

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **THE WILLOWS PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Wythenshawe, Manchester

LEA area: Manchester

Unique reference number: 131882

Headteacher: Miss A M Whitehead

Reporting inspector: Mrs Sonja Oyen  
7167

Dates of inspection: 22 - 25 January 2001

Inspection number: 230463

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Tayfield Road Woodhouse Park Wythenshawe Manchester
Postcode:	M22 1BQ
Telephone number:	0161 437 4444
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J Corcoran
Date of previous inspection:	n/a

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
7167	S Oyen	Registered inspector	Religious education Equal opportunities English as an additional language	What sort of school is it? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
9884	M Roscoe	Lay inspector		Attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
3108	E Jackson	Team inspector	Mathematics Art and design Music	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
12232	D Atkinson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Design and technology Foundation Stage	
30651	M Entwistle	Team inspector	English History Special educational needs	
27676	M Thorn	Team inspector	Science Geography Physical education	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The Willows Primary School is in Woodhouse Park, Wythenshawe to the south west of Manchester, an area of predominantly semi-detached rented housing. As part of local reorganisation, three schools were closed and The Willows opened in September 1999 in the buildings of one. Refurbishment and building work continued during the school's first year. With 427 pupils on roll, the school is larger than most other primaries. There are more boys than girls especially in Years 4 and 6. In the four terms since it opened the number of pupils joining the school has exceeded the number leaving. Thirty nine children attend the nursery full-time and 25 on a part-time basis. No pupil is from an ethnic minority. 223 pupils (52 per cent) are entitled to free school meals, which is well above average. Children's attainment on entry to nursery is generally well below that expected for their age. There are 102 pupils (24 per cent) on the school's register of special educational need, which is above average. Two pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Need and 20 other pupils receive support from outside agencies. One pupil has English as an additional language but does not require support in learning English. The school benefits from funding and projects arising from its location in an Education Action Zone (EAZ) and its participation in Excellence in Cities and other initiatives.

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

The Willows is very effective in meeting its aim of creating "a caring community, achieving and celebrating success". Members of staff are highly skilled in managing the pupils' behaviour and in ensuring that all are included in lessons. Pupils want to learn and they benefit from much good teaching. The headteacher is an effective leader and trailblazer. Community links are good and initiatives, such as learning mentors, are being used very effectively to support pupils' learning and to enrich their experience. Standards are low but are beginning to rise. Given the high funding per pupil, the school provides satisfactory value for money overall but good value in some aspects – the nursery provision, the support in classrooms and pastoral care.

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

- Pupils' achievement in mathematics is accelerating because of much good teaching with support from advisory teachers and EAZ funding.
- Standards in physical education at Key Stage 2 are higher than in most schools.
- The headteacher is highly successful in raising pupils' self-esteem through celebrating achievement and providing an attractive environment that supports pupils' learning.
- Every pupil matters. The teaching and support staff care about the pupils. The school is calm because of the excellent way that all the staff, particularly the midday supervisors, manage the pupils' behaviour.
- The rich programme of experiences and good quality of teaching in the nursery ensures the children get off to a flying start and make good progress.
- Pupils benefit from much good teaching and a broad curriculum, with an outstandingly wide range of lunchtime and after-school activities open to all pupils.

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

- Standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Standards in information and communication technology (ICT), music and religious education at Key Stage 2.
- Standards of attendance and punctuality.
- The quality and clarity of strategic planning and the role of all staff in achieving the

school's priorities.

- The quality of the teaching to ensure that pupils' progress accelerates and all pupils achieve well.
- Information to parents to help them to support their children's learning at home.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE OPENING

Much has been achieved since the school opened four terms ago. The governors, headteacher and staff have made heroic progress in raising the school's profile in the face of initial parental hostility, a high number of disaffected pupils, the need to form a team of staff from several schools and the introduction of the national numeracy initiative - all at a time when the school was undergoing extensive building work. They have successfully:

- established clear, effective systems and procedures to manage the pupils' behaviour;
- created a good learning atmosphere and fostered pupils' wish to learn;
- lifted school and local morale – the parents now wish their children to go to The Willows;
- established good links with other agencies to enrich the curriculum and to work with the school in providing a high level of care for pupils;
- used additional funds and projects to enrich what the school offers and to ensure that all pupils take as full a part as they can.

As a result pupils want to be at school. They often achieve well in lessons and standards are rising. The school is well placed to develop this further.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
English	n/a	n/a	E	D	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E lowest 5% schools E*
Mathematics	n/a	n/a	E*	E*	
Science	n/a	n/a	E*	E	

The school's overall results in its first year were poor. Pupils did badly because they had limited knowledge and skills especially in mathematics where the results placed The Willows in the lowest five per cent of all and similar schools. The pupils did best in English but writing standards were low. Although standards are still low in English, mathematics and science compared with all schools, an increasing number of pupils are reaching the level expected for their age.

The children start school with much lower knowledge and skills than expected for four year olds. They make good progress in the nursery and by the end of the reception year are closer to the standard expected. They make good progress at Key Stage 1 and the majority reach the level expected for their age in reading, writing, mathematics and science.



Standards in information and communication technology are satisfactory at Key Stage 1 but low at the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils have not been able to make up the experience and skills missed in previous years. In physical education, the pupils do well especially in gymnastics and games. In other subjects standards are satisfactory, apart from in music and religious education at Key Stage 2 where they are unsatisfactory.

### PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good; pupils are proud of their new school and want to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good; pupils generally behave well in class and around school. A small number misbehave when not closely supervised.
Personal development and relationships	Good; pupils are friendly and generally courteous. They are developing in self-esteem and getting on well with one another.
Attendance	Poor; too many pupils go on holiday in school time and many arrive late in the mornings.

### TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is at least satisfactory in 95 per cent of lessons. The five per cent unsatisfactory teaching is not typical of teaching in any one class or subject. In 48 per cent of lessons the teaching is good; it is very good in 12 per cent and outstanding in three per cent. The better teaching occurs across the school but is most prevalent in the nursery, at Key Stage 1 and some classes of Year 4 and 5 pupils. Good teaching in mathematics is boosting pupils' progress throughout the school. In English, good teaching is helping pupils to make faster progress in reading and writing but this is not consistent in all year groups.

All the teachers show a high degree of skill in managing the pupils' behaviour, in keeping them interested in learning and in helping them to feel confident in what they are doing.

Nursery children get off to a good start because of the good teaching of the team but their progress slows in the reception year as the teachers are not as skilled in building on what the children know and can do. The teaching for pupils with special educational needs is often good in sessions when they work in small groups on specific aspects related to their learning targets. The teachers do not always challenge the higher attaining pupils enough.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range	Satisfactory; the curriculum for children in the nursery is good;

of the curriculum	the range of visits and extra activities is excellent.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good; pupils take part in the full curriculum and receive much support and guidance in working towards their literacy and personal targets.
Provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good; there is a high emphasis on presenting work well, on getting on with others, on developing pupils' self-esteem and on fostering pupils' awareness of their own and others' talents, as well as doing the right thing. This adds much to the ethos of the school and the family feel.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good; all the staff show care, concern and affection for the pupils. The ways used to promote pupils' good behaviour are excellent.

The school's partnership with the parents is good and growing. The parents support events and a significant number help in school. Some are taking courses to help their children at home and in school.

#### **HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides very good leadership and is the powerhouse of the school. Other staff have yet to assume leadership in their subjects.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory; many governors are new to the role but give high support.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good; the headteacher has a clear awareness of the school's strengths and areas to improve; not enough is done to decide how well all the different projects and initiatives are helping to raise standards.
The strategic use of resources	Good; the school gets good value from grants and support from the EAZ and local education authority to improve the provision for pupils.

The school has still to appoint a deputy headteacher and a specialist mathematics teacher to bring the staff to full complement. Better use could be made of teachers' subject expertise and the space in the school. The limited number of books and learning resources weakens the quality of provision especially in English.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• They find it easy to come to the school and discuss problems or to talk with anyone on the staff.</li><li>• Their children like school.</li><li>• Their children are expected to do their best and to behave well.</li><li>• The school is helping their children to become mature and responsible.</li><li>• Their children have settled quickly and are making good progress.</li><li>• The leadership and the teaching are good.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The amount and regularity of homework.</li><li>• The school's partnership with them.</li></ul>

Inspectors agree with the parents' views. The headteacher and staff are looking at ways to improve the homework schedule and to ensure that parents are kept even more informed about what is happening in school and how they can be involved.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. When children come into the nursery, their knowledge and skill are well below what is expected for their age. They make good progress because of the good teaching and the rich variety of experiences. When they move into the reception year, their attainment is closer to that expected of four year olds. The high level of adult interaction with the children fosters good progress in their speaking and listening skills. Similarly, the children learn quickly about stories, how to handle books, to make marks and count because of the frequent, good quality group sessions and activities. This continues in the reception year although the children's progress slows. By the end of the reception year, many have achieved the skills and the knowledge expected for their age. In physical development, many are doing really well especially in using wheeled toys and balls. In language and literacy, a significant number, more often boys, have still some way to go in recognising and writing words. The children learn to count and handle numbers, and at five many are beginning to record their mathematics work formally. The children's limited general knowledge constrains their achievement in knowledge and understanding of the world. In creative development, the pupils achieve well in the nursery but less so in the reception classes as they have fewer opportunities to experiment with materials, tools and techniques or to use them in their own way.
2. The children achieve best in personal, social and emotional development. By the end of the nursery year, the children are well able to take care of their own needs and to plan and organise their own learning. This is because the nursery is set up to enable the children to get what they need and to choose from a variety of activities as well as to participate in adult led activities. In the reception classes, the children have less opportunity to develop their independence.
3. At the end of Key Stage 1, standards are low in English, mathematics and science when compared with all schools. The school's results in the 2000 end of Key Stage 1 tests were well below average in all three subjects. A significant number of pupils did not reach the level expected for seven year olds and very few did better than this. The results are better when compared with similar schools. Although standards were below average in reading and writing, they matched it in mathematics. When considering only the percentage of pupils who reached Level 2, the level expected for their age, the school did better than most similar schools in mathematics. The work of the present Year 2 pupils is below average in English, especially in writing. In mathematics, the pupils are achieving well in most lessons and standards are improving although they are still lower than seen nationally. The increased focus on teaching number, the daily session of number problems and rehearsal of number facts are all helping to boost progress and raise attainment. In science, standards are below but close to average. In lessons, the pupils achieve well when they are involved and talking about practical investigations. Their memory of key vocabulary is less secure.
4. Given their very low starting point, the pupils make good progress at Key Stage 1 and do well to reach the level expected for their age. When they move into Key Stage 2, a significant number are still in the early stages of reading and writing and are almost a year's progress behind other seven year olds. The boys do slightly less well than the

- girls but not markedly. In mathematics, the progress has been better and inspection evidence indicates that the rate of progress continues to accelerate.
5. At Key Stage 2, the picture is complex. When The Willows opened pupils joined from three different schools. School evidence show that pupils' progress in the first year varied considerably. Younger pupils made satisfactory progress but those in the older year groups often made less than satisfactory progress due to the high amount of time given by teachers to managing the pupils' behaviour and establishing a more positive attitude to work. The teachers were also aware that many of the pupils were starting from a low attainment base and therefore invested much time and support into teaching basic skills especially in mathematics. The pupils' limited knowledge and skills were reflected in the school's poor results in the 2000 national tests, especially in the very poor attainment of the boys. In English, mathematics and science, the overall results were well below the national average. The results in mathematics and science placed the school in the lowest five per cent of all schools. When compared with similar schools, the school was also in the lowest five per cent in mathematics, well below the average in science and below average in English. Several pupils attained Level 5, the level higher than expected for 11 year olds, and this raised the overall standard in English. High attainment in mathematics and science was less evident.
  6. The boys' attainment was especially weak in mathematics and science compared with boys nationally. The girls did marginally better but were closest to girls nationally in English.
  7. The school reacted positively to the poor results by analysing closely and critically pupils' test results. This identified weaknesses in pupils' reading skills, especially their ability to interpret questions and to explain their reasons using relevant subject terms. The headteacher used this information to realign school priorities and to call even more on specialist teachers from the EAZ and LEA to support the teachers and plan programmes to raise standards. Having assessed all the pupils at Key Stage 2, the school has revised its targets for Level 4 attainment. Inspection evidence and the school's own tracking evidence indicates that the target of 70 per cent Level 4 attainment in English and mathematics is unrealistic for 2001. At present, fewer than half of pupils are attaining Level 4 in English. There are twice as many boys as girls in Year 6 and although there are a few higher attaining boys, the majority are not attaining the level expected for their age. As seen last year, the boys' overall attainment is lower than the girls. Pupils' reading skills are not as high as seen nationally, especially in reading for information, but the real concern is pupils' writing. Too many pupils have a lackadaisical approach to using appropriate punctuation and to checking their work. The standard of presentation is often poor and the content more typical of much younger pupils. The higher attaining pupils do better but very few are showing Level 5 potential.
  8. In mathematics and science the picture is rosier but the target for mathematics is ambitious. Teachers' higher expectations of what pupils can do and their systematic teaching of key information and strategies are bearing fruit as pupils' progress is improving. The pupils remember scientific facts and know mathematical procedures. They are less secure when asked to apply their knowledge or to conduct their own investigations.
  9. At Key Stage 2, the rate of progress is good in several classes and in many lessons because of good teaching and the systematic coverage of topics to plug gaps in the pupils' knowledge and experience. Now that the school has established a calm learning atmosphere and pupils know they are expected to conform and to give of their best, pupils' achievement and standards are rising. The good progress being made by

pupils in Year 4 and in one class at Year 5 augurs well for the future and the school's targets take this into account.

10. Standards are also rising in other subjects. This is most marked in ICT. At Key Stage 1 standards are now satisfactory. The pupils' attainment broadly matches that of other seven year olds. The use of the ICT suite, structured teaching, pupils' enthusiasm and their good retention of skills taught have all had a huge positive impact on standards throughout the school. Key Stage 2 pupils have much lost ground to make up and although Year 6 pupils have made good progress, their attainment is still well below that expected for their age. They will not have covered all the elements required by the National Curriculum as the school does not have all the needed equipment but also because the pupils' skills and knowledge are so low.
11. A success for the school is pupils' attainment in physical education. From the nursery onwards, the pupils have regular access to outdoor activities and many show considerable skill and agility in running and handling balls. This is mirrored in pupils' good attainment in gymnastics and outdoor games. The pupils achieve well because of the good range of activities for them, the systematic teaching of skills and the expectation that they will do well. Pupils are benefiting personally from the discipline needed to play team games and from their growing acceptance of the need to practise to improve. The lunchtime and after-school tutoring by the sports' coaches and the support of subject advisors in developing the teachers' expertise have provided vital impetus. A new initiative is the introduction of dance and pupils are already showing developing achievement.
12. In art and design, design and technology, geography and history, standards are broadly average. Key Stage 2 pupils are not as good in subject skills as in subject knowledge. In subjects such as history this is linked to pupils' poor literacy skills. Pupils remember key historical facts but find it harder to interrogate different sources of evidence. In music, the lack of experience and limited skills in composing and performing bring standards below average at Key Stage 2, whereas standards are satisfactory at Key Stage 1. In religious education, older Key Stage 2 pupils show little in-depth knowledge of Christianity or other faiths. They are not reaching the expectations for their age as identified in the locally agreed syllabus. At Key Stage 1, pupils' knowledge and skills are satisfactory.
13. Pupils with special educational needs at both key stages achieve well. They make good progress towards their targets when they are withdrawn to work with an adult. In class, they receive a lot of support from the teacher and other adults which boosts their confidence. More able pupils do not always achieve their best because the work is sometimes too easy or because the pace is too slow. They do best in English and mathematics where working with those of a similar ability spurs them on.

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

14. Pupils have good positive attitudes to school. These are demonstrated in the busy eagerness of pupils in classrooms each morning and in the fact that nearly all parents who returned the questionnaire agreed that their children like school. Pupils' morale and self-esteem are good. Many show a mature awareness of what they do well and where they have difficulties.
15. Pupils new to the school settle quickly. The children who had only just started in the nursery and reception classes were coping well and were often difficult to pick out from the other children. Within the caring, secure and happy environment of the

nursery and the school, pupils gain confidence rapidly and follow the lead of others in choosing activities, sitting still to listen to stories, clearing away what they have been using and taking care of their own needs.

16. At Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils' attitudes are good overall. Many pupils show very good and occasionally excellent attitudes especially when they respond to very good teaching. When the pupils are inspired, they show a remarkable commitment to learning. This was at its best in a Year 5 lesson when at the end of a busy day pupils were engrossed in discussing questions about 'reincarnation'. Pupils also demonstrate their good attitudes by participating in activities held after school. Pupils are keen and willing to help themselves achieve more. An older pupil commented about the booster classes held after school: "I like going as it is helping me improve. I want to get a 4" (Level 4). Pupils are interested most in practical activities and are excited by sessions such as dance, drama and ICT. Pupils are proud of their work on display in the corridors and are keen to show and explain to others what they have done. They take care of equipment and show respect for work and items on display.
17. Behaviour is good overall both in class and on the playground. Playtimes and lunches are pleasant social occasions when pupils play or chat together. When pupils could not go out after lunch because of rain, they happily played board games in the class and corridors. Pupils are polite and usually look after their own and others' property, such as collecting lunch boxes or hanging coats in the cloakroom.
18. A small number of pupils, when they think they are not directly supervised, take advantage and indulge in unacceptable behaviour. The running, shouting, door slamming and throwing of bags seen in one three minute occasion at the end of a school day showed how easily incidents flare up. Although the teachers try hard to involve and engage all pupils, a small number in several classes contribute little in lessons and waste time when others are working hard. These pupils, more frequently but not exclusively boys, often present demanding attitudes and challenging behaviour. They answer back, ignore class rules and disturb others by fiddling and shuffling about in their chairs. The other pupils often show a high degree of tolerance of these lapses in behaviour. In some cases the pupils make their dissatisfaction known. Younger pupils commented to one pupil "You should sit still and be quiet like us". Pupils accept the sanctions and rewards as fair. The fact that there have been no exclusions this school year reflects the school's strong and growing ethos of good behaviour.
19. Pupils' personal development is good. Relationships are very good because of the friendliness of staff and pupils and the emphasis placed by the headteacher and all staff on consideration for the feelings of others. Parents comment that their children are very attached to their teachers. Pupils from different backgrounds work and play well together. They conscientiously carry out class and school duties and are pleased to be chosen to take registers to the office, look after animals, or keep the school tidy. Others are involved in the school council and help make democratic decisions about the reward system.
20. Attendance levels are poor. This is a concern as so far, the school's efforts to make improvements have not been effective. Some of the unauthorised absence is due to parents taking their children on holiday in term time. The majority of pupils arrive on time for school but learning is sometimes interrupted when pupils arrive late.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

21. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and much is good. In 95 per cent of lessons seen, the teaching was satisfactory or better. In four lessons, five per cent, the teaching was unsatisfactory. The unsatisfactory teaching was spread across the school and typified less successful lessons rather than weak teaching in a particular subject or class.
22. Key strengths are the teachers' skills in managing the pupils' behaviour and in creating a learning atmosphere. The teachers expect the pupils to learn and they put much hard effort into ensuring that they do. The emphasis on firm discipline, good lesson planning and effective team work with support staff gives a high degree of consistency to most lessons. There is good teaching or better in 48 per cent, with very good teaching in 12 per cent and outstanding teaching in three per cent. Although the good teaching occurs throughout the school and across the curriculum, it is most prevalent in the nursery, Key Stage 1 and classes of Year 4 and 5 pupils.
23. There are differences between and within the key stages. The quality of teaching for the children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall. The teaching in the nursery is good with occasional very good sessions. The children learn well because the teacher and nursery nurses have a good awareness of how the young child learns. They know how to talk to and engage young children and encourage their involvement. When the nursery nurse sat and wrote on a whiteboard, many children soon joined him and stayed for a long time making patterns and copying letters. All the adults work effectively as a team in the nursery. The quality of daily planning is very good and gives everyone a clear outline of the purpose of each activity and how adults may foster the children's learning. The adults' skilful interaction with groups and individuals encourages the children to talk, to have a go and to make their own decisions. This often raises the quality of the learning. The teacher's good storytelling with gestures to reinforce 'over', 'under' and 'through' not only drew all children into telling the story of "We're going on a bear hunt" but also ensured the children knew the meaning of each preposition. The reception class teachers are less experienced in working with young children and are not as skilled in managing children's restlessness by diversion or change of pace. In a good music lesson, the teacher's confidence and relaxed style rubbed off on the children who watched her intently, concentrated hard and made good progress in singing 'fast and quiet' or 'slow and loud'.
24. At Key Stage 1, the teaching is good in two lessons out of three and very good in one in four. This good quality is having a positive effect on the pupils' learning particularly in English, mathematics and science. No teaching was seen in design and technology. A common strength is the use of practical activities to sustain the pupils' interest and to keep all involved. This is particularly effective in motivating the boys. When the teacher issued her class of Year 1 pupils with their own letter fans the boys were as keen as the girls to spell out words.
25. At Key Stage 2, the teaching overall is satisfactory. It is good or better in four lessons in ten, frequently very good in one class for Year 4 pupils, and more often very good or outstanding for one class of Year 5 pupils. Although there is good teaching in English, mathematics and science, the teaching is not consistently strong enough to boost standards in each year group and in the key stage as a whole. The higher attaining pupils do not achieve as well as they might as the work is not challenging enough. In many lessons in art, music and physical education, the teaching is good and the pupils achieve well. The pupils enjoy the practical nature of these subjects and they learn quickly when the teachers motivate them and encourage them to try things out. In



history, pupils in Year 6 gained much from dramatising events and discussing likely reasons for situations set in the East End of London during World War II.

26. The good teaching at both key stages in mathematics is mirrored in pupils' good learning and improving standards. In most lessons the lively teaching and good pace keep the pupils' attention high. The initial mental number session is usually well led and the pupils enjoy chanting multiplication tables or working out number problems. In a very good lesson for Year 4 pupils, the teacher was able to check pupils' answers as they used number fans to demonstrate pairs of numbers that add up to 100. Her quick-fire problems kept them highly engaged and also keen to improve their speed in responding. By commenting "Think about our steps to problem solving" the teacher drew the pupils' attention to key information on the classroom wall. Another effective strategy used by all the teachers to reinforce the pupils' knowledge is the teachers' encouragement to pupils to use mathematical terms. The questions "Commutative? What does it mean?" led to Year 5 pupils chanting the definition. By then issuing a volley of number challenges the teacher very effectively tested their skill in applying their knowledge. The pupils enjoyed this and their achievement was good especially as the teacher ensured that the higher and lower attaining pupils were given problems that matched their ability.
27. In English, the good teaching at Key Stage 1 in how to interpret text, how to break down words, how to spell and how to compile sentences is having a positive effect on pupils' reading and writing progress. All the teachers are emphasising key words and are teaching letter sounds effectively, often in interesting ways. In a lesson for Year 1 pupils, the teacher used a toy snake to pose tasks such as finding words ending in "—ss". Her ploy of "He wants the letters – tell him the names" not only focussed on correct spelling patterns but also kept the pupils' attention high. The teachers challenge the pupils and this is helping them make good progress in realising necessary strategies. For example, when the teacher asked "What evidence do you have?", Year 2 pupils identified information in the story and pictures to support their ideas about what would happen next.
28. At Key Stage 2, there is greater variability in the depth of teachers' English subject knowledge and their confidence and flair in using different ways to keep the pupils engaged. The lead coordinator is a very good model in how to teach reading and writing. She uses her very good subject knowledge to bombard the pupils with relevant English terms and to explain what they need to know and to be able to do. A key strand in an outstanding lesson was her close questioning of the pupils and explicit explanation to show Year 5 pupils when to use 'whereas' and 'however'.
29. Most teachers follow the recommended formats for the literacy hour and the daily mathematics lesson. The initial class sessions are effective as the teachers plan and prepare well; the learning purpose of the lesson is usually displayed and also discussed, often with useful reference to how this builds on what the pupils already know. The teachers make good use of items such as individual whiteboards, enlarged texts and number cards to keep pupils' interest high and to focus on particular points and strategies. By seeding fraction cards among the Year 6 pupils and asking their help to construct a comparative chart, the teacher tested their growing knowledge of equivalence and also kept most fully occupied in checking each other's work.
30. Throughout the school the rate of pupils' learning and their achievement are very closely linked to the quality of the teaching. In all the lessons where the teaching was good, or better, the pupils showed a real interest in learning and all made marked progress. This was well exemplified in a physical education lesson for Year 2 pupils.

The teacher's high use of praise and encouragement inspired the pupils to improve their jumps and movements on the apparatus. Questions such as "How could he make his landings better?" encouraged the pupils to evaluate others' performance and also set higher expectations for the next part of the lesson. The lesson's brisk pace kept the pupils moving and much was achieved. Several pupils tried adventurous combinations of movements as a direct result of the teacher's smiles and gestures to encourage them to do so. An effective feature of this lesson and other similar hall based lessons given by teachers at both key stages was the clear explanation of what was expected - as pupils were getting changed in the classroom, the teacher outlined what they were to learn, what they needed to remember and what they were to do once they got to the hall. This focussed the pupils' attention and motivated them to get changed quickly.

31. In all classes, the good relationships between teacher and pupils and the teachers' good control of the pupils' behaviour typifies the teaching. Even in the unsatisfactory lessons, the pupils were left in no doubt as to how they were expected to behave. The teachers know the pupils well and know how to avoid confrontation. A small number of pupils, predominantly boys, are easily distracted and have a low work rate. The teachers use much praise but they also chivvy the pupils to keep them on task. In the most successful lessons, the teachers maintained the pupils' attention and interest more through pace and subject related aspects rather than through reminders and complaints. By using Bessie, a dog hand puppet, to hold up the wrong number and say "It's number ten next, isn't it?" the teacher grabbed and held the attention of her reception children. They were keen to help Bessie sequence numbers and to explain how they knew which number was in the wrong place.
32. The teachers have given time and thought to the organisation of their rooms to provide a highly supportive 'learning zone'. This is common throughout the school and pupils know that there is information on the walls to help them, such as steps in correcting their work. The teachers' use of the computer to print labels, captions and information provides a good model for the pupils but not one that they often have the opportunity to emulate as the classroom computer is used infrequently. In many classes, more especially at Key Stage 2, the pupils stay at their tables for the whole of the lesson. The teachers give the pupils little opportunity to take part in practical activities or allow the pupils to decide for themselves what to do, what they need and how to organise themselves. Teachers voice concern that pupils will get out of hand but staff in the nursery, reception classes and at Key Stage 1 manage and organise such activities very successfully.
33. A common weakness is the tendency of the teachers to tell the pupils rather than to use questions to draw out from them what they know. Too many teachers ask questions which merely require one word or short responses. When the pupils are asked to say more or to explain their thinking, gaps in their learning and in their ability to express themselves often become more apparent as in a Year 6 religious education lesson when pupils tried to explain what they knew about the Ten Commandments. The lack of critical questioning by the teacher also diminishes the quality and value of many plenary sessions. Too often these are times to share work rather than an explicit review of what has been learnt and what pupils need to remember from the lesson. The teachers miss chances to use information on display to remind pupils or to emphasise how their reading, writing, number and ICT skills are appropriate.
34. The work of the teaching support staff is very valuable. Classroom assistants, learning mentors and nursery nurses all play a vital role in supporting the pupils in the classroom and in raising their self-esteem. All have good relationships with the pupils

they support and their encouraging, unobtrusive manner gives pupils confidence particularly as they often notice and reward minor achievements. Their close presence in classrooms keeps the pupils' attention on what they are doing.

35. The special needs teacher and the support assistant provide sensitive, encouraging support to pupils when they are withdrawn from the classroom. The room used for group work is attractive and homely – the pupils can track their progress and see their work on display. When the work is geared to individual targets, the teaching is effective. The pupils enjoy the sessions and they work hard to please the adults. In class, the level of support is more variable. In literacy and mathematics lessons, pupils are grouped by attainment and the work is usually at an appropriate level of difficulty. In other subjects, the pupils are often expected to do exactly the same as the rest of the class and rely on adult support to do so. This means that the teacher often has little time to spend with others, especially the higher attaining pupils who sometimes find the task too easy. A lack of variety and challenge in the activity was a characteristic of the weaker teaching. Teachers are not consistently using what they know about each pupil to plan carefully the next step in learning.

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

36. The school provides a broad and reasonably balanced curriculum that has a number of strengths but also important areas for improvement. In the main, it meets statutory requirements, although aspects of ICT are not covered in sufficient depth at Key Stage 2. Overall, the quality and range of learning opportunities for the pupils are satisfactory. There is strength in the rich provision for children in the nursery. The key strength of the curriculum lies in the range of activities provided for pupils out of lesson time and in the steps that have been taken to meet the school's aim *"to provide stimulating and challenging learning experiences through a broad and balanced curriculum designed to meet the various needs and talents of all"*.
37. As a newly formed school operating within an EAZ, the key priority and focus of the curriculum is to raise pupils' attainment in English and mathematics. The successful adoption of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies is having a positive effect on standards. This has been balanced by providing good opportunities for pupils to experience physical education, dance and music as well as their statutory curriculum entitlement in the other subjects.
38. Underlying this provision is firstly, the school's central aim of raising the pupils' self-esteem through successful learning and secondly, the headteacher's conviction that sporting and creative success helps to improve pupils' attitudes to school and also their behaviour. This approach requires a multi-dimensional co-operative effort from the staff, pupils and parents, and the headteacher currently oversees this without the help of a deputy, a curriculum manager and a coordinator for mathematics. She has clear views about how the school will develop the curriculum further to meet the pupils' needs. A promising start has been made to deliver a curriculum that gives all the pupils rich opportunities to achieve their potential. There is still much development work ahead before the school meets its aims fully.
39. An example of this is the partial use of ICT across the curriculum. Although the computers are being used regularly in the ICT suite, there was little evidence during the inspection of the computers in classrooms being used to extend the curriculum particularly in supporting the pupils' literacy and numeracy learning. The biggest gaps are in control and modelling, and in data-handling and word processing.

40. An area of rich success in promoting pupils' personal development is the outstanding variety of after-school and lunchtime activities provided by the staff and support workers. Last term, 150 pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 took part regularly in clubs that include chess, sewing, Spanish and football. The programme is overseen very effectively by a coordinator who is expected by the headteacher and governors to mobilise and support an attractive programme of extended activities. The dedication and involvement of the staff who undertake these extra duties are impressive, and show their commitment to delivering the school's aims and to meeting the pupils' all-round needs. There are also additional classes for older pupils to improve their literacy and numeracy skills, and the school has adopted the Additional Literacy Strategy that focuses on particular aspects of phonic and other literacy skills. Older pupils have the opportunity of residential visits in Years 4, 5 and 6, covering a variety of life skills and outdoor pursuits. The growing use of visits to theatres, galleries and other places of interest widens the pupils' experiences. During the inspection, Year 6 pupils visited Quarry Bank Mill to carry out fieldwork in connection with their work in history and geography. Such trips also contribute to their cultural and social development.
41. The headteacher seizes every opportunity to supplement and extend the range of learning opportunities for pupils by using advisory workers from the EAZ, staff appointed through the Excellence in Cities initiative, from the Fischer Family Trust and other funding bodies as well as parents. Considerable support is given in the classroom by advisory teachers and this has improved the curriculum particularly in mathematics and music. It has also made the curriculum more accessible to pupils with special educational needs and extended the range of tasks for higher attaining pupils in literacy and numeracy. This is complemented by useful developments in dance and games from the paid involvement of coaches who work after school or at lunchtime. This has given high status to physical education and to the pupils' achievement as seen in the growing number of boys attending the dance sessions. Many of those who provide extra support are local people, most of them parents, who have attended specific training courses organised by the headteacher to enable them to take a full part in the school's development.
42. The quality of the curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall. The principles of learning through experience and play underlie the curriculum but the richness and balance of the nursery curriculum is not as strong for the children in the reception year. Themes such as 'The three bears' are used well to develop particular areas of knowledge and understanding in mathematics and literacy. Curriculum planning in the nursery is extremely effective as it draws out and develops connections between the six areas of learning that make up the Foundation Stage curriculum. Above all, the nursery staff recognise the importance of children's emotional response and ensure that their personal and social skills are fostered through carefully planned activities and especially through imaginative play. The nursery staff are very conscious of the differing needs of the children who have just started in the nursery and amend the curriculum accordingly. The current organisation and planning in the reception classes is closer to the Key Stage 1 timetable. The focus on subjects narrows the curriculum and breaks with the continuity and consistency of the nursery curriculum.
43. Further strengths in the curriculum at Key Stages 1 and 2 include the provision of support for pupils with special educational needs. Because a flexible approach is adopted, help is provided when and where it is most useful. For instance, the adult support for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties ensures that they remain in class. Skilled but low-key firm interventions from support assistants often prevent

minor difficulties escalating. Other pupils with learning difficulties receive effective one-to-one help in class and in withdrawal sessions from the special educational needs coordinator. The strong emphasis on developing pupils' literacy skills reflects their difficulties in reading and writing. Less is done to support those pupils who have not made the progress they should in mathematics. This applies particularly to Year 6 pupils who have not benefited from earlier coverage of some essential aspects of the work. Not all pupils who have been identified as having special educational needs have individual learning programmes. The lack of clearly defined targets and strategies weakens the support that can be offered, especially by support assistants.

44. The four pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need work alongside pupils of their own age and receive support according to their needs. It is indicative of the school's inclusive approach, that one pupil who recently acquired a statement for literacy needs has already made significant progress as a result of well targeted teaching whilst still being one of the class and taking full part in the curriculum.
45. The school is aware of weaknesses in the curriculum. Although pupils express a liking for reading, few show a love of books. This is not helped by the paucity of books for curriculum support and the poorly stocked library. In science, mathematics, art and design, history and religious education, there is insufficient discussion, investigation and exploration, particularly at Key Stage 2. This contrasts with the good emphasis on looking carefully at products and trying things out seen in design and technology.
46. A striking omission in the school's otherwise good provision for pupils' personal development is a drugs education policy and scheme of work. The headteacher and staff are highly aware of the social issues and pressures that face the pupils out of school and they place high priority on developing pupils' personal and social skills. Good progress has been made in developing school codes, procedures and practices that promote well the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have already developed a clear awareness of the values of the school and what is expected of them.
47. Visiting clergy lead school assemblies and daily collective worship contributes effectively to pupils' developing awareness of spiritual values. Through the attractive interior decoration of the school and the very attractive displays of pupils' work, the staff encourage pupils to reflect on and to appreciate the talents and work of others. The staff value each pupil as a member of the school community. The photographs of the 'Pupil of the Week', of the members of the school council and of teaching and non-teaching staff all help to build a strong school spirit. The high degree of care taken in displaying pupils' work promotes pupils' positive self-awareness and raises self-esteem. The school offers pupils opportunities to develop their awareness of self and recognition of creative achievement through dance, drama, music and art. School sporting achievements and special occasions, such as a visit from a group of Zulu dancers, are much valued particularly by many of the older boys.
48. The development of the pupils' moral code and values is good. Most classes have discussed and produced a set of rules to govern behaviour towards their classmates, staff, and to school and pupils' property. As a result pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong which is apparent in the good behaviour of the majority. Work done with Year 5 pupils related to zero tolerance of violence, introduced issues of fighting, bullying and care in the community. Pupils are helped to recognise and deal with their emotions in a positive way, to respect differences and to appreciate the hurt caused by teasing and 'name calling'. As part of their subject work, pupils consider moral issues. In geography, younger pupils have considered how to improve their environment.

49. The school expects the pupils to get on well together and actively encourages them to co-operate and to support one another. The good relationships between the adults in school are a positive influence in the social values of the pupils. As a result, the pupils show equal respect and affection for the teaching and support staff. The school's many out-of-class activities offer wide-ranging opportunities for pupils to pursue personal interests with others from different year groups. These and class sessions frequently require sharing, turn-taking and collaboration. Pupils are given responsibilities within school and class and it is made clear that these may be taken away if the pupils do not conduct themselves appropriately.
50. The provision for pupils to learn about their local culture and heritage is good. The pupils are frequently taken out into the local area. Performing groups such as puppeteers, musicians and dancers are welcomed into the school. Useful links with the nearby community through the local churches, businesses and Manchester City Football Club provide opportunities for pupils to meet others and benefit from their experiences. As yet little has been done to alert pupils to, and prepare them for the advantages and challenges of living in a multicultural society. Pupils learn about different faiths and religious customs but have little experience of different value systems. Some work has been done with older pupils to discuss sex stereotypes with posters such as 'Girls make great friends' prominently displayed.

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

51. As the parents commented, The Willows is "A happy, welcoming school" where all the staff show a high level of commitment, care and concern for the pupils. The school has good systems for the welfare of the pupils. There are major strengths in the outstanding provision to monitor and promote pupils' good behaviour and the high responsibility for this taken by lunchtime staff. Their work and the success of the systems are seen in the calmness of the school, the pupils' positive attitudes towards learning and their loyalty to the school and its staff.
52. In keeping with the school's aims, the headteacher sets high store in the school being a secure, safe and inviting place. Pupils have been consulted about the décor and school routines. Parents and pupils are proud of the bright, colourful environment with displays of the pupils' work. The teaching and non-teaching staff treat all pupils kindly with tact, humour and reassurance. The use of endearments such as 'sweetheart' and 'my love' are part of local dialect but also reinforce the good relationships and bonds between adults and pupils.
53. Procedures for child protection are generally satisfactory. The school complies with most of the requirements of the area child protection committee but training for the headteacher and other staff has lapsed. Not all agencies are always aware of those pupils in the care of the local authority. Attention to health and safety in school is good. A good initiative has been the installation of drinking water dispensers in classrooms to allow easy access. Most toilet facilities are good with some exceptions where improvements are planned. For parents and toddlers using the crèche there are inadequate toilet facilities. Assessments of risk and hazard in and around school have been made and appropriate follow-up action has improved security and safety for all.
54. Pupils' good attendance is encouraged and promoted through praise and rewards. Not enough is done to improve the poor attendance levels across the school. Monitoring of absence begins too late to reinforce the message that 'every lesson counts'. Not enough is done to promote punctuality.

55. The excellent ways and means for monitoring and promoting pupils' good behaviour are an outstanding testament to the fine work and co-operation of the entire school in establishing an orderly place. The focus on settling newcomers and raising self-esteem is highly successful and pupils now take a pride in their behaviour. They behave well most of the time because of the consistent way that adults praise them for good behaviour. Achievement is rewarded and celebrated. When pupils step out of line, the adults remind them of the choices they have. Most inappropriate behaviour stops with a warning which is always followed through consistently. The effectiveness of the system is reflected in the reduction in the number of 'red card' penalties awarded and the diminishing number of exclusions. Parents know about the straightforward coloured card behaviour system and most see it working well for their children. They fully realise the seriousness of being called in to see the headteacher but also share their children's pride when they are awarded 'child of the week' or 'child of the term'.
56. The strong team of lunchtime organisers deals fairly and consistently with pupils. They have been very well trained in behaviour management and in first aid. They take seriously their own motto of 'be where the children are'. Their close supervision results in pleasant lunchtimes for all, with effective care of pupils and good tracking of those pupils who need support to ensure they maintain self-control. The lunchtime organisers reinforce their role and authority by visiting school assemblies to distribute their own awards which are highly valued and sought after by pupils. There are very good procedures for eliminating oppressive behaviour, such as physical bullying and name calling. Parents comment that the headteacher deals quickly with such incidents and that sanctions are designed not to demean or frighten.
57. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are good. The teachers readily make themselves available to exchange information with parents. The records kept by nursery staff make it easy to check the progress of part-time and full-time children. From the time children enter the nursery to the end of the reception year, statutory requirements are met for assessing children's attainment and progress. Information from the precise and purposeful observations made by the nursery staff, and their evaluations of the children's responses, are used effectively to chart what each child can do and their progress in all six areas of learning. This is good practice very much in line with national guidance. All nursery staff use the information constantly to plan how best to group the children, to decide what should come next in their learning, to support and monitor those that need particular help and to provide a clear picture for parents. The system is only partially in place for the children in the reception classes.
58. When the school opened there were no detailed records available for pupils with special educational needs. A special needs register has been created from scratch and pupils' needs assessed, although there are still pupils to place on the register particularly at the stage of initial concern. One omission in the register is the recording of review dates and outcomes. All pupils at Stage 2 have individual learning programmes which are guiding work with support staff. Those at Stage 3 have yet to receive programmes being compiled by specialist staff from the local education authority.
59. Good progress has been made in developing school assessment procedures. No detailed records were passed on from the pupils' previous schools to indicate levels of attainment in all subjects. A straightforward system of regular testing has been introduced to track each pupil's attainment in mathematics and English, to set targets and to identify where curriculum changes are needed. A class tracking record is

similarly providing a useful check upon year group progress. The omission of science and ICT from this process is a weakness. The recording of pupils' on-going achievement is left to each teacher's professional judgement, and planning and assessment files show significant variation in quality. Where it is done well and there is accurate diagnosis of areas of difficulty for individual pupils or groups of pupils, the teaching is at its sharpest and most focussed.

60. The marking policy is clear but is not being closely followed in all classes. There is notable inconsistency in the use of comments to show pupils where they have performed well or what they need to do to improve.

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

61. Parents have positive views of the school, its staff, and what it provides for their children. The majority of those who responded to the questionnaire and attended the meeting with inspectors before the inspection agreed that they feel able to approach staff with their concerns or suggestions. Parents feel their children make good progress because they are expected to work hard and to behave well. Many praised the good induction procedures when their children started the nursery and school, which had helped to settle the children. Parents are very satisfied with the care their children receive and with the good quality teaching. They appreciate the improved quality of the accommodation and show a commitment to the school by recommending The Willows to others and by ensuring that their children wear the school colours and sweatshirt.
62. The school provides parents with information that is clear and well presented. The attractive prospectus and nursery booklet not only give needed information but also advise parents on how to help children adapt to school life. The school entrance area displays key information for parents such as details of clubs and events. The headteacher sets a very good example in meeting and greeting parents. Because of the welcome, many parents feel comfortable visiting classrooms each morning to read with their child.
63. A weakness lies in the gaps in written information and its frequency especially for those parents who find it difficult to visit the school. There is too little to tell parents about what their children are doing in school or how they might help them at home particularly in reading, writing and number work. Annual progress reports describe honestly and in much detail how pupils are doing and where they need to improve.
64. Links with parents about the identification and progress of pupils with special educational needs are sound. The school development plan includes action to create more effective ways of informing the parents about the support their children are receiving and ways to involve parents more.
65. A continuing spirited approach to winning parents' confidence is developing good links between the school and families. The school is using additional funding to provide courses for parents taught by external trainers. The courses in ICT, English, mathematics and science are to show parents how they can help their children at home. Parents taking these courses spoke in glowing terms of the positive impact they felt they could now make on their child's learning. Social events are organised by an ever-growing group of staff and parents who are forging ahead with new plans after recent successes. A number of parents provide valuable help in lessons and support teachers in practical activities. Most of the support and welfare staff have children at



the school and they talk in positive terms about how they feel valued for their work and how the school is gaining a good reputation in the community.

66. In the questionnaires returned, a significant number of parents expressed concern about homework provision. This was echoed in the meeting held for parents. Many feel the school is missing an opportunity to work more closely with them and establish a more regular pattern of homework in all classes. The team finds that parents are justified in their comments about inconsistency in the amount and type of homework given. The headteacher plans to provide parents with more information about topics taught in school and the homework routines.
67. A significant number of parents show a low level of interest in their children's education, although many parents support their children at home in hearing them read and finding out about topics. Most make good efforts to ensure their children attend school regularly and support them when there are school events. Parents' views have not been sought on aspects of pupils' personal development or what is taught but plans are in hand to consult parents on a home-school agreement.

### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

68. The overall quality of leadership and management is good. The very good leadership of the headteacher far outweighs weaknesses in the roles of the governors and subject coordinators.
69. The headteacher is the powerhouse of the school and her feisty, positive approach sets the pace and tone for others. She is a highly effective trailblazer and very skilled in enabling others to achieve her and their ideas. Central to this is her wish for the school to offer the best for the pupils. She expects and exerts high standards and has worked extremely hard in the face of many difficulties to establish The Willows as a community school to which parents want to send their children. Her success can be measured in the high level of confident optimism in the school, in the praise, support and loyalty voiced by parents, staff and pupils but most particularly, in the growing number of pupils who are joining the school.
70. Much has been achieved in the four terms since the school opened. Academic standards are low but rising as the headteacher, teaching and support staff have been highly successful in establishing a calm, orderly and purposeful atmosphere where pupils want to learn. Although The Willows has not shaken off the past completely, it is well on its way to meeting its aims. The school already lives up to its motto of being "*A caring community, achieving and celebrating success*". This has been won as a result of considerable effort, very effective team work and the clear vision of the headteacher.
71. As the building work and refurbishment were not complete when the school opened, the headteacher spent much of her time dealing with site issues, not least the safety of the pupils. Photographic and anecdotal evidence indicate the high degree of disruption and upheaval caused by the building work at a time when the headteacher was trying to build a management team, to establish effective, efficient organisational procedures and set up curriculum guidelines. This was aggravated by the fact that there were a high number of disaffected pupils, especially in Year 6, who initially behaved in an unacceptable manner. Minutes of meetings and parents' comments also stress the high level of initial hostility towards the headteacher from parents and the local community. In the face of such problems, the go-getting qualities, and the tenacity and resolve of the headteacher have been crucial factors in not only making things happen

but also in ensuring that the school has benefited from national and local projects and funding.

72. The headteacher rightly identified the highest priority as the need to set up effective systems to manage the pupils' behaviour and to develop a positive ethos for learning. The strategies for this have been and continue to be excellent. The headteacher takes the lead in her firm but fair dealings with pupils. All members of staff know exactly what is expected of them and the headteacher provides good moral support. An outstanding achievement is the way that the headteacher has supported and encouraged the ideas of the lunchtime organisers who have, as a result, assumed high responsibility for their work. Their effectiveness plays a major part in the smooth running of the school and the maintenance of pupils' positive attitudes.
73. The teachers have followed the headteacher's lead in developing the classrooms as learning zones – the information on the walls reminds pupils of what they need to know while the corridors and public areas in school act as galleries to display and celebrate pupils' work. The headteacher has made very good use of the skills, expertise and flair of individuals in mounting displays to set a high standard.
74. The governing body works closely with the headteacher in determining the way forward. While many governors are new and inexperienced and look to the chair of governors and headteacher for information, all are highly supportive and are beginning to adopt a more critical stance. The good working relationship and pooled expertise of the chair and headteacher have been key assets in dealing with organisational and strategic matters. The governors have agreed that the school should operate without a deputy headteacher for this term. The previous deputy headteacher contributed much to the development of ways to promote pupils' personal and social skills. The governors now rightly intend to appoint an experienced manager to support the headteacher in taking the school forward, especially in lifting standards and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning.
75. Strategic and financial planning are good. A weakness is that the school development plan does not reflect fully the extent of what is being done nor provides a clear enough framework to enable the governors to track progress and evaluate critically the effectiveness of action taken. The plan is a collection of individual action plans rather than a coherent indication of how priorities are to be met in the short and long term. Subject coordinators are following their own action plans but few have targets directly related to improving progress and standards. Many are focussing on organisational issues rather than leading subject improvement.
76. The headteacher and governors have actively sought and welcomed support from outside agencies to supplement the school's own resources. As a result, all members of staff have benefited from training from subject specialists and consultants, particularly in physical education and numeracy. Various funded projects, such as courses for parents and learning mentors, have also been set up. The result is "Too many balls in the air at the same time". While much is contributing significantly to improving overall quality of provision, it is less easy to assess the value and impact in raising pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science.
77. The school receives well above the average funding per pupil from the school's budget allocation and extra resources from its involvement in the EAZ and the Excellence in Cities initiative. The chair of governors, who also chairs the finance committee, is very knowledgeable about financial systems and regularly checks the ongoing budget position. He and the headteacher are monitoring the school's performance and

beginning to take a more medium term strategic view of how the school should develop, and how the available funds are best deployed. Because the school's funding comes from a variety of sources, the administrator is required to work with different financial management systems. She does this competently and keeps accurate records of funds received but there is no system to credit monies against specific requests.

78. The school is beginning to seek the best value it can from all funding and initiatives. It compares Key Stage 1 and 2 test results with those of national and similar schools and sets revised targets for improvement, drawing on internal test and assessment information about the pupils' achievements. Some evaluation strategies are still at an early stage of development. The school consults its parents and community through governing body meetings, specific meetings about initiatives such as literacy and numeracy, and asks its pupils through the school council. All major spending decisions are discussed in detail to ensure that they meet the school's priorities.
79. Staffing shows a good blend of age, experience and expertise. Teachers new to the school receive much support from others and newly qualified teachers benefit from the advice and guidance of more experienced mentors. The good number of support assistants makes a significant contribution to the progress of pupils with special educational needs, those children in the nursery and reception classes and also those who have specific emotional and behavioural difficulties. The programme of staff training is extensive but arrangements have still to be agreed for the implementation of performance management appraisals.
80. The quality of the accommodation is good. The school occupies a large site with a range of garden, playground and field areas. A particularly attractive feature is the décor of the corridors with carpets designed by the pupils. The patterns and inset games, such as snakes and ladders, the mottos and emblems give the school a distinctive air. The new entrance area gives a focal point for the school which is split into three zones by corridors and steps. Small rooms are used well to provide subject storerooms, special needs classroom, lunchtime organisers' room, parents' room and crèche.
81. The large nursery is well appointed and the secure outdoor area is also accessible to the reception classes. The nursery is a long way from these two classes and the long, cold corridor joining them does not allow close working of staff and pupils in the Foundation Stage or the easy sharing of resources. This restricts the work and influence of the Foundation Stage coordinator in developing a cohesive team and common practice. The very effective management of the nursery is not as evident in the links with the reception classes and the overall provision.
82. The upstairs classrooms are cramped for Year 5 and 6 pupils and are some distance from the computer suite and the school library. There is a very small collection of library reference books that do not use the Dewey system. This very limited stock of resources also typifies many subjects. The school inherited few quality resources from the school that occupied the site previously, and is trying to build up a stock of teaching and learning equipment as well as books and ICT software. The gaps in resources affect particularly pupils' progress in geography, art and design, design and technology and religious education.
83. Given its large size and awkward layout, the school runs very smoothly day-to-day. Administrative systems and procedures are effective and the conscientious work of the support staff adds much to the overall efficiency and sense of purpose in the

school. All know their role and are working together for the good of the pupils. The headteacher's frequent visits to all classes and interest in what the pupils are doing ensures she knows every pupil and has her finger on the pulse.

84. The management of special educational needs is sound and is a developing strength. The newly appointed coordinator has made a good start since taking up the role in January 2001. An incisive action plan identifies all relevant key areas for development, and progress has already been made in providing individual plans for all pupils at Stage 2 on the special needs register. Funds are correctly spent and resources are being bought.
85. Given the above average funding, the below average standards but the good quality of education, and the high level of effective care and welfare, the school gives sound value for money. The nursery gives good value for money. The school gives good value for money for the extra funds received for specific purposes through the EAZ, the standards fund and the Excellence in Cities initiative.

### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

86. In order to strengthen the programme of school improvement, the governors, headteacher and staff should:
- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science to at least that of similar schools and ultimately to meet the national targets in English and mathematics by setting progressive, realistic targets and by ensuring that pupils are taught explicitly what they need to know and do in order to improve their performance.  
(paragraphs 3, 5, 7, 8, 25, 33, 107, 114,119, 122, 131, 132, 137)
  - Raise standards in ICT by ensuring that all pupils gain systematic and regular practice in all the aspects required in the National Curriculum Programmes of Study for ICT.  
(paragraphs 10, 33, 36, 39, 114, 126, 164-170)
  - Raise standards at Key Stage 2 in music and also in religious education by implementing fully curriculum guidance especially that in the Manchester Agreed Syllabus for religious education.  
(paragraphs 12, 45, 82, 171-174, 180-183)
  - Take urgent action to raise pupils' level of attendance and punctuality by developing systems and procedures to follow up absence and by making parents aware of the effects of lateness and absence on their child's progress.  
(paragraphs 20, 54)
  - Ensure that the governing body and key staff in compiling action plans:
    - a) state clearly the action needed to ensure higher quality of teaching and learning and thus accelerate pupils' progress and promote higher achievement for all pupils across the curriculum.
    - b) show how the school will harness all the resources at its disposal to achieve these ends
    - c) provide better and more regular information to parents on how they can work more closely with the school to support their child's learning.  
(paragraphs 63, 75-78)

The governors should also give attention to the following minor issues:

- the inclusion of a drugs awareness programme in the curriculum; (paragraph 46)
- the provision of training for all staff on child protection issues; (paragraph 53)
- the lack of resources especially a Dewey referenced library. (paragraphs 82, 112)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	89
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	52

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	12	33	47	5	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)	60	339
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	223

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR - Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	102

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	54
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	33

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.1
National comparative data	5.2

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.5
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	26	24

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	16	15	22
	Girls	19	19	21
	Total	35	34	43
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	70 (n/a)	68 (n/a)	86 (n/a)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	16	21	15
	Girls	19	20	17
	Total	35	41	32
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	70 (n/a)	82 (n/a)	64 (n/a)
	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	26	31

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	9	5	9
	Girls	21	11	15
	Total	30	16	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	53 (n/a)	28 (n/a)	42 (n/a)
	National	75 (70)	72 (68)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	10	11	11
	Girls	23	21	19
	Total	33	32	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	58 (n/a)	56 (n/a)	53 (n/a)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	80 (79)

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

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

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	302
Any other minority ethnic group	11

*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	5	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	15.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.3
Average class size	26.5

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

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	175

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	52

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	75

Number of pupils per FTE adult	22
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	489,505
Total expenditure	398,117
Expenditure per pupil	978
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	91,388



## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	406
Number of questionnaires returned	84

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	63	29	4	0	5
My child is making good progress in school.	58	36	2	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	46	38	7	2	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	36	35	25	2	2
The teaching is good.	55	39	2	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	46	39	7	5	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	70	25	0	1	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	69	27	1	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	46	37	13	1	2
The school is well led and managed.	52	37	1	1	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	49	45	1	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	58	35	2	1	4

## **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**

87. The 60-place nursery is the strength of the provision. It copes very effectively with full-time and part-time children in the mornings and afternoons. Those full-time children who are soon to move into the reception year come together as a group and the nursery teacher expects them to be more actively involved in planning their own learning. Older children move from the nursery into the reception class in September. In January others either join this class or form a second one. The coordinator takes care that children are placed in the class or group most likely to match their individual needs.
88. Children enter the nursery with skills and understanding well below those of children of the same age nationally. As a direct result of the consistently good quality of the teaching and the stimulating, carefully planned nursery provision, the children make good progress in all areas of learning, but most especially in their personal, social and emotional development and in their delight and response to stories. Even so when they move into the reception class, the understanding and skills of many are still below those of a similar age in all areas of learning.
89. Although the nursery and reception classes work to the same theme, the provision in the reception classes does not reflect the unified and exciting vision in the nursery. The two reception class teachers have not yet built on the strengths of the very effective integrated nursery pattern. Although there are examples of lively teaching in the reception classes and children make good progress in music and mathematics, inspection evidence indicates that the quality of teaching is not as high as in the nursery. Given current progress, many of the children are unlikely to achieve the levels expected nationally by the time they leave the reception class.

### **Personal, social and emotional development**

90. By the end of the reception year most of the children will have achieved the early learning goals in this area of learning. They have already made good strides when they leave the nursery. The children feel secure and confident in the nursery, even though this is a huge room, as there are so many well-organised activities in nooks and crannies to grab and hold the children's attention. The daily routine of planning what to do often involves parents in helping their child to record their choices. The children learn to follow simple rules such as wearing a band when playing with the wooden blocks, and how to behave when in a group. Although many play on their own, the activities draw them into co-operative play. All the children listen carefully to the adults, seldom need to be reminded about wearing aprons and treat all the resources with great care.
91. All the adults working in the nursery, including the lunchtime organisers, provide very good roles models for the children. They listen to and respect what the children have to say. Good relationships and trust are established and carried over successfully into the reception classes.
92. In the reception classes the children are happy, often lively and at times a little noisy or reluctant to stop and listen. The good rate of progress seen in the nursery slows in some aspects of this area of learning. To a considerable degree this stems from weaknesses in the teachers' knowledge about how young children learn and also from

inexperience. For example, a general direction to clear up in 'The Three Bears' House', with no stated ground-rules, proved too demanding for the children who either ignored the request or were at cross purposes. At other times activities lack challenge or the teacher misses an opportunity to take the children's learning in a new direction, or there is little opportunity for the children to plan and organise their own activities.

### **Communication, language and literature**

93. The quality of provision and teaching is very good in the nursery. The children make good progress as the adults often spend time with the children encouraging them to write and to look at books. The teacher's animated storytelling with gestures to reinforce 'over', 'under' and 'through' not only drew all children into telling the story of 'We're going on a bear hunt' but also ensured the children knew the meaning of each preposition. Although there are good elements in the reception classes, flair, skill and consistency are less evident. Progress is not sustained at the same rate. Inspection evidence indicates that by the end of the reception year, a significant number of children will still have some way to go to achieve a number of the early learning goals.
94. Many of the children speak indistinctly and find it difficult to elaborate on a one or two word phrase. They gain in confidence from being with the adults who consistently encourage them to chat. The children develop good listening skills in the nursery as the adults speak quietly and the atmosphere is calm and purposeful.
95. The nursery is a story-rich environment and the children are immediately captivated. Younger children used different voices and expressions as they pretended to be father or mother bear in 'Goldilocks and the three bears'. The enjoyment of story carries over into the reception classes, but as the teachers are not as skilful in teasing out ideas and views, the children make only satisfactory progress. A small number of children are beginning to try to read the text in simple books but very few are yet able to use their growing recognition of letters and sounds to help them read words correctly. In the nursery the children copy the adults in writing names, lists and messages. They develop a positive attitude to writing and in the reception classes, the children are as keen to "write" letters and fill envelopes. While many write over or copy their teacher's writing, a few are beginning to spell simple words like 'Mum' without help.

### **Mathematical development**

96. This area of learning is well taught in the nursery and the children make good progress often from a very low level of number awareness. The nursery provides a wealth of practical situations in which the children see, hear and use numbers. They count, join in number rhymes, explore shape and colour and sort and classify by size as part of everyday activities and routines. This reflects the good quality of the teacher's knowledge and understanding, particularly in how the children's awareness of number or size can be extended through play and simple problems. Older nursery children learnt much as the teacher challenged them to put a particular bear in a stated place, using comparative terms such as 'big and small', 'over and under'.
97. By the end of the reception year, many children will achieve the Early Learning Goals. The children recognise and count numbers to ten and some higher than this. They know which number comes next and many succeed in identifying missing numbers. Their knowledge of shapes and their understanding of pattern develop well but is not always taken far enough when they explore pattern in printing and threading beads. While many managed a two colour pattern and were ready for a new challenge, others needed support in finishing the task.

## **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

98. At the end of the reception year, some children will have achieved the Early Learning Goals but a large number will still be working towards many of them.
99. The nursery children are easily drawn into the rich, exciting experiences that encourage them to look, investigate and enquire. Huge blocks of ice fascinated them. They bashed them and looked at them with a magnifying glass and then watched to see what happened when they were tipped into the water in the water trough. The children are learning through trial and error how to use the computer mouse. Many have produced bright designs by using the mouse to direct the screen pen. All the children benefit from regular use of the construction materials and big wooden blocks and develop good imaginative structures. One boy having made a boat out of wooden blocks announced: "This is a boat. It's got to China" reflecting the focus on Chinese New Year which came vividly alive as the children chased red dragons and tried to eat apple pieces with chopsticks.
100. The good progress made in the nursery is not sustained in the reception. Many of the activities lack the spark, the originality and the appropriateness seen in the nursery. The staff are not so aware of how to build on the child's interest. Their questions do not extend the learning enough. Thus the children sometimes play in an aimless way. Boys were more interested in drinking the water than exploring what to do with a jug and a bottle.

## **Physical development**

101. A strength of the provision is the shared planning of the outdoor activities for the children. The greater skill of the nursery staff however, engages the children more in thinking about what they are doing. In physical education lessons, reception children learn particular skills such as skipping and throwing balls to one another. By the end of the reception year, most children have achieved and exceeded the standard expected for their age although a small number show difficulties in manipulating pens, scissors and other tools.
102. The children have daily access to a large, enclosed outdoor area where the hard surface that runs round the edge makes a good track for bikes and other wheeled toys. When the staff provided road signs, a zebra crossing and traffic lights, the children showed developing skill in varying their speed, stopping, steering and manoeuvring. The outdoor play is a good outlet for several children, more often boys, to let off steam in vigorous activity. They also develop an awareness of others' needs and wants and they learn to play and work together. The children responded positively to the challenge to find ways to move over and through a combination of steps and boxes and climbed, stepped, crouched and curled to do it.

## **Creative development**

103. By the end of the reception year, many of the children will achieve most of the early learning goals. The quality of the provision in the nursery is good but the reception teachers do not provide a similar range of activities. The children's progress slows as a consequence. Activities such as painting are not constantly available and imaginative role play areas are not as exciting and challenging as in the nursery. All the children enjoy sessions singing and making music and there is some good music teaching in the reception year.

104. In one very effective session, older nursery children explored how the colour blue darkened or lightened as more black or white paint was added. The adult's constant repetition of 'black, white, blue' helped the children to focus on what they were doing and also skilfully drew them in to chatter about "What will happen if we...?" They added their own paint and chatted to each other excitedly as they made their discoveries. Best of all they mixed the powder paint with their fingers adding a little water until they had a mixture with which they could make hand-prints.
105. The nursery children play well in the 'The Three Bears' House' which is large and well equipped with three of everything in relevant sizes so that the children are immediately encouraged to relate what they do to the story they know. Many used different voices to represent the characters and collaborated together to relive the events.
106. The older reception children really enjoy their music sessions. They got their voices working by going from low to high notes and then enjoyed repeating a familiar phrase, 'quietly', 'loudly', 'fast' or 'slowly' before successfully combining two.

## ENGLISH

107. Standards are low at the end of Key Stage 1 and very low at the end of Key Stage 2. The attainment of boys is below that of girls with the gap widening at Key Stage 2. With a few exceptions, the girls do better than the boys in lessons, and in their independent reading and writing. The girls mostly pay more attention to spelling, to creating paragraphs and to punctuating sentences correctly, although higher attaining boys have lively ideas and vocabulary. Although pupils are learning well in some classes, the pace of progress overall is not fast enough to lift standards sufficiently to meet the target of 70 per cent of Year 6 pupils attaining Level 4 in the 2001 national tests.
108. Having analysed its results in last year's national tests, the school is working with some success to address weaknesses in reading and writing. Focussed teaching and an emphasis on spelling, handwriting and use of correct punctuation are having a positive effect on pupils' attainment in lessons.
109. Given many pupils' low attainment in language on entry to the nursery, they make at least satisfactory progress in all aspects of English during their time in school. Because of the good teaching, many make good progress in the nursery and at Key Stage 1, more especially in Year 2 classes, particularly in speaking and listening and reading. Progress is satisfactory at Key Stage 2 overall. The good progress made in Year 4 and in one class in Year 5 is not yet influencing attainment and progress at Year 6 but indicates that standards are rising and will be seen in national test results in future years.
110. Standards in speaking and listening are close to those expected at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. All pupils listen carefully to teachers and to each other and make good progress speaking and listening. Year 6 pupils listened to Walter de la Mare's poem 'The Listeners' with rapt attention. Speaking skills develop steadily, and Year 6 pupils spoke compassionately of the feelings of others in role-play about the London blitz, superbly led by a visiting drama teacher. Most pupils have a limited range of vocabulary but the concerted move by all teachers to challenge pupils to explain their thinking, for example in mathematics and history as well as in English, is having a beneficial effect.

111. Standards in reading are low. Pupils make good progress in most aspects of reading at Key Stage 1. By the end of Year 2, most have reached a satisfactory level and read fluently. In lessons seen, the majority of pupils engaged with the book and read along with the teacher. For instance, Year 1 pupils thoroughly enjoyed joining in the refrain of 'There is no such thing as a Gruffalo!' The majority of Year 2 pupils read aloud accurately, and show confidence in tackling new words – they have benefited from systematic teaching that reinforces their skill in sounding out and blending words. Few pupils confidently use clues within the story. Although Year 1 pupils correctly predicted with great glee the masked words in 'The Little Red Hen' by using the pictures and reading ahead, few use the same strategies when reading on their own. This is why so few pupils do well and why too many fail to reach the standard expected for their age.
112. By the end of Year 6 most pupils read stories fluently and accurately but are less skilled in reading information texts. Key Stage 2 pupils make satisfactory progress but many are starting from a low level. Many Year 3 and 4 pupils still tend to read word for word, rather than for overall meaning and comprehension. Year 4 pupils are being coaxed and challenged into reading, interpreting and appreciating text. In one very good lesson, they were helped to identify 'quality writing' in Ted Hughes' work 'The Iron Man'. The teacher's use of drama and close attention to words and phrases ensured pupils made good progress in realising how Hughes had crafted his writing on the re-assembling of the Iron Man's arm. However, the effect of such good teaching and learning is lessened by the pupils' disinclination to read widely, or to read out of school. Recent purchases of good quality up-to-date books to read in class and at home are helping but the development of a real love of reading is severely hampered by the shortage of quality literature and Dewey referenced information books in the school library. Pupils skills in finding information are limited and even the most able readers in Year 6 know little about authors. They have read 'Harry Potter' and Jacqueline Smith's books but often prefer to re-read known stories. This helps to explain pupils' poorly developed skills in inferring and deducing information. Pupils with special educational needs have weak reading skills and often rely heavily on additional adult support to help them cope in lessons.
113. Standards in writing are poor at the end of Key Stage 2, and below the national average at Key Stage 1. Progress varies across year groups and classes, reflecting the teachers' own knowledge and skill in teaching writing.
114. Focussed teaching in the daily literacy hour has improved all pupils' knowledge of a range of writing types and their structures. Year 5 pupils wrote convincingly in their "Reading at home advice leaflet". The leaflets were sympathetically directed at younger pupils through phrases such as, 'choose books that suit you right' and 'don't be tempted to watch TV as you read'. At both key stages, pupils' instructional writing is better than story writing. Year 6 pupils extended instructions and explanations for making musical instruments, Year 4 pupils' crisp instructions for making a Moon Buggy show good development from the simple sets of instructions for a recipe of Year 1 and 2 pupils. A general weakness is pupils' inability to sustain a well-connected piece of narrative. At Key Stage 1, most pupils only manage five or six lines of connected narrative and only the most able writers regularly join sentences or use descriptive words and phrases. Year 6 pupils included imaginative ideas in a piece of writing about an air crash rescue, but such writing is rare. Pupils' ability to plan, draft and edit is at a simple level at both key stages, and few have well developed skills in word processing and desk top publishing.

115. Low standards in spelling, punctuation and handwriting lower the quality of most pupils' work, despite good progress in many lessons. At Key Stage 1, good teaching is helping Year 2 pupils to write accurate, simple sentences and to learn spelling patterns but this is still weak. Handwriting is also below the expected standard. By the end of Key Stage 2, even the more able pupils make errors in punctuation and spelling. Although pupils learn to use paragraphs and to create complex sentences, this is not regularly carried through into the pupils' own writing. In spite of good in-class support for pupils with special educational needs, their writing skills are still very limited at Year 6.
116. The quality of teaching is good at Key Stage 1. At Key Stage 2, the teaching is sound overall but varies from excellent to just satisfactory. The lack of consistency weakens pupils' progress.
117. At both key stages, the teachers provide well-structured literacy hours. They share the purpose of the lesson with the pupils and return to it at the end. This plenary phase is usually used effectively to consolidate and review pupils' learning but rarely to reflect and evaluate. Teachers question pupils to sustain their involvement, and often build successfully upon a reply to prompt other ideas. In a lesson for Year 2 pupils, the teacher picked out the word 'nice' from a pupil's answer and drew out from the class a list of other suitable words. In the best lessons, every minute is made to count. In an excellent session for Year 5 pupils, they learned about opposing connectives, practiced using them, read a fable and speculated about its similarities and differences to other fables from different countries, and completed short, well- focussed and high quality writing tasks – all within the space of 40 minutes.
118. Support staff are well briefed and work effectively with the teachers. In many classrooms, they remain active throughout the lesson, quietly but effectively prompting and guiding pupils with special educational needs in the whole class phases of the lesson, and giving well-focussed support during the independent tasks. This often leads to good progress and enthusiasm for learning. Year 3 pupils worked conscientiously to find initial sounds because of the prompting and praise from the classroom assistant.
119. One reason why standards are not rising more sharply is the absence of practice tasks to build on the good levels of learning in the whole class phases. Homework is not being used well enough to enrich and extend class work. There are gaps in the teachers' subject knowledge of how to teach reading and writing. Few teachers show pupils in detail 'how a writer does it'. Similarly, the use of individual copies of book excerpts makes it harder for the teacher to show elements of text.
120. Procedures are satisfactory for assessing and tracking pupils' progress in English, especially from year to year. Test results are carefully analysed by the coordinator to identify areas of weakness. A strength is the setting of class, group and individual targets that are posted on the classroom walls. This strategy is successfully raising pupils' aspirations. The teachers keep reading records but do not use the information well enough to link their teaching to the pupils' weaknesses.
121. The subject is well managed by two coordinators. The lead coordinator has excellent subject knowledge, is forward-looking and extremely open to new ideas and initiatives. She takes the role seriously and does all that she can to promote good quality teaching. She has spent considerable time in training new staff about the National Literacy Strategy, and intends now to monitor teaching through classroom observation.

## **MATHEMATICS**

122. Attainment is below average towards the end of both key stages but shows good improvement compared with the low national test results last year. The improved quality of teaching, higher expectations by teachers of the pupils' progress, and the effective use of support and advisory staff have all led to significant improvements throughout the school in pupils' achievements.
123. Pupils in Years 1, 3, 4 and 5 show in their increasing depth of understanding that the concentration on raising standards is bearing fruit. The teachers comment that they are more confident and better able this year to work to the framework of the National Numeracy Strategy. The headteacher is leading the subject as the school is in the process of recruiting an experienced mathematics coordinator to lead the further development of the subject.
124. An important contribution is being made through the support provided by the EAZ and the local education authority. The school is using the high quality training and support from numeracy consultants to plan lessons more effectively. This is leading to rapid improvements in the pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding, especially in number, and to their increased enjoyment of the subject. This also aids their concentration, their attention and their behaviour, which were good during the inspection. Boys and girls are equally challenged to learn, and pupils of differing prior attainment are also given work that takes them on effectively to new levels of understanding. This is because the teachers' lesson planning is effective and there is good support to pupils in lessons. Nevertheless, few pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 are doing better than expected for their age.
125. At both key stages, pupils are making sound progress in learning to use number and procedures to solve number problems. By Year 2, pupils work with numbers up to 100, and learn by heart addition and subtraction facts up to ten. They develop a range of strategies to add and subtract numbers up to and beyond 20, and more able pupils successfully work out in their heads, for example, how many more 28 is than 23. Most pupils measure accurately up to 30 centimetres, and tell the time on analogue and digital clocks to the nearest quarter hour. They present their work neatly, including tables and charts. Lower attaining pupils are well supported by teachers and support staff to explain and clarify their answers.
126. By the age of 11, many have developed good understanding of place value into millions and are beginning to understand the equivalence of fractions, decimals, and percentages. For example, they know that  $\frac{82}{100}$  is the same as 0.82 and 82 per cent. Higher attainers use the language of mathematics successfully to explain clearly the meaning of numerator, denominator, and mixed fractions. However, many pupils become confused in comparing different fractions and in reducing them to their lowest form because a significant minority of them do not have secure knowledge of their multiplication tables. They are also less secure in explaining probability. They increase their knowledge of geometric shapes, and design nets for common solid shapes accurately. However, there is little evidence of their use of ICT to support their work, although they use calculators accurately. As at Key Stage 1, many pupils benefit from, and in some cases rely on, close adult support in order to explain and clarify their thinking, particularly in Year 6.
127. The quality of teaching and learning is good but varies across the school from sound to outstanding. The teachers follow the National Numeracy Strategy closely and use its different elements well. All are using the initial part of the daily lesson to rehearse number skills. Occasionally this session lasts too long, and a few pupils become



restless. In the very good or excellent lessons, the pace of learning is rapid because the teachers and support staff urge the pupils to get on with their work after having provided them with the strategies, techniques and practice they need. In a very good lesson for Year 2 pupils, the teacher used number charts and whiteboards to focus their attention on the steps in solving number problems such as  $18 + \dots = 29$ . The pupils were then confident to follow the process in solving and recording addition and subtraction problems. The teacher's extension of the activity for the higher attaining pupils led them to see how they could add on ten first.

128. In a lesson for Year 5 pupils, the teacher's lively enthusiasm and fast pace inspired the pupils to take an interested and active part in a whole class oral session. Her use of correct mathematical terms promoted the pupils' similar use in their answers and she insisted that they explain the meaning of terms. The tasks reinforced and extended the pupils' thinking and learning superbly. Very good support from the teacher and a learning support assistant ensured that all pupils made outstanding progress in their understanding of number factors and multiples.
129. The school's investment in extra support staff, funded by the EAZ and Excellence in Cities project, is paying rich dividends in the development of pupils' reasoning and explanations. This is because the close adult attention gives all pupils practice in thinking about the mental strategies they use. However, there is insufficient use of structured apparatus and games to support pupils in basic number or for older pupils working with fractions and percentages. Very good use is made throughout the school of small whiteboards to record each pupil's response during class and group sessions, but on only one occasion during the inspection was ICT used specifically to develop pupils' skills even though suitable programs are available such as that that allowed Year 1 pupils to compare hand drawn and computer generated block graphs.
130. Teachers are charting pupils' progress through regular tests. Target-setting is being developed and some of the older pupils know what they need to do to attain higher levels. A good common feature of the teaching is that staff share the purpose of the lesson with the pupils and usually return to it in the whole-class summary. Teachers' marking is generally up-to-date, and in the best examples it explores and extends the pupils' thinking and problem-solving ability. The layout of classrooms at Key Stage 1 supports whole class, group and individual work well but the organisation of most of the classrooms at Key Stage 2 gives insufficient opportunity for pupils to choose their own equipment or to use the classroom computers to support and extend their work. A striking feature of all the classrooms is the display of mathematical vocabulary and key facts that act as good reference and support for pupils.
131. The school is recovering from a difficult start in the management and development of the subject. Advice and support from external consultants are now well marshalled and are leading to clear improvements across the school in pupils' achievements. The target for 70 per cent Level 4 attainment in the Key Stage 2 national tests this year is very demanding but inspection evidence from the work in Year 5 indicates that this may be achievable in 2002 with continued high quality of teaching.

## SCIENCE

132. Standards are below average at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. There has been an improvement since the poor results in the 2000 national tests and more pupils are attaining or are close to the level expected for their age. At Key Stage 2, the legacy of gaps in pupils' scientific knowledge and particularly in their skills limits their attainment.

133. The school's detailed analysis of the pupils' test results identified weaknesses in particular topics and pupils' lack of skill in answering questions that asked them to give reasons and explanations. It also revealed that many pupils did not complete the whole paper. This has prompted the school to use published materials to help prepare Year 5 and 6 pupils for style and language of the test papers. The teachers are all following the science guidelines published by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. The common approach to planning lessons is ensuring that more time is being given to practical work and teachers are focussing on key scientific vocabulary and concepts. The effectiveness of these measures is seen in the pupils' interest in science and growing attainment.
134. Pupils' learning overall is satisfactory at both key stages in lessons. Over time pupils make good progress in sorting and classifying using many and varied criteria, such as the properties of different materials. Another developing strength is their grasp of scientific terminology which is a direct result of current teaching. Pupils are making slower progress in their ability to carry out their own investigations as they are more used to following the teachers' instructions. Only higher attaining Year 6 pupils were able to suggest and devise a fair test. Many found it hard to realise the number of factors to consider. This also reflects slower progress in understanding and applying concepts and principles to new situations. Few Year 5 pupils knew about sunrise and sunset or that the earth rotates once in a day. This lack of often general knowledge impedes their overall progress.
135. In some lessons, pupils did not achieve as well as they might as the teachers expected all the pupils to do the same, sometimes without any practical work. This often deflates pupils' interest. Year 6 pupils commented: "We don't mind writing up experiments but we don't want to copy up lots of writing."
136. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. In the one unsatisfactory lesson seen, pupils made too little progress as they were given an undemanding colouring and labelling task. Year 1 pupils made very good progress in exploring the concept of push and pull as forces by experimenting with a wide range of toys and items. The teacher's questions and comments such as "I wonder why it has done that" ensured that the pupils tried different things and talked about what they observed. Similar effective teaching also characterised a lesson for Year 4 pupils. The teacher, having realised the difficulties pupils had in the previous lesson, discussed changes of state from solid to liquid to gas by using a lighted candle. She then guided the pupils in applying their new knowledge from observing the candle to what they had seen when investigating the best conditions to store chocolate. Her carefully worded questions resulted in the pupils thinking more deeply, making relevant links and using appropriate scientific vocabulary neatly shown in one pupils' additional explanation of what happens to metal in a furnace.
137. The school lacks a coherent assessment system to record pupils' knowledge and the development of their investigative skills. This partly accounts for the limited provision of activities to challenge the higher attaining pupils. The splitting of curriculum time into one long and one short session is not wholly effective. A scrutiny of pupils' written work revealed much was not finished and the quantity of work was often low.
138. The management of science is sound. The coordinator has done much to widen the scope of science. A club with a high emphasis on practical activities was run to try to rekindle older pupils' interest, especially that of the boys. She has run a parents' science workshop to help them in supporting pupils at home and at school, and intends the school to enter a local Science Fair in the summer term. This will add to

the series of practical investigations devised for Year 6 pupils to complete after the national tests.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

139. In those aspects of art covered so far this year, pupils' attainment towards the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 is broadly average.
140. Pupils are making satisfactory progress in using pencil and pastel to draw and colour. Older pupils have drawn observational sketches of objects, after considering the way a number of different artists have handled this theme. They demonstrate reasonable control of line, form, shade and tone, but there is little high attainment. Year 2 pupils used viewing frames competently to isolate images in their classrooms, and produced a good range of miniatures in pencil and coloured pencil. Many achieved a good standard for their age as the teacher encouraged them to look at details.
141. Attractively displayed work throughout the school shows that pupils learn different techniques and study the work of different artists and craftspeople. The lively paintings of a variety of movements in gymnastics by Year 2 pupils are good examples of how they are learning how to use brush strokes and colour to emphasise direction, speed and exhilaration. Similarly, a display of stitched pattern samplers illustrates pupils' developing sewing skills before using the technique to sew puppets. Such work reveals pupils' steady progress in these aspects and their illustrative work in other subjects shows satisfactory development of drawing skills.
142. Pupils in Year 3 create a variety of irregular shapes from card, using scissors appropriately and in some cases with great strength and control. They make interesting and occasionally imaginative patterns showing an understanding that pattern can be repetitive and also variable. This builds well on their consideration of the designs of William Morris. Their mathematical work on pattern and symmetry is also evident in their plates based in the work and motifs of Clarice Cliff. Year 4 pupils blur the boundaries of art and design and design and technology in designing chairs for a situation or for a particular person. Some of the designs are creative and use unusual and imaginative ideas. While the girls often created an overall thematic design, such as a chair for a 'pop' star, the boys more often tended to include more devices, such as labour-saving gadgets.
143. The teaching observed was always at least sound and often had good elements. Teachers' planning drew well on national guidance which has been adopted effectively, particularly as there has been no coordinator for the subject since the school opened. The teachers captured the pupils' interest and often inspired them; for example, in a Year 4 lesson, the teacher had asked the pupils to think of as many different types of chair as they could, and then asked them to preface their afternoon registration with an example, such as 'High chair, Miss', or 'Computer chair, Miss'. Later responses were limited by the teacher's concentration on only two particular styles, for a 'pop' star or a cartoon character, when their earlier suggestions had been much more extensive and varied.
144. The pupils like art and their behaviour and response are usually good. The fact that there is no coordinator contributes to the current limited approach in art. Low priority and time are given despite the rich potential of the subject to enliven and inspire the pupils. Chances are missed to show pupils' progress in their expression and appreciation of artistic ideas as sketchbooks have been started afresh this year. Evidence from lessons, planning and sketchbooks suggests a lack of spontaneity in

teaching, especially at Key Stage 2, and an emphasis on easily managed activities, such as drawing. There is little evidence of three-dimensional work throughout the school, or of painting at Key Stage 2. The cramped classrooms for Key Stage 2 pupils may well inhibit staff in their approach to potentially 'messy' or 'disruptive' activities. The art resource room, which also houses a non-functioning kiln, is very poorly organised.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

145. At Key Stages 1 and 2, standards are similar to those expected for pupils' ages. The school is making good use of national guidance to support school plans, to ensure the required range of experiences and to guide teachers' expectations.
146. All pupils make at least satisfactory progress in their use of tools and materials and also in their ability to design and evaluate the quality and effectiveness of their efforts. Pupils with special educational needs often receive adult support and achieve well.
147. At Key Stage 1 the youngest pupils explore how to make simple pictures with moving parts. They made a clown's ball turn around a central pivot and after experimenting with a slider mechanism, came up with cats and birds on a roof. The quality of the basic cutting and joining skills is appropriate for their age. Year 2 pupils examined a range of commercial and home-made puppets before designing their own. They practised their sewing and cutting skills and then chose either sewing or gluing to join the felt pieces together. When they used the puppets in the puppet theatre they found that those that had been stuck tended to come apart, and in class discussion considered the merit of each puppet, noting where modifications might be made.
148. At Key Stage 2, pupils continue to develop a range of skills and techniques and are making steady progress especially in evaluating their own work. Pupils enjoy making things and respond well to the teachers' encouragement to try things out and to think carefully about what they want to produce.
149. Year 3, 4 and 5 pupils' work on toys, monsters and vehicles with moving parts shows developing skill and complexity of product. They are encouraged to include batteries and bulbs to light up eyes and to work out how to construct axles and attach wheels so that they move freely. Year 4 pupils described how they modified their original paper design for felt purses once they realised that their sewing skills were insufficient for the elaborate decoration they wanted. One Year 5 class has just produced high quality work on musical instruments. The standards achieved illustrate the care and insight with which pupils have investigated how string, percussion and plucked instruments are constructed. Their designs are large, drawn with care and show the relative size of parts with appropriate attention to how different materials will be joined. The final products illustrate how carefully the pupils have worked, their accurate use of measurement, a sound understanding of materials and their qualities and an ability to evaluate effectively. Those who chose wood had to work through several types before they found one soft enough for them to saw to the required lengths and shapes.
150. The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory at both key stages with good elements. Not all teachers feel equally confident in teaching the subject but a common strength is the way teachers encourage discussion and investigation and create opportunities for pupils to practice specific skills, including how to produce an effective design or a sequence of focussed diagrams. The projects are sufficiently open-ended to encourage choice and most teachers use the potential to develop pupils' skills in

science, mathematics and literacy. Year 6 pupils are using their new ICT skills to produce wrapping paper and to draw a design for their 'slipper in a box' project.

151. The management of the subject is satisfactory. The coordinator has identified gaps in resources and ordered wisely to ensure all National Curriculum requirements can continue to be met.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

152. Standards are close to national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1. The standard of work produced by the Year 3 and 4 pupils is in line with national expectations. A judgement about standards at the end of Key Stage 2 can not be made as there was very little work from the geography project in Year 6 started this term and no work from the autumn term.
153. Key Stage 1 pupils develop an awareness of maps and places in the world. This is due to sound teaching with a good emphasis on field work. Pupils are introduced to maps and plans. Year 1 pupils located India correctly using its shape as a clue. Year 2 pupils were able to locate and name European countries such as Spain. They know that people go to other countries on holiday as the weather is better. When the teacher used photographs of the local area, Year 1 pupils identified key features and signs. More able pupils did well in thinking about places where new signs could be sited and how cars could be stopped from parking in places that put people at risk. However, pupils' knowledge is limited.
154. At Key Stage 2, pupils make sound progress over time in their knowledge of geographical features and how to use maps and reference points. In a Year 3 lesson, pupils were given a plan of the school and then asked to mark in several classrooms and to use symbols to identify the position of the toilets, library and the ICT room. By Year 5, pupils locate and name the continents and most major countries of the world. They know about the equator, main oceans and physical features such as mountain ranges, rivers and volcanoes. They are less familiar with or confident in using Ordnance Survey maps.
155. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. When the tasks and activities are practical, such as carrying a bucket to help decide how having to fetch and carry heavy containers would affect the way people use water, the pupils are very positive. They quickly lose interest and give less than their best when the task is mundane or when all are expected to do the same task. This is reflected in the untidy presentation of work in some classes. In Years 3 and 4, much was carefully and neatly presented and showed a range of formats that also promoted pupils' writing and number skills. Year 4 pupils looking at life in an Indian village recorded similarities and differences between the lives of Indian children and their own. The work on weather around the world in Year 3 made good use of maps and pupils' own knowledge about places visited on holiday.
156. A strength of the school is the use it makes of photographs and field trips, such as those to Styal Mill and Manchester Airport, which provide the pupils with first hand experience of natural and man-made environments and how economic factors influence land use.
157. The coordinator has used recent training to locate useful Internet websites that offer ideas for assessment, planning and examples of worksheets. This will assist the teachers as information books and other resources are very limited.



## **HISTORY**

158. Standards are broadly in line with those in most schools. Pupils' knowledge of different periods of history is more secure than their skill in finding out about them. This reflects weaknesses in their reading skills.
159. By the age of seven, pupils know about aspects of events and people in the past; for example, they know details of the life of Florence Nightingale and also where and how the Fire of London broke out. This work is successful because teachers pose questions that help the pupils to appreciate the differences between life in the past and the present, and to record ideas and simple facts in their own way. Effective use is made of pictures to encourage pupils to be 'historical detectives', but comparisons between the portraits of Samuel Pepys and Charles II were made unnecessarily difficult for Year 2 pupils because of the small size and poor quality of the pictures.
160. Key Stage 2 pupils develop skill in writing simple reports and explanations. Year 5 pupils have good recall of people and a developing grasp of the reasons behind key events such as the Battle of Bosworth and the Reformation. Their visit to Ordsall Hall made a deep impact on them and they retain a vivid awareness of life in upper class Tudor England. They recounted with relish the lack of electricity, removal of windows for safe keeping against thieves, endemic sickness and lack of hygiene.
161. The weaker area of pupils' work is in historical enquiry. Pupils rely largely upon teacher input and on a very limited range of historical texts and artefacts. There is a dearth of good quality reference texts in the library, and of CD Roms and ICT programs. The subject action plan rightly includes the purchase of resources as a key priority. Effective use is made of drama such as was seen in a lesson for Year 6 pupils on the London Blitz, led by a visiting teacher from the University, to enable pupils to interpret history.
162. The teaching is effective across the school. Team planning ensures all pupils in the same year group benefit. Good teacher-made resources supported the teaching for Year 4 pupils on the differences between Sparta and Athens, and because of the high level of subject knowledge of the 'lead planner' for the week, both lessons were delivered with confidence. Skilful questioning and good pace helped most pupils to think hard, to make comparisons, and to justify their answers. The support of classroom assistants enabled pupils with special educational needs to play a full part in the discussion. As a result the pupils made at least sound progress especially in understanding the concept of democracy.
163. The coordinator, relatively new to the post, is keen and is monitoring planning to ensure the subject meets National Curriculum requirements. The planned introduction of an assessment system and the development of a programme of visits indicate a potential strengthening of the provision.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

164. Standards are satisfactory at the end of Key Stage 1 but Year 6 pupils' skills and understanding are well below those expected for their age. These pupils have not benefited from consistent, systematic teaching of basic ICT skills in the past or had sufficient hands-on time to practice and consolidate those skills that they have acquired since coming to The Willows. The computer club, limited to eight Year 5 and 6 pupils, is an attempt to rectify this. Nevertheless, the pupils have not experienced all

- the threads in the ICT Programme of Study and the school is not able to meet the statutory National Curriculum requirements for these pupils.
165. The context for teaching ICT and the subject's profile have changed over the last half term. Given pupils' low level of skill and knowledge, the pupils are making marked progress in each lesson. This is due to the cumulative effect of access to the ICT suite and the positive impact of training on the quality of teaching. The teachers' knowledge and confidence are good and are boosted by the support of an external company to provide technical backup and teaching guidance. Blips in the equipment are quickly sorted out and teachers know that they will receive training on each new program or function. The technical assistants, who are both computer experts and qualified teachers, are a highly valued support and ensure that everything is in place to meet all the strands of the required curriculum. In contrast to the computers in the ICT suite, classroom computers, most of which are linked to the network software, are vastly underused. The exception is their use to support some pupils with special educational needs. Opportunities are missed to help all pupils gain greater keyboard facility or use word processing skills as part of work in other subjects.
  166. All pupils are excited, eager and confident about using the computers. They work well together, take turns, discuss and agree their intentions. They willingly explore the potential of tools and take delight in sharing their discoveries with their classmates. They learn quickly although many need a lot of support and so the work rate is slow.
  167. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils confidently log-on to their workstation, find and load the correct element of a program, retrieve saved work and print it out. Year 1 pupils were impressive in the way they recalled the complex number of steps required to access the database to record how they travelled to school. Few needed any help to select and move through the menu pages and then entered their data quickly and efficiently. A blip with the printer half way through the session provided a useful point for the teacher to discuss the use and problems of technology. Year 2 pupils have made very good progress in using the mouse, and in using the 'enter and delete' keys but their familiarity with the location of letters on the keyboard is still limited. Many took a long time to compose two sentences.
  168. Throughout Key Stage 2, pupils are confident and efficient at logging on and off, loading a program and finding previous work if it has been correctly saved. Pupils again lack familiarity with the keyboard and this seriously limits their ability to use any program that requires them to compose text or add written information. Year 5 pupils' poor keyboard skills interfered with their need to ensure consistency in entering headings. When using graphics programs, pupils do better. Year 3 pupils concentrated hard on creating repeating patterns of increasing complexity and Year 6 pupils showed considerable creativity in developing and modifying designs for wrapping paper. Year 4 pupils made good progress in designing a poster about Greece as their teacher monitored carefully what all were doing, demonstrated different functions using clip art and then encouraged them to experiment.
  169. The quality of teaching observed in the ICT suite was at least satisfactory in both key stages and a third of the lessons at Key Stage 2 were good. The variation reflects teachers' own varying ICT skills, experience and confidence. A common strength is the way the teachers review skills and knowledge, introduce new skills and ideas clearly and use themes in other subjects as a meaningful context. The built-in progression results in pupils' good learning. Pupils with special educational needs are supported effectively by other adults and thus achieve success.



170. The coordinator is working well with others to develop the ICT curriculum. The assessment of pupils' progress is not yet in place and the scheme of work is being compiled. The school has concentrated its attention on the development of computing skills. Pupils' use of other aspects of technology, for example, a cooker, tape recorder, cameras and overhead projectors, is still underdeveloped.

## **MUSIC**

171. Pupils at Key Stage 1 attain the standards expected for their age, but towards the end of Key Stage 2 standards are below average. Support teachers are currently working alongside classteachers to develop their skills and confidence in teaching music and also helping them to use more effectively the adopted scheme of work to promote pupils' learning. Visiting music teachers offer good support to pupils who are learning to play a variety of instruments, including the recorder, clarinet, trumpet, and cornet. These pupils read standard musical notation, and make good progress in various aspects of the subject. Although pupils enjoy music, a number who begin to learn to play instruments soon give up despite the visiting teacher's constant attempts to encourage them.
172. Younger pupils sing reasonably and know a limited variety of songs. They learn to recognise and keep pulse and rhythm, clapping and using a good range of tuned and untuned percussion instruments carefully and with growing skill. Year 4 pupils made very good progress in keeping a steady beat as well as playing different rhythms. They played loudly and softly to match the demands of the music. There were opportunities for pupils to compose and play their own short pieces of music, and to discuss and evaluate their own and other pupils' contributions. Year 6 pupils have a limited knowledge of a range of music from different styles, traditions and cultures. They listen to and discuss music, play and sing a variety of songs and instruments but have limited opportunities to compose their own music, and to develop ways of recording their compositions through different styles of notation.
173. The teaching observed for Key Stage 1 pupils was generally good, and a very good lesson was seen with Year 4 pupils. In a Year 1 lesson, the teacher's confident approach enthused the pupils, who responded well in handling a wide range of instruments sensibly, and in trying hard to maintain pulse, rhythm and tune when singing and playing. The teacher used effective strategies to help the pupils concentrate, such as keeping time with their 'singing minds'. This technique is also used well by other teachers, as are signals to guide when to play or sing, and when to be silent or still.
174. The co-ordinator manages the subject well and has a good plan for its further development, including the evaluation of pupils' progress. The subject has gained status in the school and the effects of staff training and the adoption of a good scheme of work are evident in the quality of the work observed. There is a good range of instrumental resources to support the pupils' learning although no electronic instruments were used during the inspection. Not enough emphasis is given to listening to and appreciating a wide range of music and opportunities are missed to link this to other subjects and current themes.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

175. Standards at Key Stage 1 are in line with national expectations although many pupils do well especially in gymnastics. This continues at Key Stage 2 where pupils perform better than national expectations in gymnastics, dance and outdoor games. Not all

pupils manage to swim the required 50 metres by the end of their swimming tuition in Year 4 and there are no arrangements to provide additional help.

176. The overall good standards are a direct result of the good provision and much good teaching as well as the work of sports coaches. The teachers continue to receive training in teaching dance and gymnastics and this is reaping benefits in the growing confidence of teachers and in the quality of their teaching. Lessons are well planned and based upon the school's scheme of work which is an adaptation of the local education scheme and covers all requirements of the National Curriculum. The school's decision to provide equipment for pupils to use at lunch times has helped to raise standards. The pupils like physical education, behave well and are willing to try. They work hard and this gives the sessions a real sense of purpose.
177. By Year 2 pupils catch large and small balls confidently and send and receive balls by controlled kicking. In gymnastics, Year 2 pupils showed marked agility and nimbleness. Many performed cartwheels and handstands without assistance. The teacher's use of demonstrations and key points to improve ensured that the pupils made good progress in coordinating and performing a sequence of movements.
178. Pupils in Key Stage 2 become increasingly aware of the reasons for 'warming up and stretching' at the beginning of sessions. They know the main muscle groups and Year 3 pupils demonstrated suitable exercises. By the end of the key stage most pupils, but especially the boys, ably control a ball with feet, hands and other parts of the body. Year 4 pupils eagerly following the sports coach's instructions and ignoring the windy weather, worked in pairs and small groups to practise kicking/controlling and throwing/catching balls over different distances. Similarly in dance and gymnastics, pupils demonstrate a wide range of jumps, turns, balances, steps and other movements.
179. The coordinator has successfully put in place a clear policy and a detailed scheme of work linked to training for colleagues. This provides a good framework and a clear emphasis on the sequential teaching of skills. Clubs, activities and fixtures provide useful opportunities for pupils to perform and compete against others. As such, the subject makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. Resources are limited for some activities such as short cricket, rounders and basketball.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

180. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is broadly in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. At Key Stage 2, the pupils have considerable gaps in their knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other faiths. Year 6 pupils' attainment is lower than expected for their age.
181. The teachers are following the themes identified in the locally agreed syllabus but there is a stronger focus on learning about religion than on learning from it. This reflects the teachers' lack of confidence in teaching the subject and also a limited familiarity with different religions. Themes such as 'special people' help to unify work in the school and to link religious education with other subjects and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Displays of work showed that Year 2 pupils identified rules, school uniform and themselves as being some of the things that makes The Willows special, and Year 5 pupils had looked at the implications of responsibility and citizenship.

182. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. In the one unsatisfactory lesson seen, the teacher did not do enough to ensure that the pupils understood the language and the concepts behind the Ten Commandments such as “covet” and “adultery”. Pupils learnt little that was new and they lost too much time copying work from the board rather than discussing what the commandments mean to followers of Judaism. In the better lessons, the teachers were well prepared with items such as photographs to catch the pupils’ interest. As a result Year 1 and 2 pupils talked freely about churches and their features, and their own experiences, such as a visit to the church. The teachers’ questions helped them to realise the Christian symbol of the cross and the church as a place of worship. In a Year 5 lesson, the pupils made extremely good progress in realising that people hold different views about what happens to the ‘soul’ when the body dies. The teacher’s very skilful questioning and explanations led the pupils to discuss sensitively the concept of reincarnation and cycles of life.
183. The coordinator is new to the role but is aware of the need to raise standards especially at Key Stage 2. She is using her good subject knowledge to support others and to increase the resources for each unit of work. Key Stage 1 pupils benefit from visits to the local church and from a visit to school by a Hindu lady. The coordinator has organised training for all the staff to increase their knowledge of world faiths and to improve their skills in planning and assessment. Not all the teachers mark the work in pupils’ books and the coordinator has yet to monitor work in classrooms.