independent reading skills. Standards of writing are below average at the end of both key stages but teachers are clearly focusing on accuracy, punctuation and style. By the end of Key Stage 1 the average and higher-attaining pupils can write brief accounts to explain themselves using justifiable spelling. They are aware of capitals letters and full stops but are not always competent in their use. The improvement in writing in Key Stage 2 is due to the high focus on writing skills. The breadth and depth of pupils' writing reflects their ability and at best reflects creative thinking and the use of sensitive vocabulary. A very good example was the poetry produced by a Year 6 class when experimenting with active verbs and personification. Insufficient use is made of information technology in the drafting and redraft of writing – there is scope for further development here.

7. The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy is not yet fully effective, particularly with respect to the development of mental strategies for handling number. Some of the older pupils do not have a secure grasp of basic number concepts and this slows their work. These pupils did not benefit from the more structured approach now being used from the Foundation stage upwards. Throughout the school pupils are more competent and confident when applying other mathematical skills such as measurement and data handling. These are used to good effect in subjects such as design and technology, geography and science. Not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to make predictions and learn for themselves through problem solving and investigative work.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. The school has maintained the high standards noted in the previous inspection. Much hard work and frequent encouragement from staff have ensured that the pupils' attitudes to school, their

behaviour and their personal development continue to be good. Relationships throughout the school are good and are a credit to the consistent caring attitudes of the staff.

9. The pupils respond cheerfully as staff greet them in the playground each morning. They settle quickly into established routines. The vast majority is enthusiastic and eager to learn, especially when involved in interesting practical activities. Through the effective use of praise and encouragement the pupils become increasingly confident to join in class discussion and demonstrate their skills. In assemblies, they listen attentively and are respectful when joining in prayers. The pupils show respect for artefacts, and look after the school environment in a way which reflects the care staff have taken in displaying their work. Pupils are enthusiastic to take part in after school clubs, and older pupils are proud to represent the school in competitive sport and in music festivals. The pupils' constructive attitudes support their learning well.

10. Behaviour in class and around school is good. All pupils are made well aware of the school's high expectations, and respond positively to the clear and consistent code of conduct. They know what is acceptable and what is not, and are in no doubt of the consequences of their actions. They move around school in an orderly fashion, and in the main, share space sensibly and play co-operatively with their peers at playtime. No incidents of bullying were seen during the inspection and pupils are confident that any untoward behaviour is swiftly and discreetly dealt with. There was one exclusion during the last school year. Behaviour in class is usually good and a purposeful working atmosphere is established in most lessons. This has a beneficial effect on learning. Some pupils however, find it difficult to sustain concentration for more than a short span. When teacher talk goes on too long, or there is insufficient intervention by the teacher in group work, they lose interest and the pace of learning slows. Almost 90 percent of parents agree that behaviour is good.

11. Pupils in all age groups are happy to take responsibility as monitors in class. Older pupils carry out minor administrative tasks around school with obvious enjoyment and use of initiative. They are proud to be trusted to answer the telephone at lunch time. The Pupil Parliament is well received and older pupils show some understanding of the democratic process in voting for their representatives. Delegates show maturity in collecting opinions and putting forward proposals. Older pupils are keen to help the infants.

12. Relationships between staff and pupils are based on mutual trust and contribute to pupils' achievement. In class, pupils co-operate well in pairs and groups, for instance when carrying out investigations in science, or solving problems in numeracy. The whole of a Year 6 class collaborated particularly well when contributing their own ideas to the composition of a poem. They showed respect for each other's work. This collective effort produced a high quality piece of creative writing. Pupils are learning to reflect on their own behaviour and attitudes in thoughtful prayers at the end of each day. In the best lessons they evaluate the progress they have made. They are appreciative of individual and class efforts, as was evident from the wholehearted recognition of each other's success in the Good News assembly. Most pupils are becoming aware of the impact of their actions on others.

13. Pupils with special educational needs form good relationships with the teacher and supervising adults when working in small groups. They develop positive relationships with their classmates, taking time to answer questions and not interrupting each other. The activities in these groups make a good contribution to the development of pupils' self-esteem.

14. The majority of pupils attend regularly and arrive in good time in the morning. However a few pupils have poor attendance levels and/or arrive late. As a result the overall attendance level is below the national average. The school and local welfare services work well together to support families when children's attendance gives cause for concern.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

15. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Some good and very good teaching was seen throughout the school, but mainly in the nursery and in classes for seven and eleven-year-olds. Teaching has improved since the previous inspection when one in ten lessons was deemed to be unsatisfactory. The impact of this better teaching is evident in rising standards of work, particularly in writing and science. The practical approach to learning suits most pupils because it combines the acquisition of knowledge with its application to everyday experiences. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 96 percent of the lessons observed. It was good in 37 percent and very good in a further 17 percent.

16. Children experience a good start to their education in the nursery because teaching is good and the amount of adult support is high. These factors contribute significantly to children's personal, social and emotional development and prepare them well for the next stage. They make slightly slower progress in the reception classes because there is no additional adult help and teachers have to spread their time with each child too thinly. Teaching is satisfactory overall in the reception classes.

17. Teaching is good in Years 1 and 2, particularly in English, mathematics, science, history and art. It is unsatisfactory in information technology because the full National Curriculum programme of study is not taught. In all other subjects teaching is satisfactory. Common features of the good lessons, also evident in lessons with older pupils, are:

- a. positive management of behaviour so pupils know exactly what is expected of them;
- b. specific learning objectives which are shared with the pupils;
- c. effective questioning through which teachers develop the lesson; and
- d. pertinent use of praise and encouragement to raise pupils' confidence and self-esteem.

18. A typical example of very good teaching occurred in a science lesson in Year 3 when the teacher acted as an interested observer whilst pupils investigated geological samples through fair testing. She carefully directed the pupils to new discovery through precise questioning which placed them in the role of the scientist.

19. Teaching is satisfactory overall in Years 3 to 6 but more variable from class to class than in the earlier years. It is good in the smaller Year 6 classes where expectations are high for pupils of all abilities. In these classes teachers maintain a good pace, changing activities at strategic points to sustain pupils' interest. The satisfactory rather than good teaching occurs mainly in the larger classes where there is insufficient adult help, particularly for the high proportions of pupils with special educational needs. This is most noticeable in English and mathematics. In summary, teaching is good in science, art and music. It is unsatisfactory in information technology, for similar reasons to those mentioned above. In all other subjects it is satisfactory.

20. When pupils with special educational needs are taught in small withdrawal groups they make good progress because the lesson planning is guided by the targets in their specific learning plans. The teacher is skilled in providing challenging activities. Dedicated and enthusiastic learning support assistants maintain constructive dialogue with the pupils and effective questioning helps pupils clarify their thoughts and ideas. Their work is carefully assessed and the information used to identify the next objectives. Good use is made of information technology. The larger proportion of pupils with special educational needs is taught in mainstream classes in Years 3 to 6. They make satisfactory progress but teachers do not rigorously follow through the teaching strategies for spelling, handwriting and

punctuation as outlined in specific learning plans. When learning assistants are deployed to work alongside the teacher, which is infrequent, achievement is better.

21. In the very few lessons in which teaching was unsatisfactory there was lack of urgency and pace. Objectives were not clear and so there were no parameters against which to measure achievement.

22. The teachers' knowledge and understanding of the National Literacy Strategy are good. Teachers are conscious of the need to raise standards and have been successful in meeting the short term target ie. improvement in writing. The National Numeracy Strategy has not been as effective in raising standards.. A few teachers have developed their own strategies for teaching the mental arithmetic sessions, but, overall, more training is required. Numerical skills are developing more consistently in Years 1 and 2 because pupils are being introduced to the new more practical approach from the earliest stage in their schooling. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 have not benefited in this way and current teaching is not making up for the deficiency in computational skills fast enough. Also, the whole school assessment system does not yet provide sufficient information for teachers to ensure a close enough match between activities and pupils' needs.

23. The school has successfully adopted a pattern of curriculum planning which incorporates learning objectives for each lesson. In the best lessons teachers focus on these and make a point of discussing with pupils the extent to which objectives have been achieved. The monitoring of teaching to promote the sharing of good practices needs further development. The school also needs to consider how teachers can promote the use of information technology across the curriculum. This is a weak element in many teachers' personal skills.

24. Some good quality homework tasks are set to complement learning and encourage pupils to work independently. The ultimate value of these in progressively developing learning is almost wholly dependent on pupils' response and parents' support.

25. The improved quality of teaching is having a positive impact and contributing to rising standards. Pupils' achievement is building steadily on previous learning in most subjects. To raise standards further teachers need more adult help, especially with the large classes, so that their professional expertise can be used to best effect. They also need access to more training in the National Numeracy Strategy and information technology.

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

26. The school provides a broad range of experiences and opportunities for learning which meet the interests, aptitudes and needs of most pupils and reflects the school's aims. The curriculum includes all National Curriculum subjects and religious education and promotes well pupils' personal development. The nursery and reception classes (The Foundation Stage) provide a good range of experiences, which enable the children, particularly those in the nursery, to make a good start to their school life. The curriculum meets statutory requirements in all subjects except for information and communication technology where some aspects are not taught, partly due to the computer suite only being established very recently and the need for further staff training to increase their confidence and knowledge. Hence the use of computers to support pupils' learning in other subjects is limited and is unsatisfactory. The curriculum is socially inclusive, ensuring equality of access and opportunity for all pupils. The curricular provision has improved since the previous inspection when there was a lack of balance in the experiences offered in some subjects and insufficient emphasis on investigative work in science and mathematics.

27. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good in the Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1 classes and is satisfactory in Key Stage 2 classes. The difference in provision relates to the lower level of adult support in class for the high proportion of pupils on the register of special educational needs in Years 3 to 5.

28. There has been a significant improvement in overcoming the weakness in curricular planning highlighted in the previous inspection report. Detailed schemes of work are in use for all subjects; most are based on national guidelines and provide good support for teaching and learning. In addition a curriculum map has been devised to show how the National Curriculum will be taught in each term of each year. This has been effective in raising teachers' awareness of progression within the whole school curriculum. All pupils have equal access to the full range of opportunities provided by the school. A sound policy for sex education has now been agreed and implemented by the governors. Sex and relationships education is set within a context of caring, loving and stable relationships and relates well to the religious nature of the school. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have had the opportunity to discuss the physical and emotional changes associated with puberty. Teaching about the misuse of drugs enables pupils to acquire accurate information about the effects of alcohol and tobacco and challenges those attitudes that might lead to behaviour harmful to health. The 'Pupil Parliament', which involves Year 6 pupils in consulting with other pupils about school developments or improvements, plays an important and effective part in the provision for citizenship as pupils begin to understand the democratic process.

29. Most time is allocated to teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. The National Literacy Strategy has been implemented successfully, which is evident in the rising standards in English by the age of eleven. The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy has been less successful; teachers are not as confident in their teaching and pupils are not improving their skills, particularly in mental strategies and problem solving as well as they could be. The school has identified the need for further staff training in teaching the Numeracy Strategy.

30. The curriculum is successfully enriched through the wide range of visits, visitors, and residential visits available to pupils in Year 2 and Year 6. These experiences and opportunities make a significant and positive contribution to pupils' learning. They acquire knowledge and skills in many areas from such activities. For example, the residential visit to Conway for Year 6 pupils includes canoeing, orienteering, creative dance, musical compositions and promotes social skills. The visit to the Ossie Clarke exhibition inspired pupils to create their own designs for clothes. The range of extra-curricular activities is satisfactory, but only includes sport and music. The activities provided are reasonably well supported and appreciated by the pupils who show particular interest and enjoyment of music and dance. The number of pupils involved in instrumental music tuition has declined markedly due in part to the cost of lessons.

31. There are strong links with the local church which also add to the opportunities for learning. The priest leads assemblies and services are held in the church to celebrate Christmas and major events. The school's links with partner institutions are very good. Students from the Liverpool Hope University are welcomed into the school and given good support and guidance during their initial teacher training. Local high schools share their resources, both by way of equipment and teachers with specific subject knowledge and skills; this has led to improvements in the provision for pupils in this school.

32. The headteacher and staff are totally committed to the creation of a secure and caring environment, which is central to the personal development of all of the pupils. The high priority given to this in the daily life of the school is reflected in the overall good provision the school continues to make for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

33. Provision for spiritual development is good. Close links are fostered with the church and the parish, which support the pupils' spiritual growth well. Prayers at the beginning and end of sessions, together with whole school, key stage, and class assemblies provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to reflect on their relationship with God and join in Christian worship. Special masses, written by the school, and read by the pupils are celebrated with parents on particular Holy Days. The pattern of the Church's calendar is observed through festivals in which pupils are taught to consider their place in school, at home and in the world. Religious education encourages pupils, as they get older, to consider the nature of religious belief. Teachers are sensitive to grasp special moments in class which promote the pupils' sense of awe at God's creation, for instance, when first releasing butterflies into the butterfly garden. The youngest children demonstrate a sense of wonder at seasonal patterns of nature when they observe the cherry trees 'snowing petals' in spring, or display 'golden' leaves in autumn.

34. Provision for moral development is good. The school sets high moral standards and ensures that all pupils know exactly what is expected of them. Staff provide good role models and establish supportive relationships with the pupils. Teachers and non-teaching staff, including midday assistants, have been trained to promote good behaviour and attitudes. They set clear standards and all pupils are made aware of the choices available to them and of the consequences of their actions. Praise and encouragement are used successfully to establish caring, responsible attitudes. The school's system of

rewards and sanctions is clearly displayed around school and supports teachers in encouraging pupils to behave well. Individual targets are set and used to remind pupils of how to improve. Moral issues such as honesty and fairness are sensitively explored in religious education lessons. Opportunities to consider and help people who are less well off than themselves are provided through regular collections for charities.

35. The provision for social development is very good. The school takes care to build up a sense of community and working together as a school family. Older pupils are encouraged to look after younger pupils, and to take responsibility for minor administrative tasks such as collecting registers and answering the telephone at lunchtime. Pupils in all classes are chosen on a rota basis to be monitors, for instance, to give out books or tidy up. In Year 6 they are taught about citizenship through the Pupil Parliament. Delegates canvas the views of pupils in all age groups and pupils are invited to cast votes in an election. Last year the Pupil Parliament debated ways of improving the playground and initiated plans which were successfully funded and carried out by the school. In organising annual residential visits in Year 2 and Year 6, the school does more than most to develop the pupils' independence, and promote social interaction. Pupils' loyalty to their class is emphasised through the opportunities to win points which lead to a whole class rather than a personal reward. In many classes and in most subjects pupils are expected to co-operate closely with a partner or as part of a group, to share ideas and resources to further their learning. There are regular opportunities to take responsibility in representing the school in local sports leagues and music festivals. Weekly Good News assemblies encourage pupils to respect the achievement of others and to share in celebrating individual and whole school success. Good manners are noticed and valued, and polite and helpful behaviour is reinforced by consistent positive feedback.

36. Since the previous inspection the school has improved its provision for cultural development from satisfactory to good. Frequent opportunities are provided for pupils to learn about their own heritage and about other cultures. In history, studies of a variety of societies from Ancient Greeks to the Victorians give pupils an insight into past diversity. The study of land use around the school, and a number of visits such as to the Hat Museum in Stockport teach pupils about the culture nearer to home. Visits from drama and puppet groups enrich the pupils' experience. Familiarity with some of the works of writers like Kipling and Dickens broaden the cultural horizons for older pupils and younger pupils enjoy a variety of traditional tales. A good collection of books in the Key Stage 1 library reflects non-western cultures. In art, the school promotes a range of cultural traditions through the study of the works of famous artists. In music, pupils have good opportunities to respond to music from different periods and places. Major World Faiths are studied in religious education. Pupils' experience of non-western cultures is further enhanced by celebrations of the Chinese New Year and by interpreting the Willow Pattern Story.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

37. The level of care taken over the pupils' welfare is good. This is a very supportive community where the Christian ethos permeates the whole life of the school. Pupils are highly valued as individuals and treated with respect. Adults in the school are good listeners and respond well to pupils' wide ranging needs. Pupils have confidence in the knowledge that help is always at hand.

38. The school has good procedures to promote the health and safety of its pupils and provides them within an environment which is regularly monitored and well maintained. Safety is at the forefront of all planning and regular risk assessments are undertaken, although these are not recorded. The school should consider whether its practice with respect to the latter should be improved.

39. The school has a good policy and clearly defined procedures for child protection and all staff know what to do should any concern arise. Pupils learn about their own value and safety from studies in religious education and personal education. The school has an effective system to regulate the movement of pupils onto, and from, the register of special educational needs. Good use is made of pupils' specific learning plans in the sessions for small groups of pupils; their use is less systematic in whole class lessons because of the shortage of sufficient support for the teacher from other adults.

Pupils with emotional and behavioural problems have individual learning plans but these do not include specific strategies to help them modify their behaviour and measure success. Good use is made of time made available from external support agencies.

40. The school's policies for encouraging good behaviour and attendance are effective. They are based on high expectations. Good behaviour is positively recognised by praise and, when appropriate, by points for which there are individual and class rewards. These encourage pupils to work towards a common goal. Teachers and support staff work together to make sure that rewards for good work and behaviour, and sanctions for misbehaviour, are fair and consistent. The school discusses concerns with parents and involves them in procedures to combat difficulties. Pupils know that bullying is not tolerated and incidents are dealt with promptly. The school does not systematically record incidents of unacceptable behaviour and a few parents think that repeated misbehaviour is not dealt with firmly enough. Parents and pupils need to be regularly reassured about the fairness of the disciplinary system. Overall, the very good support and guidance offered by all staff results in an atmosphere of warmth and enthusiasm which has a good effect on raising pupils' achievement.

41. There has been delay in remedying the weaknesses in assessing pupils' attainment highlighted in the previous report. However, satisfactory procedures have recently been implemented and improvement is evident. The wealth of data available from tests is carefully analysed and weaknesses identified. The resulting action, for example the focus on writing, has been successful in raising standards. Teachers are beginning to assess pupils' attainment against weekly learning objectives and noting those who have done better, or not as well as expected. Such procedures are not yet sufficiently embedded in the planning to ensure tasks are closely matched to the needs of individual pupils. A positive, but as yet inconsistent, feature of the assessment system is the setting of targets. These are displayed on boards in some classes as a constant reminder for the teacher and pupils. Assessment procedures in the nursery are good and are well used to guide planning and target specific areas of improvement for individual children.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

42. Parents express a very high degree of satisfaction with the school's good teaching, pastoral care and the happy environment which contributes to their children's well-being and personal growth. Parents consider that the close links with the Church enhance the school's values and they like the way they are welcomed in school and can approach their child's teacher about any problems or concerns. Parents are pleased to be involved in their children's reading and in extra procedures to fulfil any special needs. Parents throughout school were involved when the school introduced the assertive discipline policy for behaviour management and parents of children in the nursery are helped with strategies to manage the behaviour of very young children. All parents know that the school will involve them in concerns and procedures which might affect their child.

43. A minority of parents do not think children get the right amount of work to do at home. Inspectors found that the school has a satisfactory policy to provide regular homework in increasing amounts as pupils progress through the school. However, not all parents make sure that homework, including reading, is completed and returned to school. Pupils positively benefit and achieve better when parents are directly involved with homework. Teachers are always ready to discuss pupils' progress at any time and the school makes good provision through termly consultation evenings. A few parents consider that the school does not always respond robustly to incidents of unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors found the school's policy and practice of assertive discipline has a satisfactory effect on behaviour overall but that parents were sometimes unaware of the results of investigations into unacceptable behaviour and the steps taken to prevent such incidents from re-occurring. Some parents would like to see a wider range of extra curricular activities. The school was found to provide well for sport and music, with considerable numbers of pupils involved. Opportunities are similar to those found in most schools. Residential visits extend the provision for pupils in the year groups participating in them.

44. Links with parents and carers are good and effective. The school has many good initiatives to promote the partnership and a number of parents make a highly valued contribution to the work of the

school. The weekly 'Good News' assembly is a prime example. Teachers keep good records of points raised in discussions at parents' evenings and incorporate action in subsequent planning where appropriate. Parents of pupils who have individual education plans are fully informed of the special provision so that they can help their children at home. All parents have opportunity to complement the school's work in developing reading skills through use of children's ongoing diary. The curriculum map provided each half term is also useful in giving advance notice of topics to be studied. Written reports at the end of each year are presented clearly but do not always include sufficient information about how well children are doing, whether it is good enough, and what they need to do to improve. Parents respond to the warm welcome they receive in school and the regular help that some parents provide in class, on swimming trips and visits out of school, is appreciated.

45. In the nursery, parents assist the staff with the initial assessment of children's achievements. The well resourced 'story sacks' help parents to enrich their children's imagination and encourage an interest in reading. Many parents take advantage of the Family Literacy and Return to Learn initiatives which are provided in partnership with a local college. Courses are well planned and enable parents to develop their own literacy and computer skills and share more in their child's education. Parents are looking forward to the focus on numeracy in next term's courses. A thriving mother and toddler group is supported well by the local authority and the grant towards the toy library is put to good use.

46. The Parents, Teachers and Friends Association is lively and active. It organises successful social events and raises substantial funds for extra resources, for instance, the millennium garden. Overall, parents and school work well together to the benefit of all pupils.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

47. The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. It is having a positive impact on rising standards.

48. The previous report identified some aspects of management in need of attention, namely, improving the effectiveness of key co-ordinators and the management role of the governing body. Progress has been made in both areas. In addition, the school has been pro-active in instituting improvement in teaching through the setting of clearer objectives and more focused planning for lessons. The school has also been effective in analysing pupils' performance in writing and science. Deficiencies were recognised and the remedial action taken resulted in measurable improvement in Year 6 pupils' results in national tests. A similar exercise could profitably be undertaken in mathematics. The headteacher and key staff have monitored a minimal amount of teaching, mainly in literacy and numeracy. This needs to be extended, and also to include the reception classes, so that good practices can be disseminated and shared by all staff.

49. The headteacher has a clear vision of the school's direction and its immediate priorities. These are shared and acted on by a committed team of teaching and non-teaching staff. Strategies for inspiring optimum achievement are working well, especially in the nursery and in Years 2 and 6. The headteacher has a high profile around the school and knows individual pupils and their families well, as do other adult personnel. There is a good team spirit amongst the staff which is highly committed to the personal development of each pupil. This philosophy successfully underpins all the school's work. A few parents consider that the leadership is not strong enough with respect to the handling of the repeated misbehaviour of a minority of pupils. Inspectors found such issues to be handled sensitively but recognised that parents were not always made aware of the action taken.

50. The governing body has a much greater awareness of the school's work than at the time of the previous inspection. A number of the governors are recent appointments and they, together with others, have embraced intensive training through diocesan and local education authority programmes. Governors are beginning to be involved in the evaluation of the school's daily work and understand the relevance of this in decision making. The school development plan is an unwieldy document but covers appropriate priorities and takes account of forward planning. It is suitably modified on a regular basis to reflect changing needs and the success, or otherwise, of actions taken. A summarised version would be helpful to assist staff keep the priorities in sharp focus. Most recently the targets have embraced literacy and numeracy and have targeted improvement in the quality of teaching and the use of

assessment procedures to track pupils' progress. These are backed up through staff training from internal and external sources, although more is needed for numeracy. Support for students who complete their training practices in the school is particularly good and appreciated by the students involved.

51. The staffing of the school is adequate but its deployment is unsatisfactory in respect to insufficient adult support in some of the larger classes. This has the greatest impact in Years 3, 4 and 5 where teachers struggle to provide all pupils with the same level of support in group activities. Too often the smaller number of middle and higher-attaining pupils receive the least amount of individual help. Those pupils with special educational needs who are taught in small withdrawal groups receive good support and, as a result, frequently achieve better than other pupils with almost similar need in mainstream classes. Without additional support, especially in English and mathematics, teachers will continue to find it difficult to maintain an appropriate pace for all pupils. The governing body needs to review the impact of its staffing policy. Consideration should also be given to the appropriateness of the reception class teacher having sole responsibility for co-ordinating the numeracy programme when she is not directly involved in the teaching of the National Numeracy Strategy.

52. The school's accommodation is generous for the number of pupils on roll. The three buildings are well used but are costly to maintain in the light of the falling school roll and the high incidence of vandalism. The school is fortunate to have a site manager who has good oversight of the buildings and is capable of carrying out a considerable number of the repairs himself. The building used by the reception classes and Years 1 and 2 is the least substantial although an improvement in the exterior décor has lifted its appearance. Outdoor play facilities for children in the nursery and reception classes are not extensive and restrict opportunities for imaginative play. The school development plan identifies this as an aspect for improvement. Resources for learning are barely adequate. This is partly due to the fact that some have to be duplicated because they cannot easily be shared between classes in separate buildings. The library used by pupils in Years 3 to 6 has recently been converted to a computer suite. This limits its use for independent study and research. In addition, there is a noticeable absence of a good range of high quality books about the school to stimulate interest in general reading.

53. The school makes optimum use of designated funding and often supplements it with money from the main budget, for example, to improve provision for pupils with special educational needs. Funding from the local education authority is relatively low compared to schools nationally. Monies are spent prudently re. the purchase of services and goods and priorities in the development plan. They take into account contingencies and the likely impact of the falling school roll. Currently the level of provision is being preserved through appropriate forward planning and use of the surplus reserved for this purpose. The school and governors endeavour to ensure that spending decisions are cost-effective with respect to the quality of provision and its effect on pupils' achievement.

54. The school has a strong caring ethos which permeates all its activities. There has been satisfactory improvement in many aspects of its work since the previous inspection but there is still more to be done. Assessment procedures need to be used to help individual pupils target higher standards, teaching needs to be monitored with the best treated as an exemplar of good practice, and, not least, staffing allocations in the larger classes need to be reviewed. Overall, bearing in mind the very low attainment on entry, the low income and quality of provision leading to good personal development, the school gives good value for money. It has the will and capacity for further improvement.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

55. To further improve the work of the school the headteacher, staff and governors should

Promote higher attainment in English and mathematics by:

- * focusing on the cumulative acquisition of basic literacy and numeracy skills;
- * providing more training for teachers in the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy.

(Paragraphs 6, 7, 50, 67, 69, 70, 74, 75, 77, 82)

Improve standards in information technology by:

- * providing opportunities for pupils to develop and use information technology skills systematically and regularly;
- * improving the expertise of staff

(Paragraphs 5, 17, 110 to 115)

Improve management and organisational structures by:

- * using assessment data to enable subject co-ordinators and classteachers to match planning and targets to pupils' individual needs;
- * using the monitoring of teaching and learning in lessons to build on the good practices already existing in some classes;
- * re-deploying staff to provide more support for pupils of all abilities in the larger classes in Years 3, 4 and 5.

(Paragraphs 22, 23, 41, 48, 51, 54, 72, 78, 82, 89)

In addition to the key issues, the school should provide a wider range of good quality fiction and non-fiction books for pupils in Years 3 to 6 as soon as is practicable.

(Paragraphs 6, 52, 69,)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	54
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	39

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	9	20	23	2	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)	49	248
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	66

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	7
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	1	66

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	11

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.5
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
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	18	14	32

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	11	15
	Girls	12	12	11
	Total	23	23	26
Percentage of pupils At NC level 2 or above	School	72(80)	72 (74)	81(97)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	13	13
	Girls	12	12	12
	Total	23	25	25
Percentage of pupils At NC level 2 or above	School	72 (74)	78 (91)	78 (83)
	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	17	17	34

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	10	9	12
	Girls	13	10	14
	Total	23	19	26
Percentage of pupils At NC level 4 or above	School	68 (51)	56(60)	76(62)
	National	75(70)	72(69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	9	12	11
	Girls	12	10	13
	Total	21	22	24
Percentage of pupils At NC level 4 or above	School	62(60)	65 (55)	71(57)
	National	70 (68)	72(69)	79 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	2
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	206
Any other minority ethnic group	

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	1	
Other minority ethnic groups		

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)	12.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.8
Average class size	24.8

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	61.5

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.5

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	61.5

Number of pupils per FTE adult	12.3
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	578,996
Total expenditure	571,584
Expenditure per pupil	1815
Balance brought forward from previous year	38,099
Balance carried forward to next year	45,511

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	321
Number of questionnaires returned	127

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	68	29	2	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	51	42	7	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	44	44	10	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	42	36	16	2	4
The teaching is good.	59	37	2	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	44	42	13	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	70	24	5	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	49	42	7	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	38	50	10	1	1
The school is well led and managed.	50	28	17	1	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	53	42	3	1	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	29	15	4	19

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

56. The Foundation Stage includes 69 children who attend the nursery part-time, for morning or afternoon sessions and thirty-four children who are accommodated full-time in the reception classes. Attainment on entry to the nursery is very low, particularly in literacy and numeracy skills. Of the children in the reception classes, a significant proportion has been identified as having special educational needs (41%) from the assessments carried out soon after entering these classes. Overall, children make good progress in the Foundation Stage but attainment is still well below that found typically for children of this age at the start of Year 1. Attainment is better in personal, social and emotional development, and creative and physical development, and is broadly similar to that expected for the children's ages by the end of the reception year. However, none exceed this level. The children receive a good start to their education in the nursery where the teaching is good in all areas of learning. The number of adults is high each session, there being at least two assistants. There are no classroom assistants in the reception classes and this slightly slows the progress, as, although class sizes are small, the children with special educational needs require a lot of adult support to complete their tasks. Teaching is satisfactory in all aspects of children's work in the reception classes. By the end of the Foundation Stage the majority of children have achieved well from their starting point.

Personal, social and emotional development

57. The children enjoy their time in the nursery and make good progress. About one third start with very few social skills; they make very good progress.. By the time they leave the reception class the majority has attained the early learning goals in this area of development. All adults in the nursery give positive encouragement to the children and act as good role models. The children begin to learn to work together, but a few have great difficulty in learning to share and co-operate with others. This occurs even in reception classes. When involved in outdoor play they realise they have to wait for their turn to ride on the bikes. Snack time plays an important part in the development of personal and social skills, both in the nursery and reception classes. In the nursery the children gain independence and make choices about when to have their snack and what they would like to eat and drink. They are required to use their manners and say 'please' and 'thank you', to sit at the table until they have finished and to place their empty containers in the waste bin. All children do so and enjoy the conversation with their teacher and friends. The majority of children in the nursery lack confidence when asked to choose which activity they wish to undertake, often copying what the child before has said, or relying on adults for help. The children are given sufficient time to complete activities, but their concentration spans are short and many move on quickly to another task. When using play dough they show little imagination in what they make. The children join in prayers at the end of sessions and are beginning to realise they are expected to behave respectfully. The teachers, support staff and voluntary helpers in the nursery work closely together to provide a welcoming, yet secure atmosphere where personal, social and emotional development is fostered well through appropriate praise and encouragement. The children's ideas and contributions are valued. This good teaching successfully increases the children's self-esteem and encourages them to gain confidence in their learning. The teaching in the reception classes is satisfactory but there are fewer opportunities for children to choose from a wide range of experiences as they are often directed to one activity and moved on after a period of time. However, they continue to gain in confidence and develop their levels of concentration.

Communication, language and literature.

58. The majority of children make good progress in developing communication, language and literacy skills, but, despite this, their attainment is still well below that expected for their age by the time they start in Year 1. All the adults use talk to good effect and are good, active listeners. They show children that they value their efforts at communicating. Children enjoy the story times in the nursery and the sharing of large books in the reception classes. Several children have speech defects, very limited vocabulary and occasionally no words. Children in the nursery were fascinated by the story of 'Delilah's Lair' and knew the print told the teacher what to say. They make good progress in extending their range of vocabulary and speaking more clearly, for instance when they say nursery rhymes, of which they know a good number. They are beginning to recognise the letter sounds they hear, but the school has recently changed the approach to teaching phonics in the reception classes and the teachers are still becoming familiar with the new materials. The children begin to recognise their names in the nursery from the self-registration procedures, and more able children begin to write their names unaided. Little progress has been made in the reception classes to develop their writing skills further. There are many opportunities during role-play activities for children to make marks and write the letters they know on paper. Elements of the Literacy Framework are used well by teachers in the reception classes but they are not sure how to link these elements to develop the children's independent writing skills.

Mathematical development

59. By the end of the reception year about half of the children attain the early learning goals for mathematics. This proportion is well below that found typically for children of similar age. The children learn to count by rote in the nursery, with the more able children beginning to recognise some numerals, for example three children could write numbers to 5 accurately. In the reception classes they attempted to order numbers to 10 and succeeded with help from their teacher. They have little understanding of larger or smaller numbers or the number before or after a given number. They identify and name simple shapes such as squares, circles, rectangles and triangles successfully and the most able children can give some properties such as the number and size of sides, or the number of corners. In the nursery, the children attempt to continue sequencing patterns using two colours, but few succeed without adult support. All adults take every opportunity to develop the children's counting skills and understanding of numbers, for example when sharing out grapes for snacks or counting the children present. There are many opportunities to experience number activities through choice, but few children choose to do so.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

60. Most children enter the nursery with little general knowledge and few experiences of the world around them. Attainment is well below the expected level by the end of the reception year. The teachers make every effort to give as many first hand experiences as possible. All adults in the nursery talk to the children, or pose questions as they work and play to build on their knowledge and understanding of the place where they live and what has happened to them since they were babies. For example, during snack time the children talk about where the grapes and bananas might have come from and where their parents go shopping. In the reception classes they make biscuits and gain understanding of how heat changes the mixture when the biscuits are cooked. The children can express preferences for what they like or don't like to eat. In the nursery the children use the computer with help from an adult. Some can control the mouse to drag objects around the screen. Photographic evidence shows the widening breadth of children's understanding, for example they have planted bulbs in the Millennium garden, been on a bus ride, and tested materials to see if they were waterproof.

61. All adults support children well in investigating their surroundings and encourage them to solve problems for themselves by posing questions such as 'How could we do that?' or 'What do you think

would happen if---?'. The children in the nursery are not yet able to select the resources they need, and when given the opportunity to use scissors, none are able to cut out and few even attempt to. In the reception classes, the children move around the different activities with more confidence, sometimes selecting the materials they need, for example, when making boats or cars from empty containers fastened together.

62. Children are introduced to festivals from other faiths and know simple facts about Divali and the Chinese New Year, beginning to understand that other people have different beliefs.

Physical development

63. The secure, outdoor play area is small, lacks features of interest and only has a hard surfaced area. This restricts the opportunities for imaginative play. The reception classes use the main playground at a different time to other classes, but again there is a lack of interest and equipment. Good opportunities are provided for dance and gymnastics which successfully promote the development of physical skills. By the end of their time in the reception class the children's attainment is broadly similar to that expected for their age. In the nursery, the children are sometimes not aware of others and the space available. There are occasional collisions. A few children are still at the stage of holding on to an adult's hand when outside but they are encouraged to join in games with others. Awareness of space improves in the reception classes; children use it well during gymnastics activities. They develop manipulative skills satisfactorily when moulding play dough and painting and in the reception classes hold pencils firmly when writing. The development of the outdoor play area is identified in the school development plan and is critical to children's further development in this aspect of learning.

Creative development

64. The majority of children achieve the early learning goals in this area by the end of their time in the reception class as many opportunities are provided to develop their skills. Most make very good progress as a result. By the end of the reception year children make good attempts at representing what they see, for example in their painted self-portraits which include hair and facial features showing good use of colour and careful application of the paint. The enthusiasm of the adults and their involvement in role-play and music making are infectious and key factors in the children's good progress.

65. There has been a significant improvement in the curricular planning in the nursery and reception classes since the previous inspection and the good provision in the nursery has been sustained. The planning includes the deployment of all adults to provide maximum support for the children. The Foundation Stage curriculum has been implemented successfully in the nursery class, with a programme to cover all areas of learning and which systematically builds on what the children already know and can do. The reception classes are following the same planning, but there are some areas in need of further development as already mentioned. One of the strengths of the Foundation Stage is the close links that are built up between home and school. The parents are welcomed into school and actively encouraged to take an interest in their child's education from day one. The nursery has high standards and clear boundaries for behaviour, which are reinforced in a sensitive, but firm manner. This continues in the reception classes. Routines are established well in the nursery and most children are now able to follow them. Another improvement has been in the assessment procedures which are good and provide valuable information which is used effectively in planning further activities and in ensuring that all children experience the whole range of activities over time when given choices. The leadership of the Foundation Stage is good but more time is needed for the co-ordinator to monitor the teaching in the reception classes and disseminate the good practice found in the nursery.

ENGLISH

66. Overall standards have improved slightly, albeit from a low base, over the last four years. The results of national tests in 2000 indicate that standards, at the age of seven and eleven, are still well below those found in most schools. Compared to schools of similar background the results were well below average at age seven and below average at age eleven. Scrutiny of test results shows that the percentage of eleven-year-olds reaching the expected level for their age was close to the national average. Few pupils however reached the higher level. The school exceeded the target set jointly by the school and the local education authority. Standards are adversely affected by the mobility of pupils and the increasingly high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in the school. Many pupils have difficulty in working independently and, although speaking and listening skills have improved considerably, pupils are still not confident in getting their ideas down on paper or working independently. This is reflected in the test results. Through careful analysis of performance in tests, the school has reviewed the way writing is taught and greater emphasis is now being placed on this. The trend for improvement is being maintained. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that standards are currently below rather than well below those found in most schools at the age of seven and eleven years.

67. Communication and literacy skills are well below average when pupils start Year 1. Almost all of the pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1 and progress is consistently good in Year 2. This is due to good teaching. The emphasis on the development of speaking and listening skills enables the pupils to extend their understanding. The provision of very small steps of graded learning in reading and writing supports their progress well. In Key Stage 2, larger class sizes in Years 3,4 and 5 together with the higher number of pupils with special educational needs, limit the amount of time the teacher can spend with the different ability groups in each class. Progress, whilst still satisfactory, slows down. In Year 6, particularly skilful, enthusiastic teaching and small class sizes promote good progress. Throughout the school the pupils with special educational needs make good progress when withdrawn to work in highly effective small groups. When working in class without the extra support the progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Overall, pupils achieve well from their starting point in Key Stage 1. In Key Stage 2 they achieve satisfactorily. Teachers promote the use of literacy skills in all subjects.

68. The majority of the pupils make good progress in developing skills of speaking and listening as they move through the school. Teachers promote these skills thoroughly across the curriculum and provide well-organised opportunities for pupils to talk and listen in small and large groups. The good relationships in all classes give pupils confidence to join in. In a history lesson in Year 1 pupils use only a very limited vocabulary to describe their favourite toys and some words like “old” and “new” are not used appropriately. By the end of Key Stage 1 the majority are keen to contribute to class discussion. Pupils are beginning to extend their vocabulary. They enjoy exploring the spoken word as when repeating alliterations and simple poems from memory. Pupils listen well to the teacher but find it hard to listen to each other, being anxious for their turn to speak. In Year 4, pupils take part in productive group debates. When considering newspaper reports they express their point of view, listen to each other and modify their ideas in the light of comments made. By Year 6, pupils brainstorm ideas confidently as when composing a class poem. Almost all contribute imaginative sentences with thoughtful use of adjectives. They listen with appreciation to the ideas of others. When interviewing each other they pose questions clearly to find out specific information.

69. The quality of pupils’ oral skills is better than in reading and writing. Attainment in reading is below average at the end of both key stages. The majority of the pupils however are enthusiastic to read. At the end of Key Stage 1, the teachers’ enthusiasm ensures that almost all pupils are keen to join in short whole class reading sessions. They read aloud together with expression and with careful attention to punctuation including commas, exclamation marks, and question marks. Higher-attaining pupils are beginning to predict rhyming words at the end of the lines. Careful teaching of letters and their sounds enables almost all pupils to break down unfamiliar words although lack of appropriate

vocabulary means that lower-attaining pupils do not always recognise or understand the words they have sounded out. Most pupils use picture and context clues successfully to establish meaning. The most able talk about what they have read in detail, showing good understanding of the major events in a story. Throughout Key Stage 1 the teachers work hard to establish good links with parents through reading diaries. Where these are taken up, and pupils practise regularly at home, there is a very positive effect on progress. Generally, by the end of Key Stage 2, the average and highest-attaining pupils have sufficient reading skills to support their learning in other subjects. For instance in geography, the teacher's emphasis on keywords enabled the pupils to research travel brochures to find out about climates and conditions in mountainous regions. Many pupils however are unsure of the differences in fiction and reference books. They can, when pressed, find information using index and contents pages. Overall independent reading for information and for pleasure outside the literacy hour does not receive enough attention and this is reflected in the standards achieved. Library facilities in Key Stage 2 are not satisfactory and the quality and quantity of books around school do not promote the development of independent reading skills well. The pupils' knowledge of famous authors is limited although most are aware of Kipling whose stories they have studied during the literacy hour.

70. The emphasis on the development of writing skills is beginning to improve standards. Extra curriculum time for writing is provided each week and is used effectively. The teachers' lesson plans are clear in pin-pointing exactly what is to be learnt. These learning objectives are often made explicit to the pupils so that they are aware of the progress they are making, and try hard to succeed. Standards of writing are below those expected for pupils' ages at the end of both key stages. Good ideas enthusiastically put forward in initial whole class discussions are not always reflected in the quality of writing produced. By the end of Key Stage 1 average-attaining pupils show some sense of rhythm and rhyme when writing a poem. They co-operate in pairs to share ideas. Spelling of short regular words is correct or phonetically justifiable. Teachers provide a clear format for pupils to plan their writing, which helps them to organise their ideas. Most pupils write a brief account in one or two sentences. They are aware of capital letters and full stops although many are not yet competent in their use. Pupils use their knowledge of letter sounds to spell words but are not always accurate, for example in writing "wet" instead of "went". Most pupils form letters correctly although capitals are sometime used randomly. Writing is not joined. Lower-attaining pupils do not space their writing appropriately or size letter consistently.

71. By the end of Key Stage 2 most pupils are beginning to write competently for a range of purposes. Their best work is produced when lessons start with carefully directed teaching which helps pupils to organise their ideas, and concentrate specifically on the expected styles. For instance when preparing to write a biography the majority of pupils compose sensible direct questions. They extend their vocabulary interestingly when composing poetry. Most are beginning to develop their ideas in appropriately punctuated sentences, and despite limited vocabularies choose words carefully for effect. Common words are generally spelt correctly although careless mistakes sometimes result in inaccuracies. Higher-attaining pupils transfer their knowledge of similes and alliteration into their own extended writing. They use punctuation within sentences, including speech marks, correctly. Lower-attaining pupils write briefly in short sentences. Basic punctuation is still not reliably used. Handwriting is usually legible and joined, although some of the lower-attaining pupils produce poorly formed and badly spaced work.

72. Teaching is satisfactory overall. It is good in Key Stage 1 and in Year 6. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed. In one very good lesson the teacher's enthusiasm, high expectations, and brisk pace, led to very good progress in composing a class poem. All teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the National Literacy Strategy. Literacy lessons are usually well planned and build on earlier learning. Whole-class sessions are invariably well taught, but the organisation of work for groups of different ability within the class does not always fully meet their needs. Assessment is not precise enough to ensure that pupils in groups not specifically targeted by the teacher are sufficiently challenged to make good progress. Teachers manage behaviour consistently well. They use positive

strategies of praise and encouragement to set a purposeful working atmosphere in lessons. Pupils respond enthusiastically and work hard. The summary sessions at the end of lessons are effective in extending or consolidating learning. Some teachers are beginning to use information technology well to support learning in English, but this needs to be developed consistently throughout the school.

73. Standards of teaching and learning are beginning to be monitored in all classes with particular reference to the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy. This is providing the school with a clear picture of its strengths and weaknesses on which to build further improvement.

MATHEMATICS

74. Pupils' results in the 2000 tests for seven and eleven-year-olds were well below average when compared to all schools. Compared to schools of similar background, they were well below average for seven-year-olds and below average for eleven-year-olds. Currently, pupils achieve better in English and science than in mathematics. Scrutiny of work and observation of lessons during the inspection indicate that throughout the school overall standards of work in mathematics are below those expected for pupils' ages. This takes account of the high proportion of pupils on the register of special educational needs and disguises the fact that many other pupils are achieving at a satisfactory standard for their age. The proportion of higher-attaining pupils is small; they achieve at appropriately higher standards. In 2000, the school exceeded the target set by the governors for attainment at the end of Year 6. It now needs to consider whether the targets for future years are sufficiently challenging. In 1999 pupils' results in Year 6 improved more than the national trend. They levelled off in 2000, partly due to the fact that the National Numeracy Strategy is not yet having as much impact as in other schools. The rate of progress also declined in Year 2 in 2000, previously having been better than that found nationally. This accurately reflects the increasingly high proportion of lower-attaining pupils entering the school. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Overall, pupils achieve well in Key Stage 1 and satisfactorily in Key Stage 2. There is scope for all-round improvement through the full implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy.

75. Considering pupils' well below average attainment on entry, they make good progress in Years 1 and 2. By the age of seven, the middle and higher-attaining pupils are familiar with number sequences and most can work with numbers to 100. They lack confidence when solving problems with higher numbers. Pupils are more confident, and have a better understanding, when dealing with aspects of mathematics such as shape and measure and data handling. Overall, numerical skills are the weakest. For example, the lowest-attaining pupils are slow in applying number bonds to 10.

76. By the age of 11, some pupils can work out calculations quickly in their heads and apply suitable mental strategies in oral work. The two Year 6 classes are small so teachers have more opportunity to work with groups of pupils at their specific level of ability. Numbers in classes in Years 3 to 5 are in excess of 30 and teachers find difficulty in sharing their time fairly amongst all pupils because the large groups of lower-attaining pupils need more attention to move them on. Consequently progress is slower in this key stage, although satisfactory overall and better in Year 6. Pupils with special educational needs who are withdrawn for extra work make good progress – individual attention within these small groups boosts confidence and standards of work. In general, pupils' numerical and computational skills are below average because they have not previously developed the mental strategies to manipulate numbers quickly and accurately. Many pupils in the upper years are still unsure of multiplication tables.

77. Currently, in Years 1 and 2, teachers are placing great emphasis on the understanding of basic number concepts and this foundation augurs well for the future as pupils move through the school. Pupils in older groups, and some teachers, are less confident with the work in mental mathematics as this is a relatively new element in the make up of lessons. There are too few opportunities in most classes for pupils to interpret word problems and tackle work through an investigative approach. The

school is currently involved in a joint training programme with the local education authority to share exemplary practices. A more practical approach to some aspects of the work would benefit all pupils, as would the greater integration of information technology into lesson planning. The satisfactory work on spreadsheets in Years 5 and 6 is indicative of the pupils' capability to work through procedures for themselves once they have assimilated the basic operational skills.

78. The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is satisfactory overall but could be better. In the lessons seen, teaching was good in Years 1 and 2. It was satisfactory overall in Years 3 to 6 but there was a small element of unsatisfactory teaching, together with some very good teaching in Year 6. The pace of learning in Years 3, 4 and 5 is slowed by the lack of additional adult support during group activities. This was evident in the analysis of pupils' work.

79. In the good, and occasional very good, lessons teachers work at a brisk pace using skilful questioning to engage pupils in an interesting range of activities. In oral work, the insistence on explicit answers using mathematical terminology reinforces pupils' understanding of the precise nature of the subject. Pupils are well motivated and teachers make them think for themselves, for example, in the Year 6 lesson in which pupils discussed amongst themselves how to find the maximum area enclosed by a given perimeter. In another successful lesson in Year 1 the teacher repeatedly varied her tactics in a role play lesson until pupils realised that 'change' in money was equivalent to counting on from the cost of the item being bought. The strategy of continually revisiting a concept over a period of time until the majority of pupils grasp and can apply it works well. In the least successful lesson objectives were not clear and the tasks were not appropriately matched to the pupils' abilities. They were unsure of what they were doing and achievement was minimal.

80. The scheme of work and teachers' planning have improved since the previous inspection. The National Numeracy Strategy is being implemented in principle but practices vary from class to class. At best some teachers have developed their own strategies for delivering the three-part lesson, and do so successfully. Others need more assistance, especially with the introductory mental arithmetic session, to ensure consistency throughout the whole school. Similarly, at the end of lessons, the good practices used by some teachers to ascertain what has been learnt could usefully be shared. Work set for the group activities is usually suitably based on the lesson's focus. However, the tasks do not go far enough for some pupils in Years 3 to 5.

81. Pupils use mathematics to help their learning in other subjects. Teachers reinforce skills such as measurement, graphical work and data-handling at the time of use in subjects such as design and technology, science and geography. Poor computational skills, such as multiplication and division, affect attainment in mathematics more than other subjects.

82. The school has made a satisfactory improvement, especially in teaching, since the previous inspection but there is still much to be done. In particular, pupils' numerical skills need to be reinforced in Years 3 to 6. Pupils' progress is not tracked and utilised on a regular basis. Teachers need more guidance in the delivery of the National Numeracy Strategy. The school needs to give consideration to the appropriateness of the reception class teacher having the sole responsibility for co-ordinating the numeracy policy, especially considering that Years 3 to 6 are taught in a separate building some distance away.

SCIENCE

83. Pupils' results in the national tests for eleven-year-olds in 2000 were below average when compared to all schools and also to those of similar background. This does not take into account the high proportion of pupils on the register of special educational need. Results in science have been consistently below the national average since 1996 and were at their lowest in 1998. In the last two

years standards have risen significantly. This improvement is a response to the school's evaluation of the national test results and its decision to concentrate on the teaching of accurate scientific vocabulary and the skills of investigation. Scrutiny of books and observation of lessons indicate that standards of work are below average by the time pupils leave the school. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls.

84. Teachers' assessment of pupils' attainment by the time they are seven indicates that standards are below average for their age. This is confirmed by evidence from the inspection. Bearing in mind pupils' well below average attainment on entry, most make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and achieve well. Gains in knowledge result from practical activities, such as when pupils successfully investigated the quality of everyday materials, accurately classifying them according to their properties.

85. In Years 3 to 6, most pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily from their starting point. They develop a sound scientific knowledge, which is often more evident in oral work than in writing, and a satisfactory awareness of scientific procedures. By Year 6 many pupils have a good understanding of scientific vocabulary, organise fair tests and write clearly ordered accounts of the procedures, forming generalisations from the evidence. However, more opportunities are needed for pupils to work at a higher level. Pupils satisfactorily draw on mathematical knowledge to analyse results and construct bar charts, such as when tallying techniques were used to investigate the favourite foods of the class. In Year 4, pupils acquire factual knowledge about the human skeleton but they do not learn about joints and the importance of the rib cage in protecting vital organs. They use CD ROMs to extract scientific information, although occasionally this is too technical for them to understand. By Years 5 and 6 pupils are enjoying the challenge of more complex practical work, such as changing the length of guitar strings to investigate variation in pitch.

86. Overall, teaching is good in both key stages. All the lessons observed during the inspection were satisfactory or better and elements of good teaching were seen in all parts of the school. Since the previous inspection there has been a much greater emphasis on the practical and investigative work which has led to an improvement in pupils' understanding of scientific concepts. A good example is pupils' appreciation of the effect of air resistance on flight gained from the construction of cardboard helicopters. Teachers have sound scientific knowledge and share the learning objectives with the class. They have good management skills and organise activities that enable many of the pupils to make good progress. For example, in a combined Year 1/Year 2 class, the teacher organises two distinct activities. The younger pupils match pictures of adult animals to pictures of their young. The older pupils study the life cycle of the frog. Well-organised investigations help pupils learn the scientific processes alongside their acquisition of knowledge. Other characteristics of good lessons include;

- * brief but detailed resumes of the previous lesson to enable pupils to use their earlier knowledge and build on what they already know;
- * carefully explained practical tasks, supported by perceptive questioning, which help pupils to understand the activities they are about to undertake;
- * the use of accurate scientific language; and
- * enthusiasm which moves the lessons forward at a brisk pace.

87. The outcome of lessons in the large classes in Years 3 to 5 is often minimised by the lack of sufficient support for the very wide range of abilities. Consequently opportunities are missed to challenge pupils at higher levels or to give full support to pupils of lower ability. Teachers do their best to see that, over time, all pupils have a fair share of their attention.

88. Pupils enjoy practical activities. Most have a good attitude towards the subject and respond well to its investigative nature. They concentrate well and successfully work in small groups, effectively delegating and accepting responsibility.

89. Improvements in curriculum content and planning, together with the decision to concentrate on the pupils' acquisition of correct scientific vocabulary, have been instrumental in raising standards. Progress is being made in the development of assessment procedures to assist teachers make more accurate judgements about individual pupil's progress. There is good capacity for further improvement and higher achievement.

ART

90. The attainment of both seven-year-olds and pupils aged eleven is above what is expected for their ages. Pupils achieve well throughout the school progressively advancing their technical and artistic skills. A good example is sketching. In Years 1 and 2 pupils confidently use a good range of paints, crayons, pencils and charcoal to create portraits of classmates and mirror portraits of themselves. Other pupils carefully and accurately print repeating patterns, successfully linking art with mathematics. In later years pupils create detailed and accurate drawings of sections of fruits, incorporating shading and line to capture the shape and texture of the objects. Teachers make good use of sketchbooks to enable the pupils to experiment with techniques before they paint in the style of famous artists including Kandinsky and Matisse. A recent project to study the work of a local fashion designer, Ossie Clark, enabled Year 6 pupils to design and produce kimonos and masks of outstanding quality.

91. Good teaching throughout the school often incorporates art into other subjects. This is an improvement on the previous inspection. Effective teaching techniques in Years 1 and 2 challenge pupils to differentiate between shades of colour when they collect an array of shades of the same colour using brochures and catalogues. Pupils are given opportunities to illustrate their favourite incidents in a storybook and are encouraged to carefully study the techniques of famous artists as they develop their techniques to represent movement. Good opportunities are provided for them to make creative responses to personal experiences, such as in the painting of landscapes during a residential visit to Conway.

92. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good. The work on display is finished to a high standard. Pupils listen attentively to instructions and carefully observe the details of the techniques being demonstrated. There are good examples of pupils' collaborative artwork on display, for example where several pupils have worked together to print cards that they fit together to create an abstract art form, in the style of Picasso.

93. The management of the subject has improved since the previous inspection, particularly noticeable in the good curriculum planning which makes provision for three-dimensional work. Resources are sufficient to support the long-term plan for the subject. Art makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development through the study of world artists, which include Cézanne, Miro, Klee and Hockney. Pupils are given good introductory insights into Chinese culture through their artistic interpretation of the Willow Pattern.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

94. Standards of work are average for pupils' ages at the end of both key stages. They are better than at the time of the previous inspection when both provision and attainment were unsatisfactory. Since then a systematic scheme of work has been introduced, teachers' subject knowledge has

improved and the range of resources has been suitably extended. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily, building step by step on relevant technical skills. Occasionally, when projects are particularly challenging, pupils' achievement is good.

95. Teaching throughout the school is satisfactory. It is well focused and encourages pupils to design, make and then evaluate their products. This is evident in Years 1 and 2 when pupils select items from a range of recyclable materials to assemble imaginary buildings and vehicles. They use a typical range of adhesives and tapes to join the cardboard boxes and tubes together. However, work is not always finished to a high standard. For example, not many pupils intuitively improve their products by including entrance doors or wheels that turn on vehicles. Pupils share equipment with thought for others, for instance when using construction kits to assemble towers, road systems and buildings. They carefully disassemble the components and have learned to store them neatly for the next group to use. As pupils become older they learn to choose materials selectively to match the criteria set. When constructing models of beds for dolls they sensibly tested the products to see which would hold the heaviest weight but did not think of ways to make the beds stronger, by, for example, attaching reinforcing strips to the beds or adding more leg supports.

96. Evaluating finished products is given more emphasis in Years 3 to 6. The teaching forges good links with other subjects, for example, when Year 5 pupils applied their knowledge of electrical circuitry to make their recently constructed vehicles move. This is a clear demonstration of progression in the subject; younger pupils had earlier built vehicles from wooden strips and dowelling and made them move using elastic bands as the source of power. Other effective projects, such as study of the process of hat making, provide good insight into local industry. Pupils were engrossed in the practical tasks, working hard to create colour patterns as they assembled fashionable hats and wrote detailed accounts of the processes involved.

97. Pupils enjoy their work in design and technology but the absence of systematic assessment prevents standards from rising higher. There is scope for further development.

GEOGRAPHY

98. The school has maintained the satisfactory standards seen in the previous inspection. By the end of each key stage, pupils' attainment is similar to that expected for their age. Given their well below average starting point, this is a considerable achievement.

99. The school has improved its long-term planning by the recent implementation of national guidelines. The curriculum is now well organised so that the pupils make steady progress in skills and knowledge as they move from class to class. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in class by their teachers and make satisfactory progress. In the larger classes, when extra support is not available, this sometimes takes a disproportionate amount of the teacher's time and slows the pace of learning for some other pupils.

100. In Key Stage 1 the teachers use their knowledge of young children, and their expertise in the subject to plan suitable work which interests the pupils and motivates them to learn. Pupils show sound knowledge of different locations when carrying out a survey of their own holiday destinations. Clear learning objectives focus their attention on the differences between home, the seaside, and the countryside, and enable them to achieve soundly. They further consolidate this by considering which clothes they need to pack for each location, and recording the method of transport they used. Effective links with mathematics to present their findings in block graphs reinforce both geographical and mathematical skills.

101. In Year 3, pupils show sound knowledge of the local area. Well-prepared and accessible Ordnance Survey maps fill them with enthusiasm and delight as they spot places they know. Effective questioning skills by the teacher enable the pupils to orientate themselves and make sense of the map. They successfully consolidate their learning about land use in the locality. By the end of Key Stage 2 the majority of pupils are becoming aware of the way varying weather conditions impact on life in an area. Their knowledge of the climate and physical conditions in certain mountainous areas is sound. They are familiar with the world map and locate ranges such as the Rockies, Andes, Alps and Himalayas accurately. Higher-attaining pupils are challenged to use their initiative and generate their own questions when comparing the Lake District with the Himalayas. They co-operate enthusiastically in groups when using travel brochures and CD-ROM to research the subject. Good links with literacy through emphasis on key words consolidates learning well and provides purposeful opportunities for pupils to practise and improve their communication skills.

102. Teaching is satisfactory overall. No teaching was seen in Key Stage 1, but scrutiny of work in books, and of teachers' planning indicates that standards are satisfactory. Some good teaching was seen at the end of Key Stage 2. This is typified by good pace and clear instructions based on well-focused objectives. Good relationships in all classes give pupils the confidence to explore and investigate, and report their findings to the rest of the class without fear of "getting it wrong". Good class management keeps pupils on task and this allows pupils to learn effectively.

103. The new scheme of work has not yet been monitored to determine its effect on the standards of teaching and learning. Assessment procedures are only just being put into place. The school currently does not have enough data to evaluate its performance and highlight areas for further development.

HISTORY

104. Standards of work at the end of both key stages are average and are similar to those at the time of the previous inspection. Given pupils' low starting points and below average standards of literacy, this is a considerable achievement.

105. The impact of improvements in the planning of the curriculum are similar to those in geography. Overall, pupils make steady progress and achieve satisfactorily. Progress and achievement could be better, especially in Years 3 to 5, if there was more assistance from adults for the high proportion of lower-attaining pupils.

106. In Key Stage 1, pupils demonstrate awareness of the differences between past and present in their own and other people's lives through observing and discussing toys. Most, but not all, use the terms old and new accurately. They listen attentively and are keen to talk, but their limited vocabulary often hinders their ability to describe and compare the toys. A survey of parents' and grandparents' favourite toys, set for homework, heightened the pupils' interest in the subject and increased their knowledge of the past. The teacher incorporated the contributions of families into a class 'History Book of Toys', which is informative and enjoyable. The pupils are proud of their efforts and well motivated to learn when the book is used to promote class discussions. By the end of the key stage, pupils know about significant events of the past. National events, such as Remembrance Day are used sensitively to teach pupils about the First World War. They research information about local War Memorials and gain a sense of the sadness and sacrifice of the time.

107. In Key Stage 2, pupils satisfactorily extend their knowledge from a personal and local level to embrace a diverse range of societies from the past. Teachers use open-ended questions and problem solving techniques to make learning interesting and to promote research skills. Most pupils are eager to learn and work hard. For instance, in Year 3 the pupils are expected to look closely at several

pictures of Boudicca before drawing their own conclusions about her life. They are thoughtful and realise that historical evidence often produces contradictory points of view. The teachers' good knowledge and understanding of the subject and of the pupils, enables them to provide work which challenges the pupils appropriately. By the age of eleven, pupils talk knowledgeably about the civilisation of Ancient Greece. They compare the different societies of Athens and Sparta. A range of activities such as writing factual accounts of the Battle of Marathon or drawing a comic strip to record a sequence of events, holds the pupils' interest and consolidates their learning. Particular attention is paid to extending the pupils' ideas and vocabulary so that they can understand and talk about for example, concepts of democracy and citizenship. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to practise their reading skills and become independent learners through their own research, for instance, using the library.

108. Teaching is good in Key Stage 1 and satisfactory in Key Stage 2. Good relationships throughout the school promote the pupils' confidence so that they join enthusiastically in class discussions. Teachers use good management strategies to set a purposeful working atmosphere where pupils sustain concentration and learn well. Occasionally in Key Stage 2, the pace of learning is slowed when pupils work noisily in groups, and time is wasted when they do not respond quickly to the teacher.

109. Assessment procedures are only just being put into place to measure pupils' attainment and progress. The school currently does not have sufficient data to evaluate its performance in history and pinpoint areas for further development.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

110. Pupils do not have enough experience of working with computers. By the time they are seven and eleven, standards of work are below those expected for their age and progress is unsatisfactory. Pupils do not use computers enough to support work in other subjects.

111. Until a few weeks prior to the inspection the school worked with a variety of computers, some of which were not compatible with new software programs. Consequently the whole approach lacked consistency. A computer suite has recently been installed and the school has adopted a new scheme of work which, when fully implemented, will progressively build up the operational skills required to meet the requirements of the programmes of study in the National Curriculum. Currently the school has the resources to teach word processing and data handling but lacks others. For instance, there are not enough resources to teach pupils to control events through electronically conveyed instructions, or to simulate events to help problem solving. There is no monitoring equipment, such as temperature probes, to support science.

112. In Key Stage 1 pupils use the computers in their classrooms to learn the basic skills of information technology. Most pupils can operate the mouse and know that it is used to carry out instructions. They can identify some of the keys on the keyboard and many can write simple sentences using capital letters and full stops. Pupils of all abilities enjoy working on the computers and they have confidence when working on software programs which support work in literacy and numeracy. Teachers make satisfactory use of the computers within the limitations of their own knowledge and expertise but lack confidence to extend the work to other aspects of the information technology curriculum.

113. Some pupils have experience of information technology through the use of home computers. They have a clear understanding of the potential of the subject and talk confidently about the word processing of information, its exchange through e-mail, and the use of the Internet for research and purchase of goods. Other pupils do not have this personal experience and are not yet gaining it through

systematic teaching within the school. By the time pupils are eleven, their experience and achievement are patchy and there are no records to show which skills have been acquired. Where teachers have a personal interest in developing information technology, for example in Years 5 and 6, pupils are successfully being encouraged to test out new skills, such as the use of spreadsheets and analysis of data about climates in different parts of the world. Work in the new computer suite is minimal at present; teachers are experimenting with different teaching strategies to optimise its use. All teachers need access to training programmes to enable them to help pupils acquire knowledge and skills across the full range of the information technology curriculum.

114. The quality of teaching in information technology is unsatisfactory throughout the school because teachers are not progressively developing and measuring pupils' skills in the subject. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are often limited by their own lack of confidence and expertise in the subject. Some teachers are too dependent on the subject co-ordinator.

115. The school has made insufficient progress since the previous inspection and has not kept up with the advances made in many other schools. This is primarily due to the delay in provision of up-to-date equipment and unsatisfactory teaching. The school is aware of the urgent need for improvement in standards of work and pupils' achievement.

MUSIC

116. Pupils aged seven attain the standards expected for their age and enjoy their music making activities. By the age of eleven, they gain much pleasure and show enthusiasm for musical activities. Standards exceed those expected for their ages. This is similar to the standards found at the time of the previous inspection. The number of pupils receiving instrumental tuition from specialist teachers has declined and the school reports this to be due to the costs involved. However, the school provides opportunities for pupils to play tenor and descant recorders and guitars as part of the extra-curricular provision and fourteen pupils choose to do so. These pupils can read notation and are confident performers. The junior choir has forty members who perform at the Warrington music festival each year. There are separate infant and junior choirs, both taking part in music festivals and school events. The pupils are justifiably proud of their musical achievements, their singing being of particularly good quality.

117. Pupils at Key Stage 1 make satisfactory progress. They sing well, showing good control of pitch, dynamics and tempo. For example, they sing a hymn in two parts, unaccompanied during assembly, with one group led by four Year 2 pupils. In Year 1, pupils develop a sense of rhythm, evident in their ability to repeat accurately a rhythm played by the teacher. By the end of Year 2, pupils can sustain a steady beat and hold it in time with the melody. They accompany their singing with percussion instruments.

118. Pupils make more rapid progress in all aspects of music at Key Stage 2, especially in Years 5 and 6 where the teachers are subject specialists. Photographic evidence and discussions with pupils confirm their abilities to work in groups to create graphic scores which they perform to the class. By the age of eleven, the pupils understand the way in which the sections of an orchestra are organised and can say why they like the sound of their favourite instrument. They have a reasonable understanding of notation and can give the length of notes such as crochets and quavers. Their singing of three part songs is of high quality, with pupils able to sustain their part. They also perform well in large groups, singing songs with descants. They have a good understanding for their age of the musical elements. Pupils in Year 6 showed particular interest in their study of different types of music, for instance, popular music, spirituals and songs from musicals. They understand the difference in the structure of the songs and the reasons for writing them. They demonstrated their good skills when listening to the words of *The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll* by Bob Dylan and understood from the lyrics that the song was about injustice. Realising that this song was written for a specific purpose,

the pupils were inspired to write their own lyrics for a song about their time in the school and the task was completed successfully. This also supported work they had undertaken on writing poetry in their literacy hours. There are effective links between music and other subjects such as history, design and technology and dance, which reinforce learning in several subjects. An improvisation of the story of the Willow Pattern was performed by a group of Year 6 pupils. This was created whilst on a residential visit. Pupils with special educational needs are usually fully included in the activities and supported well by other pupils. This was evident when a pupil withdrawn for one-to-one support for part of the lesson was immediately invited into a group activity on returning to the classroom and was soon enjoying the activities as much as everyone else.

119. The lack of emphasis on non-Western music noted in the previous inspection report has been remedied. For example, pupils in Year 6 learned an African greeting song as part of their study of different types of songs and music.

120. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 1 and good at Key Stage 2, especially in the upper key stage. Lessons identify clearly what pupils are expected to learn and this is often shared with them. A very good lesson in Key Stage 1 included a variety of activities involving both singing and instrumental work. The activities proceeded at a good pace. The teacher used demonstration well and encouraged pupils to work in pairs to identify and copy rhythms. The very good lesson in Year 6 resulted from detailed lesson planning, which sustained a high level of challenge throughout. The pupils rose to the challenge and worked hard to succeed. The teacher demonstrated very good behaviour management strategies which ensured the challenging behaviour did not cause unnecessary disruption for others, whilst still allowing those misbehaving a choice of actions to overcome the problem. The pupils received feedback on their work and so understand how well they are doing and what they will move onto in the next lesson.

121. Leadership of the subject is good. The enthusiasm of the curriculum co-ordinator positively influences the pupils' attitudes and enjoyment in music making. A new scheme of work, based on national guidelines is to be implemented shortly and work is well in hand for the transition. The range of instruments available is barely adequate to implement the scheme successfully and there is no suitable computer software available. The co-ordinator has produced an action plan for improving the subject over the year, which identifies the right priorities and has the potential to raise standards further.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

122. Overall, standards are average for pupils aged seven and eleven and are similar to those found at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils achieve satisfactorily throughout the school. Standards in dance and swimming by the age of eleven are above average. The swimming lessons in Years 3 to 6 are very effective. Already 85 percent of pupils can swim 25 metres unaided, which is the standard expected by the end of the key stage. The higher standards in dance are partly due to the enthusiasm and talent of staff who inspire and enthuse pupils to achieve their full potential. There is no difference in the attainment of boys and girls as a broad range of experiences is provided which appeal to both. The provision is enriched by residential visits, which include activities such as canoeing and orienteering.

123. It was only possible to observe dance lessons at Key Stage 1 and swimming at Key Stage 2 during the inspection. Pupils develop their skills in creative dance and improve their use of speed, level and direction when creating their dance sequences. They can copy the movement of partners and of the leader when creating class dances. By Year 2 they develop skills and understanding of English Country dancing. They move in time to the music and understand how to perform 'gallop', 'promenade' and turn when working with a partner. They are becoming confident in evaluating their work by watching each other perform in sets.

124. In swimming in Year 6, only five pupils lack the confidence to swim in deep water. These pupils can swim a few strokes unaided and three can swim across the training pool. All other pupils can swim a length of the pool, some do so easily, others have to pace themselves. They can swim on their front and back and show good arm and leg movements both in crawl and in breast stroke. The extra-curricular dance club demonstrated good quality movement with poise and control when performing their interpretation of the story of the Willow Pattern, which had been created during the residential visit to Conway. When a larger group performed for the junior classes during assembly it was good to see the involvement of boys and girls. Discussions with Year 6 pupils show they experience a wide range of sporting activities over the year including non-contact rugby, football, tennis, netball, athletics and gymnastics. The pupils understand the need for rules when playing small-sided games, why they need to 'warm up' before a period of sustained physical activity and the effect of exercise on their bodies.

125. The teaching is satisfactory overall at both key stages. It contributes to pupils' satisfactory learning and progress throughout the school. In the lessons observed, teaching was good when expectations of behaviour and effort were made very clear to pupils at the beginning of the lesson. They responded by trying hard to meet the teacher's challenge. On the one occasion when teaching was unsatisfactory the lesson planning was too brief; too few activities were planned to sustain interest for the whole session.

126. The shortage in resources identified in the previous inspection report has been partially remedied by fitting wall mounted climbing frames in each of the school halls. Because of the two sites and use of two halls for gymnastics, the level of resources is still inadequate, with little opportunity to vary the equipment used. Effective use is made of external sporting bodies to enrich the opportunities available in games. The standards in dance at Key Stage 2 are directly influenced by the co-ordinator, but her impact is less influential at Key Stage 1 where there is room for improvement in the teaching.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

127. Religious education was inspected separately by the local diocese.