

INSPECTION REPORT

**STRETTON ST MATTHEW'S CE PRIMARY
SCHOOL**

Warrington

LEA area: Warrington

Unique reference number: 111382

Headteacher: Mr C R Stott

Reporting inspector: Mrs J Thomas
17711

Dates of inspection: 20 - 22 May 2002

Inspection number: 244976

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: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 4 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Stretton Road
Warrington

Postcode: WA4 4NT

Telephone number: 01925 730371

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs C Bingham

Date of previous inspection: 24/6/96

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
17711	J B Thomas	Registered inspector	English	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9884	M Roscoe	Lay inspector		Attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
16041	O L Thomas	Team inspector	Art and design Foundation Stage Special educational needs	Science Physical education
22578	G Jones	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Design and technology Equal opportunities	How good are curricular and other opportunities? How well does the school care for its pupils?
30023	R Taylor	Team inspector	Geography History Music	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Stretton St Matthew's Church of England (aided) Primary School is situated in the village of Stretton on the outskirts of Warrington. It has served the village for over 160 years. The area is subject to a large increase in private housing. The school is about the same size as other primary schools, its roll has grown since 1997/8 from 189; there are now 210 pupils on roll - 99 boys/111 girls - taught in seven classes. The school does not have a nursery - but there are 27 full-time reception pupils. The school is now at capacity and regularly oversubscribed and applications are regularly received from out of area. The socio-economic circumstances of the area are favourable. Baseline assessments have been used for the past three years and these show children come into school with abilities above average in early literacy and numeracy skills and well above average in personal and social skills.

All pupils are white and of UK heritage. There are no children from refugee, travellers or asylum seekers families. No pupils have English as an additional language. There are no pupils claiming free school meals. There are 19 pupils on the school's register of special educational need. Four pupils have statements of special educational need.

The school has not suffered any significant recruitment, retention or staffing difficulties. The school does suffer from very limited funding and restrictive accommodation.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a highly effective school, which provides its pupils with a strong grounding in primary education and prepares them very well for the next stage of learning. The excellent leadership by the Headteacher has ensured pupils achieve very well and attain above average standards by the time they leave at 11. Standards for seven year olds are also above expectations for this age. Teaching is good overall with high quality teaching in a number of year groups. Pupils benefit from the very relevant, interesting curriculum offered by the school supported by high quality basic skills teaching. The school knows itself well and provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards of work and pupils' achievement not least in the national tests.
- Teaching is good with very high quality teaching in Years 1, 2 and 4.
- Attitudes, behaviour and pupils' relationships are very good.
- The range, quality and breadth of the curriculum at Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Its partnership with parents.
- The very effective leadership and management of the Headteacher and key staff in partnership with the governors, who fulfill their responsibilities very well.

What could be improved

There are no major issues for improvement in this school but it should look to:

- Capitalise on the use of the good assessment practice to raise standards further.
- Continue to look at ways to improve standards in writing and elements of information and communication technology (ICT).
- Review the organisation and planning of the Foundation Stage curriculum.
- Further the opportunities for pupils to improve their skills of investigation, particularly in mathematics and science.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made significant improvements in many areas of its work since it was last inspected in June 1996. This is because of the Headteacher's drive for high quality in all aspects of the school's work.

- Schemes of work now in place for most areas of the curriculum. Comprehensive scheme of work for physical education (PE). The curriculum provision is now high quality. Schemes of work in history and geography are still being developed but practice is good.
- Assessment procedures are vastly improved and a whole-school approach prevails.
- Accommodation has been improved but still constrains the delivery of the curriculum especially in Year 1.
- Test results show an improvement over time, sustaining pupils attaining at the higher levels.
- The quality of teaching has improved; impacting on how well pupils achieve.

The Headteacher's first rate leadership and the valuable support of governors and staff make the school securely placed to go from strength to strength.

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	A*	A*	A	B	very high A* well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Mathematics	A*	A	B	C	
Science	A*	A	B	D	

Attainment on entry is above what is usually found. Children attain well in most areas of learning and make good progress by the end of the Foundation Stage. The trend of test performance is broadly in line with the national trend and the apparent slight decline last year is relative to the capabilities of that cohort of pupils. Nevertheless, the school exceeded its own high targets for test performance in 2001 and looks set to do so this year.

The results show above average attainment in mathematics and science and well above average in English. In mathematics, pupils performed at least as well as similar schools and above them in English. The comparison of science results shows that although all pupils attained the expected Level 4 or above, slightly less of them attained the higher Level 5 resulting in the below average grade. The similar school's comparison belies the very good progress these pupils have made when their prior attainment at the age of seven is taken into account.

Standards of work are above national expectations for seven and 11 year old pupils. They have been improved to a better level than at the last inspection notably in science, design and

technology, art and design and PE, all of which are now above expectations. The school has improved standards in writing but recognises that more can be done in the areas of presentation skills and extended writing. Information and communication technology has largely kept pace with initiatives but resource issues prevail which hinder progress in elements of the subject but standards are overall in line with expectations for pupils' ages. Pupils achieve very well by the time they leave at the age of 11. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress with additional support but this is too limited. The school is already taking action to increase the number of support staff. Pupils of higher attaining ability are challenged well overall, this again is an area that the school is continually looking to build on. The introduction of target setting could assist the process.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Most pupils have very positive attitudes to school. They enjoy the challenging activities, show a good work ethic and settle quickly to tasks. A few older pupils show some immaturity and lack of perseverance.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is overall very good but some pupils lack self-discipline.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is good and relationships are very good.
Attendance	Good levels of attendance. There is some regular lateness by individual pupils which is not acceptable and for which parents must bear responsibility.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is good overall and ranges from satisfactory to excellent. Dedication, care and high expectations are intrinsic to the work of all staff. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is mainly good and very well supported by the nursery nurse. Teaching in Key Stage 1 is high quality. Two thirds was very good or excellent and never less than good. Teaching in Key Stage 2 varies from satisfactory to excellent and good overall with quite exceptional teaching in Year 4. The teaching of literacy and numeracy are effective and basic skills are very well taught.

Teaching quality is a driving force behind the good standards attained in the school. High expectations, positive relationships and overall effective behaviour management are key strengths. There is some variance in teachers' subject knowledge and allied to this scope to use specialist skills more thoughtfully to exemplify effective practice.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a very good curriculum which is highly relevant for its pupils. The curriculum is well supported by visits, visitors and the cross-curricular nature of planning. The curriculum meets statutory requirements at Key Stages 1 and 2. The planning and organisation of the Foundation Stage curriculum are sound with good features but does not yet follow to best advantage for the children, the recommended guidance.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Identification, assessment, management and review are effective. The level of additional support is low but the school is aware and has plans to address this; the quality of current support is very good.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. Plentiful opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own lives and actions and the world around them. The school is successful in encouraging the vast majority of pupils to be respectful, sociable and courteous.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good pastoral care. Assessment procedures are greatly improved and support pupils' learning well. Target setting is not yet well embedded in the school's work. Pupils do not yet play a strong role in improving their own work.

The school works very effectively with parents. Many parents appreciate its work.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very effective and efficient overall. Exceptionally well led by the sterling work of the Headteacher. Key staff manage their responsibilities very well. A review of some staff responsibilities could better maximise effectiveness and offer others opportunity to develop management skills.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Fully meet statutory requirements. Governors are actively involved in shaping the school's work. They support the management of finances exceptionally well. They hold the school to account and have valuable links with key staff to keep themselves informed. The governors apply the principles of best value very well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	First class. The school's knows itself very well and has taken excellent action to address the priorities it has set for itself.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Accommodation is limited although greatly improved and well used. Some gaps in ICT resources hinder improvements. The school gives very good value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That their children like school. • The progress pupils make. • Behaviour is good. • Teaching quality. • The approachability of the school. • The school's expectations. • The leadership and management of the school. • The school helps pupils become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework. • The information about pupils' progress. • How open the school is to work with parents. • The range of extra-curricular activities is not enough.

The inspection agrees with the positive points although a minority of older pupils, do not behave as they know they should; this only serves to slow their own learning.

In relation to the areas parents would like to see improved the school may wish to monitor consistency of homework provision as a number of parents expressed some concerns. However, it should be noted that the inspection has made positive judgements about the areas parents would like to see improved; much more is offered than in many schools of a similar size. Therefore the inspection does not agree that any require significant attention.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Attainment on entry to the school is better than usually found, the children have very well developed personal and social skills and good early literacy and numeracy knowledge. They make good progress in the reception class and build well on what they know in these areas of learning. Their performance in knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development is good. Progress in physical development is satisfactory. By the age of five the vast majority of children are attaining within the grey area of the stepping stones in all areas of learning. This shows they have reached the recommended Early Learning Goals at five and a good number have surpassed them.

2. Pupils move onto achieve very well in the infants because of high quality teaching. They acquire the basic skills of literacy and numeracy through structured and systematic teaching and are required to use what they know in the other subjects. Within the juniors, achievement is less consistent but nevertheless good so by the time pupils leave the school at age 11 most, even given their good prior attainment, have achieved very well. They have broadened their knowledge, developed key subject skills and improved their understanding because they have engaged in a highly relevant curriculum delivered effectively and, at times, exceptionally so.

3. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in the Foundation Stage because there are regularly good levels of adult support. In the infants and juniors they attain satisfactorily and in line with their competencies. Whilst additional support through national initiative funding has been used very well and is of good quality it is limited in availability. The school's budget has not allowed it to acquire the level of additional support staff, which it knows would best benefit the pupils. Whilst class teachers cater well for these pupils they need more additional support more often and this slows what can be achieved in spite of the school's best efforts. Higher attaining pupils achieve well because teachers plan challenging work and expect good output. Marking of work challenges these pupils well. The setting of individual targets and an onus placed on pupils to improve for themselves could assist the school in its pursuit of pupils attaining at the higher levels. The school keeps a register of gifted and talented pupils who have special skills in art, music and sport.

4. The national test results bear out the pupils' very good achievements. The trend of pupils' performance in the national tests for 11 year olds plateaued somewhat last year although it was still good and better than usually found in English and mathematics. There are a number of explanations for this, firstly groups of pupils vary from year to year and in 2001 the cohort had been recognised by the school as not having the depth of potential as others previously. Secondly, the school has been well ahead of others for a number of years, now other schools are raising their standards making the overall gap in the trend less apparent. This should in no way diminish the school's performance which is above average and due to the firm steer set by the Headteacher to ensure pupils achieve their potential and the good, and at times exceptional, teaching pupils receive.

5. In 2001, most seven year old pupils attained very well in reading and mathematics and well in writing although about one in four attained at the lower Level 2c in writing. The results for seven year olds are rising from a sharp dip in 1998 (the current Year 6 class). However, these pupils have made good progress as they have moved through the juniors.

6. Standards of day-to-day work found by this inspection are better than expected nationally for pupils aged seven and 11 in all subjects except ICT. In ICT they are in line with expectations and this is so for the investigative elements of mathematics and science. The school is aware of the need to further improve on standards in ICT but resource provision and access to staff training are holding it back. Improvement to standards in writing is a key priority for the school. Although obvious progress has been made there are still opportunities to develop pupils' writing skills further. More thought is needed in planning work to consider how both mathematical and scientific knowledge can be used and applied to investigation as opposed to solving teacher set problems, to pupils setting up their own lines of enquiry and developing and testing hypotheses which do not have predetermined outcomes.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

7. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good and are a strength of the school. Personal development is good and reflects the positive provision made for pupils' moral and social development. Attendance levels are good. Very good relationships underpin the cooperative working evident in almost all classes. This picture is similar to the previous inspection.

8. The majority of parents agree that their children like school. Many pupils said they enjoy coming to school. They are very keen to learn and participate well in lessons and assemblies. Reception children concentrate and listen well to stories. Pupils throughout the school gain from working with a partner or in a group. Girls and boys work happily together, share equipment and complete tasks. Such enthusiasm rarely diminishes amongst infant and junior pupils. They respond very well to high expectations, show a real interest and involve themselves in the various activities such as when Year 4 were thinking hard of "powerful words" to use for their persuasive writing.

9. Pupils' behaviour is very good because the majority acknowledge the school routines and teachers' expectations. Pupils are in the main polite, courteous and reliable. They genuinely care for their school and treat the facilities with respect. However, a lack of self-discipline is exposed amongst older boys when adults are not supervising doorways. Instances of silly behaviour sometimes border on rudeness in some lessons when boys chatter and deliberately distract the learning of others.

10. All teachers work hard at managing pupils' behaviour and this consistent approach is helping the majority of pupils to behave. Praise is often used and pupils respond well to this encouragement. Parents agree that behaviour is good. Most pupils behave well in the playground. The new playground equipment is having a positive effect on playtime behaviour. No instances of bullying were observed during the inspection. Parents and pupils are satisfied that such instances are dealt with appropriately if they arise.

11. Relationships amongst pupils and between pupils and teaching staff are very good. Sometimes tensions can arise when pupils do not always feel that supervising adults have listened fairly to their concerns. Assemblies are used to remind pupils to think about how their actions or achievements help others. Consequently, pupils show respect for others' feelings and care about one another. A child remarked that "it was far easier to apologise than to continue feeling guilty about breaking a friendship".

12. There are good opportunities for Year 6 pupils to take responsibility and show initiative. They assist in the library and dining room and some act as house captains. Many pupils are helpful but self-discipline is lacking in some. For example, some pupils are overly

boisterous at times and cloakrooms show some disorder. Responsibility is not planned to increase as pupils move through the school.

13. Attendance levels are above the national average and this is a reflection of pupils' attitudes towards school. Some pupils arrive during or after registration each day in some classes and this detracts from the lesson flow and work ethic set by the teachers.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

14. Teaching is good overall with about one third of teaching being very good and on occasions excellent. The impact on pupils' learning mirrors this picture precisely. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good, in the infant classes it is very good and on occasion excellent; in the juniors it is good with some quite exceptional teaching in Year 4. The picture is much more positive than at the last inspection and it is without doubt that the expectations of the teaching staff are driving learning forward. Although the number of non-teaching assistants is low their input is very valuable, contributing to the effectiveness of lessons and to how well pupils learn and make progress. This is most apparent in the work of the nursery nurse who is highly skilled.

15. Children in the reception class make good progress towards the Early Learning Goals so much so that they often exceed these goals and many are working within the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. The teacher and nursery nurse work very well as a team and their skills enable children to acquire knowledge, skills and some understanding in a secure environment where routines are quickly established and encouraged. The relationships in this class are excellent and a high level of care pervades the learning making children keen and eager to please. The high expectations of adults ensure children stay on task for increasingly long periods and concentrate well. They show confidence and an understanding of their learning. For example, one child explains in a mathematic session that "we have to see which is heavier, his or mine- anyway I think mine is because it's got more in it"; they persevere well to find out. The management of children, teaching of basic skills and expectations are all very good. Areas where teaching is competent but less strong are in the knowledge and understanding of how the areas of learning can be organised to enable children to explore and enquire through investigation rather than teacher led activity. Much teaching is subject based whilst the teaching of knowledge is strong and children absorb new facts quickly. Teaching and learning at times fall short of children having structured opportunities to carry out independent tasks initiated by themselves. This hinders children's ability to develop concepts whilst adults assess check on the stage of development and intervene when appropriate to take learning forward. On other occasions such as during use of the outdoor area children are engaged in unstructured play, which leads to little improvement in their learning. The areas of learning are not planned with a suitable balance of time and range of methods to suit each aspect of experience. Often the children's apparent capabilities and knowledge belie that they still need the opportunity at this young age to discover, explore and broaden their experiences before moving through the stages of learning for their understanding to be securely based.

16. In the infants, teaching is very good. In Year 1 the class size allows there to be two teaching staff and the partnership works very well, enabling rapid learning to take place. The activities are well matched to pupils' abilities and teaching stimulates, challenges and supports pupils very well. Teaching is lively, good-humoured and thorough; it motivates the children to learn, concentrate and be independent. Expectations in this and the Year 2 class are very high and lead to pupils producing good quantities and quality of work. By the age of seven, teaching has impacted very strongly on pupils' basic skills and on their knowledge and skills in the non-core subjects. Classrooms are highly organised and need to be because space is restrictive but very well used. The teaching recognises that these

are still young children and suitably adopts a broad approach to lesson introductions with good opportunities for practical exploration.

17. In the juniors, good teaching in Year 3 builds well on the work in Year 2. Where the teaching is good or better, these high quality relationships and expectations are continued through the school. Exceptional teaching in Year 4 is enabling pupils to maximise their learning and these pupils are challenged at a cracking pace at every opportunity. Many activities have extension tasks and there is a quiet but relentless air of 'not a moment to lose'. The teachers' subject knowledge in the lower juniors is strong and this is evident in the methods used and the pace and depth of learning. In Years 5 and 6 teaching is competent, often good quality where specialisms or enthusiasms are being taught and on occasion very good. The high expectations prevail and most work is well matched but at times notably in mathematics in Year 5 the pace of the lesson is at times too slow and misses opportunities to take the higher attaining pupils forward or reinforce concepts at depth with other pupils. This shows some gaps in stage and subject knowledge within the teaching. Some pupils in this class make teaching more difficult because they show immature behaviour for their ages, notably a group of boys, and fail to apply themselves to the tasks in spite of the teacher's encouragement. In a very good Year 6 literacy lesson, the teacher encouraged all the pupils to read out their limericks confidently to the whole class. She gave sharply focused praise, so that the pupils understood what they had done well. She modeled reading very well and brooked no-nonsense when some pupils became silly in their ideas. However, relationships were quickly supported by her good humoured approach and desire to move the lesson on. The result was some very good written work brought about by a stimulating task, which required pupils to use their acquired skills and work cooperatively. The pupils of all ages are often really interested in their work, concentrate for sufficiently long periods to complete the task, and are willing to work hard to achieve the outcomes set out by the teachers and support staff.

18. Teachers use information from their assessments and observations to plan the next steps in pupils' learning very well with due regard to what pupils already know. This was also apparent from a scrutiny of the work pupils had completed before the inspection. Refreshingly very few commercially produced worksheets are in use so pupils are not restricted in how they organise and record their findings. The teachers' marking of the pupils' recorded work is usually of high quality with up-to-date and incisive prompts to pupils on how to improve. Targets have not yet been set from this good quality marking to engage the pupils in improving and checking work for themselves.

19. Homework is used well to support pupils' learning, particularly in reading and number although not all pupils complete it as requested. Many parents support with reading homework.

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

20. The curriculum the school provides for children in the Foundation Stage of learning is satisfactory, although elements of its organisation deserve further consideration. The curriculum for the remainder of the school has been well considered and improvements have been made since the last inspection, in terms of policies, planning and the quality and range of opportunities the school offers its pupils.

21. The overall quality of provision in the Foundation Stage was judged to be satisfactory at the time of the previous inspection but has improved a good deal. This is due to the effective partnership between the teacher and support assistant in promoting the children's personal and academic development through their warm, positive interaction, generally

good teaching and high quality support. The children learn in an atmosphere of care and of feeling valued. The teaching areas are bright, well organised and geared to the children's needs. Additional funding has been used well to develop the adjacent quadrangle as a stimulating outside extension to the reception class. The Early Years Curriculum is providing a wide range of stimulating experiences. However, the majority of work is planned in line with the National Curriculum rather than the Foundation Stage and is mostly organised and directed by the teacher. Opportunities for the children to plan or initiate tasks for themselves are limited across all areas of learning. The detailed planning and delivery of focused teaching is providing the necessary structure within which the children gain knowledge, skills and confidence, in which they make good progress. But at the same time limiting their ability to explore and experiment and make decisions for themselves and deepen their conceptual understanding. The need to give children freedom to make choices is not an integral part of curriculum planning and restricts the development of this important aspect of early learning. This omission in the overall organisation of the curriculum also restricts the opportunity for adults to observe and assess the children's progress when they are engrossed in such activities and to have a clear understanding of the next steps in their development and learning, based on what the children know, understand and can do.

22. In the infant and junior classes literacy and numeracy are promoted well, making good use of both national strategies, however, importantly it has not lost sight of the rest of the curriculum, which is very broad, well balanced and very relevant to the pupils. This has been achieved by cultivating valuable cross-curricular activities which make best use of aspects of literacy and numeracy and which interest and motivate pupils. This is further supported by subject specific weeks of work, such as the Arts Week, at which a number of media were represented and promoted. The same will happen in a sports week, which is due to be held before the end of the current term. These activities help create a good balance to the school's curriculum.

23. The school further supports its general curriculum with a range of good visits and visitors to add enrichment to the work. Of the wide range of visits, the infants go to Norton Priory to support their work on the environment, whilst lower juniors visit Liverpool Museum in support of their work on ancient Egypt. The oldest pupils go on a trip to Llandudno to carry out geography fieldwork. Of the many visitors to the school, the Egyptian dance group, the local fire brigade and the saxophone quartet show the wide range of interests supported by the school. Two year groups benefit from residential visits, Year 4 to Conwy and shortly Year 6 will visit the Lake District. Not only does this allow pupils very good first hand access to a range of educational activities, it also gives good support to pupils' social development.

24. Two minor weaknesses currently exist in the curriculum for infant and junior pupils. In ICT, due to a lack of computers and other hardware, one specific area of the work cannot be completed, although plans exist for its teaching and plans are at an advanced stage for the building of a computer suite. Work in personal, social and health education is well formed in areas of sex and drug education, but is not yet as well considered in terms of citizenship and personal development. For example, some younger pupils have access to Circle Time, when they have good opportunities to discuss matters in a secure and supportive environment. Older pupils do not consistently have this support for their personal development.

25. Since the last inspection, the school has developed policies for all subjects and schemes of work for all but history and geography. A new coordinator for these subjects has that matter high on her list of priorities. In spite of this, work in these two areas is already of a high quality. Physical education was noted at the last inspection as being in

need of a clearer policy and scheme of work in order to raise standards. This has been accomplished very effectively and standards are now above national expectations with pupils making good progress in their learning.

26. Planning for all remaining aspects of the school's work is very good and consistent across the school. Planning is checked regularly by the Headteacher and subject coordinators have copies of plans in order to check on coverage of the work across the school in their own subjects.

27. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is broadly satisfactory. The identification, assessment, management and review procedures are effective. The school provides sound individual education plans for pupils on its special educational needs register, where the focus of need is on literacy and language development. They are not as good for pupils with special educational needs in other aspects of learning. The quality of additional support is very good and impacts to help pupils understand their work better and reinforce key skills. The level of additional support staff is low and the school is already putting plans into place to address this.

28. Over 80 per cent of parents who responded to the questionnaire, noted that their children got the right amount of homework. The school has a clear policy, which is understood by parents and acted upon by teachers. Homework makes a good contribution to pupils' learning. It is well supported by home/school and homework diaries.

29. The school has consideration for the issue of equal opportunities for its pupils. It has formulated a policy and procedures for gifted and talented pupils and planning takes account of the various ability groups within classes. Minor issues of differences in abilities between boys and girls have been noted and are less than national figures.

30. Additional activities provided by the school enhance the pupils' social and citizenship skills. Extra-curricular provision is good. Over 80 per cent of parents appreciated the amount of activities provided by the school, outside school time. Many club activities are offered to pupils for all ages, with extra support being given by outside sporting agencies such as The Warrington Wolves and Appleton cricket club. The school has good links with the local community. Very close links are fostered with the local church, with a number of church groups making use of the school's facilities. Local hotels and shops give generously in support of the school and parents provide much extra funding in support of their children. There is a close relationship between St Matthew's and Bridgewater High School. Resources are shared and staff lend support in specific areas of expertise. Joint ventures, such as JC2000 and the Bridgewater Cantata have added much to the relationship. At the same time local primary schools meet with St Matthew's pupils regularly in sporting fixtures.

31. There has been good improvement in provision for pupils' personal development since the previous inspection because now pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is judged very good overall.

32. Spiritual development is particularly well provided for because pupils are presented with many opportunities to reflect on positive values through their work in English, history and religious education. Some excellent poems by Year 1 describing things they like, use quite moving words. Thoughtfulness is encouraged in assemblies by pupils actively engaged in searching their minds for reasons to celebrate special occasions. Assemblies on feelings such as self worth are presented in a lively and sensitive manner. Daily, pupils are brought together through prayer and inspirational music to share in celebrations of achievement, or whole-school values such as 'passing on a smile'. The everyday

curriculum plays an important part in pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

33. The provision for moral development is good. Most pupils understand class rules and abide by the consequences when these are breached. There is a good sharing of moral principles through classroom discussion. Charitable deeds are communicated well in whole-school assemblies. Pupils are encouraged to be neat and tidy as a token of respect for themselves and others and practise good manners. In Year 6, some pupils make reasoned judgements on moral issues. They explain their self-esteem is heightened by the privilege and responsibility placed on them. This includes important tasks, which they cheerfully complete.

34. Teachers set pupils a good example in their relationships with each other and with the pupils and by the way they offer support. This has a positive effect on most pupils' attitudes and behaviour. Pupils' personal efforts are recognised and praised in lessons, but there are some inconsistencies in behaviour management and response from pupils. For example, when covert rude or arrogant behaviour in upper Key Stage 2 goes unchecked either in or outside lessons.

35. Provision for social development is very good. Social interaction at all levels is prized, both in discussion and the thoughtful comments written in pupils' books promoting ongoing dialogue. Very good opportunities in lessons allow pupils to cooperate and collaborate effectively in pairs and in small groups such as when using enquiry skills to discover facts about the Manchester Ship Canal, or completing role-play activity in a Year 5 drama lesson. Parents agree that the school is helping children to be mature and responsible. It is clear that some teachers strongly urge pupils to use their initiative. This occurred in PE when the onus was placed on Year 2 pupils to work independently to choose, use and vary their tactics of aiming and dodging. There is scope for developing initiative further.

36. Promotion of cultural development is good, and has improved in the six years since the previous inspection. Pupils learn about their cultural heritage through their work in English, science, religious education, music, history and geography. These opportunities broaden pupils' understanding of people and transport now and in the past, and also the work of artists and poets. Visitors enliven the curriculum and promote pupils' interests in drama and bird watching. A good range of visits to cultural centres, museums and residential trips to places of adventure occur. The school is aware of its lack of ethnic diversity, and seeks to compensate for this through studies of comparative religions and the traditions and festivals of other cultures. Pupils in Year 5 have been transported through story and dance to Jamaica in the Caribbean and younger pupils have discovered the lifestyles and artefacts used by travellers. It remains the case however, that multicultural awareness is rooted deeply within religious education. The school has a challenge, which it recognises to enhance pupils' understanding of the diverse cultural society in which they will grow because of its monocultural nature.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

37. Pastoral care is very good because the school is a caring and supportive community. Parents find that teachers know their children well, enjoy very good relationships with them, and respond to their needs. Inspectors agree.

38. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are good. They include awarding of house points, praise and reporting regularly to parents. This helps

many pupils to improve on their own performance and encourages them to celebrate and appreciate the achievement of others.

39. Health and safety matters receive good attention and the school is generally 'risk-aware'. Hygiene levels are high and the school is cleaned very well. Pupils' comfort and security are afforded high priority without affecting learning. For example, access to bottled water is allowed during lessons. Healthy eating is encouraged during morning breaks, when toast is also available.

40. Personal support and guidance are good for each pupil, and helped by opportunities to share private thoughts or feelings in book reviews or class discussions about 'being frightened'. There are some issues to be addressed around consistent behaviour management so that inappropriate behaviour by some pupils, mainly boys and notably in Year 5 is 'nipped in the bud'.

41. High standards of self-discipline are expected and strong emphasis is placed on respect for others. Rewards and sanctions are appropriate and behaviour is monitored well by teaching staff. Teaching and non-teaching assistants led by the Headteacher present the highest quality role models for pupils to emulate and are vigilant in their expectations. This is not continuously developed at lunchtimes. The number of midday assistants has recently been increased to ensure pupils' safety at lunchtime. Almost all midday assistants reflect the school's welcoming ethos, aims and established pastoral policies in their approach to all children in their care and visitors. There is scope for midday staff to take greater heed of the school's policies by promoting and rewarding good behaviour fairly and consistently, by encouraging pupils to enjoy more positive playtimes and by being aware that they too act as role models for pupils so that their every word and deed should be scrupulously evenhanded. Movement around the school is generally orderly. However, routines at all transition periods when pupils re-enter from the playground are not tight enough. At these times some older boys provide a poor role model for younger pupils.

42. Procedures for monitoring the attendance of some groups of pupils are under-developed. The timely follow-up of absences is less than satisfactory as are systems to ensure that registers comply with all requirements. The school tends to react to pupils' lateness, rather than proactively challenging the unpunctuality affecting some individuals each day.

43. The school has made good progress, since the last inspection, in improving its procedures for assessment, which are now good.

44. The school tests children shortly after they arrive in the reception class and uses the results to provide appropriate teaching for individuals and groups of its youngest children. This has a positive effect on the children's achievement, including those with special educational needs, who generally make good progress. It retests the pupils at the end of their first year in the school, but pupils in this their first full year of full-time education.

45. Assessments are carried out in aspects of English, mathematics, science and latterly in aspects of ICT. The results of these tests help teachers to prepare well for the next stage of learning in these subjects and help teachers plan challenging activities for all abilities. At present, other curriculum areas are not being similarly assessed.

46. Results of assessments are used well to prescribe specific courses of action, which utilise national initiatives such as Additional Language support and Booster classes.

They are used equally well to point to pupils who may need extra support within the special educational needs area of the school's work.

47. When pupils take the Year 2 and Year 6 National Curriculum tests, the results are analysed in order to compare results with national and similar schools' trends. The school has recently started to look more thoroughly at the results in order to establish if certain areas of both teaching and learning show weaknesses in English, mathematics and science.

48. Assessments are well supported by good day-to-day marking of work. In many instances marking is seen to be giving good feedback to pupils, describing where their mistakes are, but more importantly suggesting how they might make further progress.

49. The school is making good use of its ICT to assist in the tracking of pupils' progress as they move through the school. However, there is still room to improve these techniques. The school uses a mix of tests and assessments, which give rise to a wide variety of numerical and levelled scores. These do not sit comfortably together and do not always give a clear at-a-glance picture of progress. By making better use of its systems the school could create charts, which more clearly track progress through optional tests between Years 2 and 6 and across the whole school with tests that are used for mathematics and English, for example, which give constant numerical scores. In this way, the school would be better placed to make predictions of future success and then compare progress against these predictions on a more regular basis.

50. The school is now well placed to involve pupils rather more in their own assessments of their work, in order to further their personal development and provide themselves with challenging personal targets.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

51. Most parents hold very positive views of the school, are very satisfied with the care it provides, and the progress their children make. The majority of those who attended the meeting echoed these comments, and described the 'good job that teaching staff do'. They find the school is well led and managed and that their children are expected and encouraged to give of their best. A minority of parents feel that, the level of challenge is not good enough to enable pupils to achieve their potential. The inspection finds that whilst there is some inconsistency in the level of challenge between classes, overall pupils achieve very well.

52. Many parents feel very comfortable coming to school and huge numbers do so, taking advantage of the school's warm hospitality throughout the year. They value the open door policy that is a strong feature of this popular school. In return, parents are very pleased to offer practical support for class-based activities or out of school trips. A small number of parents do not feel welcomed in this way.

53. The quality of information provided is good and serves to inform parents about the daily life of the school. A friendly style and straightforward language are used in frequent newsletters. These and generally comprehensive published documents give an accurate picture of what the school provides. Curriculum information about induction arrangements to the Foundation Stage is not as fullsome as it could be and the governors' report to parents omits to provide that national comparative data on standardised tests is now also required to be included. These minor points must be set against the excellent system of home/school contact books, which are treated by most parents and all staff as an important reciprocal communication tool.

54. Most parents are happy with progress reports. Inspectors find they meet requirements because they explain where progress has, or has not, occurred for each child. Personal targets for improvement are not yet included within reports. The school provides regular opportunities for parents to hear of the progress their children make and these reflect the school's relationship with parents because they are very well attended. Most parents are confident that the school works closely with them in partnership. A number however, do not feel sufficiently informed about the work to be done at home or about their child's progress. The inspection finds the school's arrangements to be good overall.

55. Links with parents are very good because the school welcomes their involvement and takes their views seriously. A questionnaire in autumn 2000 was designed to seek views on strengths and weaknesses and this is to be repeated. Parents provide resources for topic work and also substantial funding, used appropriately, for their children's benefit. Many parents give freely of their time to help with various aspects of the school's work. These very positive and fruitful relationships have been well maintained and provide a very effective contribution to children's learning at school and at home.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

56. The school is successful because the Headteacher ensures it is so. His vision and its impact for the school's direction is excellent and firmly based on providing pupils with the tools to learn and achieve high standards. The proof is in the above average levels of pupils' performance and the standards attained in daily work by the time the pupils leave at 11, the happy atmosphere and the shared commitment to success of the governors and staff. The school aims are realised in practice and an ethos of high expectation drives the school forward. A measure of the Headteacher's commitment to improvement was his openness and receptivity to the rigour of the inspection and desire to discuss how issues could be addressed.

57. The Headteacher has a secure view of how the curriculum can be delivered to meet national requirements, take the best from initiatives and provide pupils with broad and relevant learning. This is evidenced in the school development plan where each priority identifies how it will impact on teaching and learning. The school's self-evaluation statement highlights current practice, celebrations and challenges to be addressed and is of high quality. The path to achieving his vision has been based on communication with the school community, enabling a 'culture of participation' so that all can contribute towards fulfilling the aims through teamwork and clearly defined roles with obvious levels of accountability. The introduction of performance management has complemented the school's work rather than added to it and staff have found the process valuable. The actions taken to meet the school's targets are highly successful and regularly checked for effectiveness.

58. At the time of the last inspection the Headteacher was newly appointed and a good start had been made to improving procedures, staff roles, development planning and creating a team spirit. The Headteacher is clear that there was much to be done and in the intervening six years since the last inspection many things have been achieved to bring the school to its current position of strength because of his highly effective management. The key issues of improving curriculum guidance, monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning and improving assessment procedures and their impact are now all well founded in the school's work. The view has been taken that whilst literacy and numeracy are highly important as the foundation to pupils' learning the other areas of the curriculum must not be

sidelined or minimised but rather used as effective vehicles for pupils to use acquired skills. This is so.

59. A key management strategy is to release professionals from trivia, which can detract from teaching. The school secretary provides a warm welcome to visitors and supports the Headteacher effectively in day-to-day financial and administrative tasks; the school runs smoothly.

60. The Headteacher is supported ably by the Deputy Headteacher, who provides a model of effective teaching practice. This is exemplified in the school's provision for training new teachers. Key staff use their skills and take responsibility for areas of the school's work with success in their specialist areas. A number of staff have been leading teachers within the authority in literacy and numeracy and others use specialist skills in physical education and religious education to support training and policy guidance. These specialist skills impact well on the school's provision. For example, in improving physical education, history, geography, science and ICT. Some staff are trialling initiatives for the local authority and diocese. New appointments to the staff have proven highly successful, a fine example being the literacy coordinator whose teaching and subject knowledge are exemplary. Staff training and development are regular and well focused on meeting school and professional needs. The distribution of responsibilities is currently being reviewed and this is a sensible move to avoid overload and to allow potential in management skills to be developed. The special educational needs coordinator carries too many responsibilities and cannot efficiently fulfil all roles that she carries in spite of her best endeavours.

61. Governors meet their statutory responsibilities. They make a strong impact on shaping the work of the school and bring a broad range of professional skills to help guide and advise the sub committees. An example, is the thorough work of the finance committee which supports the Headteacher superbly well in balancing the extremely limited budget and directing funding first and foremost to support pupils' learning. The governors have been instrumental in improving the accommodation and extensions to classrooms exemplify this. The governors are fully aware of the need identified by the inspection to improve the levels of classroom support staff and actions are already planned to improve the situation. Each coordinator is linked to a governor and they have reported on the progress of initiatives in their subjects to the governing body. The governing body holds the school to account very well and asks pertinent questions about its work to enable them to make informed decisions and apply the principles of best value efficiently. The governors have pursued all avenues to enhance funding and are ever aware of the constraints placed upon them by virtually no contingency reserve. Although pupils' attainment on entry is generally good, given the very good achievement through school, the quality of teaching and leadership and its impact on standards and the limited resources available to it the school give very good value for money.

62. There are sufficient teachers to match the number of classes but the budget requires the Headteacher to fulfill a one day a week class teaching commitment. Most, but not all teachers are well matched to the stage of education they teach. All teaching is at least competent but it is apparent that the most effective teaching is where teachers have an intuitive understanding, training and background in the age and stage they teach.

63. Much has been done to improve the accommodation, which is still restrictive but vastly improved. The school makes the best possible use of what is available and enhances the quality with interesting and well-presented displays of pupils' work. However, the building's poor design is not well suited to the numbers of pupils in some classes, mainly for reception to Year 3 and creates constraints for practical work that are thoughtfully managed but nevertheless confining and frustrating to teachers giving of their best. This is

most apparent in the Year 1 classroom, which although it has an overspill area is wholly unacceptable in size for pupils of this age. Another example is the Year 4 classroom which although of good size is open and suffers from traffic noise as other classes, not always quietly, move about. A well-planned outdoor area for pupils in the Foundation Stage has been thoughtfully constructed; further thought to its use is needed to ensure effective adult-pupil interaction and its use to support all areas of learning.

64. Resources are good but gaps in ICT resource provision hold back work in the subject and hamper standards to some extent.

65. The school under the Headteacher's leadership is strongly placed to succeed, to fine-tune those areas identified by the inspection and to further expand its role in support and training without deflecting from its own high quality work.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

66. **The governors, Headteacher and staff now need to:**

Capitalise on the use of the good assessment practice to ensure that:

- pupils are prompted to check their own and each other's work for how it can be improved;
- targets, especially writing targets, are set from marking of work, shared with pupils and regularly checked for success;
- assessments are developed for all subjects;
- simple 'at-a-glance' tracking procedures on which to base predictions and measure progress are devised.

Reference to these issues can be found in paragraphs: 18, 44, 45 and 49.

Continue to improve standards in writing and ICT by ensuring that:

- the provision for handwriting is reviewed and adults provide the highest role models for pupils to emulate;
- thought is given in planning to how pupils can be motivated to write from real experiences or role play;
- key subject vocabulary is prominently displayed to support writing in all subjects;
- resources for ICT are improved as funding allows;
- staff training is instigated as swiftly as possible;
- greater use is made of the Internet to support learning in all subjects.

Reference to these issues can be found in paragraphs: 5, 6, 137, 144, 145 and 147.

Review the organisation and planning of the Foundation Stage curriculum by ensuring that:

- the recommended guidance for the Foundation Stage is reflected more fully in planning;
- time allocations to the areas of learning are carefully balanced;
- more time is given to encouraging exploration, initiative and independence through structured play;
- more time is built into teaching to assess what children are learning and how well they are doing it.

Reference to these issues can be found in paragraph 15.

Improve pupils' skills of investigation, particularly in mathematics and science by ensuring that:

- opportunities for pupils to devise their own investigations are explored when planning work;
- the difference between solving problems and open ended investigations is clearly understood by staff.

Reference to these issues can be found in paragraphs: 98, 99, 111 and 112.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	51
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	25

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	4	14	24	9	0	0	0
Percentage	8	27	47	18	0	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 two percentage points.

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)	n/a	210
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	n/a	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	n/a	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	n/a	19

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0

National comparative data	5.6
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National comparative data	0.6
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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	16	13	29

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	15	16	16
	Girls	13	13	13
	Total	28	29	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (90)	100 (93)	100 (93)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	16	16	16
	Girls	13	13	13
	Total	29	29	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (90)	100 (93)	100 (100)
	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	17	14	31

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	17	15	17
	Girls	14	13	14
	Total	31	28	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	100 (97)	90 (87)	100 (97)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	17	17	17
	Girls	14	14	14
	Total	31	31	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	181
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.9
Average class size	30

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	3.2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	106

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	n/a
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	n/a
Total number of education support staff	n/a
Total aggregate hours worked per week	n/a
Number of pupils per FTE adult	n/a

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Financial information

Financial year	2001
	£
Total income	445,069
Total expenditure	450,237
Expenditure per pupil	2,124
Balance brought forward from previous year	-5,168
Balance carried forward to next year	-11

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	160
Number of questionnaires returned	142

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	70	26	1	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	62	33	2	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	62	33	1	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	39	44	14	2	1
The teaching is good.	56	36	1	1	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	45	37	15	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	68	24	7	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	32	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	47	39	11	3	1
The school is well led and managed.	73	25	2	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	67	30	2	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	41	41	8	4	6

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR THE FOUNDATION STAGE

67. The overall quality of provision in the Foundation Stage was judged to be satisfactory at the time of the previous inspection but has improved a good deal. Nevertheless there are still some areas of curriculum planning which require consideration to match the school's practice more closely to the nationally recommended guidance as detailed in the curriculum section of this report.

Personal, social and emotional development

68. Teaching is very good and the children make at least good progress in this area. They make strides in gaining self-confidence and in developing their self-esteem. Most are on target to achieve well beyond the Early Learning Goals by the end of the reception year. Established routines are remembered and adhered to without any fuss. Most of the children show mature behaviour and a good level of self-discipline for their age. They are able to sit for long periods, whilst listening attentively to the teacher and will show restraint in putting up their hands to speak. They can be relied on to take care of their personal needs and to do as they are asked. They have the confidence to try new things and to express their views and feelings, such as; when tasting different fruits and in using a computer microscope. The children respond well to the staff's high expectations in taking responsibility in selecting resources for their activities, using them appropriately and in clearing away materials and equipment at the end of a session. They engage well with others and are willing to play and work cooperatively. For example, whilst engaged as a member of a group creating fruit kebabs. Skills of enquiry and independence are less well developed because activities are not designed to enable these important skills through child-initiated enquiry. The children react well to what is offered but are not proactive in instigating exploration.

Communication, language and literacy

69. The good quality teaching emphasises encouraging the children to communicate and most are set to achieve high standards by the age of five. Within the good quality teaching and support there is strength in the skills of the staff to develop the children's use of language and early reading and writing skills. Their expectations are always high and the children make at least good progress in completing the challenging work and activities they engage in. The children are encouraged to respond clearly and to use precise vocabulary when responding to questions or when sharing their views and ideas. The reciting of nursery rhymes, poems and songs and repeated story sharing are helping them to extend their knowledge and use a good range of key words within different contexts.

70. Work in the literacy hour is helping most to make good progress in developing their language and literacy skills and they achieve well. They have a keen interest in books and are able to identify the author and illustrator when asked. They are beginning to predict how stories will end and to talk about their favourite parts. They use language well and will concentrate long enough to find the right words to explain and talk about why things have happened. For example, in listening to the story of Handa's Surprise they were quick to use picture clues to explain that the tangerines had got into Handa's basket when the naughty goat had hit the tree causing the fruit to fall off.

71. Progress in writing is also good. Every opportunity is taken to encourage the children to write as part of ongoing activities and for adults to show the children what writing

is for and how it works. White boards are often used effectively to develop the children's letter formation and writing of high frequency words, such as; sh, br and my, is, went. All children 'write' their names on their work and make every effort to explain their work to others, their attempts often including a good number of letters from their names or 'core words'. Well presented displays, which include the children's work and written captions by the staff, are used effectively to revisit previous activities to support the children's recall and to motivate them to use their language skills.

Mathematical development

72. Teaching is good and the children make at least good progress so that by the end of the reception year, most attain above the standard expected for their age. This is due in the main to the quality of support and the practical experiences offered to them to reinforce what they know and to extend their thinking and understanding of mathematics and its application in the world around them. The children have regular structured mathematical sessions, which give them opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of number, ways to calculate, shapes, space and measures, and the need to learn, repeat, use and develop mathematical language in a wide variety of different and meaningful ways. However, opportunities are missed to encourage the children to extend their use and application of mathematics through play and other activities. For example, very few structured activities were planned for or carried out in the outside area to allow the children to apply and use their mathematical knowledge through the use of the exciting range of toys and equipment available to them.

73. The children are able to recognise numbers from one to 20, to count on or backwards accurately from different starting points. A small group of boys enjoyed the challenge of sequencing number cards on a clothes line searching out additional cards to extend their numbers from the required number 20 to 24 successfully, whilst a group of girls persevered until they had successfully completed a 100 square with only encouragement from the adults rather than support or advice. Children rolling dice were able to add their two numbers together mentally, surprising their teacher on occasion by the swiftness of their reply. Other groups of children observed weighing, using non-standard units and manipulating play dough, were heard using terms such as 'heavier, increase, length, longer, shorter than'. A number of children quickly realised that weight is not dependent on the size of an object and were eager to share their knowledge with any adult willing to listen to their newly found knowledge. Where and when appropriate the children are encouraged to record their work formally, using drawings, symbols and numbers, but early techniques of drawing numbers in the air or on their friends back are more often used to reinforce or to assess what the children know and understand.

74. The area of learning makes a valuable contribution to the development of the children's social skills. The onus put on them by the staff to persevere in dealing with the practical activities offered to them makes them have to think for themselves, to take responsibility and to use their initiative in solving problems. Freedom of choice would help support this aspect of learning even further.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

75. Through the provision of well structured activities linked to a thematic approach, delivered by good quality teaching and support the children make good progress and, by the end of the reception year, most achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. On entry to the reception class most of the children have at least a sound knowledge of the world around them with many who have a good knowledge for their age, this presents a challenge

to the staff to successfully build on what the children know, understand and can do; they meet the challenge well.

76. The children take part in a range of activities that prepare them well for science, geography, history and design and technology in Key Stage 1. They go on walks in the local area, make visits to places further away and use the computer camera to record what they have seen. The staff provide a changing range of items, materials, tools and tasks to motivate and challenge the children who learn to observe, listen and ask questions and to comment on what they notice. In talking about the variety of fruit they observed they were able to use their senses to distinguish the different tastes, textures and smells and to express their ideas and feelings clearly. They responded well to questions, which prompted their feelings such as "What does it smell like?" - "Which fruit do you like best?" Focusing their attention on the fruit in Handa's basket they shared their knowledge of which countries the various fruits came from. The only flaw being that the activity was entirely adult determined giving the children little opportunity to extend the learning experience for themselves, giving the support staff the opportunity to assess and to record their level of understanding.

77. In discussions about the classroom displays some children shared their experiences of other countries whilst on holiday and were eager to answer questions about Goldilock's journey. Others shared their awe and wonder of the stained glass windows they had created and their investigations into the transparency of certain materials. Overall the subject makes a valuable contribution to the children's personal development, particularly their spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects.

Physical development

78. Many of the children show well developed skills in coordinating their movements. They develop skills in using different tools such as scissors and brushes and many show good skills in manipulating small items. For example, in manipulating small pieces of fruit onto their kebab sticks.

79. However, during the inspection there were no opportunities to observe any structured sessions either in the hall or outside, which promoted the children's movement skills and sense of space. So no judgement can be made on their level of achievement. When encouraged to play in the outside quadrangle, the children too often are left to their own devices, to run freely, to climb and to handle the large toys and equipment at will. This lack of structure and adult intervention again highlights the lack of balance in the overall organisation and delivery of the curriculum, which the school recognises as needing attention.

Creative development

80. The teaching quality and overall provision are good. The children make sound progress and by the end of the reception year many are attain above the standard expected for their age. The children have access to a wide range of materials and resources and many opportunities to explore different materials and to express themselves and their ideas using paint and other media. For example, in the techniques used to complete their large friezes of Rumble in the jungle, fish shapes and coloured paper collages.

81. They acquire a repertoire of songs and enjoy listening to music. Their interest in rhythm was evident in a session where they were expected to clap out the alphabet. Role play is an integral part of their activities. Children are often observed and supported by an adult whose input helps them to extend their ideas, to share and to develop their social skills

in relating to others. Rather than left to their own play the activity is used effectively to extend the children's speaking and listening skills. Although this is not the case when children are playing in the outside area, where the lack of adult support has a negative effect on the quality of learning and the children's level of achievement. Plenary sessions and displays are used effectively to engage the children in conversation and in recalling how they had carried out their work.

ENGLISH

82. The standards seven and 11 year old pupils attain in English are one of the school's strengths. Test results show an improving picture over time, they are better than at the last inspection, and reflect the school's efforts to improve pupils' attainment in the key skills of literacy, which are well taught and in some instances exceptionally so. The school has already identified areas for further improvement in pupils' writing and the inspection agrees that this would be beneficial in some elements of pupils' work but nevertheless good quality abounds. Pupils use their literacy skills well in the other subjects. A key point to raise standards in writing further is that target setting for individuals is not yet capitalised on fully and insufficient onus is placed on pupils to check and improve their own work. The school is aware of the need to look at how pupils are motivated to write in order to bring standards in writing closer to the high standards in reading. This development could enhance the thorough English teaching in this school.

83. Test results were above average at the time of the last inspection and they remain so for both seven and 11 year olds. In 2001, all pupils in Year 6 attained at the expected Level 4 and slightly more than nationally attained at the higher Level 5, this is well above average. When compared to similar schools, pupils' performance was above average but when matched against their prior attainment when they were seven they are well above average and this shows very good progress for that group of pupils, made even better because the school recognised that this group of pupils did not have strong potential. This says a good deal about the school's efforts to raise standards and that the quality of teaching is impacting very well overall as pupils move through the school. Girls perform slightly better than boys at both key stages and the school is looking into how they can address this. The immature behaviour of a small group of older boys does affect their performance.

84. To support achievement the test results are analysed to identify areas of weakness in pupils' learning and this helps teachers prepare relevant and challenging work for the range of abilities. It has also helped the school direct funding and support to pupils who require further help and to utilise national initiative funding such as Additional Language support and Booster classes. Results are used equally well to point to pupils who may have special educational needs. The school's good work in this area is diminished because limited funds in its delegated budget weaken its ability to provide satisfactory levels of support for these pupils. Higher attaining pupils are well challenged by the level of work and high teacher expectation at the end of the key stages. Within the juniors there is some leveling of achievement in Year 5. This may prove particularly notable for the current Year 4 when they move on because of the variance in the quality of teaching; whilst always competent, teachers' subject knowledge and methods are by no means as well grounded as Year 4 pupils currently receive.

85. Seven year old pupils also performed very well in the 2001 tests when compared nationally and above average when compared to similar schools. As in the juniors this shows strong progress. Very high levels scored at the expected Level 2 in reading and all attained expectations in writing although a higher proportion scored at the lower Level 2c in writing. The school has already focused support on this group and pupils' work shows their

attainment levels are rising well in the early junior classes. Conversely the school attained more of the higher Level 3s than is usually found.

86. The inspection finds that currently seven and 11 year olds attain above national expectations in all elements of the subject.

87. Pupils are confident speakers; they can explain their work in some detail; they invariably use the technical vocabulary of whichever subject is being taught and repeat and recall readily key words. In Year 1, pupils can explain and repeat the teacher's clear guidance on how to make a flower with petals. They process what they say in a sequence of actions, using connectives effectively and using words such as 'rotate', 'mark' and 'joints' with confidence. In spite of the tiny size of the Year 1 classroom, an inviting role-play area has been set up to stimulate talk. This type of experience could well benefit other pupils of all age groups to further link their work in the other subjects and support the school's drive to motivate pupils to write.

88. Most pupils by the age of seven and 11 listen very well and this supports their understanding and knowledge of what they are to learn. For example, in Year 2 pupils are required to listen accurately to identify the correct sound within a word; they are able to differentiate between the hard and soft sounds found in ear and pear. In a mathematics lesson, in Year 4, pupils' skills of listening are very well tested by the creative teaching. Pupils listen intently whilst the teacher explains the 'marble' game; they close their eyes and listen acutely to how many marbles have been dropped in the jar, to calculate that if each represents ten or 100 what the total will be if they started with say '790'. In Year 6, pupils listen very carefully when classmates read out their limericks, they are able to offer constructive comment about where their efforts do not follow the rhythm of a limerick or indicate a more relevant word. A minor weakness is that some pupils have not yet learned when it is appropriate to talk and when they need to listen; this is mainly but not exclusively boys, in Year 5 and to a far lesser extent in Year 6, who appear to think they can talk whilst the teacher is explaining work or that once they are set personal tasks it is a signal for casual conversation rather than sustained effort. Teaching has to be ever vigilant to ensure that these weak social skills that pupils bring with them to school are not acceptable to support their own and others' learning.

89. Reading standards are good and very well taught through the school. Pupils read and have knowledge of a good range of authors. In Year 1, they have a broad range of experiences and plentiful adult support to help them read and understand texts. Teaching is well planned to use ICT to support learning. For example, pupils at a listening centre follow text from left to right, can recall the sequence of the story and others practise letter blends on the computer. They read their own poems with enthusiasm and skill. The teaching is excellent and allows very good acquisition of basic skills. Guided reading tasks are well prepared and supported very effectively with skilful questioning by the support teacher to focus pupils on evidence, key characters and prediction. By the age of seven, a good number are close to being independent readers, adding fluency and expression when reading aloud. They show a good recall of story sequence and can name characters, the main plot and predict what may happen next. Their phonic knowledge is good and reinforced creatively. When reading a story about the 'Bear who would not share' the pupils are required to predict who will come to the party and how the characters might feel. The high expectation of the teaching in the infant classes drives the learning forward very well. For example, these pupils have already, in science, been introduced to a glossary and the higher attaining pupils reveal that this is 'just like a mini-dictionary'. Even at this relatively young age many know the names of books written by Roald Dahl and Dick King Smith and have a good understanding of the difference between fiction and non-fiction books. Pupils are required to use their reading skills regularly in the other subjects to research findings.

By Year 6 many pupils read at higher levels than expected. Pupils give a good deal of thought to what they read and quote their teacher's encouragement 'to always give the author a chance'. Reading journals are effectively used to assess pupils' understanding of plot and style and to discuss their view of the effectiveness of the writing. Pupils by the age of 11 are confident readers who show good attitudes and value towards books as a source of enjoyment and information. They have little difficulty with complex texts or with word meanings and make educated guesses using 'reading ahead' for clues. The reading diaries and home link books support reading progress very well. It is a delight to listen to Year 6 pupils read and discuss their preferences.

90. Standards in writing are at least as expected and often better but the school is aware of the need to improve handwriting and its link to spelling, notetaking and presentation skills and also to look at how it can motivate pupils, especially the older ones, to enjoy and apply themselves to writing. In spite of these relative weaknesses the quality of written work in this school surpasses that found in many others. Year 1 pupils have written well-scripted poems about things they like using adjectives well. By the age of seven pupils can retell in some detail the story of 'James and the Giant Peach', make notes, spell complex words correctly and retell personal accounts using capital letters and full stops regularly. Handwriting is the weakest element of their work and few are working competently towards a joined script. This pervades the school. Pupils are encouraged to use writing to describe in their own words 'How the world began?', 'How cars travel?', to label diagrams in science and to write down instructions in design and technology. Higher attaining pupils in both literacy and other subjects are required to use their writing skills extensively and are given more challenging tasks than other ability levels.

91. In the juniors, pupils write for a broad range of purposes and the school has made good efforts to inspire pupils to write about real experiences, for example, to describe in Year 3 a visit to Liverpool Museum. The work of the higher attaining pupils is notably better in quality, depth and output. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported through Additional Literacy support in both reading and writing. Pupils build well on the good progress they have made in the infants. There is notable progress in Year 4 from when pupils started the year to the work they complete now. This must be due to the exceptional quality of teaching in this year, which sets the highest of expectations and pupils rise to them. For example, when describing a Victorian Warehouse they have used powerful verbs to interest the reader at a level that might be expected of much older pupils. In Year 5 there is good productivity and valuable opportunities to use writing to compare the work of authors. By the age of 11 pupils are capable of writing well for many reasons; they have written modern versions of a Midsummer Night's Dream and show their knowledge of the elements of journalistic writing in recounting the gunpowder plot. Many produce some amusing and well thought out limericks based on a theme.

92. In spite of all the strengths writing could be improved. Pupils are not encouraged consistently to note the teachers' valuable marking comments and they do not have precise targets to refer to, to help them improve their work for themselves. Goals for improvement in writing in English lessons are not tracked closely when pupils write in other subjects. Whilst these weaknesses are relative given the good quality work seen their improvement could support the school's pursuit of challenging pupils to attain the highest goals possible.

93. Teaching is the driving strength of the good standards in English. It is very good with some excellent teaching in Years 1 and 2 and quite exceptional knowledge and understanding of the subject in Year 4. This is a better picture than at the last inspection. Pupils learn well because of the teaching quality and they show good understanding of their own learning and acquire basic skills very well. Planning is very thorough and pays good attention to the range of abilities within the classes. This is an improvement since the last

inspection. Work is well marked. Teachers use assessment well and a good range of standardised tests enable progress to be tracked. The key strengths of teaching are the effective use of time, knowledge of the pupils' needs, the use of literacy skills in other subjects and the thought given to how pupils can write about real experiences. As yet not all teaching shows a strong role model for handwriting for pupils to emulate nor is the link between the development of key vocabulary to support learning across the subjects through displays and the building of word banks to aid independence encouraged well enough. Where pupils for example, in Years 1, 2 and 4 are receiving high quality teaching, the school needs to consider how continuity can be safeguarded for them as they move through the school.

94. The subject manager is relatively new to the post but has a strong background, provides an exemplary role model for colleagues and has very good ideas for moving forward. The time is right to develop her monitoring role and to enable her keen skills to be disseminated and used to the full. Resources are generally good. The school has adopted a very sensible approach to the delivery of English and this enables and encourages pupils to develop their literacy skills elsewhere in the curriculum. Delivery of the subject meets the requirements of the National Curriculum.

MATHEMATICS

95. Pupils in Year 6 attained standards, in the National Curriculum tests of 2001, which were above national averages for their age. The school has maintained the standards noted at the last inspection. Current standards were similar to those achieved by other schools where pupils came from similar backgrounds and showed good progress since their tests in Year 2. The school had already recognised that these pupils had less potential and ability to attain the higher levels of the tests, as did pupils in previous years. Hence there was a slight dip in overall attainment in this year group. In the previous three years, results have been high when compared with national averages. The school achieved the targets set for it in mathematics and noted that there were minor differences between boys and girls and has set out to address these differences.

96. Pupils in Year 2, attained standards in the 2001 National Curriculum tests, which were also above the national average for this age group. However, when compared with pupils in similar schools, their results were broadly in line with them. The dip in results in the previous year was not repeated and trends are now once again rising. Even though all pupils tested achieved the expected Level 2 score, those achieving the higher Level 3 score were not sufficient to raise the overall profile of the results. The school is aware of this and has put into effect a number of strategies in order to raise standards further. For example, looking closely at the provision for the higher attaining pupils and ensured planning addresses their needs. This to be supported by teachers making use of planning for the following year in order to extend learning. It has looked again at its provision for gifted and talented pupils. It has analysed its results in order to note any weaknesses in teaching and learning. For example, the lowest percentage of questions answered correctly in the Year 6 tests were about data handling. The numeracy coordinator has carried out lesson observations in order to check the quality of both teaching and learning. It is making better use of ICT to give support to the subject. It makes more effective use of the initial part of the numeracy lessons.

97. The current inspection shows that pupils in Year 6 may well be on line to achieve well above average results than in the previous year, with more pupils gaining the higher Level 5 score. The number of pupils with special educational needs in this class is very low. Equally, all pupils in Year 2 are likely to achieve the expected Level 2 score, whilst the percentage of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 score is also likely to improve on the

previous year. The school appears well on course to achieve its overall targets for the subject this year.

98. The good use made by the school of the National Numeracy Strategy is at the heart of its successes. The strategy is put into effect well by all teachers, who are regularly looking for ways to improve their teaching and consequently pupils' learning. However, further success, especially for the higher attaining pupils, might not be achieved until the school explores the use of individual target setting, involving pupils more in their own learning; whilst at the same time, making better use of pupils' mathematical knowledge and understanding, through investigations. Not only would this give further scope for improvement, but would also support pupils' own personal development.

99. In the scrutiny of previously completed work there is not enough evidence of pupils being set open-ended tasks, drawing on their knowledge and understanding of mathematics. Too often pupils work through 'problem solving' activities which simply require them to turn word problems into 'sums'. This is far too directed by teachers, or more particularly by the commercially used schemes and does not reflect enough the interest and abilities of the pupils.

100. Work seen in the area of number is far more successful and standards are regularly above expectations. Pupils in Year 2 could group numbers and understand how multiplication works. They could find fractions of numbers such as half of 18 or a quarter of 20. This firm foundation was built upon successfully so that Year 6 pupils understood about equivalent fractions and could add numbers with two or three decimal places. They knew the connection between fractions, decimals and percentages and could calculate these for a range of numbers and situations. They were able to set out and calculate long multiplication and division sums carefully and explore negative numbers as they appear in temperature charts.

101. Standards, in work covering the study of shape, space and measures, are equally good. Pupils in Year 1 understand aspects of symmetry and a display in their class gives good examples of symmetry around the school. In Year 2 pupils can estimate and measure length up to at least 20 centimetres accurately. They have a growing confidence when telling the time and have good experiences of practical weighing activities. In a Year 2 lesson, pupils showed good understanding of direction and turning movements. They could describe angles and could point to angles, which were greater or smaller than a right angle. By Year 4, some pupils were already beginning to work in levels equivalent to Year 6 work. They knew that 250 ml is 0.25 of a litre and knew how to convert millilitres into litres. By Year 6 pupils could accurately draw and measure angles and calculate the perimeters and areas of a range of regular and irregular shapes.

102. Standards of work in data handling are equally good, supported by some use of ICT. In Year 1 there is evidence on display of pupils using graphs and Venn diagrams in order to illustrate their work in science, whilst in Year 2, bar charts are drawn in order to illustrate children's favourite Chinese dishes. By Year 5 pupils are beginning to use their ICT skills as they work with spreadsheets and graphs. In Year 6, they compare temperature graphs of London and The Algarve, whilst other pupils have created a graph to show the conversion rate of the euro against pound sterling.

103. Overall, teaching is good. It is very good in the infant classes and good in the junior classes overall. No lessons were graded below satisfactory. One third of lessons were very good, half were good and the remainder satisfactory. This was similar to the position noted at the last inspection and supports the views expressed by parents at the meeting with the registered inspector, when those attending said that the teaching of mathematics

was good throughout the school. Throughout the teaching of mathematics, strengths were noted in the teaching of basic skills, the high expectations which teachers had for their pupils and their management of lessons. When all of these strengths are present, as in lessons observed in Years 1, 2 and 4, then learning is of a high order and pupils make great strides forward. In these lessons, work was well matched to the range of abilities in the classes, pupils were clearly motivated by the teaching, relationships were strong between adults and pupils and there was a buzz of excitement in the rooms.

104. The result of this good quality teaching is seen further in the behaviour and attitudes of pupils who respond universally well to it. Very little off-task behaviour was seen, pupils knew what was expected of them, they wanted to please their teachers and make progress.

105. Progress across the range of abilities was very similar. Where it was different was on the occasions where pupils with special educational needs did not have direct support from additional adults. When this occurred, their progress was only just satisfactory, whilst the progress made by others was good or sometimes even better.

106. There are good procedures for assessment in mathematics, which give teachers ample information upon which to make judgements about pupils' readiness for the next steps in learning. It would now be an appropriate time for the school to look at involving pupils further in understanding and setting their own targets for improvement.

107. The coordinator, who has recently taken over the management of the subject, has monitored teaching and has begun to make suggestions for improvement as a result of analysing test results.

SCIENCE

108. Year 6 pupils, in the National Curriculum tests in 2001, attained standards, which were well above those expected for their age, with a third attaining at the higher Level 5. Results are similar to those reported at the time of the last inspection. However, when the results are compared with similar schools, they are below average. Although 100 per cent attained Level 4, the number attaining Level 5 was slightly below that achieved in similar schools and this downgrades the average point score. This is explained in part by the high level of pupils with special educational needs, whose results at the age of seven in 1998 caused a dip in the school's overall results. Teacher assessments of Year 2 pupils put their attainment level well above the national average, with 100 per cent achieving Level 2. Attainment for seven year old pupils was reported to be in line with national expectations at the time of the previous inspection and so improvement is clear.

109. Inspection findings show that most pupils at the end of both key stages are attaining above national expectations, with a significant number achieving well what is expected for their ages. Year 6 pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of both natural and physical scientific phenomena across all aspects of the subject and a range of investigative skills, which prepare them well for the next stage of education. They also have the ability to express their ideas using an excellent range of appropriate scientific vocabulary and terminology, strengths that were also highlighted in the last report. By Year 2, pupils have experienced a wide range of directed activities across all aspects of the subject. They question, probe and make realistic predictions about what might happen, and use precise vocabulary in explaining their ideas. For example, they are able to predict the effect of different surfaces on the speed of a car travelling down a slope. Making it quite clear that they understand the effect friction and the steepness of the slope could have on the rate of travel. Pupils with special educational needs generally make satisfactory progress in lessons in consolidating and developing their knowledge and understanding. At times,

when benefiting from their interaction with colleagues or adults or receiving additional support, their progress is good.

110. Overall the delivery of the subject has improved a good deal since the last inspection. The key points for action, to complete the audit of resources; to revise the scheme of work; to monitor and evaluate curriculum provision; identified in the previous report have all been addressed successfully through a well managed programme of strategic planning, led by the coordinator, involving both staff and governors in the process. The planned development of testing and teacher assessment has progressed well. Procedures for target setting for year groups and tracking of pupils' progress, which have extended the established use made of key stage results to inform future planning have had the desired effect of further safeguarding continuity and pupils' achievement throughout the school. This management strategy has had a positive effect on both the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, pupils make good progress in their acquisition of knowledge and understanding of how science impacts on their lives. The tasks presented through the scheme of work challenge pupils of all abilities to develop and progress their scientific understanding. From an early age pupils are encouraged to observe, classify, record and draw conclusions through their involvement in simple experiments and investigations. Whilst pupils in the upper junior classes have the knowledge, understanding, appropriate language and vocabulary to discuss bacteria, viruses and micro-organisms in an informed way. Progress has been made in the pupils' ability to present their findings in a variety of different ways, their over reliance on the use of bar charts is no longer an issue as highlighted in the last report. More sophisticated methods such as pie charts, diagrams, line graphs, data spread sheets and computer software are now being used effectively within both key stages.

111. Overall the quality of teaching is good with an incidence of very good teaching in Year 2. This is generally in line with findings at the time of the last inspection when teaching was judged to be consistently good. All lessons are well planned, thoroughly prepared and adequately resourced. Introductions and expositions are clear and meaningful and tasks generally well matched to the pupils' needs. The organisation of lessons was good and the management of pupils a strength throughout the majority of lessons observed. Skilful observations and questioning during the shared and grouped activities were used to assess the pupils' knowledge and understanding and to determine the need for support or reinforcement of understanding through the direct teaching of a specific concept or technique. Teachers are well supported by a clear scheme of work and deliver their lessons within an agreed programme of structured investigations, which helps safeguard continuity and progression in building on the pupils' previous knowledge and understanding. Consequently the majority of activities are teacher determined and rarely initiated by the pupils themselves. When given the opportunity the pupils of all ages respond with enthusiasm, being ready, willing and able to meet the challenge; such as when Year 1 pupils were presented with the task of designing and making a flip book to illustrate the life cycle of a plant. They listened carefully to the instructions, clarified exactly what was expected of them, then settled down and concentrated on their work, without any fuss or bother. Whilst the enthusiasm shown by Year 2 pupils was almost infectious as they rallied around within their groups, taking on responsibilities to carry out their investigation on 'forces'. Similar positive attitudes were shown by Year 6 pupils who, within workshop like conditions were busy using their knowledge and understanding to produce the 'best spinner'. They demonstrated their recall of previous learning, bringing further new ideas of their own for debate and trialling in the process of improving on what they had produced. Pupils in every class were keen to pursue the investigation, which they did with fascination and inquisitiveness. The very good behaviour demonstrated by them throughout their activities allowed the investigative work to be undertaken successfully in what is, for practical activities, particularly in the infant classes very restricted work areas.

112. Overall the subject is well managed and effectively organised and resourced throughout the school. Through a programme of monitoring, discussion, observation, support and analysis of test results the coordinator has a good understanding of the strengths of provision throughout the school. In her continuing quest of raising standards, the coordinator recognises that greater progress needs to be made in giving pupils more opportunities to determine their own lines of enquiry, and as this aspect of the subject develops throughout the school a wider range of resources will be needed. The provision for science meets National Curriculum requirements and makes a valuable contribution to the pupils' personal development. Literacy and numeracy skills are used well, but ICT is not yet an integral part of the process of collecting, recording, analysing and reporting on data. Effective use is made of the school environment, educational visits and visitors to broaden the pupils' knowledge of the world around them and of scientific phenomena generally.

ART AND DESIGN

113. The last time the school was inspected, standards in art were judged to be always satisfactory and often good. Inspection findings show that standards are generally above national expectations with examples of high quality work being produced within both stages. The key point for action highlighted in the last report; to devise a scheme of work, has been addressed. The present documentation is a focus within the coordinator's action plan and its impact on the delivery of the subject is currently under review. It is evident, through the displays of their work on symmetry, pictures in the style of Matisse and Kandinsky, that infant pupils are familiar with and use a wide range of media, which include paint, pencil, chalk, crayons and clay. Their completed work shows an appreciation of shape, colour and texture. They use scissors and other tools confidently in the production of collages, two-dimensional work and models. Appropriate techniques such as colour mixing are used well. Displayed examples of textiles inspired by close observation of shells and other sea creatures, clay plaques and good quality drawings of street scenes with houses and street furniture shown in perspective, pay tribute to these skills and techniques being successfully built on and extended to a good standard in the junior classes.

114. The quality of teaching is good overall. In the lessons observed the pupils responded enthusiastically to the teacher's creative and lively approach. The lessons were well planned, prepared and resourced. Skills were taught well and the onus put on the pupils to develop techniques for themselves. For example, the use of templates was demonstrated to Year 1 pupils, but not given to them to merely copy. Skilful teaching and organisation in the Year 5 class gave pupils the opportunity and the knowledge and understanding of techniques to develop intricate designs in the style of Clarice Cliff. Work included the making of clay plates, large detailed coloured drawings and three-dimensional designs using paper sculpture techniques. All teachers make best use of the limited accommodation available to them. Pupils throughout the classes had a very positive attitude to the subject, enjoyed the challenge and concentrated well in developing their work to a high standard. Effective support and direct teaching by the teachers gave them the confidence and inspiration to persevere in getting over their difficulties or lack of confidence. In discussions, the pupils were able to use appropriate terminology and technical terms to explain their activity and where appropriate to compare their work with that of the famous artists they had knowledge of in using new techniques.

115. The subject is well managed by the coordinator who is well informed, through her monitoring of colleagues' planning and their seeking of advice. Resources which are adequate for the delivery of all aspects of the subject are purchased inline with the requests made by individual members of staff. Accessibility and availability of resources have been safeguarded through the setting up of a well organised resources room. Good use is made

of artefacts, objects, prints, visitors and visits, particularly to the local high school, the school and neighbouring environment to broaden the opportunities and situations offered as stimuli for the work in art. The delivery of the subject meets National Curriculum requirements and makes a valuable contribution overall to the pupils' personal development, particularly to the spiritual aspects.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

116. Improvements have been made in design and technology at the school since the last inspection, at which time standards were mainly in line with national expectations. Currently standards are above expectations at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 for many pupils.

117. Pupils make good progress in gaining knowledge and understanding together with clear improvements in their levels of skill development. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress as the writing element of the work tends to slow their progress when they do not have specific classroom support.

118. The reasons for the improvements in design and technology can be attributed to the work of a very effective coordinator; the development of a scheme of work which is clearly based on the development of skills and the efforts of all teaching staff to put the scheme of work into effect with confidence and enthusiasm.

119. Although only one lesson of design and technology was observed during the inspection, comprehensive photographic evidence, a well kept coordinator's file and evidence of work in progress, allows clear judgements to be made about pupils' standards of work and the progress they make. Although it is self-evident that teaching has been effective, with the single lesson observed showing teaching to be good, it is not possible to give definitive details of the reasons for teaching and learning being effective.

120. Pupils in Year 1 were observed making flowers which would have opening petals. They were not given templates for making petals, but had to carefully draw and cut them on their own. This clearly supported their personal development and initiative, making them more reliant on their own abilities. They were given very clear instructions of how to use split pins in order to give the petals movement, whilst an adult helper gave good advice to pupils who were using a saw to cut lengths of dowel for the flower stems. Good note was taken of health and safety issues. Pupils listened carefully to instructions and got on with their work without delay. There was a buzz of excitement as they began to produce their flowers.

121. Clearer evidence of the design element was noted in work completed in Year 2 where pupils had designed a chassis with a sail. Pupils had understood how mechanisms could be used to assist movement, with sawing and drilling techniques developed well.

122. Older pupils, in Year 5, had made a moving toy using cams. They had explained their ideas fully in their designs and listed the various stages of construction. They had selected tools and materials and used a variety of techniques for assembling and joining materials. Good attempts had been made at evaluating their finished products, in terms of appearance, how well it worked, how close to the original design it had been and whether they had enjoyed making the toy.

123. Good links with science were noted in a Year 6 activity in which pupils had to make a device, which used a coin as a switch. Money boxes in a variety of shapes had been made and knowledge gained about electrical circuits was well utilised by pupils in order to arrange lights to flash when money was inserted.

124. Aspects of food technology are in place, but are a little less developed than the work in construction. At the same time, the school is now getting ready to introduce more links with ICT through the use of control technology. This requires further hardware and software. However, the coordinator has already linked the proposed work with the ICT coordinator's work in order that both areas of the curriculum might benefit from joint planning in this area.

125. There remains now the task of developing assessment systems in order to check the progress pupils are making in their knowledge, understanding and development of skills within the subject.

GEOGRAPHY

126. Only two lessons were seen during the inspection. However, sufficient evidence was obtained from analysing pupils' work, teachers' planning and discussion with staff and pupils to enable secure judgements to be made. Pupils in both key stages achieve well and make good progress.

127. At Key Stage 1 pupils' work is cross-curricular with topics such as "Changes" covering elements of history, geography and science. The work carried out under the heading 'Celebrations' looked at Chinese New Year and pupils in Year 2 had made individual books about the subject. Presentation is a key feature of the geographical work throughout the school. In Year 2 pupils were looking at symbols on maps and designing their own symbols for a map of the area around the school, which had been the focus of a recent walk. The work was well differentiated for different ability groups within the class.

128. At Key Stage 2 pupils extend their knowledge of the local area well and also, of other localities; they are beginning to recognise how geographical features are formed. Pupils appreciate that some changes to the environment have far reaching implications, such as the work in the Year 5 class looking at what needs to be considered when planning and building a new town. In Year 6 pupils have been working on a project about the Caribbean, which also involved them expressing opinions and stating differing points of view on the merits of building a new luxury hotel. Pupils have a good understanding of maps and satisfactory progress can be seen from work in earlier years.

129. Pupils demonstrate knowledge and understanding of places and a wide range of geographical skills is used. There are good links with other subjects such as numeracy, with temperature graphs for contrasting regions, pie charts showing seasonal changes in India and a range of literacy skills.

130. Teaching throughout the school is consistently good, and planning identifies specific objectives. Work is conducted at an appropriately brisk pace. All pupils are accurately developing their geographical vocabulary, from the reception class' display showing a plan of the route Goldilocks took using appropriate directional language - in front of, behind, round, over, under etc to a display in the Year 6 class showing the geography of the region in the Lake District shortly to be visited.

131. The coordinator is experienced and keen to see the subject develop, especially as geography has not been a priority in recent years. A concise subject action plan is in place and the policy, combined with teachers' planning, ensures continuity and progression throughout the school. The school makes good use of visits to enrich the pupils' first hand experiences and deepen their understanding of contrasting environments and human influences upon land use.

HISTORY

132. Standards attained in history have improved since the last inspection and are now judged to be good. By the end of Year 2 pupils know that events and people change over time. They have an understanding of the changes that have taken place through the lives of various famous people, such as how Mary Seacole influenced the changes in hospitals, comparing her role to that of Florence Nightingale. In Year 1, pupils are able to make comparisons between an old teddy bear and a new teddy bear, identifying the features and differences in appearance.

133. Pupils in the juniors are encouraged to voice opinions about events in the past. Pupils in Year 4 looking at examples of child labour in Victorian times were asked to write from their own point of view. An extension to this work was to think about the role of a child chimney sweep from the point of view of the child, an employer and a government minister.

134. Although only two lessons were seen during the inspection, and these were in the juniors. These, and the work analysed in pupils books, indicate that the quality of teaching is at least good and often, very good. Presentation is a key feature of the work in history. Teaching emphasises the importance of realising that the past is studied by collecting and analysing evidence. The pupils' books show a good range of work is covered and research skills are important. Older pupils are encouraged to carry out individual research into topics. All pupils show an increasing awareness of the sequence of historical events, and have access to a good range of source material such as displays of Victorian artefacts in the under-fives' classroom. Good use is made of visits to places of interest where pupils can have hands-on experiences. These include visiting the museums in Warrington and Liverpool to study Egyptian artefacts, visiting the boat museum to find out about living on canal boats in the past, and visiting Chester cathedral. Additional resources and artefact boxes are loaned from the local resources library and local museums. Cross-curricular links are a strength, with literacy and numeracy skills evident in the pupils' books. Pupils have opportunities to record their ideas both through drawing and writing. Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and children are challenged and motivated, which ensures their good behaviour during lessons. The working atmosphere is good and all pupils are encouraged to ask questions.

135. The quality of leadership in history is effective. The subject policy is good and there is an action plan in place to develop the subject. The coordinator is also the geography coordinator and often links the teaching of history and geography in the curriculum.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

136. Standards of work seen at the last inspection were said to be in line or better than national expectations. Since that time, whilst technology has moved forward at a very rapid pace, the school has had difficulties in keeping up with changes due to lack of computers and software. In spite of this, current standards of work are broadly in line with expectations with one or two instances where lack of time for pupils to spend on computers has meant that they have not quite made the progress expected by the time they reach the end of Year 6.

137. The school has a good scheme of work, which is now being implemented by all year groups. In time, this will mean that pupils will cover all the required work and it is likely that appropriate standards will be achieved. Before this happens it will be important for all teachers to take advantage of the nationally available support in order to improve their own knowledge and confidence. The school needs to improve its ratio of computers to pupils and make informed decisions on the type of computers it will choose to buy. The provision

of a room, which can be used to accommodate whole classes of pupils on a regular basis so that they can have better access to ICT is required.

138. Due to lack of resources, teaching takes place with whole classes watching explanations of new techniques and skills, in front of a single computer. For the remainder of the week, pupils work in small groups, putting in to practice what they have learned. For some pupils the time lag between watching and doing is too long and progress is therefore not satisfactory for all pupils. As a result, although overall progress is satisfactory, the progress made by pupils with special educational needs can on occasions fall short of this due to their inability always to remember what information has been given to them several days before.

139. When talking with Year 6 pupils, they clearly understand the problem and recount times when it has been difficult to remember previous instructions. The school has tried to ameliorate the situation by providing pupils with pencil and paper activities providing a link between instruction and activity. Whilst this has helped it is not an effective alternative. A good example of this was in Year 2, where pupils were being introduced to a binary tree method of posing questions. The whole class discussed the issues and while the bulk of pupils worked on paper to explore the ideas discussed, small groups were taken out by the class teacher to practise the skills on the available computers.

140. Work in the communication strand of the subject is broadly in line with expectations. Pupils in Year 1 colour in their names using the letters on a paper keyboard, while work in Year 2 shows pupils typing in text using capital letters and full stops. Year 3 experiment with different fonts and letter sizes, writing information on their canal topic, whilst a group of Year 6 pupils can describe accurately how to delete, use a spellchecker, cut and paste text and insert graphics into their work. They have not had opportunities to create, on screen, multi-media presentations, making use of their combined skills, although they have prepared for it as a pencil and paper exercise. Work on 'Crazy inventions' in Year 6 comes close to meeting the requirements of the National Curriculum in this aspect of ICT.

141. In the area of handling information, pupils in Year 1 have created a pictogram from class information. A small group of pupils were seen working with the class teacher, also the subject coordinator, on this activity. Pupils followed instructions carefully on how to load the program and select the correct files by double-clicking. They received good quality instructions in the skills needed to enter information and were given time to practise with imaginary data. They then had the opportunity to enter their own data, save and print their pictograms, which they would present to their classmates at a later date. Teaching was good, it motivated the pupils and they in turn responded well to the opportunities presented to them.

142. Two pairs of pupils from Year 5 were seen working well together accessing information from a data base on 'The Planets' and another on 'Life in Wartime Britain'. Once again, pupils were able to use their previous knowledge and skills to load the appropriate programs, click on a range of tool bars and icons in order to access the correct information. These pupils showed good attitudes to their work, were more than capable of working independently and treated the equipment with care.

143. Work in the modelling area of ICT is being developed and is close to expectations. Pupils in Year 1 work with a drawing program through which they can select facial features in order to build a picture of themselves. Pupils at the top of the school have had opportunities to work with a program about ancient Greece, which allows them to gain valuable information about life in that period as they move through the program seeing Greek life unfold before them. The oldest pupils have used spreadsheets to model

expenditure on an imaginary holiday. They have to enter details of costs in a number of categories in order to produce a spreadsheet of their payments. Whilst some of them found this difficult, Year 6 pupils in discussion said that they enjoyed the challenge of the activity. Much of the work is not only saved on disk, but also printed and kept in pupils' ICT folders, which are well presented and add to the assessment potential of the material.

144. Work in the control and measuring area of the National Curriculum requirements, poses some problems for the school, as it does not yet have the equipment to fulfil the tasks completely. At the same time, teachers do not have all the knowledge and expertise to put this difficult part of the work into effect. In spite of this, good progress has been made. Pupils in the infant classes have used a programmable toy in order to practise giving control commands. Pupils in Years 4 to 6 have had further opportunities to give commands to on-screen cursors or 'turtles' so they might move in prescribed patterns. However, other forms of control technology, for example in giving instructions to traffic lights to respond in a particular sequence, or for an IT system to sense physical data, have not yet been possible.

145. As only one school computer is linked to the Internet, the access, which pupils have to this effective avenue for research, is very limited. Equally, pupils have little opportunity to use the facility of e-mail for making contact with people in other schools, towns or countries in order to further their social and cultural development.

146. Through the enthusiasm and good subject knowledge of the coordinator, the school already has in place a full scheme of work, which takes account of all the necessary areas of learning within the subject; so that when extra computers and space becomes available, the plans will already be in place and progress can be made without delay.

147. In spite of not having had concentrated training for ICT the standard of teaching seen was good. It is hoped that once all teachers have had further training, they will be able to address the teaching of skills to their pupils on a whole-class basis, rather than in fragmented groups.

148. The school has identified the need to produce an easy to manage assessment system for ICT and the coordinator is currently experimenting material in his class. Equally the school realises that it is not yet using information technology as much as it might in order to support other areas of the curriculum. Some opportunities have been taken to link ICT with aspects of English, mathematics and history for example, but there is still some way to go before there is true mutual support between ICT and other curriculum areas.

MUSIC

149. Standards in music are good and this reflects good achievement for many pupils. Since the last inspection standards have risen, and the majority of pupils make good progress; these judgements are supported by lesson observations, assemblies and discussion with the music coordinator.

150. The majority of pupils enjoy music and achieve well in their listening and appraising skills. Year 4 pupils were able to confidently listen to and appraise two pieces of music symbolising 'storms'. All pupils are given good opportunities to listen to extracts of music in assemblies and in their music lessons.

151. Singing is a strength of the school and pupils of all ages enjoy singing tunefully, demonstrating pitch and rhythm control and expressively matching actions and intonation to the lyrics. The Year 2 pupils are able to vary the dynamics of their voices to sing the verses

and chorus of a song entitled 'Paintbox'. There is an after-school singing club available to all pupils in the juniors.

152. Pupils in the juniors are confident to discuss the meaning of tempo and identify the variation in tempo of the song 'Back within a Day'. They are aware of a simple three and four-beat rhythm and are able to practise conducting.

153. The quality of teaching was very good. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good and exposes pupils to a broadly balanced curriculum. The subject skills are very well taught ensuring pupils understand the process of the work and the meaning of words. Pupils are exposed to specialist vocabulary such as *rallentando*, *accelerando*, *timbre* and *dynamics*; they can share the meanings.

154. Cross-curricular links are strong in music with infant pupils singing songs and composing musical scores which relate to their science topic of growing plants. Whilst junior pupils learn songs linked with their history topic about life on the canals. Links with the local high school are also good with groups of older pupils performing songs and holding workshop sessions linked to the Year 5 and 6 geography topic about the Caribbean. Composition is a very important element of the music curriculum and pupils in each class are able to record a musical composition each half-term, which builds into a permanent record throughout the year ensuring continuity and progression across the whole school.

155. Leadership of the subject is good. The coordinator is knowledgeable and enthusiastic. Teachers' planning is seen by the coordinator every half-term to ensure progression and that a range of skills are taught. Music is very much a part of school life. The school offers pupils the opportunity to be involved in a range of musical activities, including joining a massed choir from the area singing at the Bridgewater Hall.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

156. Attainment is above national expectations at the end of both key stages, and most pupils including those with special educational needs make good progress in developing their skills in planning, performing and evaluating their physical activities and performance across all aspects of the subject. This is the result of significant developments that have been made in the overall provision and delivery of all aspects of the subject since the previous inspection, when attainment was judged to be in line with national expectations, progress generally satisfactory and the scope of physical activities limited and lacking challenge beyond the basic skills. The key points for action, to appoint a coordinator for PE and to develop a scheme of work have been successfully addressed, resulting in dramatic improvements in the overall organisation and management of the subject, standards, the quality of teaching and learning, and pupils' attitudes and behaviour.

157. In discussions, pupils shared their enthusiasm for the subject, many giving it a high rating in those subjects they like best. They were eager to share and discuss the opportunities offered to them, showing particular enthusiasm for team games, sporting activities and swimming, fully appreciating the high profile given to the subject.

158. Overall the quality of teaching is good, with no aspects that are less than satisfactory. In the lessons observed there was an incidence of very good teaching in Year 1 and an excellent lesson in Year 4. In these lessons, the pupils were given opportunities to plan their activities, to work individually and with others and given time to reflect on their own work and that of others before being asked to make judgements about the performances. Skilful observations were used to assess how well the pupils were performing and the information used to encourage and support individuals or to make specific teaching points to groups or

the whole class. In both, the pupils made very good progress in meeting the learning objectives shared with them by their teacher. Generally, all the teachers had a secure knowledge of what they were teaching and an understanding of the needs of the pupils. Their lessons were well structured with appropriate emphasis being given to the important elements of warming up exercises, pace, level of challenge, the direct teaching of skills and cool-down period. Lessons were well planned, prepared and resourced giving all the pupils, whatever their ability the opportunity to be fully involved. Some older pupils showed poor attitudes to the good quality experiences offered to them in Year 5. This is in contrast to the frustration felt by pupils, the time spent as passive observers, and the lack of the competitive element to activities highlighted as issues in the last inspection all of which are no longer present. In complete contrast, most pupils now enjoy pace, challenge, excitement and fulfilment. They take responsibility for resourcing their activities, including the setting up of apparatus, show initiative in using space well and are considerate of others when working within grouped activities.

159. The subject is very well organised and managed by the coordinator, who is enthusiastic and committed to the sustained improvement of standards and the overall provision for the subject. Under her leadership there is now an agreed set of aims, principles, strategies and a scheme of work which provides the staff with an effective framework by which they are encouraged to acknowledge and plan physical education as an essential part of all pupils' social, emotional and physical development. Staff expertise has been improved, training having been given to teaching and support staff, including dinnertime supervisors. The school has involved itself in national initiatives, such as 'TOP Sport' and has very recently achieved the Activemark Gold Award in recognition of the high quality and breadth of its provision. The availability, quantity and quality of resources have improved significantly. Good use is made of outside coaches and experts to raise the quality of instruction and opportunities offered to the pupils, which has motivated the pupils' interest and zest to be involved in what they consider to be exciting and rewarding activities. The delivery of the subject meets the requirements of the National Curriculum, and makes a significant contribution to the pupils' personal development, particularly the social and emotional aspects.

