

INSPECTION REPORT

MERTON BANK PRIMARY SCHOOL

St. Helens, Merseyside

LEA area: St Helens

Unique reference number: 104784

Headteacher: Mr. J. Flanagan

Reporting inspector: Miss M. A. Warner
17288

Dates of inspection: 10th – 13th June 2002

Inspection number: 245277

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 to 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Roper Street
St. Helens
Merseyside

Postcode: WA7 3EL

Telephone number: 01744 22104

Fax number: 01744 22104

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs. L. Lee

Date of previous inspection: 27th April 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
17288	Miss M. A. Warner	Registered inspector	Music Religious education English as an additional language	Information about the school The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught?
11229	Mr. M. Freeman	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents? Accommodation
30075	Mr. M. Duggan	Team inspector	English Physical education	
4058	Mrs. J. Kelly	Team inspector	Mathematics Art and design Design and technology Special educational needs Equal opportunities	
17877	Mrs. C. Ingham	Team Inspector	Information and communication technology Foundation Stage	
19843	Mr. A. Mackle	Team inspector	Geography History	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Assessment
11510	Mr. K. Oglesby	Team inspector	Science	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? How well is the school lead and managed?

The inspection contractor was:

PkR Educational Consultants Ltd.,
6 Sherman Road,
Bromley.
Kent
BR1 3JH

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33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Merton Bank Primary School serves a large housing estate situated in the St Helen's area of Merseyside. The infant and junior schools were amalgamated in 1995. The school is bigger than most primary schools nationally with 408 pupils aged three to 11 on roll, including 51 part-time places in the nursery. There is a high degree of deprivation in the area, with the unemployment rate being twice the borough average; the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above the national average, at 46 per cent. Almost all pupils are from white, United Kingdom backgrounds, with 1.3 per cent from Bangladeshi and 0.3 per cent from Chinese backgrounds. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language and none is at an early stage of learning English. 0.5 per cent are from traveller families. Forty-three per cent of pupils have special educational needs, which is well above the national average, and 3.4 per cent have formal statements of need, which is above the national average. Hardly any children, on entry to the nursery, have had any playgroup experience and nearly all enter with attainment well below what is expected of children of this age, especially in speech and social development. The school was awarded the Kitemark for the Early Years in 2001 and is working towards the Basic Skills Quality Mark this year.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Merton Bank Primary School is a very effective school. Pupils start school with attainment well below average and by the time they leave the school standards are in line with national expectations. The school also promotes the pupils' personal development very well. The school is very well led and managed; there is good teaching across the school and pupils have positive attitudes. The value added is very good. All this indicates that the school is giving good value for money. However, because the cost per pupil is high, value for money is judged to be satisfactory.

What the school does well

- Standards are good in comparison with similar schools and reflect how the school helps pupils to achieve well.
- Teaching and learning, overall, are good across the school; teachers manage pupils particularly well and relationships are very good.
- The school provides very well for pupils' personal development, guidance and welfare, and for their moral, social and cultural development. Their spiritual development is also provided for well.
- The school provides very well for pupils of all backgrounds and with a wide range of special educational needs. It is justifiably proud of this.
- The very good leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff give clear educational direction to the work of the school. There is consistency and fairness in the way that the school is run.
- The aims and values of the school are reflected well in all that it does.

What could be improved

- Standards in reading and writing across the school are below national expectations.
- Checking of the quality of teaching by subject leaders and using the information to improve teaching in subjects other than English, mathematics and science is underdeveloped.
- Information and communication technology is insufficiently used across the curriculum.
- Whilst teaching is good overall, pupils are given too few opportunities to use their investigative, problem solving and research skills.
- The library does not have an important enough role in teaching and learning.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

There have been considerable improvements since the last inspection in April 1998. All the key issues of the last report have been addressed. Standards in mathematics, science and information and communication technology have significantly improved, as has the senior management's careful

analysis of data and use of it and self-evaluation to raise standards. There have been noteworthy improvements in the provision for children in the Foundation Stage and, as a result, in these children's ability to control and co-ordinate their movement. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has also significantly improved.

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			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	E	E	D	B
Mathematics	D	E	D	B
Science	E	E	D	B

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

In 2001, the Year 2 National Curriculum test results showed that standards in reading, writing and mathematics were well below the national average. They were in line with results of similar schools in reading but below similar schools in writing and mathematics. Teacher assessments in science showed that standards were well below both the national average and those of similar schools. At the end of Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science were below the national average but above those of similar schools. The improvement in results between Years 2 and 6 reflects the continued progress that pupils make, from a well below average start in the nursery. There was no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls in either key stage. The school's trend in test results, at the end of Year 6 over the last few years, is broadly in line with the national trend.

The school sets challenging targets which it does not always meet. This is partly because they are too challenging and partly because higher-attaining pupils often leave in Year 5 and the targets, which were set to include these pupils who have left, are no longer accurate.

Inspection evidence shows that standards in speaking and listening are in line with the national average and are below in reading and writing by the time the pupils are seven. Standards at the age of 11 are close to the national average in speaking and listening and are below the national average in reading and writing. In mathematics, pupils enter the nursery well below national expectations and by the time they enter Year 3 they are approaching national averages. Pupils make very good progress and the percentage of higher attainers in Year 6 reaching the higher Levels 5 and 6, is well above that seen in similar schools. Overall, the pupils' achievement in mathematics is good, due to high expectations and the very good progress they make during the four years in Years 3 to 6. In science, by the end of Year 2, pupils' knowledge and understanding is close to that expected for this age. This improvement has not so far been reflected in the results of the national teacher assessments, which tend to be based on what pupils can explain verbally or on paper: some pupils not yet having the skills to discuss or explain what they understand. Pupils' attainment in science by the end of Year 6 is in line with expectations.

Standards are above expectations in singing, as pupils sing particularly tunefully. They are also above the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus in religious education. Pupils achieve well in English, science, geography, information and communication technology and religious education in both Years 2 and 6 and in mathematics and physical education in Year 6. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress across the school.

Most children in the Foundation Stage make good progress and are on track to achieve as expected by the end of the Reception year except, in language skills as, although they make good progress, the majority will not have reached the expected level.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to school are good. They work hard and diligently, take pride in their work and are interested in lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Simple and mutually agreed classroom rules, together with effective rewards and sanctions, contribute significantly towards the pupils' good behaviour.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' relationships with each other and with adults are very good. The school has a good range of responsible tasks available to all ages to develop and sustain their self-confidence.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Attendance is below the national average and the school is making every effort to increase pupils' attendance at school. The rate of unauthorised absence, however, is well below the national average.

Strengths are in pupils' personal development and their relationships. A weakness is in the number of days a minority of pupils are away from school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

In a quarter of lessons observed, the quality of teaching was very good or excellent and in three-quarters teaching was good or better. In only three per cent of lessons was teaching unsatisfactory. In almost a third of lessons in Years 3 to 6 teaching was very good or excellent.

Teaching was good overall in the Foundation Stage. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of children in the nursery is particularly commendable. Teaching is also good in Years 1 and 2 and in Years 3 to 6. Strengths in teaching across the school include: the relationships with and the management of pupils; the specialist knowledge of some teachers in mathematics, history, religious education and in French in Years 3 to 6; the teaching of ICT in Reception classes and Years 5 and 6 in the suite. Weaknesses include: an over-reliance on worksheets; some written tasks do not develop literacy skills sufficiently; too much directed work with too little emphasis on using enquiry skills in mathematics; the introduction to some lessons are sometimes too long and lacked paced.

Learning is good across the school, with particular strengths being in the effort that pupils put into their own learning. They usually work at a good pace, show a good degree of interest and concentrate well. As a result, they acquire a good degree of skills, knowledge and understanding. A weakness is in the pupils' own understanding of how well they are achieving.

The school meets the needs of all pupils very well, through matching work well to the needs of pupils of different attainment. Higher attainers are generally challenged well.

Pupils' literacy skills are promoted well through the National Literacy Strategy and across the curriculum. The National Numeracy Strategy is being implemented effectively

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum fulfils the school's aims by providing a broad and balanced programme of work for all its pupils. It is enriched by a good range of activities and the teaching of French in Year 5.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Teaching and provision for pupils with special educational needs are very good and help pupils achieve very well.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good support is provided for the occasional pupil joining the school with English as an additional language, and the care provided enables them to become well-integrated members of the school community.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Pupils' spiritual development is promoted well in lessons and assemblies. The school's ethos promotes a sense of fair play and provides the pupils with a strong sense of right and wrong; pupils develop a good understanding of living in a community. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to enhance their awareness of their own and other cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The previous report noted the good care, support and guidance given to the pupils and this has been maintained and developed.

The school's partnership with parents is satisfactory overall. Most parents are satisfied with their existing relationship with the school but some parents are disengaged from the life of the school. Pastoral care and welfare throughout the school is now very good and a tangible strength. Strengths in the curriculum are in the school's provision for pupils' personal development in addition to statutory subjects.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher provides very good leadership and is well supported in this by his deputy whose teaching skills are outstanding. Their combined management skills are very effective. Senior staff believe that all pupils can and will succeed, whatever the starting point.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors fulfil their roles well; they are committed to the school and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good in the core subjects. Senior staff have been trained in self-evaluation procedures and this philosophy is now embedded in all aspects of school life.
The strategic use of resources	Good. When setting the budget all decisions are linked to educational priorities.

The school is well staffed by a team of experienced, dedicated teachers and support staff. There is a good balance of male and female teachers. There is a satisfactory range of learning resources. The accommodation, although ageing, is generally satisfactory.

The governing body is aware of best value principles. These are applied properly, not only in awarding contracts but in the school's self-evaluation. Apart from some minor omissions in the school prospectus and annual report, governors meet all their statutory responsibilities.

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 child is making good progress. • That the teaching is good. • That the school expects their child to work hard and achieve his or her best. • That their child likes school. • That the school is helping their child to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A wider range of activities outside lessons. • The behaviour of some children. • The information they receive about how well their child is getting on. • The school working more closely with parents.

A small percentage (11 per cent) of questionnaires were returned. The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views of the school. However, they disagree with some of the parents' concerns. There is a good range of aesthetic and physical extra-curricular activities on offer to the pupils from Years 1 to 6. The strategies in place to manage pupils' behaviour are good and well planned. There is very little bullying or other inappropriate behaviour and the pupils understand well what to do if they are subject to such behaviour. The annual reports on the children's progress are informative and helpful to parents in gauging their children's academic progress and personal development. The twice-yearly, parent-teacher consultation meetings are well attended and also prove helpful and informative to parents. The school staff are considered by most parents to be readily accessible and helpful at other times.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The school was awarded the Kitemark for the Early Years in 2001. Nearly all children enter the nursery with attainment well below what is expected of children of this age, especially in speech. Their social development is also well below that expected. Very few children have previously had any playgroup experience. Most children in the nursery and Reception classes make good progress in the areas of learning and are on track to achieve the expected levels of learning by the end of the Reception year. However, in communication, language and literacy, although the children have undoubtedly made good progress, the majority will not be at the level expected by the time they enter Year 1.
2. In 2001, the Year 2 National Curriculum test results showed that standards in reading, writing and mathematics were well below the national average. They were in line with results of similar schools in reading but below similar schools in writing and mathematics. Teacher assessments in science showed that standards were well below both the national average and those of similar schools. At the end of Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science were below the national average but above those of similar schools. The improvement in results between Years 2 and 6 reflects the continued progress that pupils make across the whole school, from a well below average start in the nursery. There was no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls in either key stage. Trends over time show that the school's trend, at the end of Year 6, is broadly in line with the national trend.
3. The school sets challenging targets which it does not always meet. This is partly because they are challenging and partly because higher-attaining pupils often leave in Year 5 and the targets, which were set to include these pupils who have left, are no longer accurate.
4. Standards in speaking and listening are in line with the national average by the time the pupils are seven and below the national average in reading and writing. Standards at the age of 11 are close to the national average in speaking and listening and are below the national average in reading and writing.
5. In mathematics, pupils enter the nursery well below national expectations and by the time they enter Year 3 they are approaching national averages. Pupils make very good progress and the percentage of higher attainers in Year 6 reaching the higher Levels 5 and 6 is well above that seen in similar schools. Overall, the pupils' achievement in mathematics is good, due to teachers' high expectations and the very good progress they make during the four years in Years 3 to 6.
6. In science, by the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment is close to that expected for this age. This improvement has not so far been reflected in the results of the national teacher assessments. Pupils' attainment by the end of Years 6 in science is in line with national expectations.
7. Standards are in line with what is expected in Years 2 and 6 in art and design, design and technology, history, geography, information and communication technology and physical education. They are in line with expectations in music, overall, and above in singing as pupils sing particularly tunefully. Standards in religious education are above

those expected by the Agreed Syllabus in both Years 2 and 6. Pupils achieve well in English, science, geography, information and communication technology and religious education in both Years 2 and 6 and in mathematics and physical education in Year 6. In other subjects their achievement is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs and pupils with statements of special educational need make very good progress across the school.

8. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and a strength of the school. Pupils generally attain, and on some occasions exceed, their targets. Pupils with statements make very good progress and some have been removed from the register. The teaching of pupils is good in lessons and very good in the withdrawal groups. These are effectively managed in order that their work reflects and supports the work they would be doing in their own classes. Provision for pupils with special needs is good in lessons. The individual education plans (personal education plans) now include specific, short-term, attainable learning targets and clear, measurable success criteria. The school has made good progress. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. Their individual targets focus clearly on what they need to do to improve and all make significant gains in the basic skills and in improving their behaviour and learning skills.
9. Good support is provided for the occasional pupil joining the school who speaks English as an additional language and the care provided enables them to become well-integrated members of the school community. The standards they reach are in line with their peers.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. The previous report noted the generally good attitudes to learning and the good behaviour of the pupils. The present picture is just as good. The pupils' attitudes to learning are good, in general. They are eager to learn, enjoy attending school and co-operate well with each other. They work hard and diligently, take pride in their work and are interested in their lessons. They respect the school buildings, equipment and grounds and there is a commendable lack of litter and graffiti throughout the school. The pupils move around the school in a safe, calm and orderly manner. They show respect for the aims of the school and have good regard for the values and ideas of others. The school presents a safe, harmonious and happy community to the world and parents commented that staff provide good role models for their children.
11. Although there are some difficult pupils within the school, the behaviour strategies in place to manage such pupils are good and well planned. The school makes good, effective use of appropriate external support agencies, such as the Pupil Referral Service, and behaviour throughout the school is, in general, good and thus contributes effectively to good learning. The school has a well-designed, agreed policy for managing behaviour. Simple and mutually agreed classroom rules, together with a clear and effective array of rewards and sanctions, contribute significantly towards the good overall behaviour of pupils throughout the school. There is very little bullying or other inappropriate behaviour and the pupils understand well what to do if they are subject to such behaviour. The school takes a firm, effective stance on bullying, racism and similar unacceptable behaviour. There have been no permanent exclusions for some years and temporary exclusions are low.
12. The pupils' relationships with each other and with adults are very good. They are friendly, polite and helpful to adults and they possess good levels of self-esteem and confidence. The 'High Scope' system in the nursery helps develop independence and

instils confidence in very young pupils and the school has a good range of responsible tasks available to all ages to develop and sustain self-confidence, responsibility and independence in all its pupils.

13. Attendance is unsatisfactory and, at 91.3 per cent, is below the national average. The school is fully aware of this problem and is making sterling efforts, in co-operation with the education welfare officer, to increase pupils' attendance at school. The rate of unauthorised absence is, however, low and well under the national average. Most of the pupils enjoy school, attend regularly and arrive punctually. At the pre-inspection parents' meeting parents commented on how much their children enjoy learning and do not like to be absent from school through illness.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

14. The quality of teaching is good. In three-quarters of lessons teaching was good or better and in a quarter of the lessons teaching was very good and was sometimes excellent. In only three lessons was teaching unsatisfactory. In almost a third of lessons in Years 3 to 6 teaching was very good or excellent.
15. In the Foundation Stage, teaching was good overall, with particular strengths in the teachers' management of pupils, use of assessment and the teaching of basic skills. The knowledge and understanding of children in the nursery is also particularly commendable. There is challenging teaching in the nursery, an exciting environment, and planning is very thorough.
16. A key issue from the last inspection was to improve the quality of teacher' weekly and termly planning. This has been done; planning is now satisfactory, and sometimes good in subjects where there is a whole-school priority to raise standards. The planning has enough detail now to help teachers manage their lessons; for example, some science planning has useful reminders of the key questions to be asked. Teachers record clearly what they want pupils to learn.
17. Strengths in teaching are that, across the school, relationships and the management of pupils are very good. The specialist knowledge of some teachers in mathematics, history and French in Years 3 to 6 and in religious education is a strength, as is the teaching of Reception classes and Years 5 and 6 in information and communication technology in the designated suite. A further strength is the interactive questioning of pupils, the sharing of learning objectives with the pupils and the teaching of pupils with special educational needs and lower-attaining pupils. The homework policy is adhered to and pupils in Years 5 and 6 are given regular homework which parents feel helps to prepare them for secondary school.
18. A scrutiny of pupils' work shows that in some subjects there is an over-reliance on worksheets, although some are of good quality, and tasks do not promote literacy skills sufficiently. Although there has been some improvement since the last inspection, there is still too much directed work and too little emphasis on using enquiry skills in mathematics and science. In a small number of lessons, introductions to lessons are sometimes too long and slowly paced.
19. Learning is good across the school with particular strengths being in the effort that pupils put into their own learning. They usually work at a good pace and show a good degree of interest, concentrating well. As a result, they acquire a good degree of skills, knowledge and understanding. A relative weakness is in the pupils' own understanding of how well they are achieving.

20. The school meets the needs of all pupils very well through matching work well to the needs of pupils of different attainment. Support for more able pupils is good: the setting arrangement for literacy and numeracy provide a differentiated curriculum and the teachers have high expectations of them. Mathematics clubs are provided for higher-attaining pupils in Years 2 and 6. There have also been science clubs and art and craft workshops and music groups meet regularly.
21. Teachers plan work to meet the targets on the individual education plans of pupils with special educational needs well. The quality and usefulness of these has improved since the last inspection. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special needs is good overall and very good when they are withdrawn for extra help in small groups. The highly qualified and skilled subject leader works closely with teachers, classroom support assistants, dinner supervisors and a wide range of outside agencies to ensure that the very best advice and support is accessed for all pupils. The system of withdrawal works particularly well as pupils cover a similar learning objective in the small groups as their class is covering.
22. Literacy is promoted well through the National Literacy Strategy. In all classes literacy skills are also being improved through other subjects. The National Numeracy Strategy has been introduced effectively by the two subject leaders and monitoring of the quality and standards in classes has taken place.

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

23. The curriculum meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and the Agreed Syllabus for religious education. It fulfils the school's aims by providing a broad and balanced programme of work for all its pupils, by emphasising personal, social and health education and by including sex education and drugs education. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of activities, which include visits and visitors as well as after-school clubs for pupils in Years 1 to 6. Lessons provide a good variety of interesting and relevant activities. There are a few opportunities for pupils to learn and practise investigative skills in science and, when these are given, this helps them to make good progress. However, teachers do not always make the best use of the pupils' problem-solving and research skills and this restricts their learning. The library, including information on CD ROMs, is not used enough to enrich teaching and learning. Another weakness is that pupils have had insufficient opportunities to practise using information and communication technology as part of their work in other subjects. Provision has now been increased and there are appropriate plans to develop this.
24. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage meets requirements. Improvement has been noteworthy since the last inspection, particularly in the provision for physical development and children's knowledge and understanding of the world. A wider range of interesting activities to promote learning has been introduced. Improvements have also included the development of effective written plans to guide the good practice which now exists in the nursery. Extra-curricular activities are also planned for this age group.
25. The school's current approach to implementing the National Literacy Strategy is good and, as a result, pupils make good progress, although standards remain below the national average. Performance management is used well to help raise standards. Pupils are grouped by prior attainment and the school has focused particularly on improving writing in recent months. As a result, a good range of opportunities to use

and extend their writing skills in other subjects are now provided. The National Numeracy Strategy has been introduced effectively by the two subject leaders. The focus on the development of mental arithmetic skills throughout Years 3 to 6 has supported the teaching of all other areas of mathematics. The school also uses a range of catch-up programmes to ensure that as many pupils as possible reach the nationally expected standards.

26. A strength of the school is its provision for pupils with a very wide range of abilities and needs. The teaching and provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. These pupils make good progress and have full access to the curriculum. There are examples of pupils who have had difficulty fitting into other schools but are now doing very well at Merton Bank. This is because of the very good relationships within the school and the very good provision for personal and social education. Good support is provided for the occasional pupil joining the school speaking English as an additional language, and the care provided enables them to become well-integrated members of the school community. Provision for higher-attaining pupils is good, but could be improved further by using a wider range of teaching styles and giving these pupils more opportunities to show what they can do. The school identifies and supports gifted and talented pupils across a wide range of subjects and some out-of-school activities such as kendo. There are art, mathematics and computer clubs for these pupils. One measure of the success of these is the fact that two pupils achieved the very high Level 6 for mathematics in the National Curriculum tests last year.
27. There is good provision for the pupils with social needs. Their needs are identified in the Foundation Stage and, where necessary, advice is sought from outside agencies on the appropriate provision and this is always acted upon. Class teachers, the special needs co-ordinator and the classroom assistants work closely together to meet their specific needs. Where problems with behaviour are identified, the dinnertime supervisor is also included. All have access to the whole curriculum including wheelchair pupils in physical education. Autistic pupils are supported in socialising with other pupils. Those pupils with difficult-to-manage medical conditions are also fully integrated into the school, much aided by the new purpose-built medical room.
28. Good policies and schemes of work are in place for all subjects. Many of these are adapted from national guidelines and this has helped teachers to improve planning and assessment. The school has a three-year programme for review of subjects. This is effective in seeing that no area is neglected, but that teachers are not trying to deal with too many priorities at once. There is a homework policy, which is being followed. A strength of the school is the way that the school seeks to improve the quality and effectiveness of the curriculum through a process of self-analysis. This process is evident in everything that the school does. It can be seen in a formal subject review or in the open way that teachers talk about their lessons and share ideas for improvement.
29. The school has good links to its community and tries continuously to develop these. There are good working relationships in place with the local Chamber of Commerce and the Residents' Association and there is some support by the pupils of local and national charities, for example the Royal National Lifeboat Institution. There is some useful contact with local churches and also with local further and higher education establishments regarding in-service training and placements. Parents are welcome in the school and their views on the curriculum are sought and taken seriously. One example of the school's prompt response is the introduction of French lessons in Year 5. These are taught by a very good teacher from the secondary school; pupils are enjoying the lessons and making very good progress. The school has also been

promised funding to teach Italian in Year 6 as from September and has been asked by the BBC to help make a programme about teaching foreign languages in primary schools. Other valuable links with the High School include summer schools and very good arrangements for transfer at the age of 11. The school organises regular courses for parents, for example in science or computers. There are good relationships with many other agencies which broaden pupils' knowledge and experience; these include professional sports training and expert advice on health and safety issues.

30. All pupils are effectively supported and have full access to the curriculum. They take part in all aspects of physical education, including those in wheelchairs who also have the chance to attend sporting events outside school. Clubs and teams are open to all, and when girls become ineligible to join the mixed football teams the school has endeavoured to find them all-girl matches. Pupils with medical conditions that are difficult to manage are also fully integrated into the school. The provision of a specially designed medical room has supported this work. The special needs co-ordinator takes great care to access appropriate resources in order that the detrimental effects of any medical condition are alleviated as far as possible. For example, the school has provided a special lectern type desk for a pupil with a visual problem. The equal opportunities policy now contains a clear statement on racial equality. There have been no incidents of racist incidents but there are systems in place to log them and to deal with them.
31. Overall, the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. This represents an improvement upon the findings of the 1998 inspection.
32. The pupils' spiritual development is good. School assemblies, religious education lessons and circle time (a session set aside for pupils to discuss personal and social issues) provide pupils with good opportunities for reflection. Friday assemblies taken by the headteacher often provide dramatised versions, with headteacher and pupils as actors, of Bible stories, which is one of the reasons for pupils' very good knowledge and understanding in religious education. Assemblies also offer opportunities through well-selected music, themes and prayer for the pupils to join as a community in recognising their individual beliefs. In a Year 6 lesson, the pupils were encouraged to reflect on charitable actions taken within the school community.
33. The development of the pupils' moral awareness is very good. School rules prominently displayed around the school, the school's aims and values and the ethos which are encouraged in the classrooms, all promote a sense of fair play and provide the pupils with a strong sense of right and wrong. The pupils are engaged with the staff in consideration of these rules. This extended to pupils being involved in discussions on the code of conduct for the school and the sanctions to be taken where indiscretions occurred.
34. The school rightly takes pride in its social development of the pupils which is very good. The pupils are courteous and well behaved. Playground behaviour is generally good, with pupils mixing socially in a positive way. The pupils are encouraged to take responsibility, show initiative and develop an understanding of living in a community. In Years 1 and 2, for example, pupils are carefully chosen to deliver messages and take registers to the office. The good range of aesthetic and physical extra-curricular activities on offer to the pupils in Years 3 to 6 contributes well to their social development.
35. Pupils' cultural development is very good. In religious education, history, geography, art and music pupils are introduced to different cultures and teachers carefully organise

these elements of the curriculum programme in order to maximise the learning opportunities for their pupils. Stories from other cultures are built into the literacy programme. Assembly music takes from a wide range of music traditions from around the world. Celebrations of religious festivals, including the Jewish Passover, are a feature of the multicultural life of the school. Visits made out of school enhance the pupils' awareness of their own culture and of the local heritage.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

36. The previous report noted the good care, support and guidance given to the pupils and this has been maintained and developed. Pastoral care and welfare throughout the school is now very good and a tangible strength, greatly appreciated by parents and contributing to the overall effectiveness of the school.
37. Child protection is well organised and effective. The special educational needs co-ordinator is the nominated person for child protection and has received the appropriate training. The headteacher is the reserve child protection person and has also received training. Additionally, several, but not all, class teachers have received some basic child protection training. Child protection records are stored securely and are well maintained and the school makes good, effective use of appropriate external support agencies, such as educational psychologist and Social Services.
38. There are well-organised and effective pastoral care and welfare systems in place and the monitoring of academic and personal development is also well structured. These well-planned and effective systems contribute substantially towards good learning and the overall mental, social and physical development of the pupils. The care of the pupils and their personal development is mainly in the hands of individual class teachers, who know their pupils well and keep good records of their development and achievements, providing good personal support, advice and guidance. Any difficult problems are passed onwards to senior staff and the headteacher for resolution and this system works very well. The pupils with special educational needs are well cared for and this good pastoral provision has a beneficial effect on their attainment and development. The school has good relationships with the receiving secondary schools and the transfer of records and integration of pupils into secondary education are well planned and effective.
39. The systems in place for recording and monitoring attendance are good. Registers are marked briskly and accurately, meet statutory requirements and are stored securely. Any absences are swiftly followed up and the education welfare officer provides valuable support in dealing with the more difficult cases of serious lateness and absence. There is an appropriate array of rewards for good attendance and parents are well informed of the school's rules concerning absence, attendance and punctuality.
40. The school pays good attention to health and safety care. First aid boxes are well stocked and appropriately located throughout the school and parents are kept well informed of any accidents to their children. Three staff have received formal first aid training and the school keeps satisfactory records of all first aid incidents. Fire precautions are good and there are regular effective fire drills throughout the year. All fire equipment is checked regularly and there is an annual audit of electrical equipment. Additionally, the site manager and the deputy headteacher make weekly rigorous health and safety checks of the school and its grounds. These high standards of safety, health care and welfare contribute substantially towards creating and maintaining a safe, harmonious learning environment throughout the school.

41. Procedures for assessing the pupils' attainment and progress are good. The assessment co-ordinator is instrumental in developing a range of procedures concerned with the analysis of data relating to pupils in Key Stage 2 within the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Very detailed information is generated on individual pupil performance in National Curriculum tests for Year 6 pupils. This is analysed to identify strengths and weaknesses in curriculum planning and to inform future practice.
42. The school is very aware of its performance in national tests. It uses the results of these tests to track the progress of all the pupils as they move through the school and consequentially has a reliable means of judging how well the pupils are achieving over time. Regular opportunities are taken to assess the pupils' progress during both key stages. Spelling tests, written assessments and checks on the progress made by individual pupils on their multiplication tables are all features of school practice. Individual pupil targets have been introduced for English and mathematics but these are not consistently applied. In the nursery assessment activities are clearly indicated in the planning and related to the Early Learning Goals. A thorough assessment process is in place to give a baseline on entry to the nursery and good procedures exist to build on the information gained. Good procedures for baseline assessment on entry to the Reception year are also in place.
43. The headteacher is very aware of the strengths and weaknesses of each pupil and has promoted, through extensive monitoring and evaluation, the importance of the plenary session as an assessment tool for teachers to identify successful learning outcomes. Generally teachers prompt, listen and respond to the different needs of the pupils well. The assessment of pupils with special educational needs is very good. Individual education plans are well thought out and provide very good targeted programmes of work for the pupils concerned.
44. The school is aware of the need to develop a more consistent approach to the assessment of foundation subjects. The role of the assessment co-ordinator needs clarifying so that an overview of procedures across all key stages can be achieved. Marking of the pupils' work is inconsistent. Best practice was seen to occur where teachers related their comments to the learning objectives or the pupils' personal targets. In a Year 2 religious education lesson on baptism, the teacher took time to talk through the work of the pupils with them. And in a Year 5 geography lesson, the marking of the teacher furthered the understanding of the pupils. These pupils appreciated their work being marked as it helped them to know how well they were doing. Overall, the teachers know their pupils well. They apply this knowledge well to match the set tasks to pupils' abilities.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

45. The previous report commented on the effective partnership in place with parents and the community. The partnership at present is satisfactory overall. Most parents are satisfied with their existing relationship with the school but some parents are, however, disengaged from the life of the school. Very few parents help in school on a regular basis, although the Friends of the School Association is fairly well supported and raises useful funds for the school through such events as beetle drives, fashion shows and a Valentine's day disco. The annual Technology Fair, where each class has its own stall, is usually well supported by parents. The SHARE scheme, for after-school parent/child education classes, although not attracting large numbers, works well and provides useful support to those parents who wish to be further involved in the education of their

children. Parents attend two-hour weekly sessions when activities are prepared to share with their children. On the following visit parents discuss how the activity was carried out and how interesting it was for the child and parent. The staff have previously prepared workshops for parents in mathematics and science. These were deemed to be very helpful in guiding parents on the strategies they should use at home to support their children. The workshops took place during school hours which was thought to explain why attendance was low. Another recent development is an after-school computer club which is attended by parents and their children together.

46. The information provided by the school to parents is generally helpful and appropriate. Regular newsletters and letters to parents are clear and informative. The annual reports on pupils' progress are informative and helpful to parents in gauging their children's academic progress and personal development. The school gives all parents the DfES booklet on the National Curriculum. However, a small minority of parents would appreciate additional information about the curriculum in their own children's classes. The school prospectus and the governing body's annual report to parents fail to meet statutory requirements in that they omit to include information about the home/school agreement and the action plan following the last inspection; other than these omissions they contain helpful and comprehensive information. This information, however, is presented in a dull and unattractive way and would benefit from being redesigned. The last annual meeting of the governing body with parents attracted no parents at all, although the twice yearly parent-teacher consultation meetings are well attended and prove helpful and informative to parents. The school staff are considered by parents to be readily accessible and helpful and any concerns parents may have are attended to swiftly, courteously and effectively by the school.
47. The range and amount of homework set is seen as satisfactory by parents and many of them are engaged, to some extent, with their children's learning and homework. Inspectors agree that the homework set is satisfactory. The use of the reading diary as a means of communication is welcomed by parents and the home-school agreement has been generally well received and supported. In addition, some parents are involved with the 'curiosity kits' scheme for enhancing home reading.
48. The co-ordinator for special educational needs and classroom assistants work closely with the parents, often providing support for them as well as their children. They are closely involved in setting targets in the annual reviews and work with the school in helping their children to meet these targets. The systems set up to support, monitor and record the progress of the pupils are very good. The special needs co-ordinator has implemented the new Code of Practice well.
49. Parents welcome the well-structured arrangements which ensure a smooth entry for their children into the nursery. The induction of Year 6 pupils into the secondary school system works efficiently.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

50. All of the strengths of the school's leadership and management which were seen at the last inspection have been maintained. The headteacher provides very good leadership to the school community. He is enthusiastic, knowledgeable and committed to the pupils in his care. He has a very clear view of the school and has shaped its development to focus on raising standards, whilst keeping a strong commitment to good relationships and equal opportunities for all. There is consistency and fairness in the way that the school is run. The headteacher and his team believe that all pupils can, and will, succeed, whatever the starting point. He leads by example, continuously

seeking ways to improve on previous best performance. He has trained senior staff in self-evaluation procedures and this philosophy is now embedded in all aspects of school life. Improvement comes from careful analysis of data, consultation with parents, very good implementation of performance management initiatives and good development planning.

51. The headteacher is well supported in all this by his deputy; they form a good team, with clear roles, and have a strong presence around the school. Assemblies and school events are led very well. The deputy head is an outstanding teacher who teaches a wide range of subjects and ability groups throughout the school. This not only sets the standard for teaching, but is an informal way to monitor progress through the school. Subject leaders all make a significant contribution to whole-school priorities, for example in the recent push to improve writing throughout the school. They work together well and are proud of the school's achievements. Their effectiveness in their own subject or aspect varies, particularly in checking on standards and reviewing the quality of teaching and learning. This is partly because the school has a realistic view on the number of priorities that can be dealt with at any one time. Nevertheless, there is a need to review the roles and responsibilities of subject leaders so that they also keep an eye on pupils' progress in their own subjects. Performance management is carried out effectively and very good monitoring has taken place in English and mathematics, mostly by the headteacher or Local Education Authority advisors. Teachers have found this supportive and have acted on the advice given. The school provides good induction for new staff to the school.
52. The school invests heavily in the support of pupils with special educational needs. The co-ordinator for special educational needs is dedicated and conscientious; she knows the pupils on the register very well and willingly provides help and support to the teachers and support assistants. She does not have a class commitment and so is also able to work with withdrawal groups. Training for special needs assistants is good.
53. Governors fulfil their roles well; they are committed to the school and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. There are some minor omissions in the school prospectus and annual report, but apart from this the governors meet all their statutory responsibilities. They provide very good support for the headteacher in the day-to-day running of the school or in the pursuit of any new initiative. They appreciate the way that the school tries to meet the many needs of pupils and families in its community and fully support the direction given to the school by the headteacher and his team. The headteacher ensures that the governing body is well informed about what is happening in every area of the school; governors also receive reports from other members of staff from time to time. Their involvement in decision taking is, therefore, well informed. The headteacher, chair and vice chair of governors enjoy a good, productive relationship based on trust and mutual respect. They maintain effective oversight of the school's development.
54. The school has established and effective routines for the day-to-day managing of finance. All the recommendations of the auditor's report have been carried out. There are also good procedures for reaching agreement on the school budget. The proposed budget, with identified priorities, is presented to the full governing body for discussion and approval. When setting the budget, all decisions are linked to educational priorities, including national initiatives, the local authority's requirements and the school's assessment results. Specific grants are used well. The governing body is aware of best value principles. These are applied properly, not only in awarding contracts, for example for the new computer suite, but in the school's self-evaluation. For example,

there are occasional surveys of parents' views and teachers have made a thorough analysis of the way curriculum time is used in the school day. Previous spending is reviewed regularly; for example, governors have looked at the benefits brought by the enlarged team of support assistants. The governing body is exploring the options to reduce the high cost per pupil. The school is well staffed by a team of experienced, well-qualified and dedicated teachers and support staff and there is an unusually good balance of male and female teachers.

55. The accommodation in the school, although ageing, is generally satisfactory. Classrooms are adequate in number and are well decorated and equipped. The overall standard of care, maintenance and internal décor of the school is high, due mainly to the hard work of the very effective site manager and her staff. The playgrounds are appropriately sized and satisfactorily maintained and are marked out well for games. The nursery is modern and attractive and is a useful purpose-built addition to the school's range of buildings. Access to all areas of the school by pupils with disabilities is good and reflects the care shown towards inclusion of all pupils by the school. A proper medical room is not in place. Perimeter fencing is sound and provides good protection against theft and vandalism.
56. The school is well staffed by a team of experienced, dedicated teachers and support staff. There is a good balance of male and female teachers. Learning resources are adequate in number and quality, are stored securely and are located conveniently for teachers to use. The two school libraries are, however, barely satisfactory, particularly the Years 3 to 6 library. There is no overall library catalogue, no home lending of books, no computers, CD ROMs or Internet access within the libraries and the reference stock needs updating and expanding if independent learning, study skills and a closer integration of the library into the curriculum are to be achieved. The deficiencies of the school libraries were remarked upon in the last report.
57. The school has a number of good features, particularly in the way it caters for the personal development and happiness of pupils from a wide range of backgrounds and abilities. The curriculum is enriched by events and clubs and the school makes sure that all pupils have the chance to participate in everything that the school offers. Standards are improving and pupils are making good progress. The school provides a good quality of education, teaching and learning are good and the leadership and management provided by the headteacher and senior staff is very good. However, because the cost per pupils is high, value for money is judged to be satisfactory.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

58. In order to maintain the good quality of education that the school provides and continue to raise standards, the headteacher, governors and staff should:

- (1) Raise standards in reading and writing in both key stages by continuing to implement the rigorous strategies already in place and identified in the school development plan. (Paragraphs 4, 83, 84, 89, 90, 91, 92.)
- (2) Further develop the role of subject leaders, in foundation subjects and religious education, through monitoring and evaluating, so as to better assess pupils' progress. (Paragraphs 51, 114, 120, 125, 129, 133, 140, 146, 153, 159.)
- (3) Develop information and communication technology across all subjects. (Paragraphs 23, 129, 133, 140.)
- (4) Make the best use of pupils' investigative, problem-solving and research skills by using a wider range of teaching styles. (Paragraphs 18, 23, 26, 95, 110, 129.)
- (5) Develop the library so that it has a more central role in teaching and learning. (Paragraphs 56, 95, 159.)

Minor issues:

- Meet statutory requirement by including an updated action plan in the governors' annual report to parents. (Paragraph 46)
- Continue to take measures to improve the attendance of a small minority of pupils. (Paragraph 13)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	96
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	52

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	4	21	46	21	3	0	0
Percentage	4	22	48	23	3	0	0

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

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)	26	357
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	165

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1	12
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	18	147

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	5

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	30

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.0
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Years 1 and 2 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Years 1 and 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	25	26	51

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	19	19	2
	Girls	18	19	22
	Total	37	38	44
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	73 (66)	75 (48)	86 (81)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	20	22	19
	Girls	19	21	16
	Total	39	43	35
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	76 (63)	84 (72)	69 (69)
	National	85 (84)	89 (84)	89 (88)

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

Attainment at the end of Years 3 to 6 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Years 3 to 6 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	28	43	71

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	17	15	23
	Girls	32	28	37
	Total	49	43	60
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	69 (64)	61 (63)	85 (75)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	16	17	22
	Girls	33	30	34
	Total	49	47	56
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	69 (66)	67 (64)	79 (76)
	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	4
Chinese	1
White	313
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)	23
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20
Average class size	20

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	248

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26
Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	76
Number of pupils per FTE adult	6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.6
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	7	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	1041,234
Total expenditure	1028,983
Expenditure per pupil	2,297
Balance brought forward from previous year	67,749
Balance carried forward to next year	80,000

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	408
Number of questionnaires returned	47

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	49	40	4	4	2
My child is making good progress in school.	57	38	2	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	40	43	15	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	53	32	13	0	2
The teaching is good.	55	40	4	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	49	36	13	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	66	26	4	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	68	23	4	2	0
The school works closely with parents.	45	43	9	4	0
The school is well led and managed.	51	32	4	2	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	53	36	4	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	49	30	9	11	2

Other issues raised by parents

The majority of parents wrote positive comments about the school on the questionnaires. One parent was dissatisfied on various counts, which were not substantiated by others or the inspection team.

No concerns were raised at the pre-inspection meeting for parents. Parents said the school was well established and many parents and grandparents had attended. Children from other areas come to the school because it has a good reputation. Parents could only speak positively about the school and praised the efforts of the headteacher and staff.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

59. Provision in the Foundation Stage of learning is good overall and very good in the nursery. The nursery was awarded a Quality Kitemark for Early Years excellence in 2001. Children join the nursery in the term following their third birthday and move into the Reception year in the September of the year in which they will be five. The standard of care for the children and provision for their spiritual, moral and social development are good.
60. Improvements since the previous inspection have included the development of effective written plans to guide the good practice which now exists in the nursery. The provision has improved still further by the introduction of a wider range of interesting activities to promote learning. When the children start in the nursery, their attainment is generally well below that expected for their age, particularly in speech and social skills. Most children make good progress in the areas of learning and are on track to achieve the expected levels of learning by the end of the Reception year. However, in communication, language and literacy, although the children have undoubtedly made good progress, the majority will not be at the level expected by the time they enter Year 1.
61. Teaching in the nursery is always good, and frequently very good, and has been fundamental to the many improvements that have occurred. In the Reception classes teaching is at least satisfactory and sometimes good. A strength in teaching is the range of invariably rich and exciting activities offered to the children in the nursery. The nursery teacher, nursery nurses and classroom assistants form a highly effective team to the benefit of the children. They are committed, hard-working and skilful. The staff in the Foundation Stage have a good knowledge and understanding of both the needs of the children and the statutory requirements for the Foundation Stage. Adult time is used efficiently to work with children who are consistently encouraged to try their best and praised for their achievements. The organisation within the nursery successfully incorporates the High Scope principles. The aim is to help children develop independence and confidence. They are involved in making decisions about the activities they choose and work with adults in small and large groups. In the Reception classes this approach is not continued and children experience a more formal, daily organisation. The absence of classroom assistants in the Reception classes results in excessive demands on teachers, particularly during literacy and numeracy sessions.
62. Children with special educational needs benefit from the very effective support they receive and make good progress. An above average number of children have been identified as having special educational needs. The staff aim to identify difficulties from an early age and follow this with prompt intervention and close tracking of progress so that these children achieve well. The educational psychologist described the management of a severely disruptive child with learning difficulties as exemplary. Close and careful observations of the children in the Foundation Stage enable the staff to check the children's progress. A good illustration is the observation of children during discussions such as in 'Recall Time' to note whether children can communicate with others in a group situation. Targets are set for all children and shared with parents, who are encouraged to become involved in their children learning. Good liaison is established between the nursery and Reception class staff who meet regularly to discuss the children's progress and to ensure that there is continuity in provision.

63. Curriculum planning is thorough and daily plans clearly state what the children are to learn. Much effort is given to ensuring that activities in the areas of learning are linked to develop the children's understanding, for example the current Reception class topic on mini-beasts. Classrooms are well organised into specific areas of learning with many interesting resources which support the children's learning. Significant time has been given to developing the use of the outdoor environment to include activities for all areas of learning. Facilities include a digging and investigation area. These facilities are used daily when weather permits.

Personal, social and emotional development

64. The children in the nursery and Reception classes achieve well because of the strong emphasis placed on this area of learning. Stimulating activities bring children and staff together in a caring and supportive way. The staff provide consistent routines for the children, enabling them to develop social awareness, confidence and independence. The children know what is expected of them and where things are in the classrooms. The staff encourage the children to help themselves, for example to put on their own clothes and shoes, and only intervene when absolutely necessary. Relationships in the Foundation Stage are very positive which helps to play a significant part in children's learning. Younger and older children, boys and girls and children with special educational needs work well together.
65. Children in the nursery behave well because they are immersed in their activities and soon learn that good behaviour is expected. When the children come together in the nursery, they behave extremely well because the teacher is skilled in keeping their attention. There is sensitive guidance towards an understanding of right from wrong which is often effectively reinforced through stories such as 'The Horrible Dinosaur'. As the children talk about the book they readily explain why it is wrong to be cruel to your friends. In the Reception classes, some of the children find it hard to contain their energy. They are quick to misbehave when they lose interest in what the teacher is saying, for example when the time sitting on the carpet in literacy sessions is overlong. However, when working in small groups with an adult they work well and make a good contribution to the activity.
66. The children readily make their own decisions when choosing activities. They make a 'promise' at the start of the session and during 'Recall Time' they explain how this was kept. They show a good level of maturity in sharing resources and getting on with others. They talk to one another as they work and form friendships. The children respond in a variety of ways to new experiences and challenges; for example, when using a program on a computer, they display much pride in their achievement.
67. In the nursery, the three-year-olds learn much from watching the four-year-olds and from following their example, such as returning resources to the right place at 'tidy-up time'. The older children are very helpful towards the younger children and readily offer help, for example, to join difficult construction pieces. Group sizes are varied to ensure that children who lack confidence can work in a small group.

Communication, language and literacy

68. In communication, language and literacy the majority of children make good progress, particularly in speaking and listening. Although this good progress reflects the overall good teaching and provision, many children will not achieve the expected levels by the end of the Reception year. In the Reception classes the children make better progress

when they have an adult supporting their group. Children do not achieve as well in writing. By the end of the Reception year they can copy and trace adults' writing but are slow to write independently.

69. On entry to the nursery, many children have restricted speech and use a limited range of words and phrases. The children make good progress in their confidence to speak because the staff skilfully engage the children in conversation and give children time to share their ideas. This is particularly good in the nursery when the staff work alongside the children and chat, question and encourage them to extend what they say, for example as they engage in play in the jungle role-play area. The children listen attentively to each other and to instructions, for instance in physical development sessions. They also listen very attentively and with interest to stories. In some literacy sessions in the Reception classes children do not listen as attentively to the teachers' directions for group activities and consequently do not know how to proceed. Children with special educational needs make progress because they are given considerable adult support to extend their range of vocabulary and gain confidence to communicate with others.
70. The children develop enthusiasm and interest in books as a result of the daily story sessions in the nursery and literacy sessions in the Reception classes. Reading is promoted in all classes by the choice of books which are stimulating and interesting for the children. The children in the nursery scan pictures to look for clues to the progress of the story and talk about what they think might happen next. They appreciate the humour in stories and enjoy relating this to an adult. There are too few opportunities for group story sessions with four-year-olds in the nursery to extend the development of their reading skills. In the Reception classes the higher-attaining children recognise many words in their reading books and show an understanding of the meaning when they self-correct the errors they make when reading aloud. Books are very effectively used as the focus for learning. In an excellent nursery activity following the story, 'The Aliens Visit to the Seaside', the children were totally engrossed in re-enacting the story in the large indoor sandpit. The children in the Reception classes use books for information, for example, in guided reading sessions.
71. In all classrooms there are well-resourced writing areas to encourage early mark-making and there are opportunities in role-play to write, for example to write orders and record telephone messages. Progress is made from scribbling when the children first start in the nursery to making good attempts to write recognisable letters. In the Reception classes the higher-attaining children write a simple sentence for themselves. However, most children are making slower progress in writing independently, although many try to write simple words. In the Reception classes good use is made of children's writing to use as labels and captions on wall displays.

Mathematical development

72. In mathematical development, most children make satisfactory progress towards attaining the expected levels by the end of the Reception year. When teaching is practically based, the children make good progress. Progress is less satisfactory when the children attempt written calculations which they do not fully understand. The nursery children use counting strategies effectively because they use counting for a purpose, for example at milk-time. The use of routines such as 'tidy-up time' further develop the children's awareness of the different aspects of mathematics, for instance, when children need to find a space on the bookshelves to replace the books. The children also enjoy using the wall mounted 'Teddy Bear' number line to practise counting skills by touching.

73. In daily numeracy sessions the children in Reception classes develop their skills in counting and number recognition because they have many opportunities to practise in different ways. A very imaginative approach to introducing ordinal numbers engaged the children's interest. In an activity linked to sports day races the children succeeded in sequencing the runners from first to fifth. Lower-attaining children displayed their understanding of first and last.
74. The nursery children learn about shape from practical experiences. One four-year-old making shapes with construction pieces explained octagons had eight sides. She then rotated a square and said she had now made a diamond. The children's understanding of shape is well developed because opportunities are provided to use shapes in other areas of learning, for example to make shapes using straws and to paint triangles in creative work. The children are also alerted to shapes in natural objects such as flowers.
75. The consistent attention paid to introducing mathematical language results in the children using mathematical language to describe their work, for instance when directing a mouse on the computer. They use mathematical language to describe size as they play with different utensils in the water and sand trays. Mathematics is also developed through outdoor play activities, for instance when children use the petrol pumps and count items in shop play. The children have an increasing understanding of position because the staff make good use of physical development sessions to use positional language. Also in a mathematical activity linked to a story the children use positional language to say where the missing ladybird spots were found, such as under the table and behind the bookcase.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

76. Children are on course to achieve the expected levels in their knowledge and understanding of the world by the time they leave the Reception classes. The children make good progress because of the continuous programme of practical activities and the effective outdoor experiences. This represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection when opportunities to develop their experience of the natural world were too limited. The staff promote an atmosphere of wonder which captures the children's natural curiosity and interest. The nursery children investigate in the digging area and the Reception children observe the movement of snails and worms in their habitats. In the nursery the large indoor sandpit provides an excellent resource for children to investigate and become more aware of the texture and properties of materials, for example seashells.
77. The staff plan a suitable range of activities to alert children to aspects of the local area. A good example involved children making a building site and talking about the building of new houses near the school. Activities based on the rescue services helps to develop the children's awareness of essential local facilities. Frequent purposeful opportunities to investigate with construction materials develop the children's understanding of design and the potential of resources. The extensive range available successfully develops the children's understanding of different ways of joining. A nursery child made a good effort to design a photograph frame and a Reception child was equally successful in designing a home for a mini-beast.
78. The children in the Reception year make good progress in the development of their information and communication technology skills because they have regular access to computers. In a good lesson based on a computer drawing program the children

demonstrated their skills to access a program. Most children can control the mouse to drag and drop images and navigate through the program. They know how to use the keyboard to type their name and how to use the menu to print out their work.

Physical development

79. In all aspects of physical development most children attain the levels expected by the end of the Reception year. They achieve standards higher than expected in their control and co-ordination of movement. This represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection. A strength of the provision is the excellent nursery and good Reception class indoor physical development sessions. The staff provide good demonstrations and participate with lively enthusiasm. This results in the children's improving co-ordination and control in movement, for example when they make 'bunny jumps' and travel by jumping and hopping. Higher-attaining children in the Reception class display an excellent ability to use a sequence of three different movements as they travel over the large apparatus. The staff encourage the children to make best use of space when they work together. Children in the nursery actively participate in daily outdoor physical activities. The children enjoy outdoor play because the activities are so varied. Some children play shops, build with large equipment or use the wheeled toys. The availability of a good range of both small and large equipment ensures there are extensive opportunities to practise skills, for example to improve the accuracy of aim as they throw a ball to a partner and gain confidence in climbing.
80. The children's skills in using and controlling small tools and equipment develop well from when they first start in the nursery. They enjoy using different materials such as pencils, chalks and felt-tipped pens, as they draw and make marks on paper. They take great care when they paint their pictures. In the Reception year these skills are developed when, for example, children use malleable and junk materials to make models.
81. Children with special needs and those whose home language is not English make very good progress and gain a great deal from the school's provision for physical development. These children benefit from the friendships made as they play and they learn from watching the actions of others.

Creative development

82. In creative development, most children attain the level expected by the end of the Reception year. The good teaching in the nursery stimulates the children's interest with lively activities that generate high levels of excitement. This is clearly evident in the quality of imaginative play. There are fewer opportunities for creative work in the Reception classes; however, experiences are provided to extend the skills developed in the nursery. In the nursery the staff encourage the children to look closely at details and this results in paintings and drawings of a good standard. Following the story of the 'Little Blue Car', a group of children very carefully painted the car in the correct colour and size and painted the wheels in the correct places. In Reception classes the children make pictures using collage materials and successfully work together to make a large picture. They learn to use a range of techniques such as printing and use their sense of touch as they create tactile pictures. Good quality resources for role-play are a strength in the Foundation Stage. Children in the nursery sustain their play without adult support. As lions and tigers in the jungle they use their imagination and when the snake arrives panic sets in! Natural resources in the mini-beast cave adds to the authenticity and through this play the children develop their knowledge of mini-beasts, for example how they move. Access to a good range of small world toys further

promotes imaginative play. Two boys in the nursery sustain their interest in racing cars on the road track enjoying sharing the thrill of the activity. As well as singing as part of the day, each class has a music session. In the nursery the children have opportunity to explore sound making as a choice activity using the suitable range of un-tuned percussion instruments. They also use voices to create different sounds.

ENGLISH

83. In 2001, the Year 2 National Curriculum test results showed that standards in reading and writing were well below the national average. They were in line with results of similar schools in reading but below similar schools in writing. At the end of Year 6, standards in English were below the national average but above those of similar schools.
84. Inspection evidence shows that standards in speaking and listening are in line with the national average and below in reading and writing, both by the time the pupils are seven and when they are 11. The reverse was reported in the last inspection (1998) when standards in reading and writing by the ages of seven and 11 were similar to the national average and below in speaking and listening. Since then the National Curriculum test results for seven-year-olds have fluctuated slightly but remained below or well below the national average. However, in the 2001 writing tests there was significant improvement, due mainly to extra support programmes.
85. During the same period the National Curriculum test results for 11-year-olds indicate that, although below the national average, the trend is upwards and in line with what is expected nationally. In the 2001 tests the proportion of the pupils reaching the higher than expected level was close to the national average and was above when compared to similar schools. Factors contributing to the current standards include a very large percentage of pupils with special educational needs and high pupil mobility. The school recognises the need to raise standards in nearly all classes and is determined to do so. A good start has already been made and a thorough analysis of the strengths and areas for development has now enabled the school to set challenging but realistic targets for each year group. Inspection findings suggest an improving picture throughout the school, with higher-attaining pupils reaching very good levels in writing in most classes.
86. The pupils in the five to seven and seven to eleven age ranges, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, make good progress, both in the lessons seen and samples of work spanning the whole year. They also achieve well, due mainly to good overall teaching, their own positive attitudes and willingness to learn.
87. When children start in Year 1, their skills in communication, language and literacy are well below average for their age. In Year 1, the pupils enhance their speaking and listening skills when they role-play extracts from texts such as 'The Wicked Pirate'. The average and lower-attaining pupils explain their work satisfactorily, give reasons for issues such as school rules and describe a favourite character such as Goldilocks. Pupils read aloud in assemblies while others listen. They act out scenes from Biblical stories such as Zaccheus and this increases their confidence and self-esteem. By Year 2 they have made good progress, with most pupils developing as confident communicators as they get older, due to the time and strategies invested wisely by teachers and learning support assistants. For example, by the age of seven, the higher-attainers demonstrated good listening skills when responding quickly to teachers' questions about the living and feeding habits of penguins in a non-fiction text.

88. They continue to make satisfactory progress and reach average standards by the time they are 11. Most pupils are attentive and eager to contribute to classroom discussion. This is encouraged, especially at the beginning and end of lessons, well exemplified in a Year 5 class discussing the text 'Coming to England' by Floella Bell. Further examples were noted in a Year 4 lesson where the pupils offered their views enthusiastically as to how impact, appeal and honesty relate to newspaper advertisements. However, there are fewer opportunities for independent discussion and formal debate. The skills of lower-attaining pupils are more limited but with the encouragement they receive, as observed in a Year 3 lesson about humorous poems, they are beginning to show confidence in sharing their views.
89. By the age of seven many pupils have less advanced skills in reading than most pupils of this age and attainment is below the national average. This is due mainly to the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in this year group. Reading, however, is promoted strongly within the school and all the pupils are supported particularly well by a high-quality system for encouraging reading at home. The higher-attainers read a wide selection of literature, express their opinions about stories they have read and use a range of strategies when reading, such as knowledge of letter sounds, prediction and the context of the story to establish meaning. Most pupils are enthusiastic about reading and enjoy reading simple narratives such as 'Sleeping Beauty', 'Fussy Freda', 'Little Red Hen' and 'Six Dinner Sid'. In lessons, higher-attainers and many average-attaining pupils show curiosity about aspects of texts, such as index and content, as witnessed in a Year 2 lesson featuring the author Dick King-Smith.
90. By the age of 11 higher attainers read fluently, using expression which reflects the meaning of the text, but average and lower attainers are frequently hesitant because they still rely too heavily on picture cues. Most higher attainers use their knowledge of letter sounds and blends well to tackle unfamiliar words, as observed while listening to 10-year-olds reading 'Getting Granny's Glasses'. Whilst the majority of able pupils use the context of the story to help them figure out unfamiliar words to establish meaning, the lower attainers find this more difficult, as was apparent during a Year 6 reading session. Most pupils locate information books routinely in the library with ease. During many lessons they use a dictionary and thesaurus well to enhance vocabulary skills. Many pupils in the seven to 11 age range understand how increasing vocabulary adds to one's enjoyment in reading and writing. For example, Year 5 pupils, having read 'Prince Jason', wrote their own stories containing lines such as 'suddenly the giant eagle swooped upon me and the vicious snake attacked me'. They read a range of literature which includes modern poets such as Ogden Nash and Roger McGough, female authors such as Jacqueline Wilson and Anne Fine, and poems from other cultures, for instance 'The Proud Old Man' by Paul Chidyausika Zimbabwe. Many of the higher-attainers select challenging books, including classics of such as 'Oliver Twist' and 'Lord of the Rings'. All the pupils benefit from reading group sessions and many discuss plot and characterisation fluently, as, for example, a Year 6 pupil did when expressing her enjoyment of 'Prince Caspian' by C. S. Lewis.

91. Pupils' writing is below the national average, with many having difficulty in extending their ideas into complete sentences. By the age of seven the pupils are beginning to write in a number of different forms, such as recipes for menus, lists of clothes they wear and accounts of stories and poems. In Year 1, the pupils write simple stories retelling features of 'Jack and the Beanstalk'. They are beginning to construct simple sentences using appropriate grammar and vocabulary to express likes and dislikes, for instance 'I love the pony'. The higher-attaining pupils, in Year 2, use imaginative language while reviewing the book 'Prince Charming', for example 'I was triple scared'. The focused and systematic teaching of literacy is evident in examples of extended writing, for instance in history and religious education. Spelling skills are developed progressively. Although pupils' work is usually neat and letters are formed well, few consistently use joined script in their everyday work. By the time they are seven, punctuation is becoming more accurate and words are often chosen carefully, especially by the most able pupils, as witnessed in a Year 2 lesson when they were composing questions for an interview with a famous author.
92. By the age of 11 the pupils' writing is below the national average with lower attainers' and some average-attaining pupils' creative and descriptive writing skills underdeveloped and story lines not extended fully. However, pupils write for a range of purposes, for example, play-scripts, instructions, reports, biographies and book reviews, as well as creative and descriptive accounts. The pupils in Years 3 and 4 understand the use of tenses, adjectives, metaphors and similes. The skills of dialogue and paragraphing are developed steadily in Years 5 and 6. There are opportunities to improve work by drafting, editing, proof-reading and then presenting the final form. The quality of creative and extended writing is improving, and for many pupils this reflects a good depth of reading experience. This was particularly noticeable when reading some Year 6 work which referred to passages in Grimm's Fairy Tales to produce sentences such as ' "Oh, oh, oh", he whimpered worryingly as the ugly man-eating flytrap raised his head.' In Year 5 the pupils studying the text 'Scribbleboy' learn about personification and begin to use these features. Such interpretations and their own written work reinforce the importance of language as a means of communication. In the same group, writing based on the poem 'Bishop Hatto' by Robert Southey included colourful analyses of characters and sensitive and thoughtful writing from another person's viewpoint. The pupils continue to learn to spell more difficult words and many have developed legible handwriting in a cursive, flowing style.
93. Literacy is promoted well through the National Literacy Strategy. In all classes literacy skills are being improved through other subjects, for example the importance of listening and carrying out instructions in physical education, writing of science investigations accurately, and reading and acting out Biblical scenes in assemblies.
94. Teaching is good overall, promoting good learning, and is an improvement since the last inspection. An important strength of the teaching is the challenge which ensures that higher-attaining pupils reach their projected targets. The teachers generally make the most of spontaneous opportunities to develop language from the pupils' own interests. For instance, pupils in a Year 5 lesson drew eagerly on their own experiences of school, while learning about school life in Trinidad from the text 'Coming to England' by Floella Bell. This helps to promote the pupils' cultural development. The teachers introduce the pupils to a range of writing systematically. Appropriate strategies for reading are promoted and the pupils are reminded regularly through the 'Curiosity Kits' how the support of parents can improve their reading. They choose suitable texts to emphasise different aspects of literacy as in a Year 6 class when a passage entitled 'The Stones of Manchester Cathedral' was used effectively to illustrate descriptive and figurative narrative. Where teaching was best, lessons were planned

well, pace was good and expectations were high. Instructions were clear and questions were used well to review the pupils' previous learning and to challenge their thinking about the new topic. This was illustrated well in a Year 4 class evaluating the impact of powerful adverbs in sentence construction, and in a Year 3 lesson where the story of 'The Boy Who Cried Wolf' was dramatised. As a result of this good teaching, the pupils are motivated, keen to learn, show good attitudes and are generally well behaved. Such an example was noted in a Year 1 lesson where the pupils were learning new sounds. The teachers' close co-operation with learning support assistants has a positive impact on the quality of learning in nearly all classes, and particularly for pupils with special educational needs. Such an example was observed in a Year 2 class where a group of lower attainers was excitedly engaged in trying to fathom out words beginning with 'wh'. Assessment opportunities are frequently taken at the end of lessons to reinforce key learning points. However, in a number of lessons this only involves the pupils showing or telling what they have done with little reference to progress. The quality of marking varies. At best it is positive, sets clear targets and suggestions to help the pupils to improve.

95. The subject is co-ordinated by joint leaders, both of whom are enthusiastic and promote all aspects of literacy well. They ensure that the curriculum is planned well and that a good balance ensues. They have carried out an extensive review of provision and together with other staff have drawn up a policy and scheme of work which reflect the requirements of the National Literacy Strategy. The teachers' planning is thorough. A sharp check is kept on the pupils' attainment and progress through the use of statutory tests for Years 2 and 6, as well as standardised tests for Years 3, 4 and 5, and the moderation and levelling of the pupils in comparison to nationally set attainment targets. The school analyses these results carefully and uses them to set group and individual pupil targets. This strategy is proving to be beneficial in all classes, with the majority of the pupils reaching realistic goals. The subject leaders have a clear idea of the pupils' attainment over time and how well they achieve. The teachers' planning is monitored on a regular basis. Classroom observations of teaching and learning have been carried out, with written and verbal feedback offered to teachers. All classes are stocked satisfactorily with books, which is an improvement since the last inspection. The Years 3 to 6 library contains a wide range of non-fiction, although the number of books in some categories is limited. This resource is ineffective, however, in enhancing the pupils' higher level research skills. The Years 1 and 2 library is stocked well with both fiction and non-fiction, and a wide range of Big Books suitable for use during the literacy hour. Overall, the subject is led and managed well by the subject leaders, who are committed to continuing to raise standards.

MATHEMATICS

96. In 2001, the Year 2 National Curriculum test results showed that standards were well below the national average and below results of similar schools. The 2002 test results, for which there are, as yet, no national comparisons, show improvement in the number of pupils who are attaining at the higher levels of Level 2. There is no appreciable year-on-year difference between the standards attained by boys and girls. At the end of Year 6, in 2001, standards were below the national average but above those of similar schools.
97. Inspection evidence show that by the end of Year 2 standards are in line with national expectations. Most pupils can visualise and use a 100 square for calculations, count forwards and sometimes backwards in multiples of 2 and 10 and have a secure understanding of halving and a developing understanding of quartering, quantities and shapes. They form their numbers with care, understand mathematical symbols, and

have a satisfactory understanding of mathematical vocabulary. They are also able to explain to others how they complete a calculation and are developing an appreciation of pattern in mathematics. This has resulted in pupils having satisfactory mental arithmetic skills and a firm foundation for improving them still further. The pupils with special needs make greater than expected progress, both during lessons and in withdrawal groups. The attainment of higher-attaining pupils in lessons is satisfactory. In the mathematics club for these pupils, that takes place after school, attainment is very good. Pupils were observed successfully completing calculations involving numbers to 1000, using a very secure understanding of place value. Overall, the pupils' achievement in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory and progress ranges from satisfactory to good. The pupils enter the nursery well below national expectations and by the time they enter Year 3 they are approaching national expectations.

98. The pupils' attainment by the end of Year 6 in the 2001 National Curriculum tests was below average when compared to schools nationally and above average when compared to schools in a similar context. However, the work seen in class is above average. The pupils' progress through Years 3 to 6 is very good, well above that seen nationally, and accounts for the overall improvement made by the school over the past four years. Higher-attaining pupils make very good progress. The percentage of pupils attaining at Level 5 and Level 6 is well above that seen in similar schools. This reflects the levels of achievement observed in lessons. More able pupils in Year 6 have a good understanding of fractions, decimals and percentages and are learning to express one quantity as a fraction of another. They calculate quickly and efficiently and are able to explain their strategies clearly to other pupils. The pupils with special needs also make good progress, both in lessons and in withdrawal groups. A lower ability Year 4 group, for example, showed a secure understanding of using degrees to measure the angle of turn and could compare and order angles according to size. They use the knowledge they have in halving and doubling numbers to 20 to halve and double numbers to 100. In Year 6, the lower-attaining pupils are working from the Year 6 programme of study from the Numeracy Strategy. They can link and recognise simple fractions, decimals and percentages and calculate at an appropriate level. The focus on the development of mental arithmetic skills throughout Years 3 to 6 has supported the teaching of all other areas of mathematics. The school also uses a range of catch-up programmes to ensure that as many pupils as possible reach the national expectation. A challenging, yet realistic, target of 73 per cent of pupils reaching the expected Level 4 has been set for the 2002 tests. Overall, the pupils' achievement is good due to high expectations and the very good progress they make during the four years in Years 3 to 6.
99. The pupils' attitudes to learning are good, overall. When they are good, the pupils show interest and enthusiasm and their behaviour is good. They persevere when the work is challenging and are very supportive of one another, both in celebrating achievement and providing help for the other pupils. On the few occasions where pupils' attitudes are less than satisfactory this is linked to a lack of clarity as to what is required, particularly in relation to the completion of mathematics worksheets. In these lessons behaviour, particularly by some of the boys, was less than satisfactory.
100. The pupils' attitudes to learning in Years 3 to 6 are very good. They listen attentively and are keen to answer questions, discuss their mathematics and explain the strategies that they are using. They enjoy a challenge and when given the choice between having a harder problem or an easier problem, invariably choose the former. In the oral and mental sessions, where responses are often made using individual whiteboards, they try hard, and nearly always succeed in keeping up with the brisk pace set by the teacher. Although each lesson has a high proportion of direct,

focussed teaching, the pupils complete a commendable amount of well-presented written work.

101. The quality of teaching in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory and ranges from unsatisfactory to very good. The teachers have a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of their pupils and use questioning effectively to confirm their assessment of their understanding. Their planning is soundly based on clear learning objectives, which are developed successfully through a range of activities, the best of which are highly practical. The pace of lessons is appropriate and the plenary sessions held at the end of the lesson provide further assessments for the teachers and, as a result, work is well matched to pupils' different attainment, and provision for pupils with special educational needs, in both key stages, is very good.
102. The quality of teaching in Years 3 to 6 is good and ranges from satisfactory to excellent. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Clear learning objectives are displayed at the beginning of each lesson and are discussed with the pupils. The introduction provides an opportunity for the pupils to practise their mental arithmetic skills. These are often linked to and support the main teaching objective of the lesson. A Year 5 class, for example, were counting forwards and backwards in nines and then nineties, a skill which they found helpful in the main session whilst they were working on angles. Each lesson is developed carefully to ensure that pupils understand the mathematics and can confidently move on to the next stage. A good range of teaching methods is used, including exposition, demonstration, discussion and practical work. Understanding is also aided through the very good use of a range of resources. However, the amount of time that the pupils spend on investigative work or the opportunities they have to reason about mathematics are limited and further action is needed to help pupils progress towards more formal calculations.
103. The management of the subject is good. The National Numeracy Strategy has been introduced effectively by the two subject leaders and monitoring of the quality of teaching and of standards has taken place. A helpful action plan has been written identifying areas for development and all Years 3 to 6 staff have evaluated the newly introduced published scheme positively.

SCIENCE

104. The results of the 2001 National Curriculum tests show that by the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment was just below the average for all schools. When compared to similar schools, attainment was above average. Standards have been steadily rising since 1998, and have more than kept pace with the big improvement seen nationally. The percentage of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 was close to the average for all schools. There are no national tests for pupils at the end of Year 2, but the teachers' own assessments showed that attainment at this stage was well below the average for all schools and below the average for similar schools.
105. Inspection evidence shows that by the end of Year 2, the current pupils' attainment is close to that expected for this age in what they understand but below in what they are able to explain verbally or on paper. This improvement has not so far been reflected in the results of the national teacher assessments which tend to be based on what pupils can explain verbally or on paper, some pupils not yet having the skills to discuss or explain what they understand. For example, in two lessons, pupils were successful in making different circuits to light a bulb, but found it hard to explain why some worked and some didn't. Few pupils reach the higher Level 3, and this also depresses the school's results when compared to other schools. Another reason for below average

standards is the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs, although these are supported well and make good progress.

106. All pupils in Year 2 are building up a reasonable fund of scientific knowledge. Teachers explain ideas clearly and train pupils to predict, test, and draw sensible conclusions from what they see. This works well; for example, in the work on growing plants a pupil wrote 'I thought that the soil would work best but I was surprised because the sawdust was better.' All the teachers place an increasing emphasis on improving pupils' enquiry skills. They use consistent methods to help the pupils to record what they do. For example, pupils of all abilities use charts and sentences well when they investigate materials that stretch or change shape. They can use labels and sketches to make things clearer, as in the work on forces when they test cars on ramps. This helps pupils to remember and understand. Pupils in this part of the school make good progress in science. A significant number come into school with limited knowledge of the world and well below average communication skills. Pupils make a good start in the nursery and continue to improve in the younger classes because of good teaching, interesting lessons and good support for those who need it.

107. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 6 is in line with expectations. This is an improvement on last year's National Curriculum test results. Pupils have a satisfactory level of knowledge about science and show increasing confidence in their ability to investigate. They know how to set up a fair test and understand the idea of variables in an experiment. This is because the teachers plan an appropriate balance of experimental work and the learning of scientific facts. For example, in lessons on electricity, pupils had plenty of time to explore some challenging tasks on modifying circuits but the teachers made sure that pupils used and understood the correct vocabulary and symbols. Pupils have a sound knowledge of what living things need to survive and stay healthy. They can name the parts of a plant and explain their function, and can make a simple identification key for plants and micro-organisms. Pupils make good diagrams to illustrate food chains and teachers extend their understanding of these by asking questions such as "What would happen if the bird population declined?" Pupils continue to make good progress in their recording because teachers give increasing responsibility and expect high standards. The pupils' writing shows that they understand the basic ideas in a range of scientific topics, including forces and air resistance, gravity, solubility and how materials can be changed. Pupils can collect and record data accurately, for example when they measure the time taken for salt to dissolve in different temperatures, but they have little experience in analysing this data, or using it to see where extra tests are needed. This is one area where the higher attainers could be given more responsibility and challenge. However, pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in science. The main reason for this is that teaching is consistently good throughout the school, and in Year 6 it is often very good.

108. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 have good attitudes to their science work. They listen well and both girls and boys are keen to answer questions. Some pupils get quite excited and loud when they do an experiment, but behaviour is generally good and pupils handle the equipment safely and fairly. A few higher-attaining pupils work patiently and methodically, others are keen to succeed but are less organised. Teachers in these year groups are aware of this. They give pupils plenty of equipment and enough time and support to repeat or try different solutions. Groups are kept small; pupils usually work in pairs. For most pupils, this works well in improving investigation skills and encouraging a more thoughtful attitude to science.

109. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 continue to enjoy their science lessons. Behaviour is almost always good, even when classes have to listen for quite long periods. They work well together and share ideas. This helps learning; for example, when pupils in Year 4 were investigating light and shadows, their ideas were clearer after the teacher drew together the findings from all the groups. Teachers make good use of the pupils' positive attitudes, for example by challenging them to look for evidence and explain what they see.
110. The quality of teaching in science through the school is good overall and sometimes very good. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen. Teachers plan together in year groups, using national guidelines. They compare what works well, and look for better ways to help pupils learn. Relationships are very good; teachers encourage using humour and lots of praise. As a result, pupils are not afraid to make mistakes or say what they think; this helps to improve their investigation skills. Introductions to the lessons are usually clear and to the point, although in a very small number of lessons the teacher gave too much information and advice, so that the excitement of the practical work was reduced. Adult help is used well; classroom assistants are well prepared and make a good contribution to learning. Teachers make sure that pupils of all abilities are supported when needed and that everyone takes a full part in the lessons. Marking is satisfactory, but only a few teachers use comments to encourage pupils' thinking such as "Why did the carpet have the most friction?" or "Are you sure about this?" Teachers use displays well to remind pupils about what they have learned. The best of these have things to touch and test, for example in the evaporation work in Year 5 or the Year 4 work on circuits. However, displays rarely illustrate the process of scientific enquiry, showing what the purpose of the investigation was, how the test was organised and what further questions came from the evidence.
111. A strength of the teaching is the way that many teachers give just enough information and suggestions to get pupils started, but do not spoon-feed answers. Instead they use good questions to encourage pupils to think, explain and solve problems for themselves. This worked particularly well in a lesson in Year 6 when pupils had to make doorbells and buzzers for blind or deaf people. More use could be made of this type of work. In many lessons the higher-attaining pupils show that they are ready for more responsibility; for example, they might devise extra tests to check evidence or give additional data.
112. Teachers make some useful links with other areas of the curriculum, for instance with the personal and social programme when pupils in Year 2 study similarities and differences in living things. In other lessons pupils use some of their mathematical skills when they measure and collect data. However, they could do more, for example in looking for significant patterns or relationships in the figures or presenting the results in different ways. The school has so far made little use of information technology to support learning in science. Some useful links might include simulations of electric circuits and food chains, or analysing the results of experiments by making spreadsheets. The recent opening of the computer suite will make this sort of work possible.
113. The management of the subject is satisfactory. Science has not been a priority in recent years; the school has concentrated on raising standards in English and mathematics. Nevertheless, much has been achieved since the last inspection. A new programme of work has been introduced and sensibly adapted to the school's needs. All teachers have had additional training in teaching science. Teachers have made a detailed analysis of the results of the national tests. This information has been used well to fine-tune the curriculum and improve lessons. These things, together with

the good teaching, have been enough to maintain standards at the end of Year 6 and improve them by the end of Year 2.

114. The school has revised its procedures for recording what pupils know and understand. These work effectively in helping teachers to plan new work. However, there is no system to record how pupils' investigative skills are developing as they move up the school. This will be a useful tool if teachers are to plan lessons in a more flexible way, giving all pupils a chance to show what they can do. The school has not been systematically looking at teaching in science lessons, or checking pupils' books. The school is aware that this needs to be done and there are appropriate plans. With these two things in place, the school is in a good position to build on what has been achieved already and raise standards further.

ART AND DESIGN

115. The attainment of the majority of Years 1 and 2 pupils is in line with national expectations. The quality and range of the work on display and the progress that pupils make is satisfactory. From Year 1 the pupils have opportunities to use a range of media and to apply colour in pastels, chalk, paint and crayon. The activities such as producing a tartan, making mobiles and silhouettes provide attractive results. They are introduced to the work of a range of artists. The work on emulating the artistic style of Joan Miró by the Year 2 pupils, for example, shows care and developing observational skills. However, there were few examples of the study of the work of non-western artists, three-dimensional work or of colour mixing.
116. The attainment of pupils in Years 3 to 6 is also in line with national expectations. The pupils are studying a wider range of artists and there are many examples of the pupils interpreting different artists' styles and using their techniques to produce well-crafted paintings. Sketchbooks chart progression through the key stage, although some of the drawing done by the older pupils in the books remains somewhat simple with little evidence of the development of more sophisticated observational skills. Good links are made with other curriculum subjects such as English, design and technology and science. Year 5 pupils use a range of materials, tools and techniques when creating artwork from the starting point of a literary text. This was inspired and led by a local artist, Zandra Cunliffe. In Year 4, a design and technology unit on chairs was used as a stimulus for looking at how artists viewed chairs and designs of coats of arms linked in with the history curriculum. As with Year 1 and Year 2, there are too few opportunities for paint mixing, three-dimensional work and studying the work of non-western artists.
117. The pupils' attitudes to learning are generally good. They enjoy the lessons, work hard and are engaged in what they are doing. They discuss their work with the teachers and other pupils and are able to evaluate and modify their work successfully.
118. Only one lesson was seen in Years 1 and 2 during the inspection, so no judgement can be made on the quality of teaching. However, the teaching in this lesson was good. During the lesson, pupils cut and pasted and used a range of translucent papers to create a representation of a stained glass window. Designs and pictures were discussed and pupils were given the choice of the papers they would use. This was to be followed by using oil on waxed paper as an alternative method for producing translucence. The teacher supported pupils well in helping them to accomplish their ideas.
119. The quality of teaching in Year 3 to Year 6 is good. The lesson preparation and the support for the pupils through the provision of pictures and artefacts as a stimulus for

their work is a strength of the teaching. They build design, evaluation and modification into the planning for each unit of work but much of the work is teacher directed and the opportunities for modification, experimentation and investigation are sometimes too limited.

120. There are now two subject leaders and the management of the subject is developing, although as yet there has been no monitoring of the standards and quality of teaching across the school. A policy on the use of tools that was asked for in the last inspection report has been written and this will be added to the new policy early next academic year. Assessment of the pupils' work in sketchbooks remains inconsistent.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

121. No lessons were observed in Year 1 or Year 2 but discussions with the staff and the pupils and scrutiny of displayed work indicate that pupils are attaining levels that are broadly in line with the national expectations for their age. The standards found at the time of the previous inspection have therefore been maintained. By the end of Year 2 pupils have had opportunities to make products through cutting and shaping a range of materials and to use a variety of techniques to decorate and finish. A display of some work involving Hana Beads shows pupils planning a design which is then closely followed. They evaluate their work and describe why they have made the decisions they have and how they deal with any constraints they encounter with the materials they use.
122. The pupils' attainment in Year 3 to Year 6 is also in line with national expectations. They can use tools safely including hacksaws, bench hooks, hammers and nails. In Year 4, pupils make nerve testers for the school's technology day. They can measure, mark, cut and join with care. The pupils have a good understanding of the need for safe working practices when using these tools and the need for hygiene when working with food. Teachers are careful to include all the elements of designing, including generating the ideas, making, modifying and evaluating, and these elements are well understood by the pupils. The work is often combined with other curriculum areas including art, music, mathematics and science.
123. The pupils' attitude to learning in Years 3 to 6 is nearly always good or very good. They enjoy the subject and work quickly and efficiently. Good support is given to pupils with special needs by the teachers, the classroom assistants and by the other pupils. Because of this support and the good progress they make, they produce articles that they take pride in. All the pupils confidently discuss their ideas and their plans show an increasing complexity including more annotation, as they move from pictures towards diagrams. Year 6 pupils generate interesting and unusual ideas for a range of different shelters and show a good understanding of building materials and their constraints.
124. The quality of teaching ranges from unsatisfactory to very good, with the majority being good. Planning is now consistent and based on clear learning objectives. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The preparation for the lessons and the management of pupils is very good. Teachers demonstrate skills and processes carefully, ensuring that the pupils are able to work confidently, either independently or in pairs. They choose activities that will interest and motivate the pupils, such as designing a rocket to be used with the school's rocket launcher or the nerve testers that are to be one of the games for the schools' technology day. Some of these activities are over-directed by the teacher and this results in pupils having too few opportunities to develop their own ideas or to modify to any great extent those of the teacher and, as a result, learning is, overall, satisfactory.

125. The management of the subject is satisfactory. Two experienced subject leaders, one for each key stage, provide help and advice and monitor the coverage of the curriculum. As yet there has been no opportunity to monitor the standards and quality of teaching across the school. A technology day is organised by the subject leaders. This is enjoyed by the pupils and provides a very good focus for work in the summer term. Resources are satisfactory, although there are relatively few construction kits for Years 3 to 6. The subject leaders are introducing sketchbooks for pupils to record their designs and evaluations. These will provide an ongoing record of progress.

GEOGRAPHY

126. The pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2, and at the end of Year 6, is broadly in line with national expectations. This is a similar judgement to that made at the time of the 1998 inspection. In Years 1 and 2, pupils develop a sense of their own locality by mapping their own home and their route to and from school. The well-travelled Barnaby Bear and his friend Jeremy Bear allow pupils to develop a sense of distance and different places in the world through studying postcards, airline tickets and map references sent from their holiday experiences. In Years 3 to 6, progress is satisfactory. By Year 4, a good range of aspects have been covered, with a developing sense of mapping when considering the use of local routes. The pupils are able to compare St. Helen's with a distant locality, drawing interesting and appropriate geographical comparisons. An understanding of the influence of climate upon the lifestyles, agriculture and industry of different areas of the world is developing. Knowledge and understanding of their own locality is furthered through the study of transport networks and pollution surveys based on the Merton Bank area including the school grounds. In Year 5, pupils can use atlases to identify a wide range of physical features on a world map. They have the ability to translate this work onto their own maps and offer good explanation, for example, as to why the areas of the world most susceptible to drought should be found closest to the equator. Their achievement is good. Good provision is made for pupils from all ability ranges.
127. Pupils have satisfactory attitudes to their work. More opportunities to discuss geographical issues in groups and to develop the experience of explaining their own ideas in order to increase their understanding would be beneficial. Good practice was observed in a Year 6 class, where a study of diversification in the farming industry allowed pupils to work in pairs on deciding how farmers might use their land to bring in extra income. Good opportunities are taken to promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The problems created by increased tourism in rural areas studied by Year 6, the Reception class visit to the working environment of Manchester airport and a Year 4 project with St. Helen's Borough Council, on considering improvements to the local environment, are examples of some of the work covered.
128. Two lessons were observed during the inspection. Evidence from these lessons, teachers' plans and pupils' work show that the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers use national guidelines to teach a balanced geography curriculum. They assess whether pupils attain key objectives and acquire key geographical skills during year group planning meetings. The presentation of work in the pupils' books indicates a growing confidence as they progress through the school. By Year 6, there is good breadth and balance to the curriculum programme with challenging lines of geographical enquiry documented in the pupils' books and on display boards. Good practice in a Year 5 class was noted where well-prepared and stimulating resources matched the learning intentions. There was also a clever link in the lesson between the identification of areas of the world where droughts could occur

and the need for our own conservation of water as an important natural resource. A homework task asking the pupils to identify breaking news about forest fires in North America was also well linked.

129. Two teachers are jointly responsible for subject leadership and management. Their management of the subject is satisfactory but they still need to develop procedures for monitoring and evaluating more accurately the progress made by pupils. The use made of information and communication technology in developing lines of geographical enquiry is weak. Since the last inspection improvements have been made to the quality and presentation of written work in Years 3 to 6. There is less use made of worksheets and those that are used are mainly appropriate. Weekly planning meetings in year groups have achieved a better consistency in planning lessons. A good range of high-quality books are available in the classrooms and this is supplemented by satisfactory library provision.

HISTORY

130. The pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 and at the end of Year 6, is broadly in line with national expectations. This is a similar judgement to that made at the time of the 1998 inspection. Year 2 pupils are developing a knowledge of historical characters such as Guy Fawkes, Samuel Pepys and Florence Nightingale and are investigating features of castles, and understanding their function, by considering their defence systems. The pupils in Year 6 can talk about periods of history studied including Britain since the 1930's and Victorian Britain. They demonstrate a good understanding of the lifestyles, methods of travel, dwellings and social conditions in different periods of history. Throughout the school the pupils of all ability ranges make satisfactory progress in their acquisition of historical knowledge and skills. They develop a good sense of time and chronological vocabulary is introduced in increasingly sophisticated ways as the pupils get older and their language skills mature.
131. The pupils' attitude and behaviour during lessons is always satisfactory or better. They show interest in their work and are able to sustain concentration. Opportunities for them to think and learn for themselves during independent and group work is less well developed as there is an over-reliance on the use of worksheets. The best response occurred where a more open-ended activity was set for the pupils, as in a Year 5 class where they were studying Ancient Egypt. The pupils were thoroughly engaged in the activity of describing four scenes depicting different aspects of this ancient civilisation. They used the knowledge they had gained from previous lessons to discuss with their partners what it would have been like to have lived in those times. Good opportunities are taken to explore the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of the subject. The pupils respond with wonder to the achievements of past societies and this is well demonstrated in some good work on the Roman, Ancient Greek and Ancient Egyptian periods studied by Year groups 3, 4 and 5 respectively. They show an ability to recognise differences and similarities between cultures exploring through primary and secondary sources clues as to how people thought, felt, created, behaved and lived.

132. Four lessons were observed during the inspection. Evidence from these lessons, teachers' plans and pupils' work show that the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, with some very good teaching and learning seen in older classes in Key Stage 2. Teachers have considerable subject knowledge and their planning covers National Curriculum requirements. Assessment of pupils' work is variable, with the best practice evident where teachers connect the learning objectives to previous learning outcomes. A good example of this was in a Year 2 class, where the new topic of castles was introduced through a link to previous work related to King Harold and the Norman invasion. Very good use is made of expertise from an archaeologist at Liverpool University. The work carried out with pupils from Year groups 3, 4 and 5 is of a high quality. The displays in the classrooms and work in the pupils' books is excellent, with pupils gaining first-hand experience of handling a good range of artefacts and discussing these historical finds with an expert. Good use is also made of visits to places of historical interest to enrich the curriculum with Year 2 pupils visiting Croxteth Hall, Year 3 exploring Chester and Year 6 studying Wigan Pier.
133. Two teachers provide satisfactory leadership and management in this subject. They have recently updated the school policy to meet with Qualifications and Curricular Association's guidance. Monitoring and evaluation of the subject to ensure a more secure view on the pupils' progress is still an area for further development, although the subject leaders do sample pupils' work on a half termly basis. Resources in school are satisfactory and good use is made of these in class lessons and for display. A Year 2 lesson on castles was enhanced by the careful selection of appropriate book and poster resources and a Year 4 class were introduced to the old school logbook that added a different dimension to their study of the period around the Second World War. Consideration needs to be given as to how to maximise the use of the new information and communication technology facilities in school for historical study.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

134. The pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is in line with national expectations and they achieve well. This represents a significant improvement since the previous report for Years 3 to 6 because of the substantial increase in resources and the improving quality of teaching. Considering the pupils' limited skills in information and communication technology (ICT) when they start school these achievements reflect good progress. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to practise their technical skills when working on other subjects. The ICT suite is a very good resource to enable all pupils in each class to work together and ensure that all pupils have regular access to computers. Further experiences are provided through the computer club run by two members of staff for Year 3 and Year 6 pupils during the lunch break. There is also an after-school club for pupils throughout the school and their parents.
135. The pupils in Years 1 and 2 use the mouse to click on and move pictures and know how to use some icons. In Year 1 the pupils programmed a simple series of directions for the PIXIE. They can use the 'on' and 'off' switches and know how batteries are required to move parts in toys and games because they have opportunities to use and investigate how these items work. Pupils in Year 2 use the Internet and confidently located a website relating to castles. The pupils know how to return to the home page and print from the Internet.

136. By Year 6 the pupils have made further progress in their ability to use an increasing range of ICT skills. They use a PowerPoint program to plan a presentation when the higher-attaining pupils extend their presentations by adding animation and sound. Two Year 5 pupils gave an excellent demonstration on how to use spreadsheets to create a database, amend details and update the information. The pupils in Years 5 and 6 can use e-mails and give reasons why this is an effective method of communication. They can explain how to navigate through a CD-ROM and how to use the search facilities on the Internet to locate a site. Pupils have less secure skills in control and modelling. Work in word processing is impeded when pupils' typing skills are poor and they resort to one finger typing.
137. The pupils' attitudes to learning are good. The pupils respond with enthusiasm when using computers because the lessons in ICT are based on interesting situations. The pupils confidently explain their work and are often amazed by their achievements. A Year 6 pupil with special educational needs was thrilled when he succeeded in importing a graphic into his presentation. The subject makes a significant contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The pupils learn the potential of computers to support learning; they work well together and co-operate in small groups. Behaviour is good in ICT lessons. Higher-attaining pupils have opportunities to extend learning and pupils with special educational needs have many worthwhile opportunities to improve their basic skills through practice. Additional adult support is always available for these pupils and other pupils also often offer their support.
138. The quality of teaching in Years 1 and 2 is good because new skills are explained well and as a result the pupils know how to proceed. This was particularly effective in the explanation on how to use the PIXIE. Staff work effectively to ensure that pupils achieve as much independence as possible. A useful worksheet provided by the teacher in a Year 2 lesson prompted the pupils to follow the correct procedures to access the site.
139. The quality of teaching in Years 3 to 6 is good, overall, and sometimes very good because teachers intervene when required and also encourage the pupils to think of ways to solve problems. In an ICT lesson linked to literacy the pupils checked their results to make sure they were sensible. A strength in teaching is also in the short but effective review of the work and the involvement of pupils in explaining their work at the end of the lesson. This was very successful when Year 6 pupils gave their presentations using PowerPoint. The training programme for teachers has helped to successfully improve the quality of teaching since the last inspection.
140. The overall quality of leadership and management of the subject is satisfactory. The two subject leaders have drafted a detailed ICT development plan clearly identifying how the resources and curriculum will be developed. The subject managers are aware of the need to extend software resources to develop ICT across the curriculum beyond literacy and numeracy. There has been no monitoring of teaching and learning in ICT. Strategies to monitor and assess pupils' attainment in the subject are informal and this is a weakness. Planning which is based on national guidance is satisfactory. The rotating system of half termly blocks in Years 3 to 6 for ICT skills development, literacy and numeracy is not always appropriate; for example, work in numeracy may not always have an ICT application. Resources are good in the ICT suite and a wider range of technology resources are being introduced including a hydraulic pump, digital camera and video cameras to further extend pupils' skills.

MUSIC

141. Standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 are in line with what is expected of pupils of their age. The school successfully uses BBC broadcasts throughout the school. Pupils in Year 1 learn, for example, what is meant by pitch, recognising when notes are 'high', 'low' or are 'in the middle'. They know the names of different instruments and sing related songs such as 'The Grand old Duke of York', with appropriate actions. In Year 2, pupils increase their knowledge of instruments, to include those found in an orchestra and also some from different cultures, such as the ocarina. They learn how these produce sound and enjoy, for example, the opportunity to play a mouthpiece, attached to a hosepipe and funnel, having seen a tuba being played. Almost all are able to clap simple rhythms accurately on their own; this is then developed and groups of pupils clap different rhythms together. Pupils sing tunefully and join in songs with real enjoyment.
142. In Year 3, pupils have learned about the lives of different composers such as Handel and Mozart and listened to some of the music they composed. They have played tuned and un-tuned instruments in assembly. In Year 4, pupils again sing very tunefully indeed as a result of very good role models from the broadcasts. Throughout the school, in lessons and in assemblies, the quality of pupils' singing is above average. Pupils also have a good sense of rhythm, every pupil able to tap rhythms accurately in one class. Broadcasts also enable the pupils to gain a good understanding of tempo. There have been opportunities for pupils in Year 6 to compose music, using software on the computer. However, this software is restricted and the school is planning to develop this further in the future. Pupils also draw a wide range of instruments and classify them according to how they are played. Pupils have opportunities to listen to music, including jazz, and music from different cultures, in lessons and in assemblies, and know about pitch, rhythm, tempo and mood in music. As no lessons were seen in Years 3, 5 or 6 no judgement can be made on improvement since the last inspection when there was a larger evidence base.
143. Pupils have good attitudes to music in Years 1 and 2. They try hard, listen well and thoroughly enjoy the lessons. Pupils have very good and sometimes excellent attitudes in Years 3 and 4. In one lesson in Year 4, pupils' behaviour was excellent. All joined in happily and did everything they were asked, demonstrating sensibly when asked and as a result reached above average standards.
144. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2 is good and in Year 4 is very good. No lessons were seen taught in Years 3, 5 or 6. In all classes teachers use the broadcasts well, ensuring a good balance between following the broadcast and contributing to teaching themselves. When teaching pitch, however, the quality of the instruments is not good enough for this to be really successful. For example, there was not enough difference in the pitch of different instruments for pupils to hear the difference between high and low sound as bells (which were assumed to be of a high pitch) were in fact of quite a low pitch, confusing the pupils. Teachers, however, have a clear understanding of the expectations of broadcasts. Pupils are helped to follow music as they sing and the teacher in one class used her own resources, such as a metronome, to widen pupils' knowledge further. The management of pupils is excellent. The best lessons were very well organised and clear instructions were given, such as turn your chairs to face each other when working with a partner to mirror each other's slow and fast movements. Assessment was used very well at the end of the lesson to find out what knowledge the pupils had gained. The use of assessment to find out what each pupil can do is not, however, used in all classes.

145. Instrumental lessons are available in guitar, recorder, brass and violin. The guitar club observed has grown and now pupils from Years 1 to 6 take part, as well as three teachers who are learning alongside the pupils. This club is held in the lunch hour and is very popular. As pupils have been joining during the year, the skills acquired vary according to how long they have been attending. The teacher who runs the club manages it well and pupils are making satisfactory progress.
146. The leadership of the subject is satisfactory. The whole-school policy to use broadcasts throughout the school is proving successful, but no audit has been made to ensure that there is progression and that all National Curriculum requirements are covered sufficiently. For example, there are limited opportunities for pupils to compose music. There is also limited time for pupils to follow up broadcasts, which is usually expected, to ensure that all attainment targets are to be sufficiently addressed. A policy has been recently updated but has not been fully implemented; this is not sufficiently monitored. The subject is being maintained but not developed as there is no action plan for development but the subject leader has recently taken part in in-service training. Resources are generally satisfactory but old instruments are not replaced soon enough and as a result pupils play some instruments which are out of tune or no longer musical. The broadcasts contribute well to pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development and musicians have visited the school and played to the pupils. Good links are made with other subjects such as design and technology where pupils make musical instruments, mathematics and science when they study sound, and information and communication technology in Year 6 when they have had opportunities to compose. At Christmas time pupils have further opportunities to develop their musical ability and perform both in school and at a local residential home for the elderly.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

147. During the inspection the focus was mainly on ball skills, athletics and dance. Other evidence included discussion with the subject leaders, teachers, pupils and observation of sports clubs. By the time the pupils reach the ages of seven and 11 standards are in line with national expectations, which is similar to the last inspection.
148. All lessons include appropriate warm-up and cool-down exercises. The pupils, especially in the seven-to-eleven age range, know the importance of these activities in relation to heartbeat, breathing and muscle relaxation. In the five-to-seven age group the pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress overall. The pupils in the seven-to-eleven age bracket make good progress overall. All the pupils in this age range, when prior skills levels are taken into account, achieve well as a result of overall good teaching and coaching, and eagerness on their behalf to improve performance.
149. By the age of seven most of the pupils demonstrate satisfactory co-ordination when performing large body movements. They move with appropriate control and generally make good use of the space available. In the hall they move freely, engage in a range of warm-up activities and are able to start and stop movements safely. The pupils in Year 2 pass and catch items such as balls and beanbags with the expected degree of accuracy, control and co-ordination for this age group. In these activities boys tend to outperform girls.
150. By the time they leave school as 11-year-olds pupils demonstrate satisfactory techniques while running, jumping, and twisting. They are beginning to measure and compare their own and others' performances. In a Year 5 lesson, for instance, a group of pupils advised each other about the importance of elongating and contracting body

shapes as they responded to a poem ('Sea Seasons' by Moira Anderson) being read. The pupils are becoming more aware of the necessity of pace and accuracy as they develop passing, catching and controlling skills, seen to good effect during a rounders club practice. Retrieving and throwing/returning skills are less well developed. In team games such as rounders and cricket the more talented pupils are beginning to see the advantage of positional awareness when fielding. A good feature is the keen interest in cricket which the girls demonstrate. By the end of Year 6, the vast majority of pupils swim the nationally desired 25 metres, with many swimming 400 metres or more.

151. The pupils enjoy physical education and adopt a positive and enthusiastic approach. They work energetically and are keen to succeed. By the time they leave school both boys and girls know the basic rules of football, rugby, netball, rounders and cricket. Teamwork is fostered successfully through competitive sports against other schools and competitions won have included netball rallies and the girls' cross-country championships. Pupils are beginning to learn the importance of communication in a good team performance, demonstrated ably during a rounders club session. The majority show good self-discipline and respond well to instructions.
152. Teaching is good overall, ranging from satisfactory to very good. Teachers provide the pupils with well-structured sequences within lessons, enabling them to move gradually from basic to more complex work. This was very much evident in a Year 4 lesson where the pupils learned to retrieve, track and send/throw the ball prior to participating in a bowling and batting activity. During the same lesson the more skilful and talented pupils were invited to demonstrate best practice, which resulted in their peers improving their performance. Aspects of safety are brought regularly to the pupils' attention. Instructions are clear and in the best lessons pupils are encouraged to analyse their work, describing what happened and evaluating its success or relevance to the task which had been set. For example, in an athletics session the pupils were asked to give reasons why smooth baton change in relay races was important. In all classes the teachers change for lessons, which provides a good role model for the class and enables demonstrations to be given easily, as observed in another Year 4 lesson where the pupils analysed and refined jumping and landing techniques.
153. The subject is led and managed satisfactorily by the two subject leaders. They are supported by a team of teachers who are willing to devote time to promoting a good range of clubs and teams including football, netball, cricket, rugby and athletics. Their networking with outside agencies such as Liverpool Football Club and St Helens Rugby League Club has resulted in expert coaching being acquired by the school. The policy and scheme of work ensure full coverage of the subject. In-service courses attended by all teaching staff have included football, netball and ball and bat skills (Top Play and Top Sport), which are beginning to have a positive impact in physical education lessons. The monitoring of teaching and learning and pupils' attainment requires further development. Resources and accommodation, both indoor and outdoor, are good, and are generally used well.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

154. Religious education is a very strong subject in the school, reflecting the ethos of the school very well. The knowledge and understanding that pupils have are above, and sometimes well above, the standards seen in most schools. Pupils' written work is of average standard because of their limited literacy skills. Cloze procedure is used well in this subject to provide pupils with a record of work in a limited amount of time. Pupils have an outstanding knowledge of people in the Bible and the lives of Christian saints, and pupils in Years 1 and 2 learn about Christianity and Judaism, whilst those in Years

3 to 6 learn about Judaism and Islam, in addition to Christianity. This knowledge provides pupils with a very firm base on which to build further knowledge and understanding.

155. Pupils' attainment is above average. By the end of Year 2 pupils have a good understanding of celebrations such as Hanukkah, Shabbat, Sukkoth, Diwali and Christmas. They know about Bible characters such as Jonah, David and Goliath, Samson and Delilah, Moses and John the Baptist and have knowledge of stories such as the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son and Babushka. Pupils write about their New Year resolutions and the Chinese New Year. The writing of higher-attaining pupils is of good quality and shows a good understanding of what has been taught, for example how 'God sent Jonah to help some people but he did not want to go'. Pictures show the emotions of people through 'bubbles'.
156. Pupils' attainment is again above average by the end of Year 6. In Year 3, pupils learn about the miracles of Jesus, and study special events and celebration of different religions. In Year 3, much is taught through drama. In Year 4, pupils gain a good knowledge of Judaism and their recorded work is well above average. Drama is used to help them to understand the concept of forgiveness. Pupils express how what they learn relates to their own lives, when they write, for example, 'I was like doubting Thomas when my friend said that she had got a new teddy and I did not believe her.' They learn about the layout of an Anglican church and what different symbols mean. Year 5 pupils know a range of stories from different religions and enjoy using drama to act these out. They produce thoughtful written work, some inspired by their study of the life of Mother Theresa. From their study of Islam they know, for example, about the life of Mohammed and the five pillars of Islam. In Year 6, pupils again express Biblical stories through drama and can talk about what is special to themselves. They know about Florence Nightingale, Lord Shaftsbury, Martin Luther King and Yusuf Islam who founded Islamia primary school. They also have good knowledge of Biblical parables and who St Paul was. They know about Lent and the temptations of Jesus. They consider who they admire and rules to live by. The quality of pupils' recorded work in Years 2, 4 and 6 is often very good, although in Year 6 these standards vary between different classes and is sometimes below average. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well through the subject. Prayers are sometimes said at the end of the lesson, related to what they have learned.
157. The attitudes of pupils range from satisfactory to excellent and, overall, are good across the school. This directly relates to the quality of teaching. In Year 2, pupils enjoy discussing what happens in churches, watch the videos attentively and when they discuss baptism, use the different knowledge and experiences they bring to school well. They enjoy looking at the teacher's photographs of a Christening. Pupils speaking English as an additional language, lower attainers and those with special educational needs are supported well by the visiting support teacher and classrooms assistants, and as a result show very positive attitudes to their work. The good variety of activities provided means that higher attainers in the majority of lessons respond well to further challenges. In Years 3 to 6 pupils are enthusiastic and enjoy using the considerable amount of knowledge they have gained to answer questions. In one Year 3 class, two pupils with special educational needs were well supported. Attitudes in Year 5 vary from very good to unsatisfactory. Where they are very good, pupils are very knowledgeable, put their hands up to answer questions and all, especially boys, are particularly keen to contribute to the lesson. Where attitudes were unsatisfactory, there was a lack of creativity and involvement of pupils and more activity was needed to hold their interest.

158. The quality of teaching and learning is good across the school. Teaching was excellent in two lessons and in those lessons learning was very good. Where it was excellent, the teacher conveyed very well indeed the spiritual aspect of religious education and the sanctity of a church; as a result, pupils' responses were particularly thoughtful. There was a good emphasis on the importance of places of worship to all religions and very good use was made of a video and other resources. Pupils' work was marked as they were working and the teacher talked with individuals as she went round the class to further expand their knowledge. In another class, more demanding work could have been expected from higher-attaining pupils and greater acknowledgement given to the knowledge they brought to school. In Years 3 to 6, when teaching was good, lesson plans were clear, previous knowledge was revised, pupils were encouraged through praise and there was a good pace to the lesson. Occasionally, in Year 3, the management strategies of different teachers have not been discussed sufficiently to ensure that there is consistency of approach and, as a result, behaviour is not always as good as it should be. Overall, a limited range of teaching and learning styles are used in Years 5 and 6 and this is something the subject leader is keen to improve. Where teaching was excellent in Year 5, very good use was made of individual whiteboards to revise what pupils already knew, the teacher had very good subject knowledge and presented the work in a challenging way; for example when gradually drawing out from pupils what they already knew to show that their belief that they didn't know much about the Bible was incorrect. Good use was also made of wall charts to clarify the teaching in this lesson.
159. Whilst the subject is well taught because of teachers' own knowledge and understanding, the leadership of the subject is unsatisfactory. There are two subject leaders. The Years 1 and 2 subject leader has not recently had any in-service training and no local co-ordinator meetings are available for either of them to attend. The recently appointed Year 3 to 6 subject leader has, however, attended an 'Introduction to RE' course. The policy, which was updated in 1997, is out of date and the school has no customised scheme of work, as required by the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Because of this the school has not sufficiently considered, for example, how the same topic, such as harvest, Christmas and Easter, will be studied differently, building on previous knowledge, in different year groups. Also there is nothing against which to monitor the half-termly plans, which are collected in, or the time spent teaching the subject. Teachers use assessment well in lessons to find out what pupils know, but this needs to be formalised in the policy so that new teachers are aware of accepted practice. Whilst accommodation is satisfactory, more use could be made of display to enhance the subject. There is a good range of library books on all faiths, in the Years 1 and 2 library but there is a limited range of books for older pupils, especially on faiths other than Christianity, and this limits opportunities for these pupils to relate to people of other faiths with appropriate knowledge and understanding. Videos are used well and there is a satisfactory range of cassette tapes but artefacts are limited in number. Pupils visit the local church and the local vicar visits the school. The subject leaders need to develop a clear knowledge of the Local Agreed Syllabus and give a clear lead to move the subject forward over the next few years, ensuring a consistency of approach, building on the good teaching in progress and the new vision brought to the subject.