

INSPECTION REPORT

FENDER PRIMARY SCHOOL

Woodchurch

LEA area: Wirral

Unique reference number: 105039

Acting Headteacher: Mrs A. Melville

Reporting inspector: Mrs J.Tracey
20270

Dates of inspection: 14th - 17th October 2002

Inspection number: 246434

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: 4-11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: New Hey Road
Woodchurch
Wirral

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr B. Murray

Date of previous inspection: June 2000

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
20270	June Tracey	Registered inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology History Geography Education inclusion	The school's results and achievements How well pupils are taught How well the school is led and managed What should the school do to improve further?
9504	Sheila Gurney	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well the school cares for its pupils How well the school works in partnership with parents
23204	Christina Wojtak	Team inspector	English Physical education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
7994	Pamela Weston	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Music Special educational needs	
3191	James Curley	Team inspector	Science Art Design and technology Religious education	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Fender Primary School is a mixed school with 182 pupils of ages 4-11 on roll. It is smaller than many primary schools but numbers are increasing. Pupils are taught in single age classes that are split into smaller teaching groups for English and mathematics in Years 1, 5 and 6. The school does not have a nursery but there is independent nursery provision in an adjoining building. The school draws predominantly from the local neighbourhood but also provides places for 30 pupils with more severe learning difficulties and disabilities; some have behaviour and emotional problems. These pupils come from outlying districts in the Wirral. They are mainly taught in two class groups but are well integrated into the life of the school. They join in with all the activities. The proportion of pupils on the register of special educational needs (29%) is above average. The proportion of pupils with formal statements of need is well above average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals (66%) is well above average. Attainment on entry varies from year to year, but, overall, it is well below average. Almost all pupils are of white ethnic origin. None speak English as an additional language.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Fender Primary School provides a sound education for its pupils in a supportive and caring environment. It is an improving school that is successfully emerging from an unsettled period. The acting headteacher provides good leadership that, with the support of staff and governors, is taking the school forward. Standards of work, including those of pupils with severe learning needs and disabilities, are well below average by the time pupils leave the school. Teaching is satisfactory. Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall, particularly when the school's difficulties in recent years are taken into account. Pupils in Years 1-3 achieve well because they have benefited from a stable education from the start of their schooling. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Provision in the reception class is very good. Children achieve very well because teaching is very good.
- Provision is good in Years 1-3. Teaching progressively builds on pupils' prior attainment and consolidates learning.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Pupils are very well cared for in an environment that nurtures good personal development.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- Many parents are involved with the school and contribute to their children's learning.

What could be improved

- Standards of work in Year 4-6, particularly in English and mathematics.
- The use of information from assessment procedures to identify underachievement and set targets for improvement.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum.
- Subject co-ordinators should be more involved in the monitoring of teaching, learning and pupils' progress.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Overall improvement since the previous inspection in June 2000 is good. The school has managed change well, setting in place systems that are leading to progressively higher standards from the reception class upwards. The effect of these is evident in pupils' results in Year 2, but not yet in Year 6. The school won two achievement awards in 2000/01 and was the tenth most improved school in the country in 2001. Staff and pupils have higher expectations and show the commitment to succeed. Pupils' attitudes have improved, as has the whole environment for learning. Provision for pupils with special educational needs has improved significantly. Classroom assistants provide good support that is very well matched to pupils' individual needs.

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*	E	B
Mathematics	E*	E	C	A
Science	E	E	C	A

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

Attainment on entry to the reception class varies, but, overall, it is well below average, particularly in respect to language skills and personal and emotional development. Children achieve very well in the Foundation Stage. By the time they start Year 1, attainment is close to average. Most children reach the Early Learning Goals in personal and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical and creative development.

Overall standards of work for all pupils, including those with severe educational needs and disabilities are below average in Year 2. Standards are well below average in English and mathematics and average in science. They are average in all three subjects when the work of pupils with severe educational needs is excluded. Pupils of all abilities achieve well from their starting points in Year 1. Results in national tests taken at the end of Year 2 in 2001 were well below average in writing and in the lowest 5 per cent nationally in reading and mathematics. The proportions of pupils reaching the expected level for their age rose significantly in reading, writing and mathematics in 2002. National averages are not yet available for comparison. The improvement is due to more consistent teaching and the well-structured curriculum these pupils have experienced since they began schooling.

Standards of work are well below average overall in Year 6. This includes the attainment of all pupils in the age group, whatever their learning needs. Excluding the attainment of pupils with severe educational needs, standards are average in science and below average in English and mathematics. Pupils in Years 4-6 did not benefit from a consistent approach to teaching in their earlier years. There was not enough progression, particularly in language and numerical skills; there are still many gaps in pupils' knowledge. The school is endeavouring to make up for this by grouping pupils by ability for English and mathematics in Years 5 and 6. They are now making better progress. Achievement is satisfactory overall. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because of the good level of support they receive in mainstream classes and in the designated class for pupils with severe educational needs. The average point score in national tests taken in Year 6 in 2001 was similar to the national average. It was well above average compared with similar schools. Over time, to 2001, the trend in performance was above that found nationally. This was not sustained in 2002, when results declined in English, mathematics and science. The school did not meet the targets set by the governors. Pupils' performance was affected by the difficulties experienced by the school in previous years. This is also true of the current Year 6. The attainment of boys and girls varies from year, reflecting the balance of boys and girls in the two classes of pupils with severe learning difficulties. Other than this, there is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls.

Excluding the attainment of pupils with severe educational needs, standards in speaking and listening are average throughout the school. Standards in reading and writing are average in Year 2. In Year 6, reading is below average and writing well below average. Numerical skills are average in Year 2 and below average in Year 6.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Most pupils are enthusiastic and eager to learn. A small minority is uninterested and lacks perseverance. The presentation of pupils' written work in Years 3-6 could be improved.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. The school is an orderly community. Most pupils behave well in class but there is a small amount of challenging behaviour that sometimes disrupts the work of other pupils. A few pupils were excluded for a fixed period last year.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils gain in confidence as they progress through the school. Older pupils show good commitment when taking on responsibilities.
Attendance	Attendance is well below average. The figures are seriously affected by the very poor attendance of a few pupils.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Overall, the quality of teaching and pupils' learning is satisfactory. Teaching meets the needs of all pupils. It is very good in the reception class where teachers motivate children well so that they apply what they learn in creative and practical activities. The stability of teaching in Years 1-2 leads to good progress because pupils know exactly what is expected of them and respond accordingly. Pupils in these two year groups have experienced consistently good provision from the start of their education, which is resulting in good achievement overall. Pupils in Years 4-6 do not have the same background. They did not learn progressively in their early years because the school was passing through a difficult period when there were many changes, both in the curriculum and staffing. There are many gaps in these pupils' knowledge, which restricts their ability to reach full potential in some areas of the curriculum. Teachers are not doing enough to make up lost ground or introduce rigour into written work.

Teaching and learning are good in Years 1-2 in English, mathematics, science, art, history, geography, ICT and religious education. They are satisfactory in design and technology and physical education. It was not possible to make judgements about music throughout the school, and geography in Years 3-6 (Key Stage 2), because not enough evidence was available. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in all other subjects in Key Stage 2 except art where they are good. The school has adopted the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies (NLS and NNS) but in practice they are implemented more effectively in Year 1-2. In other year groups teachers miss opportunities to develop writing and numerical skills through cross-curricular work. Scrutiny of pupils' books indicates that written work is not extensive enough for pupils to express themselves in depth. They are more confident when learning through oral work and when editing and redrafting work using computers. The teaching of numeracy and computational skills in particular is not rigorous enough in Years 4-6. Pupils do not have a firm working knowledge of number and multiplication tables to underpin other work in mathematics. This slows down the pace of learning and prevents pupils from translating problems in words to their numerical equivalent.

Good teaching is characterised by good planning and interesting lessons that fire pupils' imagination and make them eager to learn. In these lessons pupils know what is expected of them and are capable of evaluating their own success, or not, at the end of the lesson. The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching observed was mainly due to the challenging behaviour of a few pupils who prevented others from making progress.

The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good overall. These pupils learn well, building up and applying knowledge, because of teachers' good understanding of how they learn through small sequential steps and regular reinforcement.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The curriculum is very good in the Foundation Stage and good in Years 1 and 2 where pupils enjoy a wide range of experiences based on thorough grounding in literacy and numeracy skills. There are fewer links between subjects in Years 3 to 6 and not enough evidence of progression, particularly in the promotion of mathematical skills.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good overall. Provision in the two designated classes for pupils with the most severe needs is very good. Most pupils with special educational needs make good progress throughout the school towards the targets in their individual education plans.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. Provision for spiritual, social and cultural development is good. The school is consciously promoting good citizenship through direct teaching and visits from members of the local community.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares for its pupils very well in a supportive environment. Their needs are given prime consideration in planning the curriculum and arrangements for pastoral care. Information gained from procedures to assess pupils' progress is not used rigorously enough to guide lesson planning and eradicate weaknesses in pupils' work.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is well led and managed. The acting headteacher is successfully leading the school through a transitional period. She is well supported by colleagues who share her commitment to raising standards and providing a good educational experience for all pupils.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors carry out their responsibilities effectively. They have a good understanding of the main issues facing the school. Attention and finances are satisfactorily directed to priorities in the school development plan.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school analyses its performance satisfactorily and is self-critical. It recognises areas needing improvement and is tackling them systematically. The monitoring of teaching and learning is not rigorous enough.
The strategic use of resources	The budget and specific grants are spent appropriately with proper regard for their intended purposes. Governors apply the principles of best value when making financial decisions, basing them on consultation with those who will be affected and consideration of the potential effect on pupils' learning.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The care and concern for pupils' welfare. • Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school if they have concerns. • The school expects pupils to work hard and give of their best. • The school is well led and managed. 	A few parents do not think pupils have the right amount of work to do at home.

Responses from the Parents' meeting and the questionnaires were extremely positive. Parents are pleased with the improvement since the previous inspection. They think that the school has a much better image in the local community and that it provides well for pupils of all abilities. Inspectors agree with the parents' positive comments, except in that provision for pupils in Years 3-6 is not as good as in the earlier years. This is because there is not as much emphasis on the progressive development of literacy and numeracy skills in these year groups. Homework is given regularly to a fixed schedule

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Attainment on entry to the reception class varies, but, overall, it is well below average, particularly in respect to language skills and personal and emotional development. Children achieve very well in the Foundation Stage. Attainment at the end of the reception class fluctuates depending on the number of pupils with severe educational needs. It is generally close to average with most pupils achieving the Early Learning Goals in personal and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical and creative development.

2. Overall standards of work for all pupils, including those in the two designated classes for pupils with more severe educational needs, are below average in Year 2 and well below average in Year 6. Excluding pupils in these groups, standards are close to average in Year 2 and below average in Year 6. Pupils achieve well in Year 2 because teaching is stable and effective in Years 1 and 2. Literacy and numeracy skills are taught well and form the basis of a well-structured curriculum suited to pupils' needs. Achievement is satisfactory in Year 6. It is not as good as in Years 1 and 2 because pupils in Years 4-6 did not have such a good start to their education. The school passed through a difficult stage in their earlier years, teaching lacked stability and there was a lack of progression in reading, writing and numerical skills. There are still gaps in pupils' knowledge in these areas that result in many pupils' reluctance to write at length and to apply mathematical skills in problem solving situations. The school has taken action this year to make up for these deficiencies by forming three teaching groups for English and mathematics from Years 5 and 6. This is enabling teachers to target pupils' specific difficulties and there are signs that progress is being made. However, there is much to do if pupils are to achieve their full potential by the time they leave the school.

3. Insufficient evidence was available to make fair judgements about standards of work in music throughout the school and geography in Years 3-6. Other than this, including pupils of all abilities, standards in Year 2 are average in all subjects except English and mathematics where they are well below average. Pupils achieve satisfactorily from their starting points in art, design and technology and physical education. They achieve well in other subjects. In Year 6, standards are well below average in English and mathematics, below average in science, ICT and religious education and average in art, design and technology, history and physical education. Achievement is unsatisfactory in English and mathematics. It is satisfactory in other subjects.

4. In 2001, pupils' results in national tests taken at the end of Year 2 were well below average in writing and low in reading and mathematics. The proportions reaching standards exceeding those expected for their age were also well below average. These results include those of pupils in the separate class for pupils with more severe educational needs. Results improved overall in 1999 but dropped in the next two years to 2001. A significant factor in the decline in results was a succession of temporary teachers that resulted in lack of continuity that undermined pupils' achievement. Results in reading, writing and mathematics improved significantly in 2002. The realistic targets set by the governors were exceeded. National figures are not yet available for comparison.

5. Pupils' results in national tests taken at the end of Year 6 in 2001, including those of pupils with more severe educational needs, were average in mathematics and science and well below average in English. They were above average in English and well above average in mathematics and science compared with similar schools and compared with pupils' prior attainment in Year 2. Results rose progressively over time in the three subjects. The trend in the school's average point score was above that found nationally. The proportions of pupils reaching the level expected for their age in English, mathematics and science declined in 2002. This year group had the lowest performance of any year group in the national tests taken when they were in Year 2 in 1998. The school identifies their difficulties as being similar to those in

the current Years 4-6, that is, insufficient progress in the development and use of literacy and numeracy skills when other schools were moving forward fast with the introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. The school is now moving on with the higher focus on language skills, but not in relation to numeracy. Averaged over recent years, boys have achieved better results in national tests in Year 6 than girls, contrary to the national picture. Analysis of results shows that this reflects the proportions of boys and girls with severe educational needs. Excluding their results, there is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls.

6. Pupils in Years 1-3 have experienced a more stable start to their schooling than did those in Years 4-6. This is reflected in the pattern of results in national tests between 1997 and 2002. The improvement in school systems and quality of teaching is leading to progressive improvement in standards. The effect will take time to work through to the older year groups in the school. The school has won two achievement awards since 2000 and was the tenth most improved school in the country in 2001.

7. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. This is because their needs are identified early and their progress is supported by good quality individual education plans. These ensure that learning is broken down into small, achievable learning steps. On a few occasions, the work set for pupils in the junior classes is too hard for them and their progress slows as a result.

8. Standards in speaking and listening are average in Years 2 and 6. Pupils make good progress because teachers are sensitive to the need for them to listen, talk and refine their language. As they grow older, most pupils speak with confidence and choose their words carefully. Excluding the work of pupils with severe educational needs, standards in reading are average in Year 2 but below average in Year 6. In Year 2, pupils have a good understanding of text at a level appropriate for their age and are beginning to recognise the structure of stories. They enjoy reading and most have a sound knowledge of the strategies to use to tackle unfamiliar words. The majority of pupils are not as fluent readers as they should be by the age of eleven. Some have a good understanding of how authors of non-fiction books organise material to make it easier to read and know how to extract information. Others find this more difficult and are too dependent on the teacher to provide information. Reading is improving from the early years upwards. The lower standards in the current Year 6 are linked to deficiencies in reading skills in their earlier years in school. Standards in writing are average in the Year 2 class and well below average in the Year 6 class. The difference is due to the consistent focus on language skills in the younger year groups, and the lack of it when pupils in Years 4-6 were at that stage. The written work of pupils in these year groups lacks progression. Pupils have not been provided with enough opportunities to write at length. Many find it difficult to write quickly because they have not developed a fluent style of handwriting. This explains why pupils' knowledge and understanding as expressed in oral work in most subjects is of a higher standard than seen in their written work.

9. Excluding the work of pupils with severe educational needs, the numerical and computational skills of the majority of pupils in Year 2 are average. Teachers focus well on mental arithmetic, continually providing opportunities for pupils to reinforce their understanding of basic number work. By encouraging the correct use of technical language in other subjects as well as mathematics, teachers build up pupils' confidence and help them to see the importance of the subject in everyday life. As with English, progress is not as good in Years 4-6 because pupils did not have a good foundation in earlier years. They do not have a good grasp of number work. Many do not know the multiplication tables well enough to apply them quickly to other aspects of mathematics. Pupils do not easily recall work from previous years so time is wasted in repetition before new work can begin.

10. In science, pupils' investigative skills have improved significantly throughout the school since the previous inspection. They are a contributory factor to the higher standard and better achievement in Year 6 than in English and mathematics.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. A pupil in Year 5 said “ We learn through fun. It is really good”. Parents are almost unanimous in agreeing that their children like coming to school and are happy. Most pupils are polite and friendly. They are welcoming and helpful to visitors and show pride in their school. Many show enthusiasm in lessons, participate sensibly and are eager to answer questions. However, pupils show less pride in the presentation of their written work. In Years 3-6 it is too superficial and is often untidy and incomplete. Most pupils work hard and are attentive but there is a minority whose attitude in lessons is sometimes apathetic and uninterested. These pupils lack the perseverance and concentration shown by the majority. Behaviour is satisfactory. The school is an orderly community. Pupils move sensibly about the school. Behaviour in assemblies is good but children are very noisy in the dining room. Most children behave well in class but a few sometimes exhibit challenging behaviour that disrupts the learning of others. Pupils are well aware of the system of rewards and sanctions. They value and take pride in the rewards and consider the sanctions fair except when a whole class is punished for the misbehaviour of one or two. Exclusions are used as a last resort. There have been no permanent exclusions over the past five years. Last year it was necessary to temporarily exclude three pupils whose behaviour was unacceptable.

12. Most pupils with special educational needs have a good attitude to their work. This is because they work in a productive, working atmosphere where the work set is suitably demanding. Classroom assistants and parents who volunteer their services are skilled at offering the right blend of support and challenge. Relationships are extremely good. As a result, attitudes are extremely positive.

13. Relationships throughout the school are very good. Pupils work and play happily together. Occasional bullying is very quickly dealt with and children learn to respect each other and the feelings of others. Older children increasingly take on responsibilities that they enjoy. For example, the head boy, head girl and house captains carry out a range of social responsibilities. Each class has monitors who undertake tasks within the classroom. A considerable number of pupils take part in the good range of very popular extra-curricular activities. Some of these take place at dinner time so that pupils who go home by bus have the opportunity to take part.

14. Attendance was well below average in 2001. The rate of unauthorised absence was well above the national average. Attendance improved in 2002 and there was a decrease in the proportion of unauthorised absences. However, these are still too high. The very poor attendance of children from just a few families badly affects the overall rates. Some parents do not have sufficient regard for the importance of getting their children to school on time.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

15. Overall, the quality of teaching throughout the school is satisfactory. It is affected to a small extent, mainly in Years 3-6, by temporary changes in staffing pending the appointment of a permanent headteacher. Teaching is very good in the foundation stage, good in Years 1-2 and satisfactory in Years 3-6. Teachers are committed to raising standards and they work co-operatively together with this in mind. Ninety-four per cent of the lessons observed were satisfactory, 38 per cent were good and 35 per cent were very good, occasionally outstanding. A high proportion of the good or better lessons seen was in the reception class and Years 1-2.

16. Teaching and learning are very good in the reception class. The climate for learning encourages children's personal development, which in turn leads to their greater confidence. Children are well motivated and apply what they learn in creative and practical activities. Teachers promote good relationships that help children to feel safe and secure at this early stage in their learning.

17. Teaching and learning are good in Years 1-2 and satisfactory in Years 3-6. The difference is due in part to the good opportunities pupils in Years 1-2 have had from the earliest stage in their education. The curriculum for these younger pupils is firmly based on good promotion of literacy and numerical skills.

Teaching of them is cleverly woven into other subjects so that they are reinforced at many points during the day. The situation is markedly different in Years 3-6. Consolidation of these important skills is not being regularly built into cross-curricular work. Consequently, pupils are not using writing and numerical skills often enough, which affects overall standards. There is scope for good practices to be transferred to all year groups through better monitoring of teaching and learning by the headteacher and subject co-ordinators. Another factor in the better quality of teaching in the earlier years is the stability of staffing. Recent changes in staffing have affected Years 3-6. Scrutiny of pupils' work showed a lack of progression over time. Considerable effort is made to make up for this in Year 6 but it is too late to wholly compensate for pupils' lack of knowledge and application of basic literacy and numeracy skills from earlier years.

18. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. It is better than at the time of the previous inspection because teachers now work more closely to pupils' individual education plans. Learning is good, often very good, for pupils with statements of special need. Their support assistants are enthusiastic and dedicated. They often make specialised resources to aid learning. The smaller teaching groups for English and mathematics in Year 1 allow individual needs to be met and the high quality of the teaching ensures that successful learning is praised and encouraged. There is an atmosphere of challenge and support. Close relationships help to nurture learning through practical activities. A good example was a Year 2 English lesson where a small group followed instructions to make interesting banana faces using paper plates, bananas and raisins. In the Year 3-6 classes provision is sound. Whiteboards and fuzzy boards are used to build confidence in writing. In physical education lessons pupils are encouraged to take on roles of responsibility. In Years 5 and 6, pupils needs are well met in English and mathematics because of the arrangement whereby pupils are grouped by ability in three teaching groups. Pupils with statements of need are often seated next to peers and support assistants who offer sensitive, targeted support. On the few occasions when pupils find it difficult to sustain concentration, teachers manage situations well and adapt their methods to the character of the individual pupils in front of them. The learning support assistants are skilled at offering the right blend of support and challenge and relationships are extremely good. As a result, attitudes are very positive.

19. The overall quality of teaching and learning in English, mathematics, science, history, ICT and religious education is satisfactory. It is good in Years 1-2. Teaching and learning are satisfactory throughout the school in design and technology and physical education. They are good throughout the school in art, and in geography in Years 1-2. There was not enough evidence of work in geography in Years 3-6 and music throughout the school to make judgements about teaching.

20. Teachers have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of requirements of the National Curriculum subjects and religious education. They are conscientious in making themselves familiar with the basics of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies (NLS/NNS). However, in practice, they are implemented more effectively in Years 1-2. In particular, strategies for teaching and reinforcing numerical and computational skills need to be enforced more rigorously in Years 3-6. The teaching of ICT skills has improved due to better provision of resources and teachers' greater confidence in their own expertise. As in other subjects, pupils' learning is better in Years 1-2 because their work has been structured from the start. In Year 2, most pupils are sufficiently familiar with the basic operational skills of the computer to be able to use them to further their learning in other subjects. For example, pupils use individual programs to test their own understanding of spelling, English grammar and number work. Teachers also make good use of these programs to make pupils face up to challenge and tackle new work for themselves. More use could be made of ICT in Years 3-6 to enrich pupils' learning.

21. Characteristics of the best teaching include good planning and interesting lesson content that fire pupils' imagination and make them eager to learn. Lessons then move at a fast pace and all pupils are challenged to work at levels that stretch their ability to its limit. An excellent example of practice that could usefully be shared was seen in a Year 5/6 English lesson for pupils in the middle ability range. Good teaching strategies inspired pupils' to consider how poets manipulate words. Through constant challenge and asking pupils to "help me" the teacher assisted pupils to embellish simple sentences through the use of adverbs. They then came up with sentences such as 'golden sunbeams peep through the trees'. The

ultimate success of the exercise was reflected in the teacher's comment - " I have such a strong image that I could almost paint a picture". Where lessons are satisfactory rather than good there is not enough emphasis on the recording of work. This accounts for the superficial nature of the writing and, frequently, the poor quality of its presentation in Years 3-6. The approach to marking is inconsistent, for instance, when there was no obvious improvement or follow up to the teacher's comment in a mathematics book that numbers should be written within the squares on the page. Subsequent work showed no indication of compliance with the comment and no follow up by the teacher. The quality of oral work in many lessons is good but pupils are reluctant to express their views in writing of any length. A much higher focus needs to be given to this aspect of teaching. The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching observed was mainly due to the poor behaviour of a minority of pupils who prevented other pupils from completing the activities and making progress.

22. A few parents think that homework is not given consistently according to a known schedule. Evidence from the inspection indicates that homework is set regularly but that parents are not always clear about what constitutes homework. This needs to be clarified.

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

23. The school has concentrated its efforts on providing an appropriate and interesting curriculum for its pupils, which meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and the needs of its pupils. There is still some way to go in improving the links between subjects, particularly in Years 3-6, but, taken as a whole, the curriculum is satisfactory.

24. The foundation stage curriculum is very good. Children are provided with a wide range of stimulating, practical experiences in all the required areas of learning. As the year progresses, children are gradually introduced to the required elements of the literacy and numeracy strategies in a way that builds their confidence and ensures that they are ready for Year 1. The emphasis on developing pupils' skills early in the school is having an impact on raising standards. The infant classes (Years 1-2) benefit from a well-planned curriculum that ensures equality of access for all pupils in interesting and challenging lessons. It continues to place a well-chosen emphasis on the need to develop skills in language and literacy. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been introduced successfully into the infant classes and elements have been incorporated into the rest of the curriculum. There are good examples of literacy skills being developed through science, history and geography but this is less apparent in religious education.

25. The strategies for the teaching of basic skills are not as effective in the junior classes (Years 3-6) because many pupils did not have a good start in earlier years. Pupils' work shows that many have not grasped the basics elements of writing and number. In order to provide more opportunities for consolidation, a new literacy scheme has been launched for Years 3-6 and teachers have been encouraged to plan opportunities for speaking and listening across the curriculum to reinforce communication skills. This is entirely appropriate but it is in its early stages of implementation and teachers are adapting lessons as they become more familiar with pupils' needs and abilities. Lessons observed during the inspection, however, show that the needs of the older pupils are being met by providing a more secure foundation in literacy. This is not so in mathematics because the curriculum lacks progression and opportunities for the regular reinforcement of numerical skills. The curriculum for other subjects is sound, with the exception of ICT, which is not yet fully integrated into the other subjects. The scheme of work for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is particularly comprehensive and is successful in raising self-esteem as part of the health promoting school. It includes sex education and information on drug misuse and also extends to areas such as business education and citizenship.

26. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good across the school and is well organised. It is very good for children in Years 1-3 and in the two designated classes for pupils with the most severe needs. The school is successfully implementing the revised Code of Practice. Teachers use

pupils' individual education plans well and the learning steps outlined for pupils are clear and specific so that they achieve appropriately. Pupils' progress is checked at the end of each half term and individual pupils' targets are reviewed every term. Older pupils take an active part in reviewing their own progress and are aware of their achievements. Pupils' talents are well nurtured in the arts and sports because a strong emphasis is given to these areas both within and outside lessons. In the after-school recorder group pupils were learning to read music in a fun atmosphere and developing a good sense of rhythm before they learnt to play 'Animals About' on their instruments. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities. Many pupils participate in sport and gymnastics, gardening and country dancing. The timing of the activities is suitably planned so that special educational needs pupils who are transported to school can participate in them.

27. Other initiatives enrich learning by reaching out to the local and global community. The school is fortunate in being part of a scheme that invites French 'assistantes' into primary schools to teach French to pupils in Year 3-6. Support for charities is at the heart of many activities that are undertaken on a regular basis. Appreciation of sport, music and the arts is heightened through visits, visitors and partnerships with organisations such as Tranmere Rovers' Football Club and the local hospice. A big breakfast was held to raise money for cancer sufferers. The local supermarket donated bread and the kitchen staff freely gave of their time. There are good links with partner institutions, including the Early Years Centre of Excellence at one end of the spectrum through to the local secondary school which support pupils' progress through the transition from primary to secondary education. For example, the science department worked with some of the older pupils on a specially designed project that was to be continued when pupils moved on at 11+.

Special educational needs

28. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good overall. Apart from provision in mainstream classes for pupils on the register of special educational need there are two designated classes for pupils with more severe learning, physical or emotional difficulties, one in the 5-7 age range and one in the 8-11 age range. Both are equipped for 15 places, although at present there are only 11 pupils on the register of the infant class and 14 in the junior class. A high proportion of these pupils have learning difficulties and some have one or more of a range of additional problems relating to, for example, hearing impairment, visual perception and emotional development. Provision for pupils in these two classes is very good.

29. The timetable in both classes is carefully planned to respond to the individual needs of each pupil. Pupils are generally taught within their classes for English and mathematics, but do work with mainstream classes at other times. Pupils always attend school assemblies and usually join in with mainstream pupils for personal and social education. At present, four pupils are being integrated into mainstream classes for either literacy or mathematics and are well supported. Effective discussion between the teachers ensures that pupils' learning is continuous and that targets are fully understood by main school staff. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when pupils' targets were not always clear enough to be understood by staff in the main school.

30. All pupils study the full range of subjects of the National Curriculum and follow its programmes of study. The use of ICT in lessons is not yet extensive enough. Lessons are imaginative and contain the correct level of challenge. Consequently, pupils concentrate and try very hard to succeed, such as when, during a design and technology lesson, pupils in Class 6 planned their investigation to discover which material would keep a cup of coffee warmest. They made good oral contributions to the planning of the investigation. There are many opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The pupils' obvious delight and pride in their achievement is a result of the built-in opportunities provided by the teachers in their planning. Staff in both classes work with the other teachers in the school to ensure continuity in pupils' learning. Pupils make good progress when working with mainstream classes. Every effort is made to ensure that pupils feel part of the school. They take part in school visits and the residential weekend and join other pupils in their year group for swimming.

31. The quality of teaching overall is very good, which results in pupils achieving well in relation to their prior attainment. Lesson planning is very good, and matches the pupils' individual needs very well. Clear explanations and a stimulating approach ensure pupils' sustained interest which in turn means that they listen well and respond enthusiastically. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are very well adapted to meet pupils' individual requirements. Staff seize on opportunities to develop pupils' language skills across all the areas of the curriculum. A very good example of this occurred during a physical education lesson that was designed to enhance the younger pupils' skills in movement. The teacher made good use of words such as in front, through and behind. Pupils understood and satisfactorily followed the instructions. Pupils' individual educational plans are well constructed and targets for learning and personal development are appropriate to their individual needs. Routine day-to-day assessment is very good and helps pupils to understand how to improve their work. Procedures for assessing pupils' progress are effective and thorough. Pupils understand the progress they are making because teachers are constantly and positively making them aware of their achievements, however small.

32. Overall pupils have good attitudes towards their work and learn effectively; they try hard in all subjects and work well with a partner and in groups led by an adult. Pupils' overall attainment is very variable but is generally well below average when measured against the national expectations for their age, particularly in literacy and numeracy. A minority achieve almost similar standards to those in the main school in for example, physical education. All pupils make good progress against their personal targets and achieve well. Pupils' written work shows sustained effort and some of the older pupils' work represents considerable achievement. A particularly pleasing example of this is Class 6's poetry anthology. Here the pupils' enthusiasm shines through in their writing, pictures and reading of their work. Pupils enjoy school and say that they are happy.

33. There is a good home-school partnership; parents receive regular updates of their children's personal and academic progress and are involved in annual reviews. Parents and pupils collaborate with staff to contribute to target-setting for individual education plans. Most pupils do not live locally and are unable to participate in after school activities. Because of this the school provides two lunchtime clubs, gardening and country dancing, so that these pupils can be fully included in school activities.

34. Current staffing in the designated classes includes two teachers and two support assistants. They work closely with the school's co-ordinator for special educational needs. All staff have good professional knowledge and their skills are regularly updated through the staff development programme. The very effective implementation of the school's policy contributes to the pupils' social and personal development because there is total commitment from all staff throughout the school to supporting these pupils.

35. Both classes provide a very good education for pupils with severe educational needs in a secure and happy environment where all are valued and priority is given to individual needs.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

36. The school has improved its provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development since the previous inspection. Provision for spiritual development is good throughout the school. It features strongly in assemblies where the staff and visitors work hard to inspire the children to make connections between daily life and the element of mystery in human experience. A junior assembly set the atmosphere for reflection with candles and soothing music. An interesting whole-school assembly about attendance captured pupils' imagination when the visiting speaker displayed an imaginary register made up of celebrities, such as 'Atomic Kitten, and the head teacher. At the end of the assembly pupils sang the 'Our Father' very well in accompaniment to the guitar. In many lessons spiritual development is strong although it is not explicitly planned. In literacy, for example, there are very good illustrations of pupils exploring the creative power of the arts and teachers nurturing imaginative expression. Individual pupils often display great understanding, patience, kindness and self-control towards each other when other pupils present challenging behaviour. Staff encourage pupils to be strong in their beliefs and to defend their point of view.

37. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. The school's code of conduct is based on the concept of everyone treating others as they would like to be treated. The positive relationships between adults and pupils throughout the school set the tone. Staff provide good role models through their dedication, hard work and respect for the individual. They help pupils relate well to each other and take account of others' feelings. The weekly Good News assembly and the awarding of smiley faces are good examples of the joyous celebration of the values of individual talents, hard work and caring. A weekly theme is set for daily assembly, which helps to reinforce the values of the school. When the moral code is infringed, incidents are dealt with sensitively and firmly, and the pupils concerned are explicitly helped to gain a clearer understanding of the difference between right and wrong. Importantly, adults remain very calm in these situations and help pupils with challenging behaviour to manage their feelings, channel their anger and learn respect for other people. Strategies such as 'time out' are used to good effect.

38. The development of pupils' social education is good. The school prepares its pupils for life in a turbulent society by teaching counselling skills and strategies for managing anger. A playground initiative was set up for the older junior pupils in the last academic year to encourage greater social co-operation during lunch times and indoor play times. There are good opportunities for paired work and group work, which support the development of good social skills. Adults are particularly skilled at developing the shyer pupils and asking questions that prompt thoughtful responses. As a result, pupils make mature, informed decisions and learn how groups work. Outside agencies are involved in the teaching of the well-planned sex education and relationships scheme. The system of monitors and head boy and girl ensures that pupils are given responsibilities. Good Citizenship awards promote social development. The visit from the local Member of Parliament highlighted the importance attached to civic duty.

39. Cultural development is good and permeates many aspects of school life. Visits, visitors and activities forming part of residential trips provide a wealth of experiences for pupils. The pupils take part in a range of creative, thought-provoking activities relating to local and multicultural society. They are encouraged to consider the importance of racial harmony within society. During the inspection week, Year 5 pupils travelled on a bus, painted in 'Jubilee' livery, to take part in an arts celebration of diversity where they composed music and contributed to a batik wall hanging. The school actively promotes a sense of British culture through literature, dance and music.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

40. Fender Primary School cares very well for its pupils in a supportive environment where they feel happy and safe. Visitors and parents alike are struck by the warm welcome promoted by the staff and their obvious care and dedication to the welfare of the children. This is an integral part of the ethos of the school. Teachers establish very good relationships with the children.

41. There is a secure induction programme for children entering the reception class. A 'buddy' system ensures that older children have a designated friend to help them settle in quickly and easily. The behaviour policy celebrates positive achievements. It is effective, fair and well known to pupils and parents alike. Rewards and sanctions are applied consistently. 'Time out' gives useful time for reflection for pupils who misbehave. Bullying is never tolerated and is swiftly dealt with. For example, a case of name-calling was sensitively tackled in a class discussion session. This helped pupils to understand the feelings of their peers and the impact that their own behaviour could have.

42. Pupils with special educational needs are identified early. Assessments are detailed and lead to good individual education plans that outline targets and anticipated outcomes. Good strategies and ideas for activities are provided for support assistants. Parents and carers are involved in the programme although only a minority attends the annual reviews for individual pupils. Pupils are now encouraged to take some responsibility for their learning and behaviour. Support assistants make notes about progress during lessons, which are passed on to the co-ordinator. This good practice, linked with the current development of self-assessment procedures, ensures that pupils' progress is monitored continuously. Generally pupils

receive clear guidance on ways to improve, which raises their self-esteem because it is often linked to praise.

43. Attendance is well monitored and staff are well aware of pupils' personal circumstances and difficulties. Families are telephoned by the second day of unexplained absence. The school is well supported in its efforts to improve attendance by the education welfare officer and the attendance project officer who recently led a very well received assembly highlighting attendance issues. Attendance is appropriately reported and recorded though the school is sometimes a little lenient in its authorisation of holidays taken in term time.

44. Local education authority guidelines on measures to ensure child protection are meticulously followed. Teachers and support staff know the children and their families well and are aware of the need for constant vigilance. Pastoral matters are sensitively dealt with and almost all parents agree that they are comfortable approaching the school about any matters concerning their children.

45. There are very good procedures to ensure pupils' health and safety. This is a health promoting school where healthy eating is encouraged. Good quality fruit can be purchased at the break times and water coolers ensure that pupils have ready access to water. The school nurse, PSHE lessons and assemblies positively reinforce health education. Questionnaires are used to seek the opinions of pupils and their parents. First aid arrangements are very good and most of the staff have undergone full training. No safety hazards were observed and risk assessment takes place regularly.

46. Fender Primary School lives up to its aim to provide equally for pupils of all abilities and needs.

47. The assessment of pupils' attainment and progress is satisfactory in that ongoing records provide information about test results and the completion of tasks relevant to the National Curriculum levels for the year group. However, the school is not making sufficient use of information from assessment procedures to monitor progress on a regular basis so that individual pupils' underachievement can be identified and rectified. This was a significant factor in the disappointing results in national tests in Year 6 in 2002. Assessment procedures work more effectively to pupils' benefit in the early year groups because pupils' progress has been regularly tracked from the start of their schooling. Teachers make good use of assessment information for daily and short term planning of lessons. For example, they modify the structure of lessons as the week proceeds to reflect comments they have noted daily on the attainment and progress of individuals and groups of pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

48. The school's partnership with parents is very good. Parents have extremely positive views of the school. The questionnaire respondents, those at the pre-inspection meeting and all those interviewed in school were all overwhelmingly supportive of the ethos, the staff and all the care given to the children. Family learning courses in literacy, numeracy and, currently, ICT are well supported and parents appreciate the opportunities to help their children whilst improving their own skills. The effect of these courses on pupils' achievement is evident in displays about the school. The breakfast club and the after school club are very useful, especially to working parents, and are seen as an added bonus when sending their children to Fender.

49. The Parent Teacher Association is very well supported. Its function is primarily social but it also makes a very worthwhile contribution to school funds. A small number of parents voluntarily give regular help in the classroom and for school trips and functions. A parent said "We have to limit the numbers wanting to help. If the school asks, parents come forward."

50. Parents are well informed about their children's progress and about school events. Their views are regularly sought. School reports are very detailed and set some targets for pupils to improve. However, targets need to be more specific.

51. Most parents are supportive of their children's work at home although not all ensure that homework is completed and returned on time. Reading diaries are well used as a means of communicating with school. The vast majority of parents sign the home/school agreement and those attending courses show great commitment. A minority does not ensure that their children attend punctually and regularly. Most parents are very supportive of their children, anxious to help them and keen for them to do well. They now take a pride in what they regard as 'our school'.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

52. The school has made good progress in working through a period of transition since the previous inspection. There is now a feeling that the school is 'going places'. The good leadership and management of the previous headteacher and the current acting headteacher have focused sharply on immediate priorities. They have put strategies in place which have resulted in good improvement and rising standards. Teaching and non-teaching staff have been consulted in the process and the good team spirit that now exists is helping the staff to work co-operatively together with a common purpose. Children in the Foundation Stage and pupils in Years 1-3 have benefited from the new structures from entry and it is in these year groups that standards are progressively improving, as indicated by the national test results in Year 2 in 2002. Pupils in the older year groups are in a 'catch up' situation. Their standards and achievement are not as good because their basic literacy and numerical skills are still below average, but improving. The school has a warm and inviting atmosphere that fosters an effective learning environment in which pupils of all abilities and race feel safe and comfortable.

53. The school is coping well during the interim period leading up to the appointment of a permanent headteacher. A number of teachers currently hold temporary positions but their changes in role have not affected progress with developmental issues. For example, work on assessment procedures and the improvement of provision for ICT is moving on as was previously planned. Most pupils respond well to the expectations of staff and concern for their welfare. The acting headteacher and deputy have high profiles about the school and know pupils and parents well. They intervene quickly when pupils experience difficulties or cause concern so problems do not escalate. Parents are confident with the manner in which the school operates and are pleased that the headteacher and staff are so readily accessible at times of need.

54. Since the previous inspection there has been a significant improvement in pupils' attitudes and the school's ethos. Teachers have higher expectations of pupils that are motivating them to achieve higher standards. This is particularly noticeable in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2. Better identification of individual pupils' needs is leading to more realistic targets for improvement. Effective deployment of trained adult support is raising pupils' confidence in their own ability to succeed. Well-directed action has led to improvement in the provision for language and numerical development in Years 1 and 2. It is satisfactorily extended to English lessons in Years 3-6, but not to mathematics. A whole school approach to the teaching of numeracy is urgently needed. Strategies for teaching in more practically based subjects, such as science and ICT, are well thought out. Pupils tend to respond better to this type of work because they are not hindered by their more limited writing skills. The adoption of national schemes of work in all subjects has substantially reduced the previous weaknesses in the curriculum. Subject co-ordinators have good oversight of planning in their subject but there is very little monitoring of pupils' work, especially in Years 3-6. Consequently, the presentation of written work is poor and it is difficult to measure progression from year to year. The school recognises that this is an area needing improvement, as is the systematic monitoring of teaching and learning.

55. Management of special educational needs is good. There is a good working partnership between the staff involved. They are well informed, know the pupils extremely well, and are approachable and clear-sighted about procedures. They lead and support a strong and increasingly skilled team of educational support staff who enable individual needs to be met. Their skills and dedication are apparent in lessons across the curriculum.

56. Overall, governors have a sound overview of the school and have supported it well during difficult times in past years. Governors carry out their responsibilities effectively and have a good understanding of how the school operates on a daily basis. There is a committee structure and a regular programme of meetings that feed into planning for the annual budget and link it to priorities in the development plan. Governors question and probe into the school's affairs and actions to ensure that they understand the context and priorities.

57. There is an adequate number of qualified teachers. However, staffing is not stable because of temporary movements pending the appointment of a permanent headteacher. The employment of additional part-time teachers is effective in facilitating grouping by ability for English and mathematics in Years 5 and 6, and in reducing the class size in these subjects in Year 1. The more stable staffing in Years 1 and 2, following a period of temporary teachers, is a significant factor in the improved results in Year 2 in 2002. The school has a good complement of trained classroom assistants who work very well in conjunction with classteachers. They immerse themselves in the work, viewing it for the pupils' point of view so that they can see just where help is needed. Newly qualified teachers receive good support and time is allowed for them to broaden their experience. The school satisfactorily operates a performance management system that provides targets for staff linked to the school development plan. Training and professional development for all staff are directly linked to the school's priorities. Most recently they have focused on improving teachers' expertise in ICT and the teaching of literacy skills. The effects are evident in practice in lessons and in the rising standards in ICT and English.

58. The accommodation is bright, clean and well maintained. The environment is welcoming and conducive to good learning. Tasteful decoration provides a good backdrop for the lively displays of pupils' work. The library has a satisfactory stock of interesting books. It is central to the school and readily accessible to pupils. A computer suite has been installed with up-to-date resources for ICT. This provides good facilities for the teaching of ICT skills, which can also be practised on computers in classrooms. At present the computers in classrooms are not linked to the Internet, which is a disadvantage when pupils need to use electronic mail or research for information. Outdoor areas are extensive and are used well for work across the curriculum and recreation. For example, in environmental studies, pupils have designed and planned a sizeable garden, planted it out and harvested the produce.

59. Financial management and control are good. Funds are spent prudently at points of greatest need. Specific grants are spent properly for their intended purpose, for example, monies allocated for the support of pupils with special educational needs. Governors and staff are aware of the need to consider best value practices in spending and consultation with all those who have an interest in the school. The governing body is also alert to attracting money from other sources, such as, currently, to provide better outdoor play facilities for the reception class. Work on the project is scheduled to begin soon, having been delayed while drainage systems are checked.

60. Good improvement since the previous inspection is due to a more rigorous approach to areas of concern, better teaching and good commitment from all staff. They are determined to provide the best for all pupils whatever their background or difficulties. The school has succeeded in raising the attainment of many of the pupils. Parents have confidence in the school. There is still much to be done but there is good capacity to succeed. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

61. In order to consolidate and further develop the improvement of recent years, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- (1) Raise standards, particularly in English and mathematics in Years 4-6, by;
 - introducing a whole school approach to the teaching of numerical skills,
 - improving the presentation of pupils' written work in Years 3-6 and adopting a consistent approach to the marking of pupils' work,
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to write at length in cross-curricular work,
 - informing pupils what they need to do to improve and monitoring progress towards given targets,
 - encouraging more independence in pupils' learning.

(Paragraphs 1,2,9,11,17,21,25,54,73,76,83-84,88, 90,92-93,113)

- (2) Strengthen the role of the subject co-ordinators in all subjects so that:
- they are fully involved in the monitoring of teaching, learning and pupils' progress,
 - they have a better overview of their subject and are more responsible for the progressive development of skills within it.

(Paragraphs 17,54)

- (3) Make better use of information from assessment procedures to monitor individual pupils' progress, identify underachievement and set targets for improvement.

(Paragraphs 47,76,83,86,90,92,110,116,132)

- (4) Make more use of information and communication technology in cross-curricular work to provide more scope for pupils to research information for themselves and work independently.

(Paragraphs 20,25,30,58,91,97,103,107,115,117-122)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	52
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	40

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	5	13	20	11	3	0	0
Percentage	10	25	38	21	6	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR- Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	182
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	117
Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	27
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	51
English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0
Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	20
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	13

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.2
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.9
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	12	13	25

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	6	6	7
	Girls	9	13	12
	Total	15	19	19
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	60(59)	76(82)	76(76)
	National	84(83)	86(84)	91(90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	6	6	8
	Girls	11	12	13
	Total	17	18	21
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	68(71)	72(76)	84(88)
	National	85(84)	89(88)	89(88)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	13	7	20

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	8	10	13
	Girls	5	7	7
	Total	13	17	20
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	65(40)	85(68)	100(72)
	National	75(75)	71(72)	87(85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	6	7	11
	Girls	3	6	7
	Total	9	13	18
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	45(36)	65(56)	90(68)
	National	72(70)	74(72)	82(79)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	170	3	0
White – Irish			
White – any other White background			
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean			
Mixed – White and Black African			
Mixed – White and Asian			
Mixed – any other mixed background			
Asian or Asian British - Indian			
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani			
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi			
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background			
Black or Black British – Caribbean			
Black or Black British – African			
Black or Black British – any other Black background			
Chinese			
Any other ethnic group			
No ethnic group recorded			

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR– Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16
Average class size	20

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	249

FTE means full-time equivalent

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
	£
Total income	393732
Total expenditure	371327
Expenditure per pupil	2372
Balance brought forward from previous year	7204
Balance carried forward to next year	29609

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1

Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)
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0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	175
Number of questionnaires returned	38

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	74	26	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	70	30	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	55	37	0	0	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	50	37	13	0	0
The teaching is good.	74	24	0	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	66	29	2.5	0	2.5
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	87	13	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	84	16	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	58	37	5	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	79	18	0	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	71	26	0	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	60	32	3	0	5

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

62. The previous inspection found that children in the reception class got off to a good start as a result of the clear focus of teaching skills within a broad range of activities. These also encouraged social development and provided much needed practical experiences. This style of teaching is now very firmly embedded in the teaching of the curriculum, and, as a result, all children in the reception class now achieve very well from their starting points.

63. At the time of the inspection, there were 14 children attending the reception class full time and a further eight children attending for mornings only. These children will be fully integrated into the class two weeks before the end of term. All children, including those who attend part time, have a good start to their education, which provides well for all their needs.

64. The leadership and management, provision and teaching for children in the reception class are very good. The class is well staffed with a full time teaching assistant and two reception teachers who share the full time teaching post. They plan together as a team and work very hard to ensure that children receive the full foundation stage curriculum. All areas of learning are taught very well. Teaching opportunities are never missed and children are constantly challenged. There is a very happy atmosphere and this encourages all the children to participate fully. Staff consistently build in very good opportunities for the development of the children's spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. During the week of the inspection there were a number of additional adults supporting the children in their work, making a valuable contribution to the children's learning, in particular their development of computer and language skills.

65. Attainment on entry to the reception varies, but, overall, in particular in language skills and personal, social and emotional development, is well below average when measured on the local education authority's 'base-line' assessment. A detailed record of progress for all children has been introduced and this is used to monitor closely the progress of the children through their reception year. Attainment by the end of reception fluctuates from year to year depending on the range of abilities and whether or not children have special educational needs. At this early stage in the school year, attainment is on target to be average by the end of the year with most achieving the Early Learning Goals in all areas of the curriculum..

66. Pupils with special educational need are very well provided for. Their needs are identified early in reception. They are given plenty of support to ensure that they are fully included in all activities and, if required, there is very good support from the various outside agencies.

Personal, social and emotional development.

67. The quality of teaching and learning in reception is very good and children achieve very well. Staff encourage the children to become independent and to play sociably together and there are very good opportunities for both. The routines are designed to promote self-sufficiency; for example, the children know the 'signing in' routine expected of them when they arrive in the morning. This they do with varying degrees of accuracy, but all try hard. Another example of this is when at the end of the day one child, without being asked, decides to prepare the table for the next day's 'signing in'. There are well-equipped activity and role-play areas where children play co-operatively as part of a group. For example, a small group of children given large building bricks and aprons and tools from the local D.I.Y. store spontaneously set about building a house using their imagination to good effect. The children are helpful and share sensibly, which is evident in activities such as using constructional materials or when using sand and water for investigation work. Children are generally expected to work on their own while staff work with the focus groups, and they do this very well. Most are confident to speak up in class and during role-

play. All staff provide very good role models, and promote positive attitudes and values. They have a secure knowledge and understanding of the needs of young children and very good knowledge of those in their care. The teachers create a secure and caring environment, which promotes personal and social development very well and children are very happy.

Communication, language and literacy.

68. Teaching and learning are very good overall and children achieve very well. The literacy strategy has been suitably adapted to meet the needs of these young children, with particular emphasis on the development of speaking and listening skills. Most children achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of their time in reception with about a quarter of the children speaking, listening, reading and writing well for their age. The teachers plan their lessons very well using whole class sessions to firmly target the main focus of the children's learning experiences. Teachers are very positive and encouraging and have very good relationships with the children. In story time, they make excellent use of questioning to encourage speaking and listening skills as well as promoting learning. Teachers also make very good use of intonation and facial expression to interest and engage the children. Very good additional activities, together with very good supervision by all adults present, enable the teachers to focus on target groups, extending their learning experiences through discussion. They have very good questioning skills and the children are confident enough to take part because they know that their comments will be well received. Children from the infant special needs class join with reception children for 'circle time'. This half-hour makes a very good contribution to the children's social and moral development, as well as their speaking and listening skills. Through carefully planned activities that encourage the children to talk and to listen to one another they develop an understanding of what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. When sitting in a circle they talk to staff and each other about, for example, what they like to do before they go to sleep. They consider this carefully and one child shares with the group that he likes to have a 'bacon butty', whilst another likes to, 'give mum a kiss and a hug'. The previous inspection report suggested that teachers should develop speaking and listening skills; teachers have successfully targeted this as an area for further development and now provide many good opportunities in all areas of the foundation stage curriculum. The children enjoy reading and higher achieving children show very good understanding of the story when handling familiar story books. A very good example of this is when one child, working independently when using the listening centre, turns the pages to correspond with the story, following the words with his finger. Lower attaining children show that they have a good understanding of how writing is read from left to right. Because teachers have very good strategies to reinforce the children's learning they are beginning to successfully read aloud with the teacher from big books. During the inspection week, the theme was 'senses'. Teachers used this to develop the children's vocabulary as they introduced words such as touch, rough and smooth. A good number of children can identify and name initial sounds in words and using the magnetic board can rearrange letters to form, for example, 'I can'. There are many opportunities for the children to make marks on paper, in sand and in role-play activities. A good number show increasing skills in writing letter shapes and names and in recognising sounds in words. About a third of the children write their own names. This area of the children's development is very well promoted through all the activities in the curriculum.

Mathematical development

69. Teaching and learning are very good and children achieve very well. At this early stage in the school year most children are expected to achieve the Early Learning Goals, with about 25 per cent exceeding them by the end of reception. The numeracy strategy has been adapted well and computer programs are well integrated into the planning. Teachers provide for the systematic development of skills through a range of very well organised activities. Higher attaining children count beyond 10 and can say that one more makes eleven. Average attaining children select numerals one to nine correctly and are beginning to solve simple problems, such as finding the missing number. Lower attaining children can say that there are three flowers in a set and match them to the correct number card. Most children recognise and name shapes such as circle, square and triangle. Higher attaining children make good attempts to describe them. There are many teaching aids on display, for example, large-scale numerals and shapes. The children refer to these if necessary when completing their work. Each week there is an activity that each child

completes at their leisure, by sticking a smiley face by their name, to record that they have completed the task, which during the inspection week was matching a continuous sequence of three colours.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

70. Teaching and learning are very good and children achieve very well. Children enter the reception with very basic general knowledge. The teachers plan activities to extend their knowledge in interesting ways such as introducing discussion to enable the children to think about healthy sandwiches. They make very good attempts to draw and design their own sandwich, and to complete a worksheet matching pictures of the ingredients with the correct names. Using coloured play dough the learning is extended when the children make a model of their sandwich. This area of learning is linked very well to all other areas of the curriculum. For example, when looking at 'our bodies' the children develop their creative and vocabulary skills. They look at two children, discuss the differences and reinforce their learning by completing a matching worksheet based on naming body parts. Teachers make very good use of computer programs to enable the children to practise their learning. They carefully demonstrate to the children the use of the 'mouse' to, for example, build a picture of their own face on the screen. Using hand mirrors to assist them in identifying their individual features most children successfully complete their own portrait. There is great excitement as the pictures begin to take shape.

Physical development

71. Teaching is very good and because of this children achieve very well. All children use the space in the large hall sensibly, moving with control and imagination as they hop, run jump, balance and climb using a very good range of equipment. They very confidently use wheeled toys individually and in pairs and show understanding of road safety rules when playing with them in the playground. Teachers use questions well to develop the children's awareness of safety and the effects of physical activity on their health. By making comments such as "We're working very hard this morning, my heart is beating very fast" the children begin to observe the effects of activity on their body. Very good supervision by the teacher encourages the children to work as a team when moving the big mats to and from the designated areas in the hall. This adds to the growth of their personal and independent skills. There are many opportunities and activities provided to teach skills such as cutting, sewing and threading to help the children gain self control of these finer movements. The outdoor play area is only just satisfactory because it is part of the infant playground with very limited opportunities for the children to experience working with large apparatus. There are very ambitious plans, which have been agreed in principle, to enhance the outdoor play area with, for example, a covered working area and a soft play area. This promises to be a very exciting development. However despite the present shortfall in the outdoor play area the children still achieve very well and make very good progress because the teachers do not allow the lack of facilities to influence the quality of teaching in this area of development. Teachers ensure that all children receive their full entitlement and make the best use of the grassy areas that are available to them.

Creative development

72. Teaching is very good overall and the children achieve very well. By the end of reception most children are likely to achieve the Early Learning Goals with a significant number exceeding expectations for children of this age. This is because of the very strong emphasis that teachers put on this area of development. Much of the learning across the curriculum is achieved through creative activities. Teachers plan exciting and interesting tasks for the children to complete, providing them with a wide variety of materials. They are encouraged to explore and experiment using paint, coloured pens, crayons, and collage materials and to talk about what they are doing. Because the staff show very good ability when questioning children they enable them to describe what is happening when, for example, white is added to primary colours. One child explained that when she wanted to make her colour lighter she added white and as a result her red paint became pink. Pupils satisfactorily learn a variety of techniques such as, printing, cutting and sticking. They use a range of simple musical instruments to explore sounds and learn a good selection of songs and rhymes that they perform enthusiastically.

ENGLISH

73. Standards in English, including those of pupils in the two classes of pupils with severe educational needs, are well below average at the ages of seven and eleven. Overall, pupils achieve well in Year 2 but achievement is unsatisfactory in Year 6 because pupils have not made up for gaps in their learning in earlier years. Excluding the attainment of pupils with severe educational needs, evidence from the inspection shows that standards in Year 6 are average in speaking and listening, below average in reading and well below average in writing.

74. Pupils' results in national tests taken at the end of Year 2 in 2001 were very low in reading and well below average in writing. Compared with schools of similar background they were well below average in reading and below average in writing. Results fluctuated in previous years, but, overall, the pattern was one of decline between 1999 and 2001. Pupils' performance improved significantly in 2002 in both reading and writing. National results are not available for comparison but the school well exceeded the targets set by the governors.

75. Effective teaching in Years 1 and 2 ensures that most pupils in mainstream classes in Years 1 and 2 (ie excluding the class of pupils with severe educational needs) achieve average standards in all aspects of English by the age of seven, with no discernible pattern in difference between the performance of boys and girls. Overall, pupils achieve well in Year 2 based on prior attainment at the beginning of Year 1. The relatively high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and poor literacy skills partly accounts for the variability in standards over the last few years. Another factor is instability in staffing during a period of long-term absence of a permanent teacher. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils. They make very good progress when supported in lessons by teaching assistants and in reading recovery sessions. There are several key factors that are contributing to improvements in the infant classes. One is the good start provided in the reception class so that the children enter Year 1 with good attitudes to learning and sound attainment. Another is the high expectations and good teaching in Years 1 and 2. The team of adults consistently set work at the right level of challenge for pupils.

76. Pupils' results in national tests taken in Year 6 in 2001 were well below average compared with all schools but above average compared with similar schools. They were also above average based on these pupils' attainment when they were in Year 2 indicating good achievement in Years 3 to 6. Results improved at a similar pace to the national trend between 1997 and 2000 and much better than it in 2001. The improvement was not sustained in 2002 when results were well below the target set by the governors. Evidence from the inspection indicates that standards could be higher in Year 6 if more consistent use was made of marking, assessment and target-setting to track pupils' progress throughout the junior classes (Years 3 to 6). Basic literacy skills are insecure in some junior classes. Many pupils started school with levels of language development that were well below average. A sizeable proportion of pupils are not achieving as well as they should. This is partly due to the quality of learning over time, particularly where pupils have had a succession of temporary teachers. There has not been sufficient time to fill gaps in the pupils' knowledge and skills have suffered from a lack of consolidation. Many pupils are not building on a secure knowledge base and the school has sensibly responded to the situation by implementing an adapted scheme of work, which provides good guidance for teachers. An additional teaching group in Years 5 and 6 is another strategy that is enabling learning to be better matched to ability. The marking of work is a weakness in teaching in Years 3 to 6. It is reflected in the poor presentation of many pupils' written work.

77. Standards in speaking and listening are average in Years 2 and 6. Pupils make good progress from a well below average starting point on entry to the reception class. There are lots of opportunities for pupils to work in pairs, to talk and discuss their work. This is a consistent practice across subjects throughout the school. Pupils are given time to answer and are encouraged to refine their thinking. This results in confident and competent speakers who listen to and respect what others have to say. At seven most pupils are confidently expressing their ideas in well-formed sentences, using an appropriate range of vocabulary. Their responses are often considered and appropriate, reflecting the good quality of their listening skills, especially during literacy lessons. Even the quietest members of each class are willing to

participate in discussion. In the junior classes there is greater self-consciousness and reserve during discussion. In Year 6 for example, there are several pupils who find it difficult to listen attentively during lessons and several are reluctant to express their thoughts and feelings fully. These pupils receive such good encouragement that good progress is being made on a daily basis, due to the very good relationships between adults and pupils. The majority is beginning to speak with more confidence and are choosing their words more carefully, although several are still using 'dead' in place of 'very'. Pupils in Year 5 engage in good levels of conversation with adults, covering a wide range of topics. The skills of lower attaining pupils are more limited but the ethos of the school encourages all pupils to listen to each other and on the occasions when a pupil struggles to voice an opinion or makes a mistake the rest of the pupils are sensitive and encouraging.

78. By the age of seven, although there are fewer higher attaining pupils than are usually found, most pupils are independent, fluent and confident readers of both fiction and non-fiction. This is because of the emphasis placed on reading in the infant classes and the pleasure to be gained through reading that is communicated through sharing texts such as 'The Meanies'. Careful reading records are kept and reading is monitored, often on a daily basis. Fluent readers and struggling readers alike are expected to take their books home every night. As a result, most pupils in Year 2 are working towards a secure level 2 in the National Curriculum by the end of the year. They have a good understanding of the text and are beginning to recognise the structure of stories and use the correct vocabulary to evaluate text. Pupils use a wide range of strategies to read new words and to correct for themselves the more difficult ones. The resources used to support the literacy hour, particularly the 'big books', result in increased enjoyment in reading and in the ability to read with expression. By the age of seven pupils show a good understanding of alphabetical order in using indexes. Higher attaining pupils use a dictionary competently. Lower attaining pupils are more hesitant in reading a new text but most have a sound knowledge of strategies to use and are gaining confidence and independence in their reading. The reading recovery sessions for Year 1 are invaluable in providing the right mixture of challenge and support for early readers. Lessons are swift and lively; clear and precise feedback is given to each pupil.

79. The attention given to promoting individual reading is less apparent in the junior classes and by the age of 11, the majority are not as fluent and articulate in their reading as they should be. The emphasis is on shared reading and guided reading in groups. Most pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 are enthusiastic about reading and can recount the main points from a text. They show good knowledge of non-fiction books and explain the purposes of captions, labels and the reasons why authors organise information to make it easier to read. Some Year 4 pupils were unable to use a dictionary properly. Year 5 pupils make sound progress in understanding non-fiction in a variety of formats such as instructions, explanations and reports. Occasionally teachers do not explain clearly enough what pupils have to do. This results in some pupils achieving less than they might. Pupils in Year 6 are often challenged very effectively and guided to use a wide range of study skills to extract information for themselves, such as when carrying out research into life at sea during Tudor times. They are beginning to read with clarity and understanding, and are reading a wide range of texts. Most can demonstrate understanding of the significant ideas in a passage by referring to the text. The majority of readers have some difficulty in reading the subtleties of text and explaining why the author has chosen particular words or phrases. Pupils' knowledge and use of phonics is patchy, which makes it more difficult for them to access material when they are carrying out research. The library is pleasant and well situated for developing study skills. Pupils make good use of a catalogued system. Some of the girls enjoy the humour and insight in 'Jacqueline Wilson' novels, and authors such as Roald Dahl and J. K. Rowling are also popular.

80. From the start, pupils are given a wide range of imaginative opportunities to write. The use of whiteboards and fuzzy boards works well in building confidence. Half the pupils in Year 1 were able to write three sentences relating to 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar' using the classroom displays to help them spell words. Pupils in Year 2 were becoming very used to writing instructions starting with, 'You will need:....' Even the lower attaining pupils knew that they needed to use a colon. Overall, standards of writing in the Year 2 class are average. They are well below average in the Year 6 class. In Year 3 the presentation of work indicates that handwriting is not always clear or well formed and few pupils confidently use a cursive style. Pupils often write with unsharpened pencils. This lack of pride in

presentation is a feature of the junior classes. Some of the work is poorly presented and yet accepted by teachers. In Year 6 some pupils are printing capital letters in the middle of words. In their longer pieces of writing, higher attaining pupils demonstrate a very good awareness of the structure and sequencing of events in a story. Their ideas are often imaginative, varied and clear. For the majority of pupils, spellings are not accurate and the use of punctuation and grammar is often unsound because pupils have not developed the habit of checking their written work. By the age of 11, there are still some basic words that are being misspelt, such as writing 'would' for 'wood' or spelling 'they' incorrectly. Not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to edit their work using a spellchecker. Opportunities for pupils to write at length are beginning to be incorporated into other subjects of the curriculum but many junior pupils find it difficult to write quickly because they have not developed a style of handwriting that encourages fluency.

81. Progress in speaking and listening in both infant and junior stages is good for all pupils, including those with special educational needs. In infant classes progress in reading and writing is good and teachers are planning sufficient opportunities for regular handwriting practice, and the teaching of spelling is effective. In junior classes, progress is inconsistent in reading and unsatisfactory in writing. Insufficient emphasis is placed on the development of a fluent, joined handwriting style.

82. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. They are good in Years 1 and 2. Pupils' learning in lessons in Years 3-6 is better than achievement over time because pupils' knowledge and skills were not built up progressively in their early years in school. All the lessons observed during the inspection were at least satisfactory, some were good and two were outstanding. In the literacy hour, teachers have established good classroom routines for pupils and there is an industrious working atmosphere. Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning and work hard with enthusiasm and interest to complete their work successfully. Relationships are very good and pupils support each other well, giving help and encouragement to anyone who has a problem. In less effective lessons the management of time is not well established and pupils' concentration wanders away from the task. Sometimes lessons are too long or teachers focus for long periods on a particular aspect of literacy and pupils are not inspired to produce their best work. Questioning is often used effectively to promote and assess understanding but sometimes there needs to be more pupil to pupil talk. Teaching assistants are skilled at intervening and using their initiative. The value of the concluding sessions to lessons is variable. In some lessons it is not used well enough to extend and reinforce ideas and provide feedback for future planning. Teaching over time shows that there is a weakness in the marking of pupils' work. This has improved since September and there are some very good examples but the practice is not yet consistent and lowers the very high standards set in some areas of the school.

83. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Overall improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. The school has effectively implemented the National Literacy Strategy in the infant classes. An adapted scheme is in use in the junior classes to make up for gaps in pupils' knowledge from earlier years. The school is missing opportunities however to improve literacy through its use in other subjects. Also, there is insufficient emphasis on improving the presentation and quality of pupils' written work. Teaching does not focus enough on developing a cursive handwriting style and consolidating spelling, punctuation and grammar. Good assessment systems are in place but the practice of sharing individual targets with pupils to provide a focus on what they need to do to improve is not linked closely enough to day-to-day self-assessment and marking.

MATHEMATICS

84. Overall standards of work are well below average in Years 2 and 6. Standards are close to average in Year 2 and below average in Year 6 when the work of pupils with severe educational needs is excluded. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

85. In 2001, pupils' results in national tests taken at the end of Year 2 were well below average compared with all schools and with those of similar background. The proportion exceeding the expected level for

their age (level 2) was very low. The results in national tests fluctuate from year to year depending on the number of pupils with severe educational needs in the year group, but, overall, there was a downward trend in the period 1999 to 2001. The main reason for this was inconsistency in staffing and the long-term absence of a teacher through illness. Results improved significantly in 2002. The school exceeded its own, realistic, target for the proportion of pupils reaching the level expected for their age. National figures are not yet available for comparison. Evidence from the inspection indicates that the improvement in standards in 2002 is being maintained in the current Year 1 and Year 2 classes. Pupils achieve well from the well below average attainment in numerical skills on entry to the reception class.

86. Pupils' results in national tests taken at the end of Year 6 in 2001 were average compared with all schools and well above average compared with similar schools. This group of pupils achieved well from well below average attainment in Year 2 in 1997. There was an upward trend in results during the period 1997 to 2001. This was not sustained in 2002. A smaller proportion of pupils reached the expected level for their age than in 2001. A drop in results was anticipated because of the higher proportion of lower ability pupils in the year group and the very low level of results in national tests in 1998. However, the school fell well short of its own target indicating that assessment procedures were not used well enough to identify and correct underachievement. National figures for 2002 are not yet available for comparison. The school has responded quickly to the disappointing results in 2002 by forming three teaching groups from Years 5 and 6, based on mathematical ability. This enables teachers to focus on pupils' specific needs, particularly numerical skills, and to challenge those pupils who are capable of exceeding the standards expected for their age. The arrangement is benefiting pupils of all abilities; most of them are now achieving satisfactorily from their starting point this year. This was not so in previous years as is clearly evident from pupils' lack of knowledge and understanding of earlier work. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls. It tends to fluctuate from year to year dependent on the proportions of boys and girls in the classes with pupils of severe educational need.

87. Overall, pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2 because teachers focus on developing and reinforcing numerical skills. They make effective use of the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) to promote mental arithmetic and to encourage mental agility and flexibility in seeking out answers. As a result, by the age of seven, pupils are developing a sound understanding of place value, including hundreds, tens and units. They have a reasonable understanding of the 2, 5 and 10 times tables and use them to solve simple problems. Lower attaining pupils are less secure with numbers higher than 10 but work satisfactorily with numbers to 100 when using practical equipment such as counters. Some pupils are more confident, and accurate, when working orally rather than in writing. This is because their language skills and vocabulary are not as well developed as they should be for their age. Pupils in Year 1 work in two smaller groups in mathematics. The highest attaining pupils are beginning to work independently. They correctly rearrange number in order to 20 and add numbers using the 'count on' method on a number line. Lower attaining pupils are less confident with number work but they are not daunted. They progress well when applying knowledge in a practical situation. For example, they correctly describe shapes in terms of the number of straight sides and recognise when patterns are repeated. By the start of Year 3, most pupils have a satisfactory understanding of a range of measures including time, money and length. They use them well within the limits of their numerical skills.

88. Pupils in Years 4 to 6 have not benefited to the same extent from a consistent approach to the teaching of mathematics. Achievement over time is unsatisfactory because there are gaps in pupils' knowledge and learning has not been progressive. Numerical skills are below average. These were not developed consistently, or consolidated, in earlier years and so, although all teachers use the NNS, pupils lack the basic knowledge to apply to other aspects of mathematics. Consequently, whilst pupils may know what they need to do to tackle a problem, they do not have the skills to arrive at an accurate answer. Even the highest attaining pupils in the older year groups cannot instantly recall the multiplication tables. Pupils in the lower ability group could not remember basic facts about drawing up graphs and frequency tables - work they had completed and repeated on numerous occasions in previous years. The presentation of pupils' written work is poor. The work is not prolific enough in quantity to provide practice in the logical explanation of answers. This is a contributory factor to the below average standards and pupils' lack of confidence when transferring skills from one branch of mathematics to another. In Year 6,

most pupils satisfactorily complete the work set each lesson on topics such as area, volume, percentages, symmetry, graphs and geometrical constructions. However, too often, they need so much help to get started that they do not reach the standard expected for their age by the end of the year. The new arrangements for grouping pupils by ability in Years 5 and 6 is working well and their achievement so far this year is satisfactory. The more able pupils are being encouraged to use their initiative, such as in the interpretation of graphs, whilst the lower attaining pupils meet with a reasonable degree of success in working with, and applying, simple numbers. Pupils lack confidence when using fractions, particularly when reducing them to their simplest form or finding fractions of whole numbers.

89. Pupils on the register of special educational need make good progress overall. In Years 1-4 this is due to the good quality of support from classroom assistants. Their work is well planned to coincide with the main topic for the whole class, enabling them to provide for the exact needs of individual pupils. This works well, resulting in little difference in standards between them and other lower attaining pupils. Progress is equally good for pupils with special educational needs in Years 5 and 6. They are taught in a small group where repetition and recall are well used to build on pupils' previous learning. Pupils meet, and sometimes exceed, the targets in their individual education plans.

90. Evidence from the inspection, including lesson observations, indicates that, overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good in Years 1-2 and satisfactory in Years 3 to 6. Pupils' learning is better than their past achievement in Years 3-6 because in Years 4 to 6 pupils are 'catching up' on work missed in earlier years. Teachers often have to spend a disproportionate amount of time making up for this before they can proceed to new work. Teachers have high expectations of pupils in the younger age groups where pupils are responsive and keen to learn. Lessons move at a fast pace and build daily on pupils' knowledge and experience. This was demonstrated in an outstanding lesson in Year 1 in which the teacher continually modified her approach as she became aware, through pupils' answers, of the difficulties some were experiencing with the concept of addition. Well-planned activities, within a set time, provided good opportunities for the most able to work independently whilst other received the practical help they needed to visualise the answers. The emphasis on learning through practical experience works well, such as when groups of pupils in Year 2 worked with staff outside the classroom on the estimation and measurement of distances. Good opportunities were provided for pupils to engage in constructive discussion about their results. Teaching is more variable in Years 3 to 6, most of it being satisfactory rather than good. It lacks the thrust seen in the earlier year groups, particularly in respect to continual reinforcement of basic numerical skills. Pupils are not sufficiently aware of their importance because, overall, teachers' expectations are not high enough. There is not enough collaboration between teachers about progression from year to year. In addition, the marking of pupils' work is inconsistent and teachers do not always check that pupils have responded to comments about how to improve.

91. Teachers are mindful of the need to develop pupils' literacy skills. For example, in a Year 1 class, pupils were asked to change the pattern of 'crazy caterpillar', built up from different two-dimensional shapes, by moving them according to instructions such as before, next to, in between, after etc. Skilful choice of instructions by the teacher enabled individual pupils to join in at their own level of understanding. Similarly, in Years 3-6, teachers emphasise the correct use of language and technical terms in oral work. In these year groups the effect of some pupils' limited reading and writing skills becomes more obvious. It manifests itself in a slower pace of working and, ultimately, not enough practice in working through written mathematical questions. Within the last two years the school has acquired additional resources for ICT, including programs specifically designed for mathematics. The exercises are suitably graded for pupils of different ability and teachers are satisfactorily incorporating them into lesson planning where appropriate. This goes some way towards supporting the development of numerical skills but the use of ICT as an investigative tool to sharpen pupils' insight into mathematics has not yet been fully exploited.

92. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. They have led to good improvement and achievement in Year 2 that is working its way through to Year 3. Analysis of pupils' responses to test questions in Year 6 has provided information on areas for development, such as investigative work, problem solving and competence in numerical skills. The school needs to adopt a rigorous response to

tackling these in Years 4-6. Overall improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory but the school recognises that there is much more to be done in Years 4.-6. To improve standards further, more emphasis is required on the teaching and continual reinforcement of numerical skills. In addition, pupils' work needs to be monitored on a regular basis to ensure progression within, and across, year groups. Also, assessment procedures need to be used more effectively to check on pupils who are identified as underachieving.

Key skills across the curriculum - Numeracy

93. Pupils' numerical skills are below average. There is no whole-school policy to support the development and use of mathematical skills across the curriculum. Good application of measurement, estimation and graphical work was seen in an environmental project that resulted in the construction of a garden in the school grounds, but, in general, there is too little recorded evidence of pupils' competence in applying computational skills in cross-curricular work.

SCIENCE

94. Teacher assessments of pupils' work at the age of seven in 2001 were well below average compared with all schools but above average compared with similar schools. In the national tests for eleven years olds in 2001, attainment was average compared with all schools and well above average compared with similar schools. Results improved steadily between 1997 and 2001 at a faster rate than the national trend. Results were not as good in 2002 but they were significantly better than in English and mathematics. National figures are not yet available for comparison.

95. Evidence from the inspection indicates that the overall standard of work in Year 2 is average. Pupils achieve well from their starting points on entry to Year 1. A contributory factor to the good achievement is that pupils are taught investigative skills from an early age. For example, pupils in Year 1 sorted out materials by using characteristics such as soft, hard, rough and smooth. The investigation was extended, with successful results, by considering whether the materials could bend or stretch. In Year 2, pupils become more adventurous in their practical work. When investigating the senses, for instance, they discover that it is easier to investigate the environment when more than one of the senses is used. Teachers ensure that pupils of all abilities have equal access to the activities. Pupils with special educational needs are given good support by the classroom assistants and make similar progress to other pupils. Pupils record their findings on well-prepared record sheets. Higher attaining pupils sometimes collate the information gathered from other pupils and successfully present the overall findings on a graph. Pupils in Year 2 have a good knowledge of the topics they have studied and remember it well enough to use at a later date. For example, they know how humans grow and recall facts such as babies sleep a lot, toddlers learn to walk, teenagers grow tall and adults have children.

96. The overall standard of work in Year 6 is below average. It is average when the work of pupils with severe educational needs is excluded. Overall achievement is satisfactory. The previous report identified a weakness in investigative work. This is no longer the case. All the science lessons are based on investigations. Pupils are taught how to prepare and carry out scientific investigations and how to present their findings in a scientific way. For example, when investigating friction in Year 6, pupils decided which variables should be used and what measurements should be taken in order to find out which materials produced the most friction. On completion of the experiment they decided that it would be appropriate to record the results on a bar graph. The more able pupils suggested reasons why some results were not in line with the general results and therefore needed to be repeated. There is good evidence of investigative work in all classes. Pupils know how to choose variables to make tests fair. Discussions with pupils revealed that they acquire a wide range of scientific knowledge and know how to use it. For example, they suggested a fair test in order to find out which one of three tennis ball was the best bouncer. They know about the functions of the heart and could explain a line graph showing a person's pulse rate before, during and after exercise. When discussing materials they could distinguish the scientific difference

between a solid, a liquid and a gas. They explained that materials usually change state when heated but that some materials such as ice can be changed back whereas others such as wood cannot. Pupils are conscious of the need to safeguard the environment, pointing out that too many cars and discarded rubbish pollute the environment whereas planting trees and keeping rivers clean protects it. Pupils have a reasonable working scientific vocabulary for their age.

97. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. It is good in Years 1-2 and satisfactory in Years 3-6. Teachers show the pupils how to think and investigate in a scientific way. The teachers' knowledge of science is good and is well used to plan interesting lessons. Good questioning encourages pupils to think scientifically and they are encouraged to join in the discussions. Teachers have caring attitudes and handle reluctant pupils well and with understanding. Consequently, behaviour is generally good and the pupils co-operate well. This makes a valuable contribution to the improving standards. Lessons are well planned and the appropriate equipment is always available. As a result, time is not wasted and pupils do not become frustrated. The pupils' numerical and literacy skills are consolidated when using calculations, presenting findings on graphs and writing on reporting sheets. Information and communication technology (ICT) is not used frequently enough to support the subject although the teachers are beginning to use sensors in practical work.

98. Leadership and management of the subject are good. There is a comprehensive scheme of work and a clear overall plan so that all the teachers know what topics are being taught and when. The headteacher and the school adviser monitor teaching and pupils' written work which enables them to track progression throughout the school. Assessment procedures are firmly in place and evaluation at the end of each topic is well used for planning subsequent lessons. Analysis of pupils' results in national tests enables the school to identify areas of weakness and attention is then focused on these areas. Science makes a valuable contribution to the pupils' spiritual and social development. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

ART AND DESIGN

99. Overall standards of work are average in Years 2 and 6. Pupils achieve satisfactorily throughout the school.

100. Pupils are introduced to a variety of media and techniques in Years 1 and 2. The direct teaching of skills is good. For example, in one class the teacher demonstrated how to carefully mix powder paint to produce new colours, and, also, how to make the shade lighter by adding white paint. The pupils were eager to join in and help with the demonstration. Sketchbooks are used throughout the school to practise skills and to make draft drawings. In one class the pupils used their sketchbooks to develop a drawing of part of the classroom. This was then transferred onto a large piece of thin card on which they completed the final picture using shades of paint they had mixed themselves. The teacher ensured that the pupils held their brushes correctly so that they could apply the paint evenly. The resultant pieces of art were most attractive. The school adapts the work well to meet the needs of all pupils. Those with special educational needs concentrate well and make similar progress to other pupils. One lower attaining pupil was particularly pleased when the beautiful picture he had created was shown to the class as an example of good work. Pupils also work together to make large class pictures; in one class they created an attractive Hungry Caterpillar to support their work in literacy. Pupils are familiar with famous painters and create some beautiful patterned pictures in the style of Mondrian using bright colours and glitter. They have a good introduction to three-dimensional art when they make models of large bugs using paper mache and pipe cleaners and paint them in bright colours. Pupils also use clay to make small candleholders to support work in religious education when they are learning about Divali. They paint attractive portraits of themselves and their friends and some pupils enclose them in cardboard frames decorated with string patterns. Interesting techniques are introduced to give a different slant on art. For example, pupils learn how to use a viewfinder to paint just a small part of their classroom.

101. In Years 3 -6, teachers clearly demonstrate techniques to be used in artwork. Pupils use sketchbooks well to practise skills and make draft drawings before tackling the main project. In one class the pupils made three-dimensional masks out of paper mache to support their work in history. Pupils are satisfactorily learning to make observational drawings using different quality pencils but more practice is needed to improve skills in this area. One group of pupils investigated patterns based on Indian designs that included a variety of animals. They created attractive patterns with vivid colours and metallic paper. These made a fine display. Pupils also learn about the art of other cultures. One group designed attractive prayer mats using Muslim patterns when studying Islam.

102. Art displays are well used to enhance the atmosphere in the school. In the main corridor there is a beautiful display of fish and sea creatures against a sea green background created by a group of parents and their children. There is also a large attractive display of batik patterns at the entrance to the school. This is such a fine piece of batik artwork that it has been displayed at Brimstage Hall and the Williamson Gallery. Pupils visited the Local Education Centre for a workshop in Cultural Diversity and produced some more beautiful Batik wall hangings. An artist also visited the school and worked with pupils to make the brightly coloured banners that now form an attractive display in the courtyard. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

103. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Learning is currently better than achievement over time because pupils are making up for missed opportunities in previous years. The teachers have a good knowledge of art and recognise its value in providing a means through which pupils can express themselves. Teachers encourage the use of sketchbooks to practise techniques and make draft drawings but art packages are not used frequently enough in ICT to enable pupils to create pictures using a computer. Teachers have good relationships with the pupils and motivate them well. As a result they enjoy art activities and behaviour is good. Lessons are well planned and organised effectively with good quality resources available. Teachers have appropriate expectations and towards the end of lessons they and the pupils evaluate the work produced to see how it could be improved. Good use is made of the support staff to help and encourage the less able pupils. Art is well used to support other subjects of the curriculum, for example when pupils used textile trimmings to decorate small chairs, which they had made, in the style of Egyptian thrones. Pupils became fully engrossed in aspects of Egyptian life and culture..

104. Management of the subject is good. Art is making a good contribution to the life of the school and to pupils' education. The quality of pupils' work is monitored so teachers know how pupils' work is progressing. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. The schools' advisory service and other art specialists provide art workshops for the pupils and staff and these have contributed to the rising standards. Art makes a valuable contribution to pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

105. Design and technology was not being taught at the time of the inspection because it is taught in alternate half terms with art. Judgements are based on evidence of previous work including photographs, discussion with pupils and staff, planning documents and models made by the pupils. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, enjoy the practical nature of the work and achieve similarly.

106. Pupils achieve satisfactorily from their starting points in Year 1. By the end of Year 2, standards are average for pupils' age. Pupils are taught effective methods for designing and making models. They are encouraged to think about the model before making a drawing and listing the materials required. The pupils then learn the necessary skills to construct the model. On completion they are encouraged to complete an evaluation sheet about the quality of the finished product and whether or not it could be improved. For example, in their topic on homes, pupils were taught how to roll newspaper into strong tubes to make a frame for a model house before covering it with thin cardboard in which they had cut

doors and windows. A good range of practical activities provides pupils with opportunities to practise making moving vehicles with axles and wheels and to learn basic elements of food technology.

107. Pupils continue to achieve satisfactorily in subsequent year groups and by the end of Year 6 standards are similar to those expected for eleven-year-olds. Pupils have learnt effective methods of designing and making models and use good quality planning and evaluation sheets. By this stage most pupils draw on a good range of techniques. They progressively learn to use pneumatic mechanisms and to measure, saw and join wood securely. They are taught the finer details of practical work, such as how to 'score' cardboard so that it bends neatly and accurately. The 'monsters' with opening mouths and delicate photograph frames are fitting examples of pupils' understanding and execution of these techniques. Pupils are made aware of safety issues involved with practical work. They respect them in practice and relate them to concerns for health when preparing food in food technology sessions. By Years 5 and 6, the work extends to wider issues, such as the construction of musical instruments and their link with the production of sound in science. Pupils in Year 6 investigating shelters made good model shelters of their own which they tested in the open air to see if they were waterproof. As yet, pupils do not have enough experience of control systems. For example they do not use electric motors in models so that the speed can be varied. Not enough use is made of ICT to support the subject but the school has recently acquired a control unit that should be in operation in the near future.

108. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Basic design and making skills are well taught. The pupils learn effective methods to tackle design and technology problems. Teachers encourage pupils to use design and evaluation sheets to help them to think clearly about the models that they are making.

109. The management of the subject is satisfactory. It makes an important contribution to overall standards in the school. A good quality scheme of work is in place and there is a clear overall plan so that all teachers know what to teach and when. Assessment procedures are comprehensive and enable the co-ordinator to monitor the standard of pupils' work. Resources are of good quality and conveniently stored in individual boxes for each topic. This assists teachers and pupils to work in an organised manner. The subject makes a worthwhile contribution to the pupils' social and cultural development. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

110. Geography and history are planned for together under the heading of humanities. They are taught separately, one each half term, but there is some overlap where geographical skills are integrated into sections of the history. For example, the historical study of Egypt incorporates the physical features of the country, climate and ways of life. Similarly, study of life at sea in the Elizabethan period extends to exploration. The cross-curricular aspect of the work is well thought out, but, in practice, it results in an imbalance, more history than geography being studied in Years 3-6. Leadership and management of the subjects are satisfactory overall. Progress of pupils in the older year groups could be improved through higher expectations with respect to the recording of work, more checking of progress and greater emphasis on the progressive development of relevant skills. Overall, across the whole school, improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

Geography

111. Overall standards of work are average in Year 2. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well because the work is first related to their own location and experiences in Woodchurch and the Wirral. It progressively extends further afield and pupils begin to make comparisons between life in Great Britain and that in more distant places overseas. Geography has not been on the timetable so far this term for Years 3-6 so work was not available for scrutiny. Discussion with pupils indicates that geographical skills are probably not as well developed as they should be for pupils' ages.

Not enough evidence was available to make a fair judgement on standards, achievement, teaching and learning in Years 3-6.

112. Pupils experience a good range of activities in the first two years. By Year 2 they follow simple instructions and know that maps can be used for different purposes depending on the information required. Pupils correctly identify differences in the landscape, buildings and peoples when comparing Woodchurch with photographs of the island of St Lucia in the Caribbean. Teachers set challenging tasks that encourage pupils to think about lifestyles in different parts of the world. With respect to St Lucia, pupils note the appearance of school buildings and facilities and decide that Fender Primary School is better. Higher attaining pupils write about their findings, lower attaining pupils express their thoughts equally well in illustrations. Pupils have put together a 'big book' about St Lucia, successfully designing the cover and contents page. In groups, they have extracted evidence from various sources and been perceptive in its interpretation. Overall, geographical skills are developing well. Pupils are being made to think for themselves about issues that affect the local and wider environment. It was not possible to observe any geography lessons in Years 1-2 but evidence from the inspection, including scrutiny of work, indicates that teaching and learning in Years 1-2 are good.

History

113. Evidence from the inspection, including scrutiny of work and displays, indicates that standards are average in Years 2 and 6. In Year 2, pupils achieve well from their starting points. They achieve satisfactorily in Year 6. The difference in achievement is rooted in pupils' ability to express and record what they know in suitable forms. In Year 2, pupils talk about the content of their studies, draw simple conclusions from their own observations and make reasonable attempts to explain their views in pictorial form or simple writing. In Year 6, pupils' knowledge and understanding of the periods they study are equally good, but the written work associated with them is often superficial and poorly expressed. However, to pupils' credit, it is original.

114. In Years 1 and 2, pupils satisfactorily learn to sequence events to show the passage of time. They talk about the present day and the past and relate this to the topic being studied. Teachers provide interesting material and base the work on practical experience wherever they can. In Year 1, pupils had walked around the area looking at different houses as an introduction to the study of homes. Many had brought in photographs of their own homes. They used a good range of vocabulary when describing the interior and exterior in response to the teacher's question about 'looking through the keyhole'.

115. The content of the history course in Years 3-6 is relevant to pupils' natural interest in the past. They enjoy the work, especially where it has a practical base and involves discussion. Pupils in Year 3 are beginning to research information for themselves. In one lesson they were seeking out the reasons for, and consequences of, Henry the VIII's marriages. The more able pupils tackled the work independently with minimum help from the teacher. They teased out answers from books, making use of the contents page and index to locate information. Other pupils, including those with special educational needs, worked satisfactorily with support assistants. The work was challenging for most pupils because they found some of the language in the text difficult to understand. Ultimately, the majority of pupils found the answers to the tasks they had been given, but many had difficulty in finding the language to express their conclusions, either orally or in writing. Pupils' interest in history is reinforced as they progress to older year groups. For example, in Year 5, they take advantage of opportunities to compare life in Victorian times with life today. Good use is made of artefacts and visits to 'bring history to life'. Pupils are amassing knowledge and satisfactorily using it to make judgements. They know how to use ICT and the Internet to search for information but do not capitalise enough on this aspect of learning because the only access to the Internet is through the computers in the computer suite. The limited amount of time in the suite available to each class does not allow much time for research. In Year 6, pupils' knowledge and understanding of history are satisfactory. Standards are average but could be better if written work reflected the quality of oral work.

116. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. They are good in Years 1-2. In these two year groups teachers capture pupils' imagination and make them eager to learn. The discussions that take place in lessons are directly related to pupils' experiences or those of their families. Teachers introduce a touch of humour, which lightens the intensity of work and encourages pupils to talk in a more relaxed way and share their own experiences. In the older year groups the work is mainly pitched at a level for pupils of middle ability. More challenge could be introduced for the higher attaining pupils. At present the assessment and marking of pupils' work in history is inconsistent. In Years 3-6, pupils are not aware that the quality of their written work is not good enough and they are not being given sufficient direction to know how to improve it.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

117. Standards of work are average In Year 2. Pupils achieve well from their starting point on entry to Year 1. They are benefiting from the satisfactory improvement in provision for ICT since the previous inspection. In Years 3-6, pupils are catching up on experiences they missed out on in earlier years. Consequently, standards of work are below average at the age of eleven. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in Year 6 considering their prior attainment. Throughout the school pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils because they have good support from classroom assistants. The improvement in facilities followed an audit of the school's provision and the decision to set up an ICT suite in addition to the computers in classrooms. The school has a suitable range of resources to cover all aspects of the curriculum. To date, not all have been used because the new scheme of work is only coming into full effect in the current year.

118. By the age of seven, pupils have developed satisfactory skills, particularly in word processing. Most pupils can confidently explain what they are doing and have a sound knowledge of technical terms and how to operate a computer. They know their way round the keyboard and are conversant with the range of facilities that can be accessed through it. Evidence of pupils' increasing confidence in using ICT was observed in a Year 1 lesson. By choosing from collections of words on the computer screen pupils correctly put together sentences showing understanding of the use of capital letters and full stops. The most able pupils worked quickly and accurately, completing as many as ten sentences. Other pupils, including those with special educational needs, sometimes needed additional support but they successfully made up a few simple sentences. Pupils knew how to print their work and were encouraged by the teacher's comments about its quality. Scrutiny of work in Years 1 and 2 clearly shows how skills are developing. By Year 2, pupils are printing out graphs, interpreting information on pictograms and beginning to use ICT in other subjects, such as in the study of St Lucia in geography.

119. Pupils in Years 3 -6 did not have such a good grounding in ICT in their earlier years because the school did not have the facilities. Teachers are endeavouring to make up for this at the same time as pushing ahead with the current year's curriculum. Pupils' learning tends to be patchy with too little time for consolidation of basic skills. For example, in an exercise on correcting spelling and grammatical errors in text in Year 4, pupils knew what they wanted to do, but not always how to do it. Some pupils did not remember simple technical operations, such as 'backspace' and movement of the cursor. On the whole, pupils learn well in lessons but do not have enough practice to reinforce their knowledge and understanding long term. It is not possible to access the Internet on the computers in the classrooms. This is a disadvantage because it limits pupils' independent study in cross-curricular work to the small amount of time when the computer room is not being used for specific ICT lessons.

120. In general, pupils gain confidence and encouragement from the success they achieve in practical aspects of the curriculum. Information and communication technology contributes well to this. For example, good use is made of 'listening centres' to enable individual pupils to listen to stories on tape and follow the words in a book. They satisfactorily learn how to control battery powered toys. Other equipment, such as sensors for use in experiments in science, is being programmed into the curriculum. This helps pupils to understand the importance of technology and how it underpins so much of our everyday life. It is noticeable that pupils are less reluctant to express themselves when writing 'on screen' than when recording work in their exercise books. One reason for this is that pupils feel they can make corrections more easily on the computer. Teachers should take this into account when looking for additional ways to improve pupils' writing, especially in Years 3-6.

121. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. They are good in Years 1 and 2 because teachers are starting to teach ICT progressively from the start of Year 1 according to a well planned scheme of work. Good features seen during the inspection were the teachers' growing expertise and confidence, resulting from training, and the use of ICT to promote literacy and numeracy. The content of specific ICT lessons is frequently based on aspects of literacy and numeracy. It is backed up by programs on the computers in classrooms. Teachers plan lessons effectively, giving thought to the level of challenge for pupils of different abilities. Classroom assistants have a good understanding of their tasks with individual

pupils and groups because they work closely with teachers at the planning stage. A typical example was the Year 2 class in which more able pupils improved a piece of text by inserting capital letters and full stops when removing the word 'and'. Lower ability pupils worked with support on a simpler text in larger font in which the corrections needed were more obvious. Teachers help pupils understand how to improve by discussing printouts of the work at the end of the lesson, or soon afterwards. Pupils' learning in ICT is satisfactory rather than good in Years 3 -6 because skills have not been built up progressively over the years. In addition, not enough use is made of ICT across the curriculum for research or to reinforce skills.

122. Leadership and management are good. They have led to a significant improvement in provision. Greater expertise amongst staff is progressively bringing about improvement in standards from Year 1 upwards. The school has created momentum for further improvement. The involvement of parents through the family learning sessions is paying dividends. Parents appreciate the opportunities to learn computer skills for themselves and to work alongside their children. A good level of interest is being generated to the benefit of everyone involved.

MUSIC

123. Only two lessons were seen during the inspection and because of this it is difficult to make an overall judgement on standards and teaching in a subject that is mainly practical. In the one lesson seen in Year 1, standards were similar to those expected for pupils of their age. This is an improvement since the previous full inspection when standards were judged to be below average by the end of Year 2. In the Year 5 lesson, standards were below average because a small number of pupils disrupted the lesson and restricted the progress of other pupils. This attainment is similar to that at time of the previous inspection when standards were found to be unsatisfactory. Overall, improvement in music is unsatisfactory

124. In Years 1 and 2, the pupils' singing is similar to that found in most schools. They sing enthusiastically from memory and keep in tune even when singing unaccompanied. Using percussion instruments they satisfactorily explore the different sounds made by, for example, tambourines and maracas. There are good links to literacy when the pupils listen to a recorded tape and then describe the sounds that they have heard using words such as 'gentle'. The pupils enjoy their music lesson, they listen carefully and as a result are beginning to change pitch and identify high and low notes. Pupils wait and take turns and learn to share the instruments.

125. In Years 3 to 6 pupils continue to develop their singing skills and to extend their repertoire. They sing tunefully during the hymn practice showing very good recall of words. When singing 'Gloria in Excelsior Deo' they show a sense of musical expression, singing with reasonable diction and pitch control. They concentrate very hard when asked to perform the action song 'Come and go with me' using actions only. The silence during this hymn as the pupils perform is a spiritual experience for all. Pupils in Year 5 singing 'Camp fires burning' demonstrate an ability to sing quietly, gradually increasing the volume. They sing tunefully in rounds and after recording their singing suggest how they can improve their work. Two pupils suggest that the use of harmony or chords would be a useful improvement. This lesson follows a visit to the teaching centre where pupils are taught by an advisory teacher. They enjoy using instruments to create mood in the journey of a raindrop to the sea. All the pupils choose an instrument to make for example, the sound of raindrops, heavy rain or a waterfall to demonstrate the journey of the raindrop.

126. Music makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils take part in the local schools' 'Music Festival' and there are school performances to which parents are invited.

127. There is insufficient evidence to make a firm overall judgement on teaching and learning. The present curriculum is in the state of transition. A new scheme of work is being piloted in Years 1,3 and 4 and as a consequence some teachers are still feeling insecure. The subject is supported well by a relatively new co-ordinator. The most recent policy document is clearly written and sets out the school's stance on presentation of the curriculum, provision and assessment. However much of this is not yet

firmly in place. There is a good action plan that should promote music well throughout the school. Once the new curriculum is in place, coupled with the enhanced provision of resources to support the curriculum, standards in music should rise. At present, they are below average by the time pupils leave the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

128. Pupils' overall standards of work in physical education are average at the ages of seven and eleven. Teaching is satisfactory. Positive features include the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities, which enable all pupils to enhance their skills, and the good provision for swimming. Good attention is given to the full ability range and the subject makes a positive contribution to the pupils' health development. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. The overall achievement of pupils throughout the school, including those with special educational needs, is satisfactory. When pupils from the two designated special educational needs classes are integrated into other classes, their needs are well met and achievement is often good.

129. In the infant classes (Years 1 and 2), pupils make good progress and most work with application, both individually and in groups. They listen and learn well because lessons are interesting, enjoyable and build confidence. Pupils have a good understanding of the need to warm up before physical exercise and of the need for safety in physical activities. Pupils in Year 1 describe how the blood pumps around their bodies and how their hearts go faster. Their attitudes are good; they show good determination to master new skills and they respond promptly in response to a signal. They create unique shapes with their bodies, confidently developing and demonstrating interesting ways of travelling in a circle. All pupils, including a number of individuals who find some of the tasks very challenging, throw themselves wholeheartedly into activities, because they are so well supported. All pupils and adults take an interest in each other and offer constructive evaluations of performance. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a sound basic knowledge of games, gymnastics, dance, athletics and outdoor activities. They can run at different speeds, hold their weight on different body parts and move to music, creating their own movements.

130. These solid foundations are not developed with the same consistency in the junior classes (Years 3-6), particularly in gymnastics lessons when some pupils do not listen to instructions. Pupils make sound progress in Year 3 and 5 in the development of teamwork and ball skills in games lessons. In Year 4, however, pupils do not work collaboratively to develop their skills. Many do not listen carefully and as a result their performance lacks precision, control and fluency. By Year 6, pupils approach lessons in a disciplined, enthusiastic manner, encouraged by the enthusiasm and high expectations of the teacher. They work well with partners and in teams. Standards are satisfactory for pupils' ages but could be higher if greater emphasis were placed on the consistent development of skills across all the junior classes. Most pupils learn to swim at the local leisure centre and readily achieve the requirement to swim unaided for 25 metres, with many exceeding it by the time they leave school. All pupils understand the necessary safety considerations in water. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated in lessons and work well alongside their peers.

131. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The learning in many lessons is good but some unsatisfactory teaching and learning was seen where pupils did not listen to the teacher and ignored instructions. In most lessons pupils concentrate well and use lesson time to the full. Teachers are familiar with the skills to be taught and give clear direction and helpful coaching points. Good features include the use of demonstration, and clear explanation in lessons. Strengths also include a clear structure to lessons and energetic, fast-paced aerobic warm ups at the beginning of most sessions. Attitudes are good and most pupils listen carefully and follow instructions sensibly, which results in lesson time being spent purposefully. Procedures for the setting up and dismantling of apparatus are firmly established in most lessons and the attention paid to health and safety in lessons is appropriate. There is suitable emphasis given to relaxation and recovery after exercise and many lessons encourage imagination and creativity. Pupils achieve satisfactorily but could improve on this if some lessons were brisker and more sharply focused on the development of skills. For example, too much time is wasted on classroom

management in some classes when pupils are looking for their kit, or the teacher spends too long talking about activities. This impedes learning by cutting the time available for practical activity. In one lesson the tone was set when the pupils entered the hall loudly and excitably. The warm up was too short, which did not allow pupils' heart rates to be raised for an appropriate period of time. As a result, pupils were not ready to move onto stretching exercises and were reluctant to join in activities, which were not sufficiently stimulating or challenging for them. Several pupils began to seek attention and impeded learning for the core of pupils who were attempting to participate. In contrast, a very good Year 6 dance lesson showed very high expectations of behaviour and performance throughout the whole lesson.

132. Leadership and management are satisfactory, with some good features. There is a good link with the local high school through a sports development initiative. This has led to a comprehensive audit of provision and an expanded scheme of work, which provides more guidance for staff in the infant classes. The school is set to build on this sound foundation. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. The school has established good links with partnership institutions to increase opportunities for the pupils. Checks on provision are not yet focusing on improving the development of skills in some lessons, particularly where time is being wasted. The assessment of pupils' progress is too general and relies on a summary for the end of year annual report based on teacher assessment.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

133. Standards of work in Year 2 are average and meet the requirements of the Local Agreed Syllabus. Pupils achieve well. They not only learn about religious topics, but respond to the issues raised. For example, in Year 1, pupils thought about the importance of hands and considered how people such as builders and mechanics use their hands to help other people. Pupils thought about how they used their own hands and after listening to the Bible story of the talents and how everyone can do some things well decided that every one should use their talents for their own benefit and for other people as well. A very sensitive lesson in Year 2 led pupils to an interesting discussion about Hindu gods and comparison of some aspects of the Hindu faith with Christianity. Central to the lesson was a beautiful display of artefacts. Pupils found the lesson interesting, listened to the teacher quietly and joined in the discussions well.

134. Standards in Year 6 are below those expected in the Local Agreed Syllabus. Achievement is satisfactory taking into account pupils' low starting point at the end of Year 2. The low level of some pupils' literacy skills affects both their written and oral work. There is insufficient work in pupils' books on the topics covered and discussion with pupils indicates that their knowledge of religious matters limited. For example, pupils found it difficult to write down their thoughts about the story of the Angel Gabriel even though the teacher had engaged them in an interesting discussion at the beginning of the lesson. Similarly, in Year 5 where pupils were studying Islam, in particular the aspect of fasting during Ramadan, pupils were interested but found it difficult to complete the written work. Pupils' written work is equally 'thin' in Year 6. It is too superficial. Discussion with pupils indicates that they do not have an adequate knowledge of religious topics, nor do they make a sufficient response to them. They know about the Bible and that it contains information about Jesus but recall little about his life or activities except for the fact that he died on a cross. They are familiar with the Nativity Story but remember little about characters such as the Good Samaritan or the Prodigal Son. Their knowledge of World Religions is unsure. They do not know about Muhammed, the Qur'an, the Torah or the festival of Passover. Although pupils were able to discuss rules for life and explain that rules in school were to help every one they did not know about the Ten Commandments or the Five Pillars of Islam. Throughout the school, the achievement of pupils with special educational needs is similar to that of other pupils when their prior attainment is taken into account.

135. Teaching and learning are good in Years 1-2. Teachers make the subject interesting and cover work on Christianity and World Religions. They use interesting artefacts and lead discussions well to reinforce learning. Relationships are good so that the pupils respond well and the behaviour is good. A wide range of topics in the Agreed Syllabus is covered. In Years 3-6 teaching and learning are barely satisfactory. Some of the topics taught are not given a generous enough coverage to ensure the pupils

acquire sufficient knowledge. The teachers make good use of questioning to lead interesting discussions which the pupils take part in and enjoy. There is a good range of artefacts available to make the lessons more appealing. For example in Year 5 there was an attractive display of Muslim artefacts, including a Qu'ran and prayer mats, because the pupils were studying Islam. However, not enough opportunities are provided in written work for the pupils to practise their literacy skills or consolidate their religious knowledge. Information and communication technology is not used often enough to support the subject. Relationships with the pupils are generally good so that they co-operate and behave well.

136. Management of the subject is satisfactory overall. The co-ordinator has ensured that the curriculum is based on the Agreed Syllabus and has produced a clear overall plan so that all the teachers know what to teach and when. Planning of lessons is monitored well but pupils' books are not examined regularly to check progress. The local vicar comes into school but not visitors from other faiths. However, pupils recently took part in a workshop 'Celebrating Diversity' where they were involved in experiences of various faiths. School assemblies, with a collective act of worship, are held each day and often these add support to the religious education programme. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory overall because standards are progressively improving from Year 1 upwards.