

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. JAMES' CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Skelmersdale

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119588

Headteacher: Mrs. P. Irvine

Reporting inspector: Sheila Pemberton
20810

Dates of inspection: 16 – 20 October 2000

Inspection number: 225087

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Ashurst Road Ashurst Skelmersdale Lancashire
Postcode:	WN8 6TN
Telephone number:	01695 728989
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Maureen McCaffery
Date of previous inspection:	23 September 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Sheila Pemberton Inspector no: 20810	Registered inspector	English Art Physical education Equal opportunities	What the school should do to improve How high standards are How well pupils are taught How well the school is led and managed
John Rowley Inspector no: 9690	Lay inspector		How well the school cares for pupils How well the school works in partnership with parents/carers
Megan Spark Inspector no: 18342	Team inspector	Mathematics Geography History Music Under fives	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
Keith Roberts Inspector no: 8769	Team inspector	Science ICT Design and technology Special educational needs	How good curricular and other opportunities are

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Number of full-time pupils:	189, 93 boys, 96 girls (smaller than many other schools).
Age range:	4 to 11
Pupils with English as an additional language:	0 per cent
Pupils entitled to free school meals:	12.15 per cent (average)
Pupils on the register of special educational needs:	7.7 per cent (well below average)
Pupils with statements of special educational needs:	3.3 per cent (above average)
Average class size:	27.6
Attainment on entry:	similar to that of most four-year-olds.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

At the last inspection, the school had considerable weaknesses in most aspects of its work. Since then, the headteacher, governors and staff have undertaken a vast amount of work in four years to steadily improve pupils' learning in English, mathematics and science from the very low levels reported at the last inspection. The school is now giving its pupils a satisfactory, but continuously improving education in all subjects except writing, and is providing satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Most of the teaching is good. It is a strength of the school.
- It makes good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- Pupils' attitudes to school and their behaviour are very good.
- Provision for pupils' moral development is very good.
- Teachers use very good procedures for promoting good behaviour.
- The headteacher and staff work hard to raise the standards of pupils' learning.

What could be improved

- The writing of more able pupils in the infants and of less able pupils throughout the school.
- The way the school uses its funding to improve pupils' learning.
- Outdoor equipment for the physical development of children in the reception class.
- The range of after-school clubs.

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 left with a long list of serious weaknesses after the last inspection in September 1996. The first and most important improvement has been to the quality of teaching. From a very low level in 1996, teachers have put great effort into training to improve their skills. This has paid off so well that most of the teaching observed during this inspection was good or very good, and pupils' learning is improving throughout the school. The work of teachers responsible for different subjects has also improved to a good level. The work of the co-ordinator for mathematics is so good that the school uses it as a model for other co-ordinators to follow. Considerable effort went into providing programmes of work for every

subject. Work is still underway on the last subject to be tackled, music. Teachers' planning has improved at the same good rate as their skills. As a result, pupils' learning has improved to a satisfactory level in subjects where it was weak such as information communications technology, design and technology, and music. Standards in physical education have improved at an even better rate and are now good. The school still has some way to go in improving its reference library and teaching older pupils how to find books in a library. Better teaching, planning and resources have raised the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs to a good level. With a large amount of money reserved in its budget, the school has still not got its spending on resources right.

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	C	C	D	C
Mathematics	C	B	C	B
Science	C	C	C	C

Key

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

Standards in English and mathematics in national tests for 11-year-olds in 2000 were lower than in 1999. The school just missed its targets for English because of weaknesses in writing, but surpassed its target for mathematics. Although standards are rising in English, mathematics and science in the current Year 6, weaknesses in writing persist among less able pupils. Many pupils in last year's Year 6 did poorly in national tests when they were seven-years-old, but in the juniors they did well, making more progress than might have been expected. A high proportion of pupils in last year's Year 6 had special educational needs. As a result, standards fell in English and mathematics. Although these results seem unsatisfactory, a good proportion of pupils achieved a personal best. More able pupils also did their best by reaching the high level of which they were capable in national tests.

Standards in physical education have improved considerably since the last inspection. All pupils now reach levels above those expected for their age. Pupils in Year 6 are doing better than at the time of the last inspection by reaching satisfactory standards in information and communication technology, design and technology, geography and music. Eleven-year-olds also achieve satisfactory standards in art and design, and history.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils are very interested in their work. They do their best and enjoy coming to school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils' behaviour is very good in lessons, at lunchtimes and in the playground. It is a strength of the school.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils have good relationships with one another and with adults in the school. Many of them respect other people's feelings and beliefs.
Attendance	Satisfactory

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Of the teaching in lessons during the inspection, five per cent was excellent, 23 per cent very good, 49 per cent good and 23 per cent satisfactory.

Strengths in teaching and learning: teachers' clear planning and good knowledge of most subjects provides good support for pupils' learning. Good teaching in mathematics is raising the standards most pupils reach in Year 2 and Year 6. Teachers' very good control of pupils' behaviour allows them to do their best and to make good use of the time available in lessons. Good support for the learning of pupils with special educational needs ensures that they make good progress.

Weaknesses in teaching and learning: although teachers are good at teaching spelling and punctuation, they provide too few opportunities for pupils to practise these skills until they reach Year 6. This limits the quality of pupils' writing. Teachers are not using their assessments of pupils' work to find out why standards in writing are low. Teachers' marking is not helpful enough for pupils' to improve their written work.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school covers all subjects of the National Curriculum. It provides pupils with a good range of sporting activities outside lessons but lacks other activities to extend their learning.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The help provided for pupils with special educational needs has a good effect on improving their learning and behaviour.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' spiritual and social development is good. It is satisfactory for their cultural development. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good and is a strength of the school.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school gives good support and guidance for pupils' educational and personal needs. Its efforts to involve parents in their children's learning are satisfactory.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides good leadership for the work of the school by working closely with the deputy headteacher, staff and governors. With very little external support in the period following the last inspection, the headteacher and key staff have worked very hard to bring about essential improvements to the school's provision.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil all legal responsibilities. They are closely involved in planning the school's development and in managing its finances.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The headteacher's good understanding of the school's performance underlies all issues for improvement in the school's development plan.
The strategic use of resources	Although the school is keen to get best value from spending on resources, better use could be made of existing funds to provide more help for the learning of children in the reception class and for less able pupils throughout the school. There are also some shortages in resources, such as equipment for the outdoor physical development of children in the reception class. There are sufficient teachers to provide pupils with a full curriculum and the accommodation is used effectively for teaching and learning.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents are satisfied that behaviour in the school is good. • They think that most of the teaching is good. • Their children like going to the school. • They are glad that their children are expected to work hard and do their best. • Parents are pleased that teachers help their children to become mature and responsible. • Their children are making good progress. • They feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. • The school is well-led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many parents would like a more interesting range of activities for their children outside lessons. • Some parents would like more information about how their children are getting on in school.

The inspection confirms parents' positive views about the school. The school already provides helpful information for parents who would like to know more about their children's learning. It offers opportunities at parents' evenings for parents to talk to teachers about their children's progress and sends out clear written reports. Teachers are also willing to discuss pupils' progress with parents on a regular and informal basis. They are keen to discuss the achievements or problems of pupils with special educational needs as improvements or difficulties arise. Inspectors agree with parents that the range of after-school activities provided for pupils is limited, although football and netball training is provided for older pupils. When planning for improvements to its provision, the school is asked to consider providing a range of activities to widen pupils' experiences outside lessons.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

- 1 Four-year-olds joining the reception class have a wide range of ability. Many children's early achievements in English and mathematics are similar to those reached by most other four-year-olds. Many children do well in personal, social and emotional development. They make satisfactory progress in communication, language and literacy, mathematical, creative and physical development, and knowledge and understanding of the world.
- 2 The standards 11-year-olds reached in National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science were far too low at the last inspection in 1996. They were well below those reached by pupils of the same age nationally. From 1996 to 1998 standards rose at a good rate as teaching improved in all three subjects. In English, pupils' achievements were satisfactory and in line with the national result from 1997 to 1999. This satisfactory improvement was not maintained in national tests in 2000. The main reasons were that there were more pupils with special educational needs in Year 6 than usual and that a significant number of less able pupils in the class needed more support than was available for their learning. Contributory to these results is a lack of opportunities for pupils to develop their writing to a high standard. By the time they reach Year 6, it is too late for some pupils to catch up with what is expected of them in writing.
- 3 Standards in National Curriculum tests for 11-year-olds in mathematics rose above the national result in 1997 and 1998, but dipped again in 1999. This dip was temporary and standards in mathematics rose to the national average in 2000. Similarly with science, standards rose from the low levels reached by 11-year-olds in national tests in 1999 to a satisfactory level for 11-year-olds in 2000. These results show that in the juniors, pupils' attainments have improved from the low standards they reached in Year 2. Their learning has developed at a satisfactory rate in English and science, and a good rate in mathematics. The school's most able pupils did their best in 2000 in English and science. Their results were even better in mathematics, where more of them than in most schools achieved a personal best at the level higher than expected for their age. Girls did better than boys in all three subjects from 1996 to 1999. The school addresses this variation between the achievements of boys and girls by trying to encourage fathers as well as mothers to take an interest in their son's learning. It surpassed its targets for mathematics and just missed its targets for English in national tests.
- 4 At the last inspection, standards in reading, mathematics and science were too low for seven-year-olds. They reached a satisfactory standard in writing and maintained this until 1999, when standards fell dramatically in writing and mathematics. Standards in reading improved at a satisfactory rate until 2000 when more pupils than nationally achieved a high level in reading. The results of national tests in 2000 also showed satisfactory improvements in writing, mathematics and science. What is still not good enough is the performance of more able pupils. None of those who reached a high standard in reading did the same in writing or science. Too few of them reached a high level in mathematics. When compared with pupils in similar schools in 2000, pupils did well enough in reading but their results were too low in writing and mathematics. From 1996 to 1999, boys did better than girls in mathematics and girls did better than boys in reading and writing.

- 5 Inspection findings indicate that in the first part of the autumn term standards continue to improve in Years 2 and 6 in mathematics and science. More able pupils are working at a level above that expected for their age in the infants and the juniors. Standards in reading are as strong in Year 2 as they were in national tests in 2000. However, there is no sign of improvement to the writing of more and less able pupils in Year 2, or less able pupils in Year 6. The school has identified low standards in writing in its current development plan. Good provision for pupils with special educational needs allows them to make good progress with their learning. Pupils with emotional and behavioural problems, and physical disabilities, receive high standards of care that give them access to the same learning opportunities as other pupils and to reach the standards they are capable of achieving.
- 6 Although pupils have opportunities to read and write in different subjects, these opportunities are limited by the use of undemanding worksheets that require small amounts of writing. There are few examples of extensive writing in subjects such as history and geography and pupils are restricted by worksheets from recording their findings in science. Pupils use mathematics across a range of other subjects. Accurate measurement brings precision in design and technology. In science in the infants, for example, pupils sort and classify materials into sets. In history, pupils gain a sense of the passage of time from their work in different eras and the use of time lines.
- 7 Satisfactory standards in information and communication technology (ICT) have risen from a low level at the last inspection and are now satisfactory. There is still room for further improvement to aspects of the subject in Year 6 and by greater access to computers in Year 2. Standards in art and design, and in design and technology have been maintained at a satisfactory level. Seven and 11-year-olds gain increasing skill in the use of materials, tools and techniques. Pupils in Year 6 could gain better experiences in design and technology with a wider range of materials. While standards in geography remain satisfactory for seven-year-olds, they have improved from a low level and are now satisfactory for 11-years-olds because they link new work to their earlier learning.
- 8 Standards remain satisfactory for seven and 11-year-olds in history. This is because older pupils are good at linking different periods and using a variety of ways to find out about the past. In music, standards are rising at a rapid rate and have improved to a satisfactory level, because the school employs a teacher with excellent skills in the subject. As a result of teachers' increased knowledge of the subject, standards in physical education have risen to a good standard. They are now better than those reached by most pupils of the same age. Pupils now tackle a wider range of activities in physical education and do well by reaching high standards in all aspects of their work.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 9 Pupils' very good attitudes, values and behaviour are a strength of the school. The same very positive attitudes and behaviour reported at the previous inspection are still evident. Pupils' personal development is good. It is based on the strong Christian ethos at the heart of high-quality relationships. From the earliest years, pupils are keen to come to school, and develop very good attitudes to work in the reception class. Young children acquire the personal and social skills needed to become part of the school's community in a relatively short space of time. They get on well with adults, and work and play happily together. Parents support the school's behaviour

policy and most of them believe that their children's very good behaviour comes from the school's high expectations.

- 10 Most pupils with special educational needs are keen to learn and work hard in small groups and with individual support. Everyone on the staff pays close attention to pupils with emotional and behavioural problems. With firm, consistent discipline and caring attitudes, they learn to control their feelings and actions. Playtimes are calm and enjoyable because pupils get involved in the games and activities provided. There are no obvious signs of bullying and no recent exclusions for poor behaviour. Parents are very supportive of the school's part in developing positive attitudes in their children.
- 11 Pupils are enthusiastic about the interesting activities that teachers provide. In dance, for example, they work together very well to perfect complicated routines. Pupils behave very well in classrooms and in the dining hall. They are polite and courteous to teachers and other adults in lessons and during the lunch break. Older pupils look after younger ones as they eat their lunches and take their responsibilities very seriously. They are aware of teachers' high expectations and this is usually reflected in the way most of them act. Pupils enter the school in a quiet, orderly manner, and move about with the minimum fuss and disturbance. They settle down quickly, work well together and share equipment. In science, for example, pupils in Year 5 worked enthusiastically in pairs to investigate pitch and reached an opinion by mutual agreement.
- 12 Most pupils learn to respect others from a very early age. They are aware of the difficulties faced by children less fortunate than themselves, and initiate collections for causes such as *The European Children's Trust*. In English in Year 6, pupils learn to share the feelings of fictional and real people. They showed this understanding when reading the autobiographies of people like Anne Frank. Pupils are willing to take responsibility for the day-to-day running of the school and are responsible for looking after their work and belongings. They are given formal responsibilities for tidying away tools and materials. Regular visits to places of educational interest make a good contribution to pupils' learning and personal development. Attendance has improved since the last inspection to a satisfactory level.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

- 13 Teaching has improved in a marked way since the previous inspection when too much teaching was unsatisfactory. With strong improvements to teachers' expertise, standards are rising especially in reading, mathematics and science and much of the teaching in lessons during this inspection was good or better. Five per cent was excellent, 23 per cent very good, 49 per cent good and 23 per cent satisfactory.
- 14 Teachers are implementing the National Numeracy Strategy well. As a result, standards are rising to a satisfactory level in Years 2 and 6. The emphasis teachers give to mental mathematics is strengthening pupils' recall of number facts, their ability to solve problems and to use accurate mathematical vocabulary. This is not the case, however, with the National Literacy Strategy, which is not extended effectively enough to improve pupils' writing. Teachers are skilful in teaching reading, but less so in writing, where limited opportunities reduce pupils' chances to practise and improve. It is not until they reach Year 6, that good teaching gives the most able and average attaining pupils the opportunity to fulfil their potential by producing extensive writing in different forms. By using too many worksheets that allow for small amounts of writing, teachers reduce the chances of the most able pupils in Year 2 and the less able in Year 6 reaching the standards of which some of them are capable. Although

improvements are evident in developing the skills of research, this aspect of teaching is still not good enough to allow all older pupils to become confident users of library classification systems.

- 15 Teachers have put a great deal of effort into improving their planning since the last inspection. Better planning has improved teaching and learning in mathematics, ICT, and design and technology. Higher expertise and good planning have raised standards in physical education above those expected of seven and 11-year-olds. Teaching in music was the focus of training during the inspection when the excellent skills of an advisory teacher provided a model of what it is possible for pupils to achieve. The teacher also helps teachers to improve their planning for music. Planning now has all the ingredients needed to ensure that pupils progress with their learning in lessons and from year to year.
- 16 A specialist teacher, employed on a part-time basis, provides teachers with essential information and advice to support the learning of pupils with special educational needs. Teachers are conscientious in following the helpful targets set in individual education plans and statements. They take advice from outside agencies and other specialist teachers to provide good support and suitable tasks for pupils with learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural problems and physical disabilities. Most lesson planning contains tasks that effectively meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs. Very good teaching takes place when the part-time specialist teacher works on clearly directed tasks with a small group of children in the reception class. The high level of input into these sessions provides children with the close attention and opportunities for discussion that accelerate their learning.
- 17 A very successful feature of teaching lies in the very good control teachers exert over pupils' behaviour. Very good relationships between pupils and teachers ensure that most pupils are keen to work hard and to listen with great attention to instructions and explanations about the work. In a good lesson in mathematics in Year 5, the teacher's confident control of behaviour increased pupils' understanding and brought the subject to life when they were trusted to toss real coins before recording the results on a tally sheet. The atmosphere teachers create is calm and conducive to learning. It allows them to work without distraction alongside individuals and groups of pupils in need of their specific support. Even during boisterous activities in physical education, teachers never lose control. Their discipline is seamless and results in very positive attitudes and the good progress many pupils make in lessons.
- 18 As well as providing clear instructions that allow pupils to work independently, teachers are good at summarising learning during lessons. During long lessons, this strategy is effective in drawing learning together to inform pupils about the progress they make. Giving pupils time to think and to develop their understanding is another technique teachers use to instil confidence and a sense of success into pupils at different levels of learning. In art and design in Year 2, the teacher used several different strategies to bring the objectives of the lesson home to pupils. When they started to sketch different types of building they had a good body of information to help them express their ideas.
- 19 When improving their planning, teachers identified opportunities to assess pupils' learning in lessons. Added to information about pupils' progress in National Curriculum and other regular tests, teachers carry out assessments in lessons to identify gaps in pupils' learning. The only subject where this strategy is not good enough is writing, where evidence that standards are not high enough has not

influenced teachers' approach to the subject. While teachers mark pupils' work on a regular basis, marking lacks guidance to help pupils to improve their learning.

- 20 Good communication and co-operation between teachers and support assistants ensure effective use of limited time. Teachers provide sufficient homework for pupils to improve their learning in school. Reading at home allows pupils to practise the skills they develop in lessons. Work with multiplication tables ensures that most pupils' knowledge of them is secure in Year 6. Finishing off work at home gives pupils the chance to extend the quantity of work they normally produce in a limited time in lessons. Teachers are attempting to raise the standards reached by boys in national tests by involving their fathers in their learning and providing books to arouse their interest in reading in the literacy hour. Parents are mostly right in being pleased with the quality of teaching in the school.

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

- 21 The curriculum has improved considerably since the 1996 inspection and teachers have made good progress in revising it. As a result, the school now meets statutory requirements in all subjects and is effective at promoting pupils' learning, physical and personal development. A weakness exists in the physical development of children in the reception class. This arises from a lack of suitable outdoor facilities and equipment. Health, the misuse of drugs and sex education are dealt with effectively and sensitively in science. Care is taken to ensure that pupils are included equally in all activities and opportunities for learning. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. They receive good support from teachers and assistants to aid their learning, and benefit from all that the school offers. As a result, for example, a pupil with physical disabilities achieved an award for swimming.
- 22 Other than seasonal sport, the school offers too few extra-curricular opportunities to extend pupils' interests and increase their learning. Many parents are aware of this and are dissatisfied with the range of after-school options available to their children.
- 23 Provision for personal development is good. It has improved for pupils' spiritual development since the previous inspection and is now good. Prayers are said with reverence at different times each day. Opportunities for spiritual development exist in lessons. In history in Year 6, for instance, pupils' gained insights into the values and viewpoints of others through the sad story of a child during the Second World War. By looking at records, pictures and everyday objects, pupils began to appreciate what it was like to live during a war. The teacher in Year 3 provided good opportunities for spiritual development by encouraging pupils to express their feelings through poetry. When pupils in Year 4 learned about the Vikings they offered thoughtful opinions about the value of people's lives.
- 24 Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. It maintains the same high quality as at the previous inspection and is a strength of the school. From the time children enter the school, teachers and support staff provide very good models for positive moral attitudes. As a result, most pupils are very well behaved and polite, and usually show respect for one another and adults. Teachers ensure that pupils follow the school's code of conduct by applying it firmly, consistently and effectively. Pupils understand the difference between right and wrong and usually use this knowledge in their dealings with others.

- 25 Good provision for social development is an improvement since the last inspection. The school is a living Catholic communion, which teaches the importance of the local community and the wider world. Teachers encourage pupils who organise an *Enterprise Afternoon* every year during Lent to raise money for Liverpool's *Good Shepherd* collection. They also encourage pupils to contribute to the *Samaritan's Purse*, by bringing gifts for those in need at Christmas. During the inspection, pupils donated dried foods to the *European Children's Trust for the Children of Eastern Europe*. Comments on a *Tree of Knowledge* centre on social values such as, *we treat visitors properly and make them feel at home*. Pupils in Year 6 are given jobs around the school such as looking after younger pupils in the dining room, helping with lesson preparation, and photocopying.
- 26 Provision for pupils' cultural development has improved to a satisfactory level since the previous inspection. Pupils are taught about their own culture through literature, geography and history. In physical education, they practise traditional sporting activities and teachers raise their awareness of popular sports from other countries. Teachers increase pupils' understanding of artists from different times, traditions and cultures, while visitors develop pupils' appreciation of life in the past and different forms of music. Although older pupils gain insights into modern China in geography, knowledge of the beliefs and traditions of other cultures is still not strong enough. This shortfall will be addressed when the new programme of work for religious education increases pupils' knowledge of other communities.
- 27 The school has satisfactory links with the local community. Pupils benefit from visits from a member of staff from a local bank who talks to them and raises their aspirations about the world of work. Other involvements include singing carols to pensioners at Christmas and listening to pensioners talk about their experiences in the Second World War. This activity was linked effectively to work in history and led to pupils reproducing wartime objects they learned about from the talk. Educational visits in the area, for example to the Catalyst Museum, Eureka and Rufford Old Hall, extend pupils' experiences and contribute to their learning. Visiting speakers such as fire fighters, a dog warden, a visually impaired adult and various musicians support pupils' learning as well as their social and personal development. Another connection enjoyed by pupils comes from theatrical performances at Skelmersdale College. Invitations are extended to players and clowns who are welcomed into school at different times in the year to entertain and to broaden and extend pupils' awareness and understanding of the wider community.
- 28 Links with local schools are good. At the last inspection, the school had poor links with pre-school groups and nurseries. It now has very strong links with a private nursery in the building that help children to adapt to life in the reception class. Productive relationships with a local Catholic secondary school result in good support when pupils transfer to secondary education. Visits to the school by pupils in Year 6 familiarise them with its staff, buildings and routines. This helps to ease the change from primary to secondary education by giving pupils a confident start in a new school. Pupils take part in summer schools in literacy and numeracy, and in technology fairs that support their learning. Skelmersdale College provides theatrical performances that contribute to pupils' cultural development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 29 The school provides its pupils with a safe and caring place for learning. Well-considered policies ensure good support for pupils' health, welfare and guidance.

Other policies and measures support positive behaviour, provide sex education, ensure child protection and make good provision for pupils with special education needs. The site supervisor ensures that the building and grounds are maintained to high standards of cleanliness and safety.

- 30 The school has good procedures for child protection that follow local education authority guidelines. The headteacher is responsible for good links with outside agencies. The governing body maintains effective support for child protection through the services of a governor who is a social worker. Staff know what to do if they have any concerns about pupils' safety and well-being. Systems for administering first aid are good. Qualified staff deal with injuries and as a result, procedures are quick, calmly handled and efficient. Effective practices are in place so that the well-being of pupils with problems to their health can be checked and dealt with. Parents willingly co-operate with requirements to administer medicine in school when this is necessary. Midday assistants are well briefed in their duties of care and make positive contributions to pupils' well-being, good behaviour and social development.
- 31 Good procedures exist for encouraging attendance. The school takes care to check the absence of pupils whose learning is affected by missing school on a regular basis. Helpful links are maintained with the educational welfare officer, who works in close collaboration with the headteacher at regular meetings. At a meeting before the inspection, parents clearly understood the school's requirements for reporting absence and its views about holidays in term time. Very good measures to promote positive behaviour are reflected in the very high standards pupils achieve. These include bullying, which is not tolerated in the school. Teachers take considerable care to understand the difficulties faced by pupils with special educational needs for their emotional and behavioural problems. The consistent and apparently effortless way that teachers, classroom assistants and midday supervisors skilfully use the school's behavioural policy is responsible for pupils' very good behaviour.
- 32 Care for the well-being and learning of pupils with special education needs has improved to a good level since the last inspection. Assessing children's learning and identifying their strengths and weaknesses as soon as they enter the school achieve this. A part-time specialist teacher carries out regular assessments of pupils' progress to ensure that the work provided meets their needs. The headteacher ensures that pupils receive the support they need from local services for speech therapy, visual impairment and learning difficulties. The limited but valuable individual support provided by specialist teachers from these services ensures pupils' continuing good progress. Support staff provide sensitive daily support and the school does its best to ensure that all pupils with special educational needs have equal opportunities to learn and access to the whole curriculum. Provision meets the school's aim to ensure that *the environment always reflects* pupils' needs. Teachers check the effectiveness of provision for special educational needs by taking parents' comments into account, analysing pupils' progress, and reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of resources.
- 33 Arrangements for assessing pupils' learning are good from the time they enter the school. An extensive programme of reliable procedures is used to assess pupils' achievements. Assessment plays an important part in most lessons. Programmes of work for science and mathematics, for example, are planned to include regular tests. Good assessment procedures in mathematics allow teachers to group pupils with others at similar levels and to provide challenging work that meets their needs. Teachers maintain records of pupils' reading and other achievements. This information helps pupils, teachers and parents to understand pupils' individual needs.

The school is developing a computerised system, which will provide better access to individual records of achievement and allow the school to track trends of learning in subjects or in different groups of pupils. The only subject where information from assessing pupils' learning is not used effectively is writing. The school has used assessment information to identify weaknesses in attainment, but not thoroughly enough to appreciate how these weaknesses are caused.

- 34 Although many of the school's procedures for checking and supporting pupils' personal development are informal, they work to good effect in a small school, because teachers know all pupils well. By the time pupils reach Year 6, they are provided with more explicit support in the form of personal targets, that help pupils to address shortcomings both in their learning and personal development. Also in Year 6, the school is trialling new arrangements for pupils' personal, social and health education to provide more secure, formal means of supporting and checking personal development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 35 The mainly positive views put forward by parents before the inspection confirm that a satisfactory partnership exists between them and the school. Although the previous inspection reported little of how the school worked in partnership with parents, it was critical of a lack of information to help parents understand how they could improve their children's learning. Information about attendance was missing from the governors' annual report to parents and the results of national tests lacked explanations for parents about their meaning. The school has worked hard to address these criticisms, and most parents think they are well informed about how their children are getting on. They are fully aware of the school's rules and have a clear understanding of the procedures followed if pupils misbehave.
- 36 Effective arrangements involve parents whose children have special educational needs with their children's learning. When reviews of pupils' statements and individual education plans take place, parents are invited and encouraged to take part. Home and school agreements involved pupils and parents closely in their development. However, as few parents help on a regular basis in school, teachers and pupils miss the benefits usually gained from this kind of involvement. The school makes sure that parents with limited resources are able to contribute to the costs of educational visits over an extended period. As a result, all pupils benefit from a range of first-hand experiences.

- 37 Significant parental dissatisfaction concerns an absence of interesting after-school activities. This is not entirely justified, however, since weekly sporting clubs are available and open to all pupils in football and netball. Parents are provided with good, clear details about the work and routines of the school. Although some parents are unhappy with information about their children's progress, written reports are informative, parents are invited to open meetings to discuss their children's learning, and talk informally with teachers about their concerns. Good attendance at school events encourages the view that good information is available to parents.
- 38 The school does its best to inform and support parents through frequent, well-presented newsletters that give a good picture of activities and pupils' achievements. The school's prospectus explains its organisation with summaries of its policies for reference. Information about attendance and pupils' performances in national tests is now included in the prospectus. A notice board is another focus for parents who want to check for new information. It is conveniently sited for them to see when coming into the building. Close involvement with parents has a positive impact on children's learning in the reception class. A feature of this is the encouragement given for children to read with their parents at home. The confidence and skills they gain at home are strengthened when children read with adults in school.
- 39 A clear summary of the school's policy for special educational needs is featured in its prospectus and parents know that teachers are the first point of contact for their concerns. Parents and carers are kept informed and involved at all times, and this does much to ensure the effectiveness of the school's provision.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 40 The new headteacher was faced with a list of issues for improvement following the school's last inspection in 1996 that were described as *a daunting agenda* during a visit of one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. What was even more problematic was that little outside support was available for the headteacher and staff of a school with very low standards, considerable amounts of weak teaching and serious limitations to other aspects of provision. Although support has been available for the last two years, the most outstanding features of the headteacher's leadership are a high commitment and strenuous efforts to improve that are shared by all members of staff. The headteacher recognises that the school still has some way to go to raise standards to higher levels. Good improvements to areas of identified weakness have taken place in the last four years.
- 41 Managing improvements to teaching remains the first and most important issue to be dealt with after the last inspection. This is managed systematically and successfully through intensive training to improve staff expertise. This has resulted in improvements to pupils' learning in ICT, design and technology, geography, music and physical education. Together with the introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, the school has done as much as could be expected in the time available to bring good improvements to all aspects of its provision. Through analysis of its strengths and weaknesses, the school is aware of teaching that still needs improving. Teaching and learning in writing, an issue identified for improvement in this inspection, are highlighted for development in the school's planning. The headteacher and staff have undertaken a vast amount of work in a relatively short period of time in providing new programmes of work to ensure that pupils make progress in all subjects of the curriculum. Such a secure foundation for teaching and learning places the school in a good position to continue to raise standards.

- 42 At the previous inspection, the role of teachers with responsibility for the curriculum was weak and some subjects lacked leadership. This situation was addressed in part by the co-ordinator for mathematics, whose enthusiasm led the school into the National Numeracy Strategy a year before most other schools. The efforts of the co-ordinator, coupled with support from the local education authority to check the effectiveness of teaching and learning, provide a very good model for the work of a subject leader. A governor trained in the National Numeracy Strategy added momentum to visits to classrooms from the headteacher and co-ordinator. As a result, teaching and standards in mathematics have improved since the last inspection. Also, other co-ordinators have strengthened the task of managing different subjects by using this model to raise standards.
- 43 Governors link their membership of the governing body's sub-committees to their personal areas of expertise. Child protection, for example, has the services of a governor who is a social worker. This effective strategy provides governors with the ability to measure aspects of the school's provision against their own knowledge and practical experiences. Their understanding of the locality and of the strengths and weaknesses of the school allow governors to act as a sounding board for the views of the headteacher and to take a realistic view when setting targets for pupils' attainments in national tests.
- 44 Weaknesses to development planning have been tackled with reasonable success. The school's development plan is now well structured and provides evidence that the headteacher and governors use finances wisely to improve the quality of teaching. National and local priorities are discussed, costed and allocated sufficient finance and time for completion. The headteacher and governors have gained strength in measuring the success of planning and expenditure. These measures are increasingly realistic but do not always take account of the strengths and weaknesses of pupils' performances in national and other annual tests. Overall improvements to development planning, coupled with more of the precise targets it already contains to measure improvement, give the school a good basis to continue to measure its effectiveness.
- 45 The management of provision for pupils with special educational needs was a further area for improvement that has been tackled successfully. A clear new policy that meets legal requirements and additional support from a specialist teacher to assess, teach and provide targets for pupils' learning raise provision to a good level. The school does its best to ensure that pupils with physical disabilities, learning or behavioural problems all get the good care to which they are entitled. A well-informed governor also checks that pupils with special educational needs receive their entitlement. Specific grants for special educational needs are used correctly and to good effect.
- 46 Financial reserves are high because the headteacher and governors are saving for the school's contribution to a new nursery. While governors have carefully researched why the school needs nursery provision, the maintenance of a large reserve is unsatisfactory when the school lacks resources for existing pupils. For example, because support for teaching and learning is limited, children in the reception class are unable to benefit from the skilled attention that is important for young children in their reception year. The school also lacks large outdoor equipment to improve the physical and social development of children in the reception class. The results of National Curriculum tests in 2000 indicate that in order to raise standards, less able pupils lack additional support to improve their learning.

- 47 The last audit of the school's finances found *secure financial procedures*. A number of minor recommendations were adopted by the headteacher and governors and added to an efficient and unobtrusive system for financial management. The school's administrator, aided by the local education authority, keeps the headteacher and governors informed with up-to-date information on expenditure and the budget balance. Day-to-day administration is good. It allows the school to run efficiently and smoothly. The use made of computers in school administration is very good and there is potential for further development.
- 48 The school has sufficient, suitably qualified teachers to teach the National Curriculum effectively. Governors and staff are trained and prepared for new procedures to evaluate teachers' performances and to set targets for the headteacher. The effectiveness of recently appointed staff and a supply teacher points to good induction procedures. There is sufficient accommodation in well-maintained classrooms for effective learning. The hall is suitably equipped for physical education with good, well-organised storage but lacks library space for the development of library classification and research skills. While there is usually a calm working atmosphere, frequent disturbances to lessons in Year 6 are caused by movements to and from the nursery. The school puts its spacious playgrounds and well-maintained grassed areas to good use for leisure and sport. There is no secure outdoor play area for children in the reception class.
- 49 Resources are mainly satisfactory. Most of the resources for English and mathematics are very good. Resources for ICT are much improved since the last inspection and are now good. As a result, pupils' achievement in these subjects has improved. Teachers make very good use of computers to prepare materials for lessons but there is still a shortage of suitable software and a lack of commitment to use computers regularly enough to support pupils' learning in English and mathematics. There are insufficient good-quality texts and reference books; consequently, teachers rely too heavily on photocopied worksheets. The school compensates for a lack of resources for some subjects by making good use of loans from the county library and museum. Resources are accessible, managed well and used effectively to increase pupils' skills and knowledge.
- 50 The school uses funding for special educational needs wisely on specialist support and assistance for pupils' learning and welfare; this enables pupils to make good progress. Governors, headteacher and staff are increasingly aware of the principles of best value. The cost effectiveness of financial decisions is measured against the success of priorities in the school's development plan. A local education authority department promotes good value for major items and the school ensures that best value is achieved in purchasing renewable materials and stationery. Staff appointments are reviewed to measure the effectiveness of the way staff are selected. From the results of national tests for 11-year-olds in 2000, the use made of specific funding for *booster* classes is not used effectively enough to improve the achievements of some less able pupils.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

Governors, headteacher and staff should

- (1) raise standards in writing for more able pupils in the infants and less able pupils throughout the school by:
using the results of assessment to identify weaknesses in pupils' writing
providing pupils with frequent opportunities to write in a variety of forms in different subjects
extending pupils' writing beyond the constraints of undemanding worksheets
allowing children in the reception class to write freely in role play and regularly in everyday situations
giving better support for the learning of less able pupils who need more help with their work
guiding pupils to improve their work and presentation through more helpful marking
(paragraphs 2, 4, 14, 19, 33, 46, 56, 62, 64, 68, 70 and 107 of the main report).
- (2) make more efficient use of existing funding to raise standards by
providing additional support for the learning of children in the reception class and less able pupils throughout the school
modifying the use of funds for *booster* classes to improve standards for pupils in Year 6
improving existing resources in shortage areas
(paragraphs 46, 50, 62 and 79 of the main report).
- (3) enable children in the reception class to have access to all activities essential for their physical development by
providing them with large wheeled toys and climbing equipment in a secure outdoor area.
(paragraphs 46, 48 and 59 of the main report).

In addition to the key issues identified above, a less important weakness should be considered for inclusion in the action plan.

Increase the range of after-school activities to extend pupils' learning in other areas as well as sport.
(paragraphs 22 and 37 of the main report).

Issue 1 is identified by the school for attention in its current development plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	43
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	21

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5%	23%	49%	23%	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	0	189
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	22

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	34

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	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.1
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000 [1999]	14[12]	11[12]	25[24]

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12[10]	11[*]	12[*]
	Girls	11[11]	11[*]	11[*]
	Total	23[21]	22[17]	23[19]
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92[88]	88[71]	92[79]
	National	83[82]	84[83]	90[87]

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12[*]	12[*]	12[*]
	Girls	11[*]	11[*]	11[*]
	Total	23[20]	23[19]	23[18]
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92[83]	92[79]	92[75]
	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 [1999]	13[13]	6[16]	19[29]

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	*[*]	*[*]	*[*]
	Girls	*[*]	*[*]	*[*]
	Total	14[23]	14[16]	16[18]
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	68[79]	74[55]	85[62]
	National	75[71]	72[69]	85[78]

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	*[10]	*[*]	*[10]
	Girls	*[15]	*[*]	*[12]
	Total	14[25]	15[19]	15[22]
Percentage of pupils	School	68[86]	74[66]	85[76]

at NC level 4 or above	National	70[68]	72[69]	79[75]
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Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

*** When fewer than 10 boys or girls in a small class reach the expected level in any subject, the numbers are not published.**

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	156
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	27.6
Average class size	27.6

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	85

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	0

Total number of education support staff	0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	0

Number of pupils per FTE adult	0
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999 - 2000
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	£
Total income	290,560
Total expenditure	303,762
Expenditure per pupil	1,678
Balance brought forward from previous year	38,261
Balance carried forward to next year	41,588

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out:

189

Number of questionnaires returned:

97 (51%)

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
1 My child likes school	60	37	2	0	1
2 My child is making good progress in school	61	33	4	0	2
3 Behaviour in the school is good	74	25	0	0	1
4 My child gets the right amount of work to do at home	42	37	11	2	5
5 The teaching is good	62	36	1	0	1
6 I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on	44	30	22	3	1
7 I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem	63	27	4	4	2
8 The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best	67	28	2	0	3
9 The school works closely with parents	32	42	19	4	3
10 The school is well led and managed	47	41	7	0	4
11 The school is helping my child become mature and responsible	60	35	1	0	4
12 The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons	18	23	25	22	13

NB: figures are rounded to nearest integer; sum may not = 100%

Nil responses (i.e. blank boxes) are included in category 5.

12 (12%) parents made additional comments

Strongest points in order:

- School should provide more out-of-school activities.
- There should be a male teacher on the staff.

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

- 51 When children enter school, assessments of their reading and mathematics confirm that their early achievements are comparable with those of most children of the same age. By the time they start in Year 1, most children have made satisfactory progress in communication, language and literacy, mathematical, creative and physical development, and in knowledge and understanding of the world. Many children do better than expected in personal and social and emotional development. With effective help for their learning, children with special educational needs make good improvements to their learning in the reception class.
- 52 Provision in the reception class is suitable for young children but the restricted accommodation limits children's access to the wide range of activities needed to extend their learning. Tasks and activities are well planned and matched to new national requirements for children in their first year in school. Although teaching provides children with many suitable experiences, there are too few chances for them to explore different areas of learning through independent, planned investigations and to practise and strengthen new skills.
- 53 Teaching of personal, social and emotional development is good. Children make good progress and their behaviour, attitudes and responses are above those expected for their age. A consistent approach enables children to understand the sort of behaviour that is expected in school. The teacher creates a calm but busy place for learning where children feel happy and secure in a caring atmosphere. Children form friendly relationships with one another and pay good attention to their teacher. They are very well behaved, show respect for the feelings of others, and follow the rules when taking turns in games and discussions.
- 54 Children are taught good manners and never forget to say *please* and *thank you*. Staff encourage children to be responsible for belongings, such as aprons, and to undress for physical education without assistance. Adults provide very good models by treating children and one another with courtesy and respect. Although adults encourage children to work and play together happily, they are less successful in encouraging children to take part in independent activities, or to try new experiences and to think for themselves. At lunchtimes, children sit quietly and sensibly while eating their meals. They are very polite, ask for help when needed and show as much independence as possible.
- 55 The skills of speaking and listening are developed to satisfactory levels and teaching in these areas is satisfactory. Children listen attentively to stories, to instructions from their teachers and to one another in discussions. Their speech and vocabulary are developed effectively through rôle play where children work together in small groups. Teaching is particularly successful when the teacher questions children very skilfully to extend their understanding of ideas and to increase their vocabularies during discussions. Teaching places considerable emphasis on reading with the result that children make good progress in this area. Although children are taught to hold books and to turn the pages carefully, free access to books in an attractive library is limited and restricts reading for pleasure.

- 56 A good feature of the teaching of reading lies in helping children to identify words through the names of sounds of letters. As a result, most children know the sounds of some letters of the alphabet. Many make good progress by using sounds to identify words. However, shortcomings exist in the teaching of writing. Far too few opportunities are provided for children to try out their own writing, and the organisation of rôle play does not support the use of writing in familiar situations. Because the teaching of writing is not as strong as it is in reading, children make good progress in reading and limited progress in writing.
- 57 Children's mathematical understanding is similar to that of most four and five-year-olds and their progress is satisfactory. Although teaching is satisfactory, it allows too few opportunities for children to strengthen their understanding of mathematics by selecting their own resources and activities. Teaching develops mathematical ideas effectively through sorting, matching and counting, and activities involving shape, position, size and quantity. The teacher uses children's enjoyment of painting effectively to practise sequencing patterns. They learn to count forwards and backwards with reasonable confidence when they are taught enjoyable songs and rhymes. More able children count to ten with confidence while recognising written numbers. As a result of high expectations, a small group does very well by counting and recognising numbers to 20, using accurate mathematical language and taking away by counting forward and backwards. The teacher guides children to handle data confidently at this early stage by asking them to help to make a pictogram about the colours of their eyes that shows the most common colour in the class. They recognise simple shapes such as circles or squares, place objects *in front* or *behind* other objects and know the meaning of *bigger than* and *more*.
- 58 Children's knowledge and understanding of the world are similar to those of most children of their age. They take an active part in investigations in science and technology. Their teacher provides opportunities for children to develop technological skills by using large and small constructional toys. As they become more familiar with programmable toys and computers, children become skilled at using a mouse and drawing pictures on a screen. They all use headphones and tape recorders confidently to listen to taped stories and rhymes. Teachers use group work effectively to involve all children in experiments. For example, they did their best to guess the contents of several jars from smell alone. Children make satisfactory progress in this area of learning with satisfactory teaching based on clear objectives for their learning.
- 59 Most children's physical development is satisfactory for their age. Teaching is satisfactory and based on secure knowledge of the subject. As a result, many children run, skip, jump, and land confidently with a growing sense of space and the safety of others. Independent, physical activity is restricted by a lack of access to a secure outdoor play area, or to wheeled vehicles and climbing equipment. The teacher encourages children to use space in the hall carefully to gain control of their bodies and to avoid bumping into one another. Because children enjoy physical education, they move confidently and imaginatively as they travel round the hall. As a result, most children have reasonable co-ordination and balance. The teacher uses good strategies to develop children's skills in the use of balls. Consequently, even the youngest children throw and catch a ball or beanbag, and manage to control balls when moving round the hall. The many opportunities provided by the teacher develop children's control of tools and equipment for cutting, gluing, drawing and forming letters.

- 60 The creative work children produce is typical for their age. Although teaching is satisfactory, the way the class is organised restricts children's access to materials that extend opportunities for imaginative expression in art. The teacher plans colourful creative activities that develop children's skills with paint, crayons, and collage. Consequently, they mix colours effectively to produce attractive self-portraits and pictures of familiar people and places. Adults do not always encourage creativity and free expression when they take too large a part in directing children's work. Teaching is much more effective in drama and rôle play where children are provided with high-quality materials and encouraged to devise their own plays about stories, such as *Cinderella*. Children gain satisfactory skills in music as they learn to play untuned percussion instruments with confidence and creativity. They gain a growing feeling for rhythm when clapping in time to familiar tunes.

ENGLISH

- 61 Since the last inspection, standards in English improved in Year 6 until they reached the national average in 1999. They fell below average in national tests in 2000 because of the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in that year's class. When compared with the low standards most 11-year-olds achieved when they were seven, these results indicate the good progress they made in the juniors. The most able of them did as well as expected, and as well as more able pupils in other schools. This result was good when compared with their earlier performances.
- 62 Standards in national tests are still low for about a third of pupils in Year 6. Some of these pupils, nevertheless, reached a personal best in 2000. For others, weaknesses in writing, too little time to improve their work in *booster* classes and a lack of extra help prevented them from achieving the national average. Weaknesses in writing, which are identified for improvement in the school's development planning, also caused the school to miss its targets for English in 2000. Over recent years, girls did better than boys in English.
- 63 Gradual improvements to the reading of seven-year-olds since the last inspection meant that many pupils in Year 2 did better than expected in national tests in 1999. Results were even better in 2000 when over a third of all pupils in Year 2 reached a higher level than expected for their age. This good improvement is evident in the current Year 2 and was achieved by teachers placing greater emphasis on the skills that help pupils to make sense of new words. With better teaching and additional support for pupils' learning, there is room for standards in reading to rise even higher. Although girls did better than boys in reading from 1996 to 1999, boys did better than boys in most other schools.
- 64 Seven-year-olds did better in writing at the last inspection when many reached the national average. However, standards fell in 1999, but improved to a satisfactory level in 2000. The writing of more able pupils was not good enough in 2000 and remains too low in this year's Year 2. None of them reached a high level in writing in national tests. Although seven-year-olds acquire the skills of writing, opportunities to practise these skills are insufficient to reach the high level of which some of them are capable. Girls did better than boys in writing.
- 65 All pupils' achievements in speaking are satisfactory. They acquire increasingly accurate and suitable vocabulary in most subjects, express themselves with growing clarity and speak reasonably confidently in a range of different situations. The vocabulary that older pupils use is satisfactory for their age, but could be better. Few

of them use adventurous language to develop their views. This lack of challenging vocabulary in their speech also affects the quality of vocabulary most pupils in Year 6 use when writing. Pupils are much better at listening than speaking. Because of teachers' very good control of their behaviour, all pupils are very attentive in lessons. They listen very carefully to teachers' clear instructions and explanations and as a result, know what they are expected to achieve and make the best use of time by settling down quickly to tasks.

- 66 Teaching in English has improved at a good rate since the last inspection. It is now mainly good with some that is very good. The effects of good teaching are evident in rising standards since 1996. A particularly strong feature of teaching lies in the good skills teachers demonstrate when reading with groups of pupils during the literacy hour. For example, the teacher in Year 1 very effectively ensured that everyone understood a shared story, joined in with a rhyming text and used the attractive illustrations to predict what happened next. As a result of very good teaching, these young pupils are so confident at reading together, that when asked to re-read their books, they organised the activity independently and all joined in with confidence. In Year 5, the teacher's skilful questioning drew out pupils' understanding of a story. It encouraged them to use a text to locate specific details and to draw their own conclusions about characters and events.
- 67 At the last inspection, teaching lacked clear objectives for pupils' learning. The successful implementation of the National Literacy Strategy provides a clear framework to successfully teach the skills in reading. Writing is taught well enough to enable many pupils in Year 2 to reach the level expected for their age. However, there is room for improvement as more able pupils fail to produce the range and quality of writing of which they are capable. Also, some less able pupils work at too low a level. More able pupils do far better in Year 6, where good opportunities are provided to reach high standards in writing. However, the writing of pupils in all classes is limited by the use of undemanding worksheets in English and other subjects. Weakness in writing also stems from a lack of extra help for the work of less able pupils. Most teachers effectively provide pupils with the skills they need to write but limit the opportunities to use these skills.
- 68 Good support for pupils' with special educational needs provides them with help and guidance to improve their reading and writing. The school pays close attention to external advice from specialists such as educational psychologists and teachers for pupils with physical disabilities and learning difficulties. Not only is there good support for these pupils in small groups outside the classroom, but teachers also do their best for them by providing materials that suit their specific needs in lessons. Individual support for disabled pupils with statements of their special educational needs helps them to learn at the same rate as other pupils.
- 69 The subject's co-ordinator ensures that thorough testing provides teachers with good information about pupils' learning. In addition to reading and spelling tests, teachers are good at checking pupils' learning as they work on tasks in lessons. When the teacher in Year 3 read in turn with a group of pupils, she assessed their skills with a view to improving their weaknesses. While information from assessment is used effectively to identify general weaknesses in learning, it is not used specifically enough to find out what is wrong with pupils' writing. Also, marking lacks advice and guidance to help pupils to improve their writing and presentation. With the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy, the school has increased its resources for English to a good level although it lacks a well-resourced library to develop the skills of research

for older pupils. As a result, few older pupils can locate reference books by using simple library classification systems.

- 70 The governor responsible for literacy closely checks work in the National Literacy Strategy by observing teaching and learning in classrooms. Similarly, the co-ordinator and members of the local authority's advisory staff have checked the progress pupils make from the use of the strategy. Parents who take part in the school's reading programme and help their children with spellings, add considerable value to pupils' efforts in school. Given the strong improvements to reading over the last four years and planned commitment to improving pupils' writing, the school is in a good position to continuously raise standards in English.

MATHEMATICS

- 71 The school has worked hard to raise standards in mathematics since the last inspection. The results of national tests for 11-year-olds show a pattern of overall improvement over the last four years, although in 1999 they were disappointingly low. The year group involved had a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs, which depressed the figures. The 2000 results were much better, reflecting the good progress made by pupils in their years in the juniors. Much of this improvement is a direct outcome of the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy, which has resulted in better teaching and higher expectations of how pupils will perform, so much so, that the targets set for results in mathematics were exceeded in 2000. In the first part of the autumn term, the attainment of many pupils in Year 6 is already close to or above expectations for 11-year-olds. Over recent years, girls did better than boys in mathematics.
- 72 Seven-year-olds do less well in mathematics than they do in reading. This was the case at the last inspection and remains the same now. Results in national tests, however, have improved, particularly in 2000 when the proportion of pupils attaining nationally expected levels was similar to the national average. The most able did not do as well as they should have done. Consequently, the school did not do as well as other schools in similar social and economic settings. Overall, boys did better than girls in mathematics in national tests from 1996 to 1999. The school's results in mathematics were too low in 2000 when compared with the performance of pupils in similar schools.
- 73 This pattern of improvement is maintained in the current Year 2 and Year 6 classes. It is because teachers know how to teach the basic skills of number well and can ensure that pupils make the progress of which they are capable. All teachers give prominence to mental arithmetic. As a result, pupils continuously improve their recall of number facts and develop a range of strategies for working out problems in their heads. Pupils in Year 2 order numerals accurately to 100 and recall addition and subtraction facts to 20. Many of them understand how to classify and sequence numbers, and more able pupils are very successful in recognising patterns and relationships in numbers.
- 74 Teaching in mathematics is good overall. In Years 1 and 2, teaching is very good and sometimes excellent. This is a clear improvement since the last inspection. Good mathematical knowledge is a strength of teaching in the subject. It is evident in clear explanations of the work and the good use teachers make of examples and practical demonstrations. Better planning contributes to improvements to pupils' learning. It is now thorough and very well matched to the recommendations of the National Numeracy Strategy. It contains a good range of tasks for pupils that are well matched

to their needs. For example, because of the level of work provided, more able pupils in Year 6 understand the relationships between vulgar fractions, decimal fractions, and percentages.

- 75 A successful feature of teaching, which ensures that pupils can express their mathematical understanding, is the use teachers make of accurate terminology. Clear mathematical language allowed pupils in Year 1 to explain the attributes of three-dimensional shapes with confidence and understanding. They talked about *faces, edges* and *corners* of shapes and that a cube is unable to roll, *because it's got edges and corners*. The use teachers make of practical equipment aids understanding of mathematical ideas. In Year 2, for example, less able pupils used mathematical equipment to improve their understanding of place value. Teachers are very good at managing pupils' behaviour. By providing very good models of how they expect pupils to behave, teachers provide them with a sense of security and encouragement. All pupils in Year 5 were shown that their teacher respected their efforts and that it was safe to take chances when answering questions in mental mathematics.
- 76 Teachers use praise effectively to encourage pupils to improve their work. For this purpose, they give mathematics a high profile in displays and also raise the image of the subject in the school. Pupils with special educational needs in mathematics make good progress towards the targets of their individual education plans. These pupils receive good support from classroom assistants and teachers with tasks planned to meet their needs. The progress made by some less able pupils, who are not on the register of special educational needs, is restricted by a lack of support staff to help them reach higher standards.
- 77 Pupils use and improve the skills of mathematics across a range of other subjects. In science in the infants, for example, pupils sort and classify materials into sets. Pupils use the skills of accurate measurement to bring precision to their work in design and technology. In history, they gain a sense of the passage of time from their work in different eras and the use of time lines.
- 78 Teachers use skilful questioning to check if pupils fully understand mathematical ideas before developing them further. The pace of lessons is generally brisk. There is an appropriate balance between moving the lesson on and giving pupils time to think. Teachers are good at asking questions to make pupils think and to explain their calculations. They give well-informed answers to pupils' questions. Sometimes, however, teachers make the work too easy for more able pupils by providing them with mathematical rules rather than getting them to use the findings of problems to work out rules for themselves.
- 79 The subject is well managed and the co-ordinator is committed to improving standards. The school has clear procedures to check the quality of teaching and learning in response to the findings of the previous inspection. Assessment and record keeping are good. They allow teachers to plan work that meets pupils' needs and to set realistic targets for their learning. The co-ordinator supported other teachers very effectively as they implemented the National Numeracy Strategy. The impact this support had on teaching puts the school in a good position to raise standards much higher. Teachers use resources successfully to improve pupils' understanding of the subject through *first hand* experiences. There is, however, a reliance on the use of worksheets in mathematics. By devising their own worksheets, several teachers make sure that work matches pupils' needs. Most teachers use commercially produced worksheets that encourage lazy attitudes to recording and presentation.

SCIENCE

- 80 The standards reached by 11-year-olds in science have varied since the last inspection. They dropped to a level well below those reached by pupils in most schools in national tests in 1999. Pupils in Year 6 did much better in national tests in 2000 and the school's results were similar to those reached by many schools nationally. More able pupils did well enough. As many of them achieved high standards as more able pupils did in most schools. Inspection findings confirm that standards are still rising in Year 6. There is room for further improvement to the challenges provided for more able pupils.
- 81 The standards reached by seven-year-olds were too low in assessments by teachers in 1999. Not only did fewer pupils than in most schools achieve the level expected for their age, but none of the more able pupils in Year 2 did well enough by exceeding it. Standards rose to a much better level in 2000 and were similar to those reached by many pupils nationally. Again, however, the results of more able pupils were still not good enough and none of them reached the higher level expected of them. Inspection findings confirm that early in the school year, many pupils in Year 2 are working close to the level expected for their age.
- 82 Most of the teaching in science is good. Teachers' confidence and knowledge of the subject have risen since the last inspection. Emphasis on correct scientific language is influenced by teachers' work in the National Literacy Strategy and leads to clearer explanations and better, more accurate understanding of scientific ideas for pupils. This was evident in Year 5, when pupils were investigating the changes in frequency of sound made by columns of air in bottles, and from stretched elastic bands. The teacher's probing questions were expressed precisely and guided pupils' thinking to important points of the work. Pupils responded with correct language and explained their ideas clearly.
- 83 Teachers have raised standards through better planning and preparation for lessons. As a result, pupils do well when learning about life and physical processes, and materials. Although satisfactory, standards are not high enough in investigative and recording skills. Teachers are not making enough use of ICT for pupils to record the findings of investigations in written text or graphs. Most lessons end with well-structured questions and answers that remind pupils of the main objectives of the work and assess their understanding. Pupils produce a lot of good work from commercially prepared worksheets, but there is too much dependence on these and pupils have too few opportunities to write carefully structured accounts of their work. Pupils in the juniors require greater challenge in recording their work in a scientific manner than filling-in gaps on worksheets allows.
- 84 Teachers expect pupils to work hard and to behave well. Consequently, pupils show respect for one another when carrying out tasks together. Pupils work productively, either individually or in groups, in a quiet working atmosphere. They conduct practical investigations carefully, show respect for materials and equipment and bring critical and questioning attitudes to their findings. Pupils in Year 2, for example, maintained interest for a long period of time in the gradual melting of an ice balloon. They observed and explained changes as they occurred, listened to one another's explanations and tried hard to fit their thinking to observable facts. In Year 6, pupils resolved the difficulty presented by a sieve with too fine a gauge to separate components of a mixture, by discussing alternative strategies and selecting and

testing a solution to the problem. Throughout the school, pupils show a high level of interest in science and try hard to produce good work.

- 85 Good improvements to the subject since the last inspection form the basis for further improvements. The co-ordinator provides clear programmes of work to guide teaching and learning. As a result, lessons are prepared well. When teachers share the clearly defined objectives of lessons with pupils, they provide pupils with a helpful measure of what is expected of them. Teachers sometimes spend too much time on work intended for older pupils. Examples of this in Years 3 and 4 include work about the structure and functioning of the digestive organs, teeth, ears and eyes, and in Year 6, about cross sections of electric cells. Assessments of pupils' learning are used productively by teachers to plan future lessons and to track pupils' progress. The co-ordinator gives good support for teaching and learning, and has clear targets for developing the subject. Resources for science are satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

- 86 Standards have risen in ICT since the last inspection when seven and 11-year-olds were working at too low a level for their age. Most of the work pupils do in Year 6 is now satisfactory in many aspects of the subject. An area of weakness still exists in sensing and control, but this will be addressed later in the year. Standards in Year 2 are developing in line with expectations for seven-year-olds, but could be better with greater access for pupils to computers.
- 87 The school has committed a great deal of expenditure to improving the number and quality of computers and equipment in order to raise standards. All classes have access to at least two computers and this number is increased when adjacent classes share resources. However, there are insufficient resources to teach computer skills to more than a few pupils at a time without major movements of equipment. The result is that it takes too long for all pupils in a class to learn a new skill. While pupils in Years 1 and 2 use the mouse to manage quite complex screen controls, they are slow to develop keyboard skills. This is because very little use is made of computers to improve their writing and opportunities to develop pupils' skills at the keyboard are missed.
- 88 When pupils in the juniors produce short poems and personal accounts, they demonstrate satisfactory, and sometimes good word-processing skills, with good layout, use of colour, changes of font and print and occasional graphics. Pupils in Year 5 used a spreadsheet for recording entries and results in a fantasy football league run by the secondary school. They used a data processing program to display results of a survey in the form of a graph and explained the function performed by the computer. Pupils in Year 4 and Year 1 with special educational needs received good individual support while working with computers. They made good progress when using programmes to increase their understanding of language and number. Most pupils enter school with experience of computers. From an early age, they control cursors and icons skilfully with a mouse.

- 89 Pupils are interested and confident about their ability to manage computer systems. In Year 5, they demonstrated skill in locating and extracting information from a CD ROM-based encyclopaedia. They performed essential commands to extract and print information, and discussed the contents of other CD-ROMs. With home-based computers, many pupils are familiar with the Internet. For reasons beyond the school's control, connection with the Internet has been established only recently. As yet, some teachers and pupils lack knowledge and skill in this area.
- 90 Training for ICT has been a priority and the skills of teachers and support staff have improved considerably since the last inspection. As a result, staff speak knowledgeably about programs and show confidence and dexterity in managing them on screen. They coach pupils sensitively and nurture their confidence from an early age. Despite teachers' skills in using computers for administration and lesson preparation, insufficient use is made of computers as a teaching aid in other subjects. Programs available are not always suitable, but exceptions include programs for art and mathematics to support pupils' learning in Years 1 and 2.
- 91 The subject is managed well but lacks arrangements to ensure that ICT is taught efficiently in different subjects. Clear targets and a list of skills for each year group to identify gaps in pupils' learning are missing. With these, the school will be in a good position to raise standards to a higher level. The maintenance of software and equipment, and advice purchased from a local agency, are good value for money and support for the co-ordinator.

ART AND DESIGN

- 92 The school has maintained satisfactory standards in art for seven and 11-year-olds since the last inspection. Teachers' planning for the subject has improved. It now provides opportunities for pupils to develop the use of artistic materials and techniques alongside their work in design and technology. It is not uncommon, as was observed in Year 2, for pupils to produce work in art at the same time as working in design and technology. This means that pupils have full access to the programmes of work for both subjects in a twelve-month period.
- 93 Teaching in art is good. A successful feature of teaching is the way that teachers help pupils to use different materials. In Year 3 for instance, the teacher spent considerable time demonstrating techniques for sketching with charcoal. The careful instructions that accompanied this demonstration were reflected in the successful way that pupils used charcoal in their sketches of miners. Good attention to the needs of pupils with physical disabilities ensures that they make the same good progress as other pupils in art. By listening carefully and following instructions from their teachers, pupils produce effective work. Their very good behaviour means that they concentrate, work hard to do their best and complete all tasks.
- 94 The teacher in Year 2 used a good strategy to develop pupils' observational skills by showing them a range of houses and asking them to look closely at features such as chimneys and patterns of brickwork. This strategy was extended when the whole class walked round the playground observing and commenting on different buildings surrounding the school. Pupils were encouraged to look at the features of different buildings, the materials used to construct them and the mathematical shapes evident in their design. As a result, pupils brought clearer perspectives to the buildings they sketched and at the same time increased their vocabularies and understanding of shape.

- 95 Good planning ensures that older pupils use the techniques developed in Year 2 with charcoal and pastels, to produce effective pictures of galleons set in sky and seascapes. A new programme of work blends a programme from a recent national initiative with another produced by the local education authority. With further modifications to match existing resources with the work in subjects such as English and history, the programme encourages the teaching of skills in easy steps. It also introduces pupils to the work of artists from different times and cultures. When teachers link work about the ancient Egyptians, Greeks and Celts to the art of these cultures, pupils widen their knowledge of modern artists to the work of artists from ancient times. When painting in the style of Kandinsky, pupils in Year 3 improved the skills of colour mixing, used their own lines and shades but produced colours similar to those used by the artist. Pupils who studied the work of Matisse in Year 4, developed skill in collage by producing Matisse-like shapes freehand, from rough cutting and torn paper work.
- 96 Improved and more informed teaching combined with good management and a helpful programme of work, places the school in a good position to raise standards even higher.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- 97 In design and technology, the school has maintained the satisfactory standards in construction reported in the 1996 inspection and has improved pupils' knowledge of the design process. Pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 achieve standards that are typical for their age, but use a restricted range of materials. Although weaknesses exist in pupils' knowledge of structures and mechanisms, improved planning is in place to correct this shortfall in the current year. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support for their learning. As a result, their progress is good and their achievements frequently match or exceed those of other pupils.
- 98 Teaching is at least satisfactory and mainly good. Teachers ensure that skills are taught with due attention given to safety. They concentrate effectively on the design process and ensure that it is a meaningful preparation for pupils' projects. Some projects, while producing objects of satisfactory quality, are too controlled by teachers and result in most pupils producing similar articles. Limited freedom of choice in design and access to a wider range of materials limit the quality of pupils' work.
- 99 Teachers plan lessons well. They provide work that develops sound knowledge of the design process and link this to the development of skills in measuring, shaping, cutting and fastening. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 become skilful at preparing food when they peel and cut fruit and vegetables for salads and sandwiches. When using construction kits to build model houses, they demonstrate sound knowledge of structures. Many pupils in Years 5 and 6 show good achievement in designing and making slippers. They create designs from their own measurements and cut outlines carefully in felt. They practise a range of stitches before choosing a suitable stitch for assembling their slippers and create original patterns for the finishing touches. While attainment in this project is satisfactory, older pupils, are capable of handling more varied materials and tackling constructional problems with a more challenging function. This would extend the learning of more able pupils.
- 100 Because the subject is linked to other subjects, it is difficult to ensure balanced progress in developing pupils' skills and knowledge. The recent adoption of a new

national programme of work means there are better opportunities to cover weaker aspects of the subject, to ensure systematic development of skills, and to use resistive materials. This places the school in a satisfactory position to continue to raise standards.

GEOGRAPHY

- 101 Standards in geography, which were too low for 11-year-olds in 1996, have risen to a satisfactory level for pupils in Year 6. The school has maintained satisfactory standards for seven-year-olds since the last inspection.
- 102 Satisfactory teaching in geography represents progress from unsatisfactory teaching in the juniors during the previous inspection. However, teaching is more effective for seven-year-olds. This is because the teacher in Year 2 is the first in the school to implement a new national programme of work and pupils in the class are the first to benefit from it. As a result, seven-year-olds produce high-quality work about the Scottish island of *Struay* and demonstrate good understanding of the landscape and geographical features. Before extending their learning to more distant places, the teacher built this effective study on pupils' previous learning. Pupils study the immediate environment by following a picture trail around the locality and drawing simple maps with squared paper. Pupils' knowledge of places increases at a steady pace. Their interest is engaged and their motivation increased through a range of enjoyable activities. On maps of the United Kingdom and the world, for example, pupils in Year 2 log the travels of *Barnaby Bear* who has visited not only the Isle of Wight but also Disneyland, Spain, and Egypt.
- 103 Teachers in the juniors take greater care than at the time of the last inspection to link new work to pupils' earlier learning. Younger pupils in the juniors note the position of Skelmersdale on maps of the United Kingdom, Europe, and the world. They identify major cities of the United Kingdom on maps and use two-figure co-ordinates on simple maps. As they get older, pupils study countries further afield and enjoy work on China where they investigate characters of the Chinese alphabet as well as the geography of Beijing. This work makes a good input to pupils' cultural development. By the time they are 11, pupils' knowledge and understanding of geographical skills, places and themes, such as weather, settlements, and environmental change, are typical for their age. They study rivers, waterfalls, and estuaries but much of the work is from worksheets and unrelated to field studies to make it *come to life*.
- 104 The school has taken suitable action to raise standards since the last inspection. Issues from the previous inspection are addressed through a new national programme of work that ensures pupils build steadily on the knowledge and skills they acquire in successive years. The co-ordinator checks teachers' planning to make sure that the programme of work is in place. New assessment procedures are set out, as a list of the skills pupils are expected to gain each year. By helping them with their work, the learning of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Insufficient equipment and outdated resources prevent pupils from reaching higher standards in aspects of the subject. With greater depth in pupils' work, sound management and improvements to resources, the school is strong enough to raise standards in geography to a higher level.

HISTORY

- 105 The school has maintained satisfactory standards in history since the previous inspection when the achievements of seven and 11-year-olds were typical for their age. Teaching has improved and is mostly good, especially in the juniors, where a new programme of work allows teachers to build systematically on pupils' previous learning. As a result, pupils in Year 6 are good at linking different periods of history. They appreciate differences and similarities between the lifestyles of people in ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome and of evacuee children in Britain in World War II. In Year 5, pupils contrast the modern Olympics with those of ancient Greece. Successful teaching informs pupils of different ways that past eras can be studied. Because teachers emphasise different sources of information, pupils know that the past can be studied through archaeology, art, written accounts, photographs, and visits to sites and museums. Pupils in Year 4, for instance, discover the origins of English place names through work about the Vikings and Anglo-Saxons.
- 106 Teachers use their good knowledge of history to deepen pupils' thinking through questioning and to make lessons interesting for pupils. In work about the Victorians, pupils in Year 2 talked with interest about everyday life in Victorian times as they scrubbed and rubbed over washboards and dolly tubs. Teachers effectively introduce pupils to research through loans of high-quality objects from a local museum. Although teachers make good use of visits to museums and talks from visiting historians, the school has too few resources to give pupils sufficient first-hand experiences of investigative work. Too much reliance on undemanding worksheets has a detrimental effect on pupils' writing. When pupils in Year 3 did write at length, their awareness of mummification in ancient Egypt prompted detailed writing, which reflected the good learning that had occurred.
- 107 Management of the subject is good. This is because the co-ordinator looks for new ways to add greater depth to pupils' learning. She is moving the subject forward through techniques such as drama and debate that bring the subject to life for all pupils, including those with special educational needs. The school makes satisfactory use of pupils' mathematical knowledge in history by developing their understanding of the passage of time. All teachers provide pupils with time-lines that help them to sequence events, people and changes over time.

MUSIC

- 108 Standards in music have improved since the previous inspection. Seven and 11-year-olds reach standards that are typical for their age under the skilled and expert tuition of a visiting specialist teacher. The school has used its funding for the training of teachers wisely to purchase the services and advice of an excellent teacher of music. The teacher has worked closely this term alongside teachers in Years 1 and 5 with the intention of raising standards and sharing enthusiasm and expertise in the subject with the whole staff. As a result of this support, teaching has improved since the last inspection. The music teacher's work is of a very high standard and she offers challenging tasks that give pupils a sense of achievement when they are completed successfully. In a concert to round off a half-term's work, pupils were pleased to perform for one another and to display their new talents.
- 109 As a result of very good teaching, pupils in the juniors identify pitch, ostinato, and chords in their work. They create mood and atmosphere very effectively as they work in small groups to compose short pieces of music. This term's composition used the sounds of a variety of animals as Saint Saens did in his work the *Carnival of the Animals*. Pupils portray their music well when using percussion instruments to

perform their compositions. Most pupils' enjoyment of the subject influences the pride they take in creating their own music. Teachers extend pupils' cultural awareness by introducing them to different styles of music from a variety of traditions. For instance, pupils appreciated and were influenced by Caribbean *Raps* when reciting simple rhymes and chants.

- 110 Pupils in the infants benefit from very good teaching when they sing a variety of songs tunefully and use percussion instruments to develop an effective musical score about a train journey. They understand how music creates different moods and how it can represent people, places, or animals. Pupils listened attentively to music by the Brazilian composer Villalobos and then used percussion instruments to portray their own imaginary journeys.
- 111 All pupils, including those with special educational needs, have made very good progress in a short time under skilled tuition and are on course to reach standards above those expected of seven and 11-year-olds. Pupils respond very positively to live performances by brass, guitar, and rhythm groups and to workshops with visiting specialists. Pupils in the reception class and in Years 1 and 2 take part in an annual Christmas concert; a version of *The Little Christmas Tree*, being the most recent event. The school's ability to raise standards in every year group will increase when a proposed new scheme for music is in place. Resources are satisfactory. There are enough instruments from different cultures to widen pupils' knowledge of musical traditions.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 112 Since the last inspection, standards in physical education have improved. They are now above those expected of seven and 11-year-olds. The appointment of a new co-ordinator for physical education brought strong improvement to teachers' expertise in the subject and to planning for the development of skills in its different aspects. All teachers are trained in the *Tops Sport* initiative with the result that they bring enthusiasm and new knowledge to their work. Consequently, most of the teaching is good. Teachers bring high levels of confidence to the teaching of dance. As a result, pupils in Years 1, 2, 3 and 5 danced with great vigour and energy while performing increasingly complex patterns and sequences. Great enjoyment of dance enables pupils to persevere with difficult steps and to improve their performances.
- 113 Teachers improve pupils' learning effectively by demonstrating the effects they want pupils to achieve. Similarly, pupils' performances improve dramatically after watching the work of others who are particularly skilled at some activities. When the teacher in Year 2 drew pupils' attention to techniques to throw softballs for greater distances, it was noticeable how their skills improved when working in large circles. Teachers carefully explain the rules of safety in physical education. Because of this, very few accidents result from pupils wearing unsuitable clothing. When pupils learn new skills in games such as football and rugby, they confidently question their teacher about the purpose of specific tasks. Pupils in Year 3, who learned new techniques for throwing balls, and leading and following in rugby, carried out these activities with good control, co-ordination and use of space. The same good control was evident when pupils in Year 1 maintained their balance as they stretched, strode and *froze* in large shapes.
- 114 Teachers build opportunities into their planning to assess pupils' learning. Planned assessments give teachers a good idea of what to expect from pupils at different stages of their development. Assessment allows teachers to modify activities from

the local authority's programme of work to match the needs of pupils in the school. This means that all pupils, including those with special educational needs for their physical disabilities, have access to a full programme of activities. The school provides swimming lessons for pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 so that they all swim at least 25 metres. The co-ordinator involves pupils in considerable amounts of sporting activity with other schools. They compete in swimming galas, football and netball matches, cross-country events, athletics and tug-of-war championship bouts. The efforts of teachers who provide pupils with after-school clubs in football and netball extend the learning of pupils with particular enthusiasm for sport. Improvements to teaching, resources and planning place the school in a good position to raise standards in physical education to even higher levels than in the last two years.