

INSPECTION REPORT

OAKFIELD PRIMARY AND MLD RESOURCE BASE

Newton, Hyde

LEA area: Tameside

Unique reference number: 106180

Headteacher: Rosemarie Williams

Reporting inspector: J. Ann Sharpe
18101

Dates of inspection: 12th – 15th November 2001

Inspection number: 230550

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 – 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: St Mary's Road
Newton
Hyde
Cheshire

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Sue Newton

Date of previous inspection: 22nd – 23rd November 1999

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
18101	J. Ann Sharpe	Registered inspector	Foundation Stage English as an additional language Art and design Music Religious education	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further?
9224	Mike Vineall	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
4303	Simon Reynolds	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology History Equality of opportunity	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
17681	Roger Sharples	Team inspector	Science Design and technology Physical education Special educational needs The MLD resource base	
1678	David Peckett	Team inspector	English Geography	How well is the school led and managed?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The 235 children (98 girls and 137 boys) are between the ages of three and eleven. The nursery has 60 part-time places of which 38 are currently taken. Most children come from white families and many live fairly close to the school in rented properties. The area of Newton is identified as being amongst the most deprived in Tameside, and the proportion of free school meals taken is above average. Nine children are from a variety of other ethnic backgrounds. For a few children, English is not their first language, and occasionally, the children are at an early stage of learning to speak English. When children start in the nursery, their attainment is below average. The proportion of children with special educational needs is rising and is presently average, but the proportion of these children with statements is well above average. This is because the school includes a resource base for children with moderate learning difficulties (MLD) who live in Tameside. The MLD resource base has places for 12 children between the ages of seven and eleven, and seven places are filled this year. There have been several very recent staff changes in the resource base as well as two teachers who are new to the school from September.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school provides a good quality of education. Teaching in most classes is good and children do well by the time they leave at the end of Year 6. The headteacher and governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses well, and work hard to make sure that teaching improves and standards rise. The very good relationships and sense of teamwork in the school create a climate where all children feel equally valued and happy. As a result, children's behaviour is almost always good and they have good attitudes towards their learning. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Children achieve well, especially in writing, mathematics and science.
- Children in the nursery and reception class make a very good start to their education.
- A high proportion of teaching in Years 4, 5 and 6 is good or very good.
- Children with special educational needs, including those in the MLD resource base, do well because the school caters for their differing learning needs.
- The very good provision for children's spiritual and social development results in good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning.
- Staff keep a very careful eye on how well children are doing at school.
- The school has improved a lot since the last inspection due to good leadership.

What could be improved

- Standards in reading are not improving as quickly as in writing.
- There are still a few weaknesses in teaching in some classes and some subjects.
- The curriculum, although good overall, needs more careful checking and timing.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

In the two years since the school was last inspected in November 1999, it has improved a lot. Governors and staff have worked consistently to put right the key issues in the report and have made good progress with raising standards, improving teaching, setting clear targets and improving arrangements for assessing children. There are still some subjects where standards have not improved much, but standards in National Curriculum tests for eleven year olds in English, mathematics and science have risen faster than the national trend in the last few years. Also, provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved significantly. Standards and test results for seven year olds have not improved much, however, and pupils of all ages are now doing better with their writing than they are with reading. The leadership of the school has improved, including the work of governors and teachers who are subject leaders. Pupils' attendance is better, and parents' views of the school are much more positive. Although teaching has improved overall, this is not equally evident in all classes and subjects. Provision for pupils' personal development has improved a lot, and this has helped to raise their expectations. The school is now well placed to continue to improve in the future.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
English	E	E*	E	C	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E in the lowest 5% E*
Mathematics	E	E	E	B	
Science	E	E	E	B	

Where this table compares the school's results with all schools, the well below average grades include the results of children from the MLD resource base, but the similar schools grades do not include their results. In 2001, the school exceeded its targets for eleven year olds attaining the level expected for their age in the English and mathematics tests. In English, mathematics and science, a lot more children reached the level expected for 13 year olds, and more children reached the level expected for eleven year olds than in previous years. Results for seven year olds in reading, writing and mathematics were well below average, below similar schools in writing and well below similar schools in reading and mathematics – these results, as well as the science teacher assessments, were not good enough. Over the last few years, boys have done better in tests than girls, and differences in their results do not reflect the national picture. Children achieve well, overall, although mainly in the nursery, reception class and in Years 4, 5, and 6. By the end of the reception year, children attain most of the learning goals set for them nationally. Children with special educational needs, including those from the MLD resource base and those who speak

English as an additional language, also achieve well. The standard of work of eleven year olds is now average in English, mathematics and science, whilst for seven year olds it is below average in English and mathematics and average in science. Standards in other subjects are still variable. For example, eleven year olds attain high standards in art and design, but below average standards in history, ICT, physical education and religious education. Although standards in writing have improved throughout the school, there is room for further improvement with reading in all classes.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Most children are interested and enthusiastic learners who try hard to please teachers and take a pride in themselves and in their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Children know what is right and wrong and most follow the school and class rules. Occasionally, the poorer behaviour of a few children makes lessons less successful.
Personal development and relationships	The very good relationships between all the children help them to feel that their contribution to lessons is worthwhile. The very good provision for personal development ensures that children become increasingly confident, thoughtful, mature and sensible.
Attendance	Satisfactory. The rate of attendance has improved since the last inspection and there are now fewer unauthorised absences.

The very good relationships between all children enable them to benefit as much as possible from their education, and contribute well to the standards they achieve.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Very good	Satisfactory	Good

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

The good teaching overall ensures that children become interested and eager learners. Teaching in the nursery and reception class is very good because staff work together well to help all children to achieve as much as they can. In infant classes, teaching is satisfactory, although teachers do not always expect enough of the children, and their learning is sometimes at a slower pace than they are capable of. Teaching in junior classes is good, overall, with a high proportion of good, very good or excellent teaching in Years 4, 5 and 6 that motivates and excites children. In these classes, teachers often set challenging and stimulating work and push children on to do even better. In Year 3, teachers find the behaviour of some children difficult to manage, and some lessons are unsatisfactory. Teaching for children with special educational needs and those who speak English as an

additional language is good because staff are careful to make sure that their needs are catered for in all lessons. Teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy are satisfactory in infant classes and good overall in junior classes. In literacy, teachers are better at teaching writing than they are at teaching reading, and the school needs to put this right as a priority. Teaching has improved since the last inspection, but teachers still need to increase their expertise in a few subjects, especially physical education.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum has improved since the last inspection. It is broad, interesting and well planned to allow all pupils to benefit equally. The programme of work for children in the nursery and reception class helps them to make a very good start with work in the National Curriculum.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Children in all classes and those attached to the MLD resource base mainly have the same good quality curriculum as others of the same age. Teachers adjust the programmes of work well to take account of children's individual needs. The school ensures that children have the encouragement and support they need to do well.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Staff ensure that children are not disadvantaged by any lack of English. Children achieve well and some become higher attaining children in their year group. The school seeks specialist help where children need extra support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Good, with very good provision for spiritual and social development. The school puts a lot of emphasis on these aspects of the curriculum both in lessons and in its day-to-day life. Consequently, children become increasingly considerate, well mannered and respectful of others.
How well the school cares for its pupils	All adults are caring and supportive of the children. Teachers know them very well as individuals and keep a very watchful eye over their academic and social progress.

The school's partnership with parents has improved a lot since it was last inspected and it is now good. Although the curriculum is good, weekly timetables could be constructed more efficiently to ensure that there is enough time to teach all the subjects in depth.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and deputy give strong leadership that ensures that the school continues to improve. The headteacher delegates wisely, and teachers with management responsibilities support teachers in other classes well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their school and are keen to support the improvements. They take their responsibilities for the children's education seriously and are very closely involved in all aspects of the school's work.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Plans for improving the school are based firmly on a clear knowledge of what has already been achieved and what needs to be done next if standards are to rise even further.
The strategic use of resources	Governors are careful to make sure that they spend the budget on the children's education and that no money is wasted. There are a few shortages of resources, however, that could have been put right with a more flexible approach to financial planning.

Good leadership and management are now taking the school forward successfully and standards are rising. The level of staffing is good, and teachers deploy the good quality support staff very well so that children have maximum help from adults. The accommodation and resources are satisfactory. Governors apply the principles of best value well when making decisions about spending the budget.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school is a happy and friendly place. Children like coming to school, behave well and make good progress, especially in art and design. Teaching is good and children are expected to work hard and do their best. The leadership of the school has improved, and there is now much more happening for children. Parents feel comfortable to approach the school at any time, and teachers listen to their concerns. The school helps children to become mature. Provision for ICT has improved a lot 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A few parents would like more extra-curricular activities, including competitive sport. A few parents think that there needs to be even more 'bonding' between home, school and the community.

recently.	
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Inspectors agree with parents' positive views of the school. There is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities, including some competitive sport, and the school hopes to extend these in the future. The school works hard to involve parents in their children's education and to promote the school as part of the community it serves. There are clear signs that this work is having an increasing effect on the school's standing in the community.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. When children start in the nursery, their attainment is below average, especially in their talking skills, social skills and knowledge and understanding of the world. They achieve well in the nursery and reception class in all areas of learning and attain most of the national learning goals set for children at the end of the reception year. In personal, social and emotional development, children achieve very well. This gives pupils a very good start to their work in the National Curriculum in Year 1, although most pupils in the older classes did not benefit from this recently much improved provision. Also, not all the children in the nursery stay at Oakfield School. Children's good and very good achievement is due to very skilled teaching, but this has not yet had time to impact fully on pupils' attainment by the end of Years 2 and 6. Some improvements are very recent and, because the older pupils did not benefit to the same extent, the improvements have not yet fed through into standards and test results at the end of Years 2 and 6. Provision in the nursery and reception class is, however, a strong feature of the school's present good capacity for improvement in the future.

2. A key issue in the last report was to continue to raise standards of attainment, particularly in literacy, numeracy and ICT. In literacy and numeracy, standards have improved, overall, but most notably by the end of Year 6. The 2001 national test results for eleven year olds in English, mathematics and science rose considerably from the previous year, especially results for higher attaining pupils, who did very well indeed. There was also an increase in the proportion of pupils attaining the level expected for their age in all three subjects. The 2001 results continued the rising trend of standards by the time pupils leave the school, and the school's results have improved faster than the national trend since 1997. When setting aside the results of pupils with statements of special educational need from the MLD resource base, the 2001 results were in line with similar schools in English and above similar schools in mathematics and science. The school slightly exceeded its own targets for the proportion of pupils attaining the level expected for their age in English and mathematics tests. Governors set realistic targets for test results, but the new arrangements for setting targets based on more detailed information about pupils' progress are likely to make sure that these are challenging targets in the future.

3. Judgements about standards and pupils' achievement by the age of eleven do not include the work of pupils from the MLD resource base. Pupils' achievement overall in the juniors in English, mathematics and science is good. They reach the standard expected for their age in all three subjects, and, from their low starting point at the age of seven, this represents good progress. Pupils do not achieve as well in reading, however, as they do in other aspects of their English work, especially writing. In science, pupils in Year 6 do particularly well in their investigative work and this increases their knowledge of the topics they study. Although pupils' achievement, overall, is satisfactory in ICT, standards are still below national expectations. Pupils do not yet use ICT on a regular basis as part of their lessons in all subjects, especially music. Nevertheless, the older pupils have started to make very good progress and standards are on course to rise in the near future. In those parts of ICT covered so far, pupils are beginning to achieve well.

4. National test results for seven year olds in reading, writing and mathematics are not rising fast enough, and in 2001, they slipped back a little. The results were, yet again, below or well below similar schools. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall, but this is not enough to enable them to reach the standard expected by the end of Year 2 in English and

mathematics. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make slower progress than the children in the nursery and reception class and the junior pupils. In English, there are too many pupils who do not attain average standards, and in mathematics there are not enough pupils reaching the higher level. There are positive signs that standards in writing are improving, however, and more pupils are now reaching the standard expected for their age or a higher level. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 now make good progress with learning to write by themselves. Standards in reading are lagging behind writing, however, due to shortcomings in teaching, and pupils could achieve higher standards. Standards in ICT are still below national expectations, but there are indications that things are improving now that the school has improved resources. Pupils achieve well in science owing to improved teaching, and most pupils attain the standard expected by the end of Year 2. The 2001 teacher assessments improved a lot from the previous year, especially in the proportion of pupils reaching the level expected for their age.

5. The year groups tested in 2001 in both the infants and the juniors consisted of about twice the number of boys to girls. As there are national differences between the attainment of girls and of boys, this may have influenced the 2001 results. Nevertheless, when taking account of the school's results from 1997 to 2001, boys in the school have done better in their tests, overall, than girls, and this is contrary to the national trend. The school does not have reasons for this difference, and there are no plans, as yet, to see what can be done to raise the standards attained by girls.

6. It was not possible to make judgements about standards and achievement in music and geography by the ages of seven and eleven or in religious education by the age of seven. In the other subjects, pupils' achievement and the standards they attain remain variable, as at the time of the last inspection. These variations, however, reflect the status of each subject on the school development plan, the strengths of individual subject leaders and the amount of time allocated to subjects as part of the whole curriculum. Standards in physical education and history, for example, are below national expectations. Standards in art and design on the other hand, are above national expectations by the age of eleven, due to the subject leader's strong expertise and influence on teaching across the school. Both infants and juniors do well in design and technology, and in religious education standards are improving, but they are still below the requirements of the local agreed syllabus by the end of Year 6.

7. Pupils with special educational needs, including those from the MLD resource base, achieve well, and in some cases, very well. Last year, for example, a pupil in Year 6 from the resource base attained the level expected for eleven year olds in the science tests. Pupils achieve well because teachers expect a lot of them and organise the right kind of help to enable them to be successful alongside their friends as often as possible. This improves pupils' self-esteem and encourages them to try their best.

8. Pupils' achievement is currently good overall, but especially in the nursery and reception classes and in Years 4, 5 and 6. The standard of work is, overall, as expected for pupils by the end of Year 6, and this represents considerable improvement since the last inspection. The school is now well placed to continue to raise standards, although remedying the weakness in reading needs to be a vital part of this.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development make a good contribution to the standards they achieve by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 6. This indicates continued improvement since the last inspection. One of the main strengths of the school is the very good relationships between the pupils themselves and between adults and pupils. An example of the school's strong community spirit was seen in an assembly when pupils all

sang a favourite hymn together with smiling faces. Older pupils help younger ones, and younger pupils think of older ones as their 'big friends'. Each afternoon, pupils from the MLD resource base work co-operatively in classes with other pupils of their own ages, and this is to the mutual social benefit of all.

10. The school's approach to furthering pupils' personal development ensures that their behaviour is almost always good both in lessons and around the school. By Year 6, pupils' behaviour is often quite mature. They show respect for other pupils, as when they allow others to 'have a go' in their play or discussions and they offer to help others. On the rare occasions when conflicts arise, pupils are willing to resolve them through open discussions with teachers and with one another about the rights and wrongs of what happened. Pupils understand and follow their teachers' imaginative methods of tackling personal concerns, such as a class board where pupils can write their name to indicate that they would like a quiet word with their teacher. Pupils are, therefore, open and they readily speak to adults in a mature and sometimes humorous manner. Last year, one pupil was excluded four times for unacceptable behaviour, and the school resolved this situation satisfactorily.

11. Around the school, pupils can be a little noisy at times, but they are soon quietened when necessary. They are cheerful, purposeful and frequently eager to start a favourite activity, for example singing or hockey practice. In nearly all lessons, pupils show a keenness to learn. A small amount of unacceptable behaviour, including rudeness to teachers, occurs where teachers' class management is insecure. Nevertheless, pupils mainly show respect for adults and for one another. Pupils' outdoor play is often boisterous, but only rarely becomes threatening in any way for pupils. All the pupils mix well, and older ones take care that their vigorous games of football do not clash with the quieter activities of younger pupils. Pupils respect the property and belongings of others, and there is no sign of vandalism in the school. During the inspection, pupils frequently asked inspectors to admire their work and displays around the school. Pupils often work by themselves successfully without direct supervision. They show initiative and particularly enjoy taking responsibilities, such as acting as class monitors or taking responsibilities for school tasks.

12. Attendance is satisfactory. It has risen steadily over the past three years and is now broadly in line with the national average. Unauthorised absence is below the national average. Only a few pupils arrive late. Overall, attendance has improved since the last inspection.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

13. Since the last inspection, all teachers have worked hard to help the school to tackle the key issue in the report relating to the quality of teaching. As a result, teaching and learning, overall, have improved from satisfactory to good and standards are rising. Improvements to the teaching of writing in infant classes, for example, are starting to show in pupils' attainment. The improvements generally, however, are more evident in the nursery and reception classes and in junior classes than they are in the infants, where there is more work to be done to improve teaching. Nevertheless, improvements are partly due to teachers' increased subject expertise, especially in literacy, numeracy, science, ICT, art and design, and design and technology. There are still some gaps, however, in teachers' knowledge of how to teach music, physical education and sometimes ICT. Teachers' lesson plans are now much sharper than previously, and this helps them to focus more clearly on what they want their pupils to learn in each lesson and over time. There are some occasions, especially in Years 1, 2 and 3, when teachers are not sure enough about how to structure lessons so that all pupils, regardless of their prior attainment, meet the objectives of lesson plans. In such lessons, teachers do not expect enough of their pupils and the pace of

learning is slow. Some teachers are still more successful than others at involving pupils in their own learning and helping them to understand what they are going to learn next and how they need to improve.

14. The very good teaching and learning for children in the nursery and reception class give them a head start with their future work in the National Curriculum. Teachers understand the learning needs of younger children, and strike a very good balance in the teaching methods they use each day. The emphasis on helping children to learn by playing and talking with adults, as well as by taking part in some whole-class direct teaching sessions, works very well. Teachers and support staff work together co-operatively as teams, and this enables them to spend a lot of time assessing children's progress and planning what they need to learn next. Consequently, all children achieve well from their variable starting points when they first come to nursery.

15. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, overall, in infant classes, although during the inspection, there were some good lessons as well as an unsatisfactory lesson. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in English (including literacy), mathematics (including numeracy) and in ICT. Teaching and learning are good in science and design and technology, but unsatisfactory in physical education owing to a lack of confidence and knowledge of how to teach the subject. It was not possible to make judgements in other subjects, but the one lesson seen in music was satisfactory.

16. Teaching and learning are good, overall, in junior classes. There is a high proportion of good, very good and occasionally excellent teaching in Years 4, 5 and 6, but some lessons in Year 3 have shortcomings because the new teacher finds the pupils' behaviour difficult to manage. The school's efforts to improve the position so far have not been sufficiently effective, and pupils' learning in this class has already been disrupted. In Year 6, teaching is inspirational, perceptive, imaginative and very responsive to pupils' academic and social needs. This very good teaching makes a significant contribution to raising standards by Year 6 and to the school's efforts to improve the quality of teaching in the school generally. Teaching and learning are good in English (including literacy), mathematics (including numeracy), science, ICT and design and technology. They are satisfactory in history and religious education, but unsatisfactory, overall, in physical education. It was not possible to make judgements in art and design, geography and music, although the art lesson in Year 5 was very good and the geography lesson in Year 6 was good. The games lessons for pupils in Years 5 and 6 were excellent, but some teachers are not sufficiently confident to take their own lessons.

17. There are several strengths in teaching and learning that are evident in all classes and in most lessons and subjects. Teachers and support staff are very good at questioning pupils and encouraging them to extend their knowledge and use of new words through both speech and writing. This challenging questioning increases pupils' confidence to talk about their work and helps their ideas to 'flow' more easily when writing. Most teachers manage their pupils' behaviour very well through the good relationships they forge and by setting pupils high expectations and interesting work, and giving them a belief that they can succeed. Teachers use resources and deploy the good quality support staff carefully and make sure that adults are well briefed to play an important part in lessons. In junior classes, teachers plan a lot of opportunities for pupils to work together co-operatively, such as investigations in science, and this helps pupils' personal and social development considerably. As a result of this good and very good teaching, most pupils are enthusiastic, show interest, can work by themselves when necessary and respond positively to new challenges. Although teaching and learning in ICT are improving, teachers do not always seize opportunities to use the computers in the classrooms as an integral part of lessons. This is sometimes due to shortages of suitable programs, but certainly not always.

18. Teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs and pupils from the MLD resource base are good. The school's very good procedures for assessing pupils, the well-managed provision and teachers' positive attitudes towards integrating pupils into as many lessons as possible, ensure that pupils make the best of their education and do well. Similarly, pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve well because staff do not let any lack of knowledge of the English language stand in the way of their learning. Teachers are supportive, helpful and seek specialist help for those pupils who need even more help to achieve their potential.

19. The teaching of reading is improving in all classes, but further improvements are still needed to bring standards in reading up to standards in writing. Teachers need more training to help them to maximise the time set aside for working with groups in literacy lessons. They need to focus even more rigorously and systematically on helping pupils to learn the skills they need to become confident to tackle reading new words by themselves. Teachers do not organise enough opportunities for pupils to practise reading with adults, talk about their books and extend their enjoyment of reading both at school and at home. The good assessment procedures can be used more fully to make sure that pupils always have the right amount of challenge in their lessons to help them to make progress.

20. Teaching and learning are features of the school development plan because the headteacher and governors understand the relationship between improving teaching and raising standards. The school is well placed to continue to improve teaching, but difficulties with managing pupils' behaviour in Year 3 need to be resolved to prevent standards from slipping back again. The school's policy for teaching and learning is not yet always applied consistently in all classes and all subjects.

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

21. The curriculum has improved since the last inspection and is now good, overall. The curriculum for children in the nursery and the reception class is very good. It is well planned to meet national recommendations and to ensure a smooth transition from the nursery to the reception class and then into the National Curriculum. The outdoor curriculum for the youngest pupils, however, is not yet as carefully planned. The requirements of the National Curriculum and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education are fully met; this is an improvement since the previous inspection. There is appropriate emphasis on English, mathematics, science and ICT. Time for the other subjects is a little tight, making it difficult to cover all the necessary skills and knowledge in sufficient depth. The school needs to monitor this in order to:

- maximise the opportunities for effective cross-curricular links;
- modify the schemes of work where necessary;
- re-examine the way that weekly timetables are constructed.

22. Teachers make good use of the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy and of the support available from the local education authority to ensure that their teaching is effective. Progression in the teaching and learning of basic skills, most notably in writing, is now good, and has improved since the last inspection.

23. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs, including those attached to the MLD resource base, is good. The school is particularly successful in integrating pupils with moderate learning difficulties into normal lessons and extra-curricular activities, such as

the residential visit. Pupils who speak English as an additional language have good support when necessary. They sometimes reach above average standards in their work. An increasing number of pupils are now joining the school at an early stage of learning to speak English, and staff recognise when there is a need to seek additional advice from external agencies.

24. Secure planning systems are in place that enable teachers to match the work they plan in English, mathematics and science to what pupils already know, understand and can do. Some lessons in the other subjects are differentiated in this way, but this is not always the case, resulting in work that is sometimes too easy or too difficult for part of the class. Lessons are usually organised for single-age classes, but mathematics for pupils in Years 5 and 6 is organised for two classes according to pupils' prior attainment, rather than by age. These arrangements have contributed to an improvement in national test results, but the school does not ensure that pupils experience the whole mathematics curriculum throughout the full school year.

25. The National Curriculum is broadened by the inclusion of a personal and social education programme incorporating sex, health and drugs education. Teachers are free to determine the content of these lessons within a general framework, and the school now needs to find a more systematic programme to ensure that teachers cover the key aspects at an appropriate time. A satisfactory programme of extra-curricular activities includes choir, games coaching, drama, computer and homework clubs. The homework clubs prepare pupils well for their personal studies when they transfer to secondary schools. Last summer, the school initiated a residential visit for older pupils that extended their physical and social education curriculum by providing a much-enjoyed opportunity for adventurous activities. Some parents would like to see more competitive sports and, although there is already imaginative and appropriate provision for the age group, a more stable staffing situation should now allow further development. The school actively supports a privately run 'before school and after school club' that is based on the premises.

26. A strength of the school is the success of its policies and practices for social inclusion. Reference has already been made to the positive ethos within which pupils with moderate learning difficulties are integrated when they join the school's junior classes. The extent of the integration has increased since the last report. The school is careful to encourage girls and boys equally to participate in all activities, for example the choir and the football club for younger pupils. Staff need to monitor more rigorously, however, the patterns and trends seen in the attainment of girls and of boys, and to find out why boys are doing so much better than girls.

27. The school has forged good links with other local schools. The specialist secondary school welcomes older pupils to use its facilities, such as the science and computer suites. A number of curriculum networks exist for subject leaders, and the headteacher and deputy headteacher regularly attend local meetings. Over the last three years, the school has made good use of the resources of the local education authority to improve the curriculum and raise standards. Links with the local community are satisfactory. Visitors to the school include a local artist, fire officers and town wardens, and staff have visited a local educational suppliers and have a regular link with an art gallery. However, these links are in the early stages, and there is capacity for the school to further enhance its standing and involvement in the community.

28. Provision for moral and cultural development is good and it is very good for spiritual and social development. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection when provision was satisfactory. Class and school assemblies generally provide a very good context for pupils to reflect on important issues in their lives. For example, in

considering the meaning of remembrance, some pupils were encouraged to write movingly about the impact of war – with one group accompanying their words with music. The religious education syllabus includes lessons about different faiths, contributing to both spiritual and cultural development. Year 6 pupils, for instance, learned about the meaning of a sacred place by designating a part of their classroom as special and sacrosanct. Staff are very aware of opportunities to foster a sense of awe and wonder in other lessons, such as listening to music in assembly or when discovering how big the pyramids are in a history lesson. Displays throughout the school reflect the value that teachers place upon pupils' work, including some very sensitive writing and poetry.

29. The school caters for pupils' moral development well, and parents welcome the ethos of good behaviour in the school. Rules are limited in number but displayed in classrooms and referred to appropriately. Personal and social education lessons include good opportunities to consider issues, such as how to resolve arguments or take personal responsibility. English lessons encourage pupils to write persuasively about moral issues, such as the care of war memorials. Teachers and support staff promote social development very well. In most classes, they provide regular opportunities for pupils to work co-operatively with one another. There is fruitful co-operation, for example, between children in the reception class and the oldest pupils IN THE SCHOOL in art and in ICT. In the best cases, teachers expect pupils to consider how to operate as an effective team, as seen in a design and technology lesson where they helped pupils to determine their own groups. The school regularly contributes to charitable causes, such as the Christmas gift boxes that were being collected during the inspection for distribution abroad, and pupils usually sing carols for the elderly at Christmas. The oldest pupils carry out their duties as monitors well, including looking after younger children.

30. Cultural development includes occasional visits to art galleries or museums. The religious education programme provides soundly for pupils to learn about several different faiths, and other subjects, such as art and design, geography and English, include opportunities to learn about cultural traditions of the past and present. The cultural range of pupils attending the school is broadening, and staff welcome this as an opportunity to extend everyone's understanding of our mixed society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

31. The very good relationships in the school are part of the caring ethos that adults continually strive to provide. Teachers know individual pupils well and are responsive to their academic and social needs. Pupils know that they can approach teachers at any time if they have problems, and teachers take their responsibilities for watching over their pupils very seriously. This closeness helps teachers to keep a careful eye on pupils' personal development. The care and concern for pupils with special educational needs in the MLD resource base, for example, is a strong influence on the pupils' good level of achievement. The school makes good use of external support agencies and pupils' individual education plans are detailed and thorough.

32. Procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are satisfactory overall. Governors meet their responsibilities for health and safety and are adequately involved in making sure that policies are always seen in practice. Health education is satisfactory, although the 'healthy eating' project promotes very good attitudes towards developing a healthy lifestyle; rarely are so many apples eaten in a primary school!

33. The school promotes good behaviour successfully in a variety of ways. Teachers and other adults make pupils aware of what is expected of them by being good role models

themselves. They apply the behaviour policy fairly, and help to build pupils' self-esteem, while making sure that they know the difference between right and wrong. There are many incentives for good behaviour and good work and pupils usually respond to these with enthusiasm. Pupils with special educational needs, including any with behavioural problems, usually have strong support to help them to overcome their difficulties. Problems sometimes arise, however, in Year 3, where the behaviour policy is not always seen in practice.

34. A key issue in the last inspection was to improve assessment procedures. The school has made good progress, owing to the headteacher's knowledgeable management of the changes needed to the school's practice. Procedures are now very good in all classes, but they are particularly well planned and effective in the nursery and reception class. Teachers assess their pupils' progress in the Foundation Curriculum and the National Curriculum regularly, and keep detailed and helpful records in all subjects. Teachers often use this information well when planning future work for pupils, sometimes pupils of differing prior attainment. They use it to set targets for their pupils' future learning, including identifying when pupils may need extra help to reach the level expected by the ages of seven and eleven. The targets are sometimes for groups of pupils and sometimes for individual pupils, and teachers have started to share these targets with parents and with the pupils themselves. This has already been successful, for example in raising standards in writing. The assessment of pupils with special educational needs and those who need help to learn to speak English is equally good.

35. The school also uses a range of information about pupils' attainment to set whole-school targets for National Curriculum tests for eleven year olds, and to know how they must adjust their teaching to make sure that pupils make as much progress as possible. The headteacher and governors use assessment information when formulating the school development plan. They know, for example, when national test results are not high enough and where they must do better. These very good procedures are beginning to have a considerable impact on raising standards. There are still a few occasions, however, when teachers do not take full account of pupils' existing knowledge, skills and understanding when setting work for them. Similarly, although some marking of pupils' work is good, especially in writing, teachers do not always make it explicit for older pupils what they need to do next in order to improve.

36. The school watches over pupils' attendance carefully, and this is one of the reasons that attendance rates are improving. Another reason is that pupils want to come to school because they are happy and enjoy their work.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

37. Parents' views of the school, as indicated from the inspection questionnaires and the comments of the very small number of parents who attended the meeting, are good. This represents a huge swing of support for the school since the inspection in 1998, when many parents expressed their concerns. The good parental support was echoed in many conversations with parents during the inspection, and in the amount of help given to teachers by parents helping in the school.

38. The school's substantial efforts in recent years to involve parents more effectively have included greater consultation with them. The special educational needs co-ordinator, for example, has asked for parents' views and suggestions about homework and other issues. Those parents who are also governors play a particularly active and effective part. The governor with responsibility for the oversight of ICT, for example, helps to run the new computer suite and makes a considerable contribution to its growing success. Several other

parents help in the school on a regular basis. They read with pupils, organise and manage the tuck shop and undertake projects, such as producing the 2002 calendar for sale. The Friends of the School is an organisation that includes parents, and plays a valuable role in organising well-supported social events and fund-raising events to buy equipment, such as stage blocks. Some parents help pupils at home with their homework, although teachers would like pupils to practise reading at home with adults more often.

39. The termly newsletter gives very good information to parents, and goes far beyond the useful information about events, notices and administrative matters. Parents contribute by writing about their work in the school, and pupils' poems and other writing are also published. The newsletter is a very good way of celebrating pupils' achievements, for example the success of the girls' football team. The governors' annual report to parents extends this by including numerous photographs of pupils and their work. Communication to individual parents about their children's work is also good. Pupils' annual reports are detailed and include information about both attainments and how pupils need to improve. Termly meetings with teachers are an opportunity to discuss children's targets for improvement. Teachers now also give parents an insight into the type of work to be covered by means of a letter at the beginning of each year. Day-to-day direct communication with parents is particularly good in the nursery, where there is an easy and pleasant atmosphere that encourages positive links between home and school. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are invited to meetings to discuss their children's individual education plans. The school's efforts to keep parents well informed is backed up by a willingness on the part of staff to talk informally or meet additionally at any other convenient time.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

40. The school's leadership and management have improved since the last inspection and are now good. The headteacher promotes and sustains a clear sense of direction for the work of the school. She helps the senior management team to work co-operatively and sensitively to raise standards and to achieve the school's aims and targets in the school development plan. The headteacher does not have a regular teaching timetable, but the deputy has direct involvement with teaching and pupils' learning in most classes. She provides competent support to the staff and pupils. Together, the headteacher and deputy promote a sense of common purpose throughout the school that focuses on the well-being of all the pupils, the quality of their education and the academic and personal standards they achieve. Relationships between all those involved with the pupils' education are good, and the school ensures equality for all. When necessary, the headteacher and governors seek help and advice from outside the school to help with monitoring their initiatives.

41. Governors are well informed about their school, and some are regular visitors and valuable helpers. They are actively involved in monitoring the school's progress and understand its strengths and weaknesses. Governors welcome the inspection as an integral part of their own self-evaluation, and plan to use the report to guide plans for their work and training in the future. They provide good support for the school, and are fully involved in making all the important decisions, including those concerning finances and the curriculum. Individual governors have specific responsibilities for areas, such as special educational needs and literacy. They have formed committees to oversee improvements and to make sure that they meet their statutory responsibilities.

42. The school development plan is produced in consultation with staff and governors, and all are involved and aware of the part they have to play. The plan is based on a clear analysis of the school's needs, and it places, rightly, emphasis on raising standards and improving teaching. It is linked to the school budget, has clear criteria for success and is reviewed regularly to evaluate progress. This has resulted in the school making good

progress in the last two years with rectifying the key issues in the previous report and with raising standards for pupils leaving the school at the end of Year 6.

43. The school manages provision for pupils with special educational needs very effectively so that the requirements of the Code of Practice are met. The deliberate ethos of 'care' and 'calm' enables pupils to feel secure and safe and encourages them to do their best. Effective use is made of all staff to teach pupils with special educational needs within classes, within the MLD resource base or occasionally in small groups withdrawn from normal lessons. The special needs co-ordinator provides very effective leadership. She is knowledgeable, enthusiastic and very committed to ensuring the best education possible for all pupils with special educational needs. The headteacher delegates management responsibilities well, and most teachers oversee parts of the curriculum or aspects of the work of the school. They take these responsibilities very seriously, for example by seeking expert guidance from outside the school to make sure that provision is as good as it should be. This work forms an important and integral part of the overall school development plan, and is planned carefully on a three-year cycle to make it effective.

44. Financial control is very good. The headteacher and bursar manage and watch over day-to-day spending very carefully. Governors receive regular updates of spending so that they too can monitor expenditure. They carefully evaluate the effectiveness of their spending decisions and consider a number of alternatives and quotations in order to ensure good value for money and to follow 'best value principles'. Careful financial planning ensures that the school always has funds available to support the priorities for improvement. Special grants, such as funding for pupils with special educational needs, are used for the intended purposes.

45. The school has built up a substantial budget surplus over the last two years, although a three-year budget plan suggests that this surplus will reduce considerably in the future. Governors have discussed how to use these funds to best advantage and have explored various possibilities. Most of these plans focus upon the current school development plan and improvements to the premises, as well as the need to have funds readily available to respond to the key issues from this inspection. Governors, rightly, align their spending closely to the school development plan, and make sure that resources are satisfactory, overall. Their approach is not flexible enough, however, to ensure that pupils' education does not suffer owing to shortages of resources that are not identified in the overall plan. Examples of these shortages are books, musical instruments, physical education equipment and ICT resources in several subjects and the nursery.

46. Good staffing levels enable the school to meet the learning needs of all the pupils well. Teachers deploy the good quality support teachers and assistants, including those who support pupils with special educational needs, carefully and sensitively. Administrative staff make a positive contribution to the smooth running of the school on a day-to-day basis, and this leaves teachers free to concentrate all their time and efforts on the pupils. Overall, the school makes satisfactory arrangements for staff development. Governors have put the required procedures into place for managing the professional performance of the headteacher and staff. The school provides the support required to newly qualified teachers, although the degree of success of the procedures varies between teachers. There are times when pupils' education is disrupted because problems persist.

47. While the accommodation is satisfactory, overall, some of the classrooms are small for the older pupils. Teachers manage the limited space extremely well, however, and all teachers provide a positive setting and promote high standards through their displays of pupils' work. Pupils enjoy working in the new computer suite, and the school has spent its grant for this purpose well to raise standards in ICT. The school has spacious grounds for

outdoor play and physical education lessons. The area outside the nursery is not used sufficiently well, however, to make sure that the children in the nursery class have a regular outdoor curriculum. Teachers and administrative staff make very good use of ICT resources to improve the presentation of their documents, to prepare teaching resources and to record assessment data.

48. The good leadership and management of the school ensure that it continues to improve and that it provides a good quality of education for the pupils.

THE MLD RESOURCE BASE

49. The resource base is housed in a classroom in the main building of the school and presently caters for seven pupils between the ages of eight and eleven. A teacher, supported by a nursery nurse, teaches the pupils each morning. Four of the pupils are in Year 6, one in Year 5 and two in Year 4, and each afternoon, they work in classrooms alongside other pupils of their own age. The provision caters for a maximum of 12 pupils from the Tameside area who have statements of special educational need. At present, both the teacher and the nursery nurse in the base are temporary and new to the school. The school has recently made an appointment of a permanent teacher to start in January. The local education authority is in the process of reviewing its provision for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, and the future of the base is being considered as part of this review.

50. Owing to the fact that the number of pupils in the base has reduced since last year, the pupils have only literacy and numeracy lessons actually in the base classroom. For other subjects, they join their year groups in the main school, and this has increased the number of opportunities for them to integrate with pupils of their own age and to benefit from the same curriculum. Pupils make good progress, overall, and achieve well, although they only rarely attain the National Curriculum level expected by the age of eleven. This maintains the good position reported at the time of the last inspection.

51. The main reason for the success of the school's provision is that teaching and learning are organised in ways that maximise and balance pupils' opportunities to have close and individual attention in the resource base, as well as to be integrated with pupils of their own age. This helps the pupils to have a clear sense of 'belonging' as well as providing opportunities for other pupils to help and support them in a natural way.

52. Pupils benefit from a considerable amount of individual attention from adults in their literacy and numeracy lessons, and this escalates their progress. In a literacy lesson, for example, they quickly improved their skills with learning to read words by looking at the sounds that individual and groups of letters represent. They were able to build the words and understood how the words were made up of phonemes. Similarly, in a numeracy lesson, pupils learned to recognise coins and to understand their value. They made good progress with calculating the total when adding the value of two coins together. The higher attaining pupils in the group learned to add three coins together.

53. In a Year 6 design and technology lesson, more able pupils helped pupils from the resource base to design and construct models of wind and waterproof shelters. Similarly, in a Year 5 art and design lesson, pupils from the resource base made good progress with learning how to use clay to make coil pots, and in a Year 4 history lesson, they learned how to use the Internet to research. In science, some pupils do particularly well, and in the 2001 national tests for eleven year olds, one pupil attained the level expected for that age. Pupils take part in the full range of activities available, such as a residential visit at an outdoor activity

centre and coaching in hockey. This provision makes a very good contribution to the social development of all the pupils and enriches the life of the school well.

54. Teaching and learning are good, overall, and the pupils also benefit from the very good teaching often seen in Years 4, 5 and 6. Staff are sensitive to pupils' needs and care about them. They plan work to build on what pupils have already attained. In a science lesson on electrical circuits in Year 4, for example, pupils' work reflected their individual education plans. The teacher made regular assessments of their progress and adjusted the programme of work to take account of these. Teachers collect assessment information on a day-to-day basis, and staff use this when making decisions at pupils' annual review meetings. Teaching gives pupils equal chances to contribute to discussions and to be successful with their work.

55. Overall, the resource base fulfils a positive role in offering the pupils a chance to develop their basic skills in small group situations at the same time as creating opportunities for them to support their wider academic and social development in a main school setting. The school has done very well in recent times in managing the current uncertainties that have resulted in several staff changes, without detracting from the good quality of the provision.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

56. In order to continue to improve teaching and to raise standards, governors and staff now need to:

- (1) Raise standards in reading throughout the school by:
 - organising more training in using the literacy hour to best effect;
 - providing more opportunities, both in and out of school, for pupils to read and discuss books with adults;
 - promoting a stronger culture of enjoyment of books and reading;
 - improving the range and quality of books available to pupils.
Paragraphs 4,8,19,38,71,73,78.
- (2) Make sure that the policy for teaching and learning is consistently followed in all classes and subjects.
Paragraphs 4,13,15,16,19,20,33,35,46,87,94,122,128,133.
- (3) Review and check the schemes of work for subjects and weekly class timetables to make sure that teachers use lesson time efficiently for teaching individual foundation subjects in sufficient depth, while extending the existing meaningful cross-curricular links.
Paragraphs 6,21,24,66,68,108,112,123.

In addition to taking action on the above key issues, the school should:

- Make sure that financial planning allows for shortages of resources to be rectified quickly.
Paragraphs 17,45,64,78,124,129.
- Look closely at the differences in attainment patterns of girls and boys and take action where necessary.
Paragraphs 5,26,70,82,90.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	58
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	29

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	18	23	11	4	0	0
Percentage	3	31	40	19	7	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	19	208
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/a	59

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	8
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	49

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	10

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1

National comparative data	5.6
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National comparative data	0.5
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2001	19	10	29

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	*	*	*
	Girls	*	*	*
	Total	21	22	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	72 (71)	76 (81)	83 (71)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	*	*	*
	Girls	*	*	*
	Total	23	24	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	79 (71)	83 (68)	83 (68)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2001	19	10	29

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	*	*	*
	Girls	*	*	*
	Total	24	19	23
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	66 (55)	62 (52)	79 (61)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	*	*	*
	Girls	*	*	*
	Total	19	19	23
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	66 (45)	66 (55)	79 (55)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

*The results for girls and boys separately are not required for this school because of the relatively small number of girls tested in Years 2 and 6 in 2001.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	3
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	6
Chinese	0
White	166
Any other minority ethnic group	1

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22
Average class size	30

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	195

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19
Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	70
Number of pupils per FTE adult	6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	447,340
Total expenditure	440,897
Expenditure per pupil	1,683
Balance brought forward from previous year	61,474
Balance carried forward to next year	67,917

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2.9
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

27%

Number of questionnaires sent out

246

Number of questionnaires returned

67

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	51	43	4	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	54	43	1	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	40	51	6	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	37	46	10	4	1
The teaching is good.	52	43	1	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	37	48	10	1	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	63	30	4	0	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	72	28	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	37	54	7	0	1
The school is well led and managed.	45	46	4	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	55	37	4	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	31	12	1	15

Other issues raised by parents

There were no significant issues raised.

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM AND SUBJECTS

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

57. Children in the nursery and reception class make a very good start to their education, although not all the children in the nursery transfer to Oakfield's reception class. Since the last inspection, the national arrangements for judging the quality of provision and standards have been revised. Nevertheless, it is clear that there has been a lot of improvement, and children now achieve well, overall, from their below average attainment when they start in the nursery. Improvements to the curriculum and to teaching and learning enable most children to attain almost all of the goals set nationally for children at the end of the reception year.

Personal, social and emotional development

58. Children achieve very well because teachers and support staff give a lot of attention to making sure that children settle into school life and routines and that they are happy. Adults are friendly and supportive, while ensuring that children learn about acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Staff provide interesting, attractive and stimulating classrooms that encourage children to want to come to school and to please the adults who work with them. Children in the nursery work happily and confidently with all three adults. They are becoming independent with attending to their own personal needs, such as going to the toilet and taking coats off. They can select activities for themselves, work alongside other children and take part in whole-class activities, such as story times. During the inspection, they listened and concentrated very well when their teacher helped the whole class to improve their counting skills.

59. In the reception class, both adults set equally high expectations of children's behaviour and work. The children come to school eagerly, enjoy a good range of work, try their hardest and become confident to take part in the day-to-day life of the school, such as going to assemblies, taking part in formal physical education lessons, playing out and eating dinner at school. Children's very good attitudes and behaviour enable them to be successful in their work in each area of learning. A significant factor in this is the teamwork of staff in both the nursery and the reception class. Adults all set the same standards and give equal attention to making sure that children do well. Teachers in both classes understand the importance of working together closely, especially given the physical divide between the two classrooms. This ensures consistently high quality provision for children of all backgrounds and prior attainments.

Communication, language and literacy

60. Children do well in all areas of their learning, mainly because all the adults give so much time and attention to talking with them, and because staff know how best to teach the basic skills of reading and writing. Teachers plan interesting work and all adults ask questions that encourage the children to answer using the new words they learn. For example, in the reception class, when reading a large book together, the teacher asks, "What time of day does the story take place?" and children have to explain their answers in relation to the clues in the pictures. Teachers set high expectations of the children when planning lessons. In the nursery, adults expect children to begin to understand that print has meaning in reading and writing, and they give children good opportunities to master the earliest reading and writing skills. Many children can recognise their own names and all try to write the letters of their names, some more successfully than others. The children pretend to write by themselves, for example when they write 'pretend' letters to post in their post box.

61. In the reception class, children listen very well to their teacher and support staff. They know what the terms 'title' and 'rhyme' mean when reading a large book aloud together. They predict what might be going to happen in the story, join in with the repeating text and try to read words using their knowledge of the story and of rhyming words. A few children recognise some letters of the alphabet and understand what a 'word' is. Children write simple invitations for a party, although not all can write their letters correctly yet. Higher and average attaining children write a few ideas by themselves with a good attempt at correct spelling. The lower attaining children and those with special educational needs can say what they would like to write, but adults have to help them to do so. A few children still find it difficult to articulate their words correctly.

Mathematical development

62. In the nursery, children benefit from a lot of day-to-day play experiences and talking with adults that furthers their mathematical understanding. They also learn a lot during occasional formal lessons when teachers draw all the children together to recite number rhymes and to talk about numbers and counting. During the inspection, most children joined in confidently counting aloud together to 20. Some recognised written numbers, pointed to the correct number to five whilst others counted, and a few used mathematical terms, such as 'number line', correctly. Children made good progress with learning that, for example, three comes after two because it is one more. Children do very well with learning about numbers because adults do a lot of talking about mathematical ideas in meaningful contexts, such as asking questions like "How many will be left?" Adults use themes, such as the story of 'The Three Bears', well to help children to begin to understand the language and mathematics of 'shape' and 'size'.

63. Children in the reception class also benefit from a lot of talking with adults and different kinds of activities that enable them to continue to make good progress. In their numeracy lesson, they joined in counting aloud together, often well beyond 20, and the higher attaining children counted to 40 correctly. They learned to use the terms 'on top of' and 'below' with understanding. The higher attaining children can solve simple number problems and record their answers by writing numbers and symbols to five and sometimes beyond this. Average attaining children also work with numbers to complete simple sums, such as $4+2=6$. Lower attaining children and children with special educational needs can record their ideas by writing numbers, but need help to do this correctly. Most children can recognise simple geometric shapes and understand terms, such as 'same', 'more' and 'less'.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

64. Nursery staff provide continuous and planned opportunities for children to extend their knowledge and understanding of the world around them, and children make good progress. They enjoy looking through magnifiers at natural materials, for example, and describe autumn leaves by talking about the sounds they make. They use audio equipment to listen to stories, but during the inspection, they had no opportunities to become familiar with using programmable toys and computers. This was owing to problems with existing equipment and a shortage of some resources.

65. The close attention to providing a lot of opportunities for children to further their talking skills continues in the reception class. When discussing a book about the jungle, for example, the nursery nurse spotted an opportunity to introduce the word 'ocean' and talked to children about what the word means. When playing in the water, children learn to use scientific terms, such as 'float' and 'sink', and they can offer explanations as to why things happen. They know the differences between day and night, and can say what the weather is

like outside. When talking about their previous work, children remember that their magnets stuck to metal, but not to wood or plastic. They show a good understanding of the idea of 'living things' and name some things that are 'non-living'. The higher attaining children explain well how sunshine melts snow and it turns into water again, and know that some people believe in God but others do not. Most children still find it hard, however, to talk about the past and where they live. Although previous work on display shows that children can use a computer to record ideas, during the inspection, they rarely did so in their own classroom. Children do, however, benefit from lessons in the computer suite.

Physical development

66. Children in both the nursery and reception class have regular opportunities to improve their physical dexterity in a range of situations using an assortment of materials and equipment. In the nursery, for example, they learn to cut with scissors and use glue sticks, brushes and construction toys. Many can hold writing and drawing materials correctly, and teachers quickly spot when they need more help with this. Children move around the nursery safely, sensibly and with confidence, and when they work outside with beanbags, they try hard to improve their throwing and catching skills. They have too few regular opportunities, however, to move around energetically and to practise larger movements, such as climbing and balancing. In the reception class, children take part in formal physical education lessons. During their dance lesson, they moved their bodies in many different ways and used the large space in the hall sensibly and carefully – although for some children, their excitement was obvious. They enjoyed energetic exercise and changed their movements from light movements to heavy movements in response to the music.

Creative development

67. Children in the nursery express their feelings in a variety of ways. They enjoy listening to stories and make up their own stories when playing in the role-play areas, such as the Three Bears' Cottage. They join in with singing nursery rhymes and experimenting with the musical instruments, and enjoy painting or drawing pictures and making patterns. Children in the reception class build on their creative skills well. Their paintings of favourite toys, for example, show how well their ability to observe and record what they see using finer brushes has improved in a short time. Similarly, in their dance lesson, they listened to a piece of classical music and many children moved their bodies very imaginatively in response to the changing sounds. Other children really enjoyed moving around the hall and letting their arms and legs go with the music.

68. The very good teaching and learning in the nursery and reception class help children to achieve well, overall, in all the areas of learning reported above. Children with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language have equal opportunity to succeed and to achieve their potential. This very good provision is due to strong leadership, the teamwork of all staff, the very good curriculum and the constant attention that teachers give to assessing children, planning their next steps for improvement and making sure that no lesson time is wasted. The outdoor curriculum is not sufficiently well developed, especially in the nursery, but the outdoor activities that are available are always carefully planned. The school is now very well placed to continue to improve in the future due to the very strong commitment of staff to the children's education and progress.

ENGLISH

69. Results in the national tests for eleven year olds in 2001 were well below average and well below the results for schools with a similar proportion of free school meals. Almost a

third of the pupils tested, however, were from the MLD resource base and were not taught in mainstream classes for literacy. When setting these results aside, the school's results were in line with similar schools. Higher attaining pupils did exceptionally well; even when including the results of all the pupils tested, their performance was well above average and well above similar schools. Since 1997, results have fluctuated, but overall, standards have risen faster than the national trend, and in 2001, the school increased the proportion of higher attaining pupils significantly. The results exceeded the target that governors set in 2001 for the proportion of pupils attaining the level expected for eleven year olds.

70. Results in the 2001 national tests in reading and writing for seven year olds were well below average. Pupils did better in writing than they did in reading, however, and when comparing the results with similar schools, their attainment was well below average in reading and below average in writing. Results in 2001 showed no overall improvement on 2000, and test results of seven year olds have not improved quickly enough since the last inspection. As in the juniors, boys did better in tests than girls did, which is a reverse of the national picture. Staff and governors have yet to look closely for reasons and decide if anything needs to be done about this difference.

71. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in infant classes, although the standard of work of seven year olds is still below average. Pupils' achievement in junior classes is good, and this enables them to reach average standards from a below or well below average starting point at the age of seven. Many pupils of all ages could achieve higher standards in reading, however, but teachers have recently given priority to improving standards in writing. Pupils who speak English as an additional language do well and sometimes become higher attaining pupils. Pupils with special educational needs have good support from skilled learning support assistants, and make progress at the same pace as other pupils in their class. Infant pupils are now beginning to achieve better standards in their writing owing to teachers' strong focus on improving writing skills over the last year or so.

72. Judgements about the standard of work by the age of eleven do not include the work of pupils attached to the MLD resource base, who have separate literacy lessons. Standards in speaking and listening by the ages of seven and eleven are better in listening than they are in speaking, but overall, they are about in line with national expectations. Staff work consistently to create a quiet working atmosphere in classrooms. Their calm approach ensures that pupils can listen to teachers and to each other, and this develops their listening skills well. Teachers are careful to extend pupils' vocabulary through skilful questioning. When answering questions and discussing books or their work, junior pupils are confident talkers and speak using a satisfactory level of detail and description. In Year 4, for example, pupils discussed newspaper reports and changed the tenses used, and in Year 6, pupils discussed their ideas for writing a play script coherently. Nevertheless, pupils would benefit from even more planned opportunities to extend their speaking skills in other subjects.

73. Standards in reading are below average by the ages of seven and eleven. Only a small number of pupils read at a level higher than expected for their age or with a good fluency and expression. In literacy lessons in infant classes, teachers use a range of methods to teach early reading skills, and pupils experience a variety of texts. The part of literacy lessons set aside for working with groups of pupils, however, is not used as well as it should be to drive up standards, and teachers need further training to help them to be able to make the best of these sessions. In Year 6, the higher attaining pupils read fluently and enjoy more complex books, like the current favourite 'Harry Potter'. Average and below average attaining pupils attempt to read books at the level expected for their age. They do not practise reading and talking about books with adults often enough, however, and too many are hesitant and falter over uncommon words. Staff need to put greater emphasis on the word and sentence level work within literacy lessons to improve the word building and word

recognition skills of these pupils. When discussing books, pupils can remember the details of the story, recall a few other authors and have favourite books. During the inspection, few pupils expressed pleasure in their reading and not many read out of school. In general, pupils were more confident about using the index and the contents to locate information in books than they were about reading them.

74. The school has invested a lot of time and given a lot of attention to improving the teaching of writing, and teachers in all classes now give writing high priority in the curriculum. Pupils in all classes are beginning to benefit from this, and standards are now rising. The standard of the work of the current seven and eleven year olds is average. Teachers develop pupils' handwriting well in the infant classes, so that by Year 2, they use a competent joined-up script, and average and above average attaining pupils produce mainly correctly formed letters. In their writing lesson, pupils in Year 2 planned stories about being 'Lost'. Almost all wrote at least a few sentences by themselves confidently. By Year 6, pupils write fairly extensively across most subjects. They write vividly, for example, about the lives of children in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in history, and write imaginatively and persuasively to plead for help. Across the school, however, the most significant weaknesses in pupils' writing are the lack of correct grammatical structures and spelling of more complex and uncommon words. Nevertheless, the improved approach to teaching writing skills within literacy lessons, using both shared and guided writing, as well as extended writing at other times, is helping to put these weaknesses right and raising standards.

75. Teaching and learning in English, overall, are satisfactory in the infants and good in the juniors. The improving standards in writing are the result of some good and very good teaching, especially in Years 2, 4, 5 and 6. Teachers have worked very hard to implement the National Literacy Strategy. Strengths in the teaching and learning include enthusiasm, inspiration and good subject knowledge. These factors, along with good classroom management, usually result in motivated pupils who want to do better. An example was seen in Year 6 when pupils followed the teacher's dramatic and expressive reading of 'Harry Potter' with great interest. They wrote their play scripts by following their teacher's excellent model, and read the parts for different characters with real expression. Teachers usually set high expectations of pupils by asking them probing questions and setting them challenging tasks. They use interesting and varied approaches and encourage the pupils to express their ideas accurately in both speaking and writing.

76. Teachers are often very clear in their planning about what they want their pupils to learn in lessons. They sometimes share this information with the pupils themselves, and use the final part of lessons well to recap on what pupils have actually learned. This is not a consistent feature of all the literacy lessons, however, and some good opportunities to involve pupils in their own learning are missed. In almost all lessons, teachers work consistently to implement the school's behaviour policy, so that pupils' behaviour is very good. Teaching is, nevertheless, more successful in some classes than it is in others. The reasons for this relate to the varying pace of pupils' learning and teachers' differing expectations of their pupils. In the one unsatisfactory lesson in Year 3, for example, the teacher had difficulty managing the inappropriate behaviour of some pupils, and this spoilt the lesson for other pupils. Teachers provide some opportunities for pupils to apply and practise their skills in ICT. In Year 6, for example, they work collaboratively to draft play scripts by using computers to set out speech and stage directions.

77. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment are good and in writing they are now very good. Teachers are very familiar with what pupils need to be able to do to attain each National Curriculum level, and they use this information soundly to guide their planning and future assessments. All pupils have personal learning targets and teachers refer to these targets as they outline the work for the pupils and when they are marking. The subject leader

has assessed pupils' writing across the school, and this has helped to identify areas for further improvement. This good assessment practice has yet to be extended to improving teaching and learning in speaking, listening and reading.

78. The subject leader gives a very strong and confident lead to other teachers, which is helping to improve teaching and raise standards. She knows the strengths and areas for improvement well and follows her action plan carefully, in consultation with the governor for literacy, in order to tackle the shortcomings noted in the action plan. Weaknesses in writing, for example, are now being rectified successfully. The school now needs to turn its attention to raising standards in reading by making teaching and learning equally rigorous in all classes, thus ensuring that pupils attain challenging National Curriculum targets. In order for this to happen, the school also needs to extend the range of books available and find more time for pupils to practise reading and talking about books with adults, including parents and other voluntary helpers. The amount of improvement since the last inspection is, nevertheless, good, and the school is well placed to continue to improve in the future.

MATHEMATICS

79. Standards in mathematics are continuing to rise, although much more evidently in the juniors, where pupils' attainment is now higher than at the time of the last inspection. Pupils achieve well by the age of eleven, and this is because the school has adopted the National Numeracy Strategy successfully. Consequently, teaching is improving and pupils now learn the basic skills more systematically than was previously the case. Pupils make better progress in the junior classes than they do in the infant classes owing to the fact that lessons are usually more clearly focused.

80. National test results for eleven year olds have shown consistent improvement over recent years, notably in the number of pupils reaching the higher level. The 2001 results were well below average, and below the results in schools with a similar proportion of free schools meals. Pupils attached to the MLD resource base were not taught in mainstream classes, and, when their results are set aside, pupils' performance was better than the performance of pupils in similar schools. Results for seven year olds have begun to improve, particularly in the number of pupils reaching the level expected for their age. However, starting from an unsatisfactory base, the extent of the improvement has been limited; test results remain well below average and are not yet good enough when compared with results in similar schools. This is mainly because teachers' expectations in Years 1 and 2 are not always as high as they might be, and some of the brighter pupils are not challenged to complete work to the best of their abilities.

81. The standard of the work of seven year olds is below average. Teachers' planning generally takes adequate account of pupils' differing prior attainment, although teachers ask some pupils to complete tasks that are too easy for them, and for others, worksheets are sometimes too hard and often left unfinished. Nevertheless, more pupils are on course to reach higher levels than in the recent past. Most pupils can count forwards and backwards, adding and subtracting numbers up to 100. Some are beginning to understand that two-digit numbers are made up of tens and units, but most are not confident working with larger numbers, estimating, or recalling simple number facts from memory. They can measure in centimetres and calculate the change in small money sums. Some work is untidy and careless, for example when pupils are drawing and naming shapes. The achievement of most infants, including those with special educational needs, is satisfactory and they make sound progress over time. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress. Some of the brighter infants, however, do not always achieve as well as they could. The school is meeting its own targets for increasing the number of pupils reaching the expected level by the age of seven.

82. Judgements about the standard of work of eleven year olds do not include the work of pupils attached to the MLD resource base. Pupils in junior classes, including those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, achieve well and reach the standard of work found in most schools by the age of eleven. Good test results last year partly reflected a more capable year group than the current Year 6 pupils, and the school exceeded its target. In both infant and junior classes in recent years, girls have achieved less well than boys in the national tests, and the school needs to examine the reasons for this as part of their drive to raise standards further.

83. By Year 6, pupils can measure with increasing accuracy, including measuring in millimetres, and they understand the properties of two-dimensional and three-dimensional geometric shapes. They can read the 24-hour clock and are beginning to use their mathematical knowledge to solve problems. They can add, subtract, multiply and divide, with higher attaining pupils using quite large numbers, for example when multiplying by partitioning. The school organises the teaching of pupils in Years 5 and 6 by putting them into classes according to their prior attainment rather than their age. This has some benefits, namely that pupils work with others at a similar stage, and teachers can have similar expectations of them when setting work and asking questions. However, the school needs to ensure that pupils' access to the full mathematics curriculum throughout the year is not compromised by being in the class of lower attaining pupils, where the teaching objectives often focus on Year 5 work. In Year 6, most pupils are beginning to understand decimal numbers. They can use fractions, which the higher attaining pupils can reduce to simple terms. They collect and translate data into graphs, and some pupils can use a range of line graphs to convert units of measurement, such as changing temperatures from Fahrenheit to Centigrade.

84. Throughout the school, teachers put a good emphasis on helping pupils to try different ways of calculating and explaining their particular chosen methods, using the correct vocabulary. For example, some Year 2 pupils used their emerging understanding of tens and units to add two-digit numbers quickly and accurately. In a lesson for the lower attaining pupils in Years 5 and 6, pupils used words, such as 'angle' and 'length', correctly when investigating the properties of different types of triangles. Almost all pupils make sound gains in remembering number facts and tables. In some classes, teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills, both within numeracy lessons and in other parts of the curriculum, such as gathering information in science or using a database on the computer to develop their understanding of formulae. However, this is not consistent, and overall, progress in using and applying mathematics is not quite as good as in other parts of the subject. Opportunities to use ICT within the mathematics curriculum are not yet fully in place, although some very good work is being introduced in the new computer suite.

85. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in infant classes and good in junior classes. All staff have adopted the lesson planning format recommended by the National Numeracy Strategy. The introductory sessions are more consistently successful because teachers use interesting resources, their questioning skills are good and the pace of lessons is usually appropriately brisk. Staff succeed in making these sessions fun for the pupils so that they participate eagerly and try hard. For instance, in a Year 3 lesson, most of the class were eager to offer suggestions about which silver coins they could use to make up 50 pence, and the teacher used the overhead projector well to demonstrate the answers.

86. Practical activities for the main part of lessons are planned well. They are usually matched to the pupils' needs, although too often in Years 1 and 2 all pupils start with the same work, which does not extend brighter pupils sufficiently. Teachers in these classes use workbooks and worksheets extensively, offering pupils insufficient opportunities to set out

their own ideas. However, almost all pupils work independently, and show increasing pride in their work as they get older.

87. The final part of lessons is sometimes a little rushed, but in the best lessons, teachers use this time well to reinforce the main teaching objectives and to help pupils to understand how well they have done. The regular marking of work does not usually give much guidance about what pupils have done well and what they need to focus on next time. Good management of pupils in most classes ensures that they behave well, work hard and concentrate on the work in hand. A recently qualified teacher is experiencing some difficulties in sustaining good work attitudes, although additional support in this class reduced the extent of the problem during the inspection.

88. The school has, rightly, focused on raising standards in mathematics and initiatives have successfully addressed the priorities that were set. In Years 1 and 2, the aim of increasing the number of pupils reaching the expected National Curriculum level is being met. This now needs extending to improve the ways in which the needs of the higher attaining pupils are met. The assessment of pupils' attainment is good throughout the school, and teachers use the information they gather increasingly effectively to match pupils' work to the accomplishments of different groups. Some initial work on setting individual targets for the pupils is currently being evaluated. This needs to be developed more consistently, for example in the marking of work, so that pupils and their parents are regularly reminded of the specific learning points being covered.

89. The recently appointed subject leader has quickly identified strengths and weaknesses in the subject. She has a clear agenda for continuing the improvements, having been allowed time to visit all classes and to begin collecting work samples to help teachers to give National Curriculum levels to pupils' work. Mathematics is managed well and the school is securely placed to continue to improve teaching and raise standards in the future.

SCIENCE

90. The results of the 2001 teachers' assessments for seven year olds were well below the national average, and below results for similar schools. Pupils' attainment was much better in 2001 than in the previous year, however, because significantly more pupils attained the level expected for their age. The teacher's predictions for the results of the current pupils in Year 2 suggest that results are likely to improve again this year due to improved teaching that is now paying dividends. The results of the 2001 national tests for eleven year olds were below the national average and below results for similar schools. When taking account of the fact that almost a quarter of the pupils tested had statements of special educational need and were from the MLD resource base, test results were above similar schools. Out of the seven pupils from the resource base, who are taught alongside pupils of their own age, two pupils did very well in the tests, one attaining level 4 and the other level 3. All the other pupils in Year 6 attained at least level 4, five pupils reaching level 5 and one pupil gaining a level 6. Test results for eleven year olds are rising, and the school is now getting more pupils to the higher level than in recent years. Over the last few years, boys have attained higher standards than girls have, and to a greater extent than the national trend. Staff have yet to look into the reasons why this might be, and to discuss whether anything needs to be done about it.

91. The work seen during the inspection reflects a good amount of improvement in pupils' attainment, particularly in Years 2, 4, 5 and 6. This improvement is owing to the introduction of a nationally recognised scheme of work that gives more structure to the teaching across the school and emphasises the need to use practical investigations to promote learning. The majority of lessons seen gave pupils a chance to carry out a practical activity; for example, in

Year 4, pupils made electrical circuits using batteries, wires and bulbs. Investigative work of this nature has a positive effect on the way that pupils learn scientific facts, and is an example of improvement since the last inspection.

92. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, now achieve well, and by the ages of seven and eleven, standards are in line with national expectations. In a lesson in Year 6, pupils made good progress in their understanding of materials and the methods by which substances can be separated. The teacher made good use of role-play, pretending to have an accident causing the salt, sand and iron filings to mix. She asked pupils to devise a way to separate the substances, and they did so successfully by using magnets, filtration and evaporation. Pupils have studied the parts of a plant and understand the process of photosynthesis. A pupil in Year 6 was fascinated by a 'live' display in the classroom of triop creatures and explained how they lie dormant in the desert and only hatch when it rains. In a Year 5 lesson, pupils worked well in groups and showed a good range of research skills, including using a computer program to increase their knowledge of the workings of the heart. In Year 4, pupils can find answers to problems set by the teacher about the equipment needed to create an electrical circuit. In their lesson, a higher attaining pupil questioned the need to have two wires to produce a circuit, and later proved that it can be done with just one wire. Pupils record their work in different ways, including writing up their investigations, and they sometimes apply their mathematical skills, as when recording results in tables and graphs.

93. By the age of seven, pupils can classify objects as either being manufactured or natural. They understand that materials have different properties and that this makes them suitable for varying purposes, for example the wool of sheep is greasy in order to make it waterproof. They talk about sound being loud and soft and know that toy cars move if pushed or pulled. They understand how we use our senses and that we need certain foods to give us a healthy diet.

94. Teaching and learning are good overall in both the infants and the juniors, and this is an improvement since the subject was last inspected. Lessons during the inspection, however, ranged from very good in Years 5 and 6 to an unsatisfactory lesson in Year 3. The school's strengths in teaching and learning are most evident when teachers have high expectations, provide well-structured and interesting activities and ask challenging and probing questions. Pupils respond well to these challenges, showing interest and involvement, such as when learning about materials in Years 2 and 6. In the Year 5 lesson, pupils were keen to communicate their findings about the human heart to the rest of the group. Some lessons have a brisk pace and teachers and classroom assistants provide good support so that pupils remain interested and involved. Unsatisfactory teaching is seen, however, when activities carry on too long and pupils are unsure of what is expected of them, as in a Year 3 lesson on magnetism. In this lesson, pupils lost interest and concentration and their chattering interrupted the lesson. Teachers and support assistants ensure that pupils with special educational needs gain full access to lessons; for example, pupils from the MLD resource base were totally involved in the Year 6 lesson on materials and made good progress.

95. The school's procedures for assessing pupils are good. The information gained from these assessments, however, is not always used as well as it could be to plan work for pupils of differing prior attainment in each class. Although resources are satisfactory, they need reviewing in order to support the increasing number and variation of investigations that teachers plan in lessons. The subject leader has a broad overview of teaching, learning and standards in the school, and takes advantage of advisory support from the local education authority in order to help colleagues. This makes a sound contribution to taking the school forward.

ART AND DESIGN

96. Art and design is currently a focus for whole school development, and the school has improved a lot since the last full inspection in 1998, when the standard of work for eleven year olds was below national expectations. The new subject leader is well qualified and experienced and helps other staff to improve their teaching; consequently, the standard of work is improving, especially in junior classes. Part of the improvement is because of the revised programmes of work being put into practice. These give proper focus to teaching the art skills identified in the National Curriculum in their own right, but with meaningful links, when appropriate, to other subjects. Pupils in Year 4, for example, use the Internet to find out more about the national world of art.

97. It was only possible to see one lesson, but recent work on display is better than the work of eleven year olds in most schools. Pupils in Year 6 can observe the work of famous artists or reflect on a poem before recording their ideas in paint or pastel. Their pictures are thoughtful, careful, imaginative and pleasing to look at. The pupils have also worked with children in the reception class and helped them to grow in confidence to record their ideas in this way. The three-dimensional clay sculptures on display show that pupils can co-operate to record what they see by modelling with clay. These pieces of work show that pupils can add a good amount of detail and apply the skills and techniques that their teacher has taught them.

98. The recent work of seven year olds is in line with national expectations, although there are clear signs of improvement owing to the involvement of the subject leader in teachers' planning. Pupils can work with a range of art materials to record what they see, imagine or remember. Their pictures of 'holiday memories', for example, show that they can mix the media well in one picture. Their finished clay faces show that they can look closely at themselves and others and record what they observe by using clay for a variety of effects.

99. The school gives high priority to art and design in displays around the school. Teachers in all classes celebrate pupils' achievement as part of a programme for raising their self-esteem. This is successful because pupils are, rightly, very proud of their work and talk about it with enthusiasm. A regular link with a local art gallery adds further interest to pupils' work, as do initiatives, such as having a visit from a local artist and holding a school art week. Work in art and design makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils in Year 3, for example, study 'pop art' and create pictures emphasising texture and colour. Pupils in Year 5 look closely at natural materials before recording their ideas in paint using thin brushes to mix and apply colours. Their pictures are thoughtful, detailed and very carefully produced.

100. No overall judgements about teaching and learning were made, although the one lesson seen in Year 5 was very good. The teacher has a very good technical knowledge of working with clay and used direct teaching very well to help pupils to learn the skills and techniques necessary to make successful coil pots. The teacher did well to manage a practical lesson so smoothly in a classroom with limited space for such a large number of pupils. The pupils watched and listened to the teacher well before going excitedly to their places to try things out for themselves. They enjoyed the work and tried hard to follow their teacher's guidance. Pupils with special educational needs had good support to enable them to play a full part in the lesson. They made good progress alongside pupils of the same age.

101. Work from a recent whole-school art and design theme on portraits is displayed in the hall. This is a very good way of recording pupils' progress as they move from class to class

and of making sure that the work of every pupil is seen to be valued. It makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development. The work provides clear evidence that pupils make good progress with learning how to use an increasing range of art materials, and that their achievement by the ages of seven and eleven is now good. The school is very well placed to continue to increase teachers' confidence to teach art and design and to improve the standard of work in the school even further in the future.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

102. By the ages of seven and eleven, pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations and pupils in all year groups, including those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, achieve well. This is an improvement since the last time the subject was inspected, when pupils' progress was unsatisfactory and standards were below national expectations. The reason for this improvement is that the subject leader is pointing teachers in the right direction, and the school now follows a programme of work that focuses on teaching relevant skills, as well as knowledge, in a well-structured and interesting way. The school is now well placed to continue to improve in the future.

103. During the inspection, pupils in Year 6 constructed wind and water shelters for soft toys using a wide range of materials, such as paper, cardboard, plastic film, glue and sticky tape. Groups of pupils worked together to agree the features they wanted to consider to make their finished products fit for the intended purposes. Pupils responded very well to the stimulating and challenging task their teacher set for them; one group built a shelter in a cone shape to ensure that it was waterproof and stable. Following a visit to the theatre to see a production of 'Twelfth Night', pupils designed puppets to represent the characters in the play. The puppets were string and rod-operated, and were later used to perform a puppet show for the younger pupils in the school. In a food technology lesson in Year 5, pupils conducted a comparative study about biscuits. The teacher asked pupils to decide which biscuit was best value for money when taking account of the taste, packaging, design and cost, and which biscuit was their preferred choice. The teacher in Year 4 plans work that links well with pupils' work in science, and pupils will design and make torches as part of their work on electrical circuits.

104. In Year 2, pupils design and make rod-operated puppets. They use lollipop sticks, glue and paper fasteners to create puppets with movable joints. Their cutting out and sticking skills are good. Pupils in Year 1 explore different ways of using sliding mechanisms to make moving cards. They design and produce attractive and interesting backgrounds for their cards using colouring and paper scrunching techniques.

105. Teaching and learning are good, overall, in both the infants and the juniors, and this is an improvement since the subject was last inspected. Teachers explain the work carefully and make sure that pupils are clear what they have to do. They manage pupils well in practical activities, and make sure that pupils understand the need for working safely with tools and equipment. Teachers are good at questioning pupils and encouraging them to think and do things for themselves. In a very good lesson in Year 6, pupils formed themselves into groups in a sensible and mature manner. They worked very hard and achieved a lot in a single lesson. Four pupils from the MLD resource base took part in the lesson and made good progress alongside pupils of their own age. The higher attaining pupils in the groups offered lower attaining pupils good support. Pupils of all ages are proud, rightly, of their finished products, and teachers promote the subject positively to them by displaying finished items around the school for all to see.

GEOGRAPHY

106. In the one lesson seen and pupils' previous work, there was too little evidence to make overall judgements about pupils' attainment by the ages of seven and eleven. Pupils in Year 1 are studying islands and have begun to draw simple plans and maps. Pupils in Year 3 are finding out about the local environment and the services within it. Pupils in Year 6 are studying mountains in localities across the world. They are involved in researching to identify locations and mountain ranges and comparing the environments for similar or different characteristics. The well-presented written work shows good research skills, but pupils' use of geographical vocabulary is not as well developed. The small amount of work for pupils in Year 6 is below national expectations.

107. The one lesson seen was in Year 6. Teaching and learning were good because the teacher successfully combined teaching and learning in geography with appropriate work in ICT. Pupils were keen to research by themselves, but their geographical knowledge and understanding was not as good as it should be for pupils of their age; for example, they were not very confident in suggesting reasons for a tourist trade in summer. Pupils with special educational needs and those from the MLD resource base took a full part in the lesson and were helped very well on computers by more capable pupils in the class. This made a very good contribution to pupils' social development.

108. Geography is one of the school's current priorities for development. The plan includes a very useful and accurate evaluation of the school's provision that is based on the new subject leader's observations, including observing teaching in some other classes. She has benefited from training in carrying out this management role and gives good support to colleagues. The school has plans to review the curriculum and to work towards raising standards by building on strengths and rectifying weaknesses over the next year. A draft policy for the teaching and development of geography is to form the basis for these developments. There are examples of steady improvement since the last inspection, and the school is now well placed to achieve its aims in the school development plan. Staff now need to review the long-term curriculum plan in order to make sure that the subject has enough teaching and learning time to enable pupils to study geographical topics in sufficient depth, while maintaining some of the current good opportunities for cross-curricular links with other subjects.

HISTORY

109. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, make satisfactory progress through the school. Pupils' achievement is appropriate, given the weaknesses in their knowledge and understanding of the world when they start full-time school. However, partly because the scheme of work has only recently been established, there are significant gaps in many pupils' historical knowledge and skills that prevent them reaching the expected National Curriculum level by the age of eleven. This is similar to the findings of the last inspection. The school is aware of this weakness, and action to raise standards is planned to continue under the guidance of the very recently appointed new subject leader.

110. By the age of seven, pupils are beginning to compare past and present, for example in examining changes in holidays over the last 100 years. This work is mostly at a simple

level and rarely extends into giving reasons for changes. Pupils are learning to look at historical evidence such as artefacts and pictures. During the inspection, Year 2 pupils were enthralled and captivated by a personal story of the Second World War and, because of good teaching, they asked relevant questions to find out more. The work recorded over time is around the expected National Curriculum level, but often limited in quantity and quality, so that brighter pupils are not taken on to the next level.

111. By the age of eleven, pupils have studied a number of historical periods. Good work in Year 4 on Ancient Egypt is the result of challenging teaching. Pupils gain relevant historical knowledge whilst learning appropriate skills, such as searching the Internet for information about the pyramids and distinguishing primary and secondary evidence sources. These skills are not fully extended in Year 5, although in Year 6, research skills are again developed well. An example is when the teacher sets an additional challenge for pupils by asking them to think about what they already know – for example in studying Victorian childhood – and planning what they want to find out next. However, there are significant gaps, for example in their understanding of chronology and in being able to recall or make use of key information. Most pupils have difficulty in linking the periods and events they have studied, partly because this is not emphasised enough in the teaching or in the scheme of work.

112. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in both the infants and the juniors. Some good teaching was seen during the inspection, although over time there are some common weaknesses. All staff blend the teaching of essential knowledge with the acquisition and application of historical skills, but with varying success. They make good use of available resources and where the teacher has personal enthusiasm and understanding of the subject this rubs off on the pupils. For example, Year 4 pupils were encouraged to devise their own questions before using the Internet, because the teacher understood the importance of work of this kind. Time for the subject is limited and some lessons are too short to adequately revise previous learning and move on to high quality activities. As a result, pupils do not always complete work in sufficient depth.

113. The subject is a priority in the school development plan. The new subject leader has not yet had enough time to contribute to raising standards. The provision of time away from teaching lessons and the use of support from outside the school, however, has very quickly enabled her to begin to find out about the strengths and weaknesses in the school's current provision. A straightforward, but relevant, assessment system provides information about what pupils have learned, although this is not yet used fully in planning their future work.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

114. At the time of the last inspection, standards were too low because resources and the level of staff expertise were inadequate. The school has started to make very rapid progress now that the new computer suite has been installed and staff training has started. Consequently, although there are still gaps in pupils' learning that mean that standards by the ages of seven and eleven are below national expectations, pupils are now making very good progress, particularly in Years 4, 5 and 6. Owing to very good subject leadership and the willingness of staff to undertake training, often in their own time, the school is very well placed to continue to raise standards further in the future.

115. By the age of seven, standards are below the expected level, but pupils' achievement and progress are now satisfactory, particularly in computer skills. With guidance, pupils can log on to the computer using the mouse and keyboard with the expected level of skill and confidence, but most do not know how to save their work without help. Pupils in Year 1 can

find letters and the space bar on the keyboard, and the higher attaining pupils know how to change between lower and upper case letters. In a Year 2 lesson during the inspection, pupils could click and move the mouse in a painting and drawing program to write their own names and to experiment with different effects. By the end of the lesson, higher attaining pupils – about a quarter of the class – were showing good initiative in trying new techniques, using menu buttons and correcting their work. One pair of pupils was able to draw all the numerals from 1 to 10, showing great satisfaction with their final product. This illustrates a consistent strength of the teaching throughout the school; pupils are taught specific planned skills in each lesson which they are then encouraged to use creatively in their own work.

116. By the age of eleven, standards are still below the expected level because the hardware has not been available long enough for pupils to cover the entire required curriculum, and some software is still not available, for example in mathematics and music. Nevertheless, pupils are currently making very good progress, as a result of well-planned teaching and more frequent opportunities in ICT lessons and in other subjects to acquire and use a good range of skills. For example, in a Year 5 lesson, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, made good progress in entering data into a spreadsheet. Brighter pupils can use a formula to total the data. They understand terminology, such as 'cells' and 'columns' and can suggest uses of spreadsheets in the real world. In common with some other staff members, the teacher used her own inexperience with computers to encourage the pupils by repeatedly pointing out how she was learning as much as they were! Most pupils are less confident to talk about their work and to use the technical vocabulary that staff introduce them to.

117. Pupils in Year 6 are making exceptional progress due to enthusiastic and skilful teaching. They learn to construct a multimedia presentation based on individual staff biographies. They apply techniques, such as text manipulating, animating, illustrating by importing pictures and graphics and by sound sampling. Almost all pupils enjoy experimenting and most can reverse and correct their work if necessary. They are developing a secure appreciation of the place of ICT in the outside world and feel confident about their skills. Resources for control technology and digital cameras are used in some classes, but less frequently because the current focus is on developing the use of personal computers.

118. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in the infants and good in the juniors. Teachers' subject knowledge is variable because the nationally funded training has only just become available to the school. Staff are learning how to use the new computer suite with good support from the subject leader and a very committed parent who helps in school. Sufficient computers are available in the suite for pupils to work in pairs. This is being managed effectively with different groupings according to the needs of each lesson, so that pupils collaborate well. In some classes, pupils from the MLD resource base are integrated successfully, generally working with more able pupils to the benefit of everyone in the class. This is mainly due to the very positive attitudes of staff. Pupils are enthusiastic, behave well and many show good initiative when developing their work. For example, in a Year 1 lesson, some of the more confident pupils added their own words to those provided within the program; the teacher noticed this and praised the pupils.

119. Despite continuing shortages of personal computers in classrooms, teachers take some good opportunities in other lessons for ICT to be included. This is not always as well planned, however, and overall, the provision is imbalanced. In timetabling the suite, sessions are deliberately included for other subjects. For example, in a successful Year 4 history lesson, pupils working at different levels used the Internet to find out more about the pyramids in Ancient Egypt. Similarly, two teachers worked together in a Year 6 geography lesson in which pupils searched for information about the Dolomite Mountains. The impact of this

imaginative lesson was reduced only because insufficient time was available for most pupils to complete the task. The school makes good provision for pupils to use the computers outside lesson time. This complements their learning and very successfully offers opportunities for pupils to show initiative and take responsibility.

120. The school has improved very well since the previous inspection. Some continuing gaps in resources have been identified and a secure plan is in place to address these. The subject leader is enthusiastic with up-to-date expertise that is being shared effectively with colleagues through a planned training and demonstration programme. Arrangements for assessing pupils are good, and the curriculum has been sensibly modified to reflect pupils' learning needs. This will need to be monitored closely as standards rise. Grant funding is allocated wisely, providing good value for money and raising attainment well.

MUSIC

121. It was possible to see only one lesson and a singing practice, and no overall judgements were made about standards, teaching and learning. Developing provision for music has not been a main priority for the school in recent years, and there are shortages of resources, such as tuned percussion instruments, ethnic instruments and computer software. The subject leader has a personal action plan for taking the school forward. This shows that there is still work to be done to enable pupils to attain the standard expected nationally by the ages of seven and eleven, and not all teachers have enough expertise and confidence to teach music to their own classes. The subject leader, who has good technical knowledge, helps less confident teachers and knows that standards in the school need to improve. She is not as competent with planning lessons that provide stimulating and challenging work for the pupils. Therefore, there has not been a great deal of improvement since the subject was last inspected.

122. Teaching and learning in the one lesson seen in Year 1 were generally satisfactory. The teacher has a plan for teaching music over a period of time, but this is not sufficiently specific about what pupils are going to learn in order to improve their musical knowledge, understanding and skills. In the lesson, the teacher was enthusiastic and the pupils were keen to play the instruments available, but they had only rare and brief opportunities to do so. The lesson moved on slowly, and by the end, some pupils showed signs of frustration because there was not much to challenge their thinking or own creativity. Nevertheless, they were well behaved and listened carefully.

123. When pupils from the reception class and Years 1 and 2 come together for singing, they all enjoy singing familiar songs to piano accompaniment. They do not have, however, enough encouragement to improve their musical skills, and the teacher expects too little of them, especially the older pupils. This curriculum time is not used efficiently because, although three teachers are present, pupils make no evident progress with learning the skills required by the National Curriculum.

124. By the age of seven, pupils use a few basic percussion instruments to make loud or soft sounds. They listen to a simple rhythm, repeat it by clapping and change the sounds they make in response to looking at a musical symbol. When singing with younger pupils, their singing is not yet up to the standard expected for their age. Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language make as much progress as other pupils of the same age. During the inspection, a few pupils in Year 6 enjoyed composing a short musical sequence together to accompany a piece of recorded modern music. They practised in their own time and performed for the whole school during an assembly. Other pupils listened with interest. Pupils have no opportunities to use ICT to

further their learning in music because the school does not have any suitable programs. The shortages of resources are unacceptable when the school's budget is so healthy.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

125. The amount of improvement since the last time the subject was inspected is reasonable considering the school's other more pressing priorities. Although both infants and juniors take part in an adequate range of physical activities, these are not yet taught to a high enough standard, and this leads to low achievement and below average standards by the ages of seven and eleven. Overall, pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, make slow progress in the key skills, such as gymnastics and dance.

126. Pupils in Years 5 and 6, however, develop good skills in hockey owing to the excellent teaching of a visiting qualified sports teacher. They show good stick control when dribbling the ball and can perform an accurate push pass to a partner. A number of pupils have achieved swimming awards for swimming between 10 and 400 metres. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 now take part in a residential visit to an outdoor activity centre where they participate in a range of activities, such as canoeing, abseiling and archery. A group of girls played in a five-a-side football competition for local schools and won the silver medal.

127. By Year 2, pupils take part in dance, ball skill activities and gymnastics. They are taught football skills by a visiting coach who is employed by the school on a part-time basis. In gymnastics, pupils can perform a sequence of three movements confidently, but these are not to a high enough standard because the teacher does not expect them to improve the quality of their performances.

128. Teaching and learning range from excellent to unsatisfactory, but they are unsatisfactory overall in both the infants and the juniors. The excellent teaching seen during the inspection was in the Years 5 and 6 hockey lessons. Pupils were aware of the purpose of the 'warming-up' session at the beginning of the lessons. The visiting coach set high expectations of the pupils and used good quality demonstrations to encourage pupils to constantly improve their skills. These lessons had a brisk pace that maintained and stimulated the pupils' interest and enjoyment of their work. In the unsatisfactory lessons in Years 2 and 3, however, teachers did not demand a high enough quality of performance from the pupils, and there was a lack of structure to these lessons. In the Year 3 gymnastics lesson, pupils lost interest and their behaviour deteriorated because they were unclear about what they had to do.

129. Lesson planning has improved since the last inspection because staff have started to take account of recent national guidelines about teaching physical education. Some teachers, however, still lack confidence to teach the subject and need further training to enable them to know how to teach all the different elements of the curriculum effectively. The temporary subject leader is aware of the priority areas for development. She knows that the school needs to have the resources required to teach the range of activities, for example different sizes of balls and good quality mats for gymnastics that offer enough protection for pupils when they are working on the floor. These minor shortages of resources are unacceptable when the school's budget is so healthy. Physical education does not feature on the school development plan this year due to other more pressing priorities, and the management of provision is not yet strong enough to raise standards in the near future.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

130. Teachers' assessments confirm that pupils in Year 6 attain standards that are below the expectations of the Tameside Agreed Syllabus. Since the last inspection, however, the school has done a lot to improve the curriculum and teaching in religious education, including appointing a knowledgeable, supportive and positive subject leader. Teachers now plan lessons that reflect this well, and they also take account of further national guidance for teaching the subject. This results in a good programme of work that makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The curriculum also includes relevant opportunities for pupils to use ICT as an integral part of lessons. Pupils in Year 1, for example, have used a computer program to search for suitable symbols that reflect their work about christenings, and pupils in Year 2 have found out about Jewish synagogues by looking at 'virtual' images on the screen.

131. No lessons were seen in Years 1 and 2, but pupils' previous written work suggests that by the age of seven, they respond to ideas, such as 'special books' and 'special clothes' in thoughtful writing, using the new words they are learning, such as 'Torah'. The school's long-term curriculum plan and teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment indicate that there is likely to be provision for pupils to reach the standard expected by the age of seven.

132. Teaching and learning in the juniors are satisfactory overall, as is pupils' achievement. The very good teaching in Year 6 makes a significant contribution to raising the standard of work of eleven year olds. The teacher plans meaningful work that motivates and enthuses the pupils so that they try hard to respond to the mental challenges she sets for them. As a result of this thoughtful and sensitive teaching, pupils develop good attitudes towards the beliefs and religious practices of people from several religions, and have a growing understanding of religious ideas, such as 'worship', 'sacred' and 'holy'. Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language take a full part in such lessons and make very good progress alongside other pupils in their class. The teacher takes advantage of an opportunity for Moslem pupils in the school to help others to understand beliefs and customs. Pupils know that the Bible is a 'special book' for Christians. They have studied Psalm 136 and have discussed and written about how the words could relate to people's lives today.

133. Teaching and learning in the lessons seen in Years 3 and 5 were not as effective as in Year 6. Teachers in these classes also plan good lessons and ask pupils a lot of questions to make them think and express their thoughts. During the inspection, however, pupils did not show enough interest and enthusiasm, and in Year 3, the behaviour of some pupils was poor, even with two teachers in the room. The subject leader worked hard to teach her very carefully planned and interesting lesson, but pupils did not respond well enough, and their learning was unsatisfactory, including pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language. Although a lesson in Year 4 was not seen, pupils' previous work shows that they too have good opportunities to find out about religions in a meaningful context. They find out, for example, about the different ways in which people worship and about the special things that Christians use as part of their worship.

134. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment are very good and much better than usually seen in other schools. With the recent improvements to the curriculum and teaching and the very good leadership, the school is now well placed to raise attainment in future years.