

INSPECTION REPORT

ST PAUL'S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Prenton

LEA area: Wirral

Unique reference number: 105070

Head teacher: Maureen Johnston

Reporting inspector: David Marshall
27681

Dates of inspection: 24th – 27th February 2003

Inspection number: 246439

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 3 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Farmfield Drive
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Prenton

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs M Cook

Date of previous inspection: 20th – 24th October 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Team members | | | Subject responsibilities | Aspect responsibilities |
|--------------|------------------|----------------------|---|---|
| 27681 | David Marshall | Registered inspector | Science Information and communication technology Music Physical education Equal opportunities | How high are standards? How well are the pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? |
| 9092 | Ronald Elam | Lay inspector | | How well does the school work in partnership with parents? Pupils' personal development and attendance |
| 30823 | Brenda Clarke | Team inspector | Mathematics Geography History Foundation Stage | How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? |
| 29989 | Pauline Goodsell | Team inspector | English Art and design Design and technology Special educational needs | How well does the school care for its pupils? |

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Paul's is a smaller than average voluntary aided Roman Catholic primary school, with 109 pupils on roll. Of the full-time pupils, 61 are boys and 48 are girls. The pupils come almost exclusively from the surrounding council estate, which is recognised as an area of high deprivation. Of the full-time pupils 64 per cent are claiming free school meals – this is well above national figures. Pupils' attainment on entry is well below national expectations. Over a third of the pupils on the school roll are assessed as having special educational needs, and four pupils have statements of specific need – both figures are well above the national average. There are very few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, and there are no pupils with English as an additional language. This is well below the national average. Attendance figures are poor, and well below the national average. There has been one exclusion this year. Since the last inspection there has been a new head teacher, new deputy and three new teachers.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Paul's is an effective school in lots of ways. The pupils make good progress in Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics and inspection findings show they are now achieving average levels of attainment in these subjects by the time they leave the school. Pupils with special educational needs are catered for well with appropriately challenging activities. Pupils make a good start to their education in the nursery. The quality of teaching is good in Key Stage 2. The leadership and management provided by the head teacher and deputy are good and are now giving a drive to raising standards. The school offers a broad curriculum and provides particularly well for the pupils' personal development. The school is giving sound value for money.

What the school does well

- The quality of teaching in Key Stage 2 is good.
- The quality of provision in the nursery class is good and so children are enabled to make a good start to their education.
- Pupils' behaviour and personal development are good. They are polite and very enthusiastic. They cooperate very well, think of others, and make very good relationships.
- The staff promotes a good school ethos for learning through the broad curriculum and good resources.
- The leadership and management of the school by the head, deputy and governors are good.
- Staff accurately assess the pupils' achievement in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and use the information effectively in Key Stage 2.
- The provision for those pupils who have special educational needs is good.

What could be improved

- Pupils' level of achievement in Key Stage 1 in all subjects.
- The presentation of pupils' work and the consistent implementation of the school's policy on spelling and handwriting.
- Levels of attendance are poor. The school needs to review its arrangements for tracking and promoting better attendance and punctuality.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school's progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. In the last three years in particular, after very good replacement teacher appointments by the head teacher and governors, the pupils have been enabled to make good progress in Key Stage 2. During this period the standards being achieved in English, mathematics and science in Key Stage 2 have risen well, and pupils are now reaching expectations for their age by the time they leave school. All National Curriculum requirements for information and communication technology (ICT) are now being met and sound standards are being achieved. Although the school has introduced a variety of measures designed to improve pupils' attendance, it is still poor and further effort is required to raise attendance to an acceptable level. The requirement to raise standards in English has been achieved in Key Stage 2 in the last three years, although writing still remains a concern in Key Stage 1. The staff have been successful in maintaining the good pupil attitudes and ethos of the school that made such a positive impact on the quality of education provided at the time of the last inspection.

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 |
| | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2002 |
| English | E | C | D | A |
| Mathematics | E | E | D | B |
| Science | E* | E | D | B |

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

Results in the 2002 national assessments for seven year olds were well below the national averages for all schools in reading, writing and mathematics. They were also well below average when compared with schools with a similar number of pupils eligible for free school meals. In science, teacher assessments of pupils' standards at age seven were above average when compared nationally and when compared to similar schools. However, current standards seen during the inspection are well below average in these areas.

The results in national tests for eleven year olds in 2002 were below average in English, mathematics and science when compared with schools nationally. Compared to similar schools these results were well above average in English, and above average in mathematics and science. These results, at the age of eleven, show that when the achievement of those pupils who have been in the school since they were tested at the age of seven are analysed, the school has been successful in raising their attainment. The trend over the last three years has been one of continued progress, and in line with the national trend of improvement. In the last two years, pupils in Key Stage 2 have reached their challenging targets in National Curriculum tests. The targets set for the 2003 are for more improvement and the school is on course to achieve them.

Standards in ICT are rising well now pupils have more regular access to computers. Overall standards in all other subjects are in line with what could be expected for pupils of this age. On the basis of their own prior attainment, pupils up to the age of seven are making poor progress, but older pupils make good progress and achieve well.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Attitudes to the school | Good. Most pupils are eager to learn. They respond enthusiastically to stimulating and well-planned lessons. They concentrate well and work hard. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Good. There is sensible behaviour both in class and around the school. There is no bullying or oppressive behaviour. |
| Personal development and relationships | Pupils' personal development is good. They develop very good relationships with each other and to visitors to the school. They enjoy each other's company, and show high levels of tolerance and respect. |
| Attendance | Unsatisfactory. Despite the school's efforts to improve pupils' attendance it is still below the national average, and further efforts are required to raise the attendance level. |

Pupils enjoy school. Their relationships with each other and with adults are very good throughout the school. They consistently work well together. Pupils' personal development is a strength of the school and makes a considerable impact on the quality of their learning and the progress they make.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of pupils in: | Nursery and Reception | Years 1 – 2 | Years 3 – 6 |
|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-------------|
| Quality of teaching | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Good |

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

The quality of teaching varies considerably across the school. Teaching in the nursery is good and is particularly effective in Year 6. Teaching of literacy and numeracy is generally good throughout Key Stage 2 and is responsible for the improved learning at this stage.

Teachers in the Foundation Stage in the morning are able to catch and keep children's attention well thanks to their careful planning based on good assessment and their good use of resources. The cheerful and supportive atmosphere they create enables the children to settle down well and immediately begin to learn. However, this is not sustained in the afternoons when the reception children are taught as a separate class.

The quality of teaching throughout the Key Stage 1 classes does not enable pupils to make satisfactory progress. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the curriculum are sound, but the inconsistent use of assessment information means that many lessons are inappropriately challenging. The level of planning is not thorough in many of the non-core subjects and as a result these are taught less well and pupils make less progress. Teachers have inappropriate expectations of pupils, which often results in their poorer behaviour and inadequate learning.

In all Key Stage 2 classes teachers are skilful and work hard for the benefit of their pupils. They manage their classes well with a range of strategies to ensure that pupils are fully engaged in learning. Lessons are generally managed with good pace because they are effectively planned, resources are well prepared and explanations and instructions are clear. Teachers and classroom assistants have very good relationships with pupils and this contributes most positively to the whole ethos of the school, encouraging and valuing learning and good behaviour. Teachers have good questioning skills, which enables them to engage pupils' attention, to consolidate or extend learning and to assess understanding. In the best lessons teachers are able to challenge their more able pupils effectively with carefully chosen questions to extend their thinking. As a result of the good teaching they receive in Key Stage 2, pupils' learning is good. A wide variety of teaching methods are employed to make lessons interesting, and pupils enjoy their learning. On a day-to-day basis teachers plan lessons in English and mathematics well so that they are interesting and provide activities that motivate pupils effectively. They are careful to set work at the right level for pupils of differing ability and as a result they all learn well. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well by teaching and non-teaching staff and they also make good progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | There is a satisfactory range of learning opportunities and all National Curriculum subjects have an appropriate allocation of time. The two-year cycle of topics has been reviewed in order to ensure that pupils continue to be challenged throughout the school. The provision includes very good extra-curricular activities. |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs | There is good provision for pupils with special needs who receive effective support from learning support assistants in most lessons. This ensures their full involvement in all areas of the curriculum to help them achieve the targets set out in their good individual learning plans. |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development | Good. There is good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This leads to good personal development for all pupils. |
| How well the school cares | Procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare are good. Teachers know their pupils well and make sound assessments of their work in English |

| | |
|----------------|---|
| for its pupils | and mathematics in Key Stage 2, which they now use well to promote higher standards. The monitoring and promotion of attendance are poor. |
|----------------|---|

Parents' views of the school overall are positive. They are pleased with the school and the progress their children are making. Information provided for parents is good. Parental contribution to pupils' learning at school and home is satisfactory through helping in school, pupils' reading diaries, homework schemes and occasional workshops. Parents of children with special educational needs are encouraged to become involved as soon as needs are identified.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|--|
| Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff | Good. The head teacher provides a clear direction for the school. The deputy head offers very good support in all areas and curriculum co-ordinators are hard working and effective. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | Good. Governors take their responsibilities very seriously and play an effective role in shaping the direction of the school. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | Good. Specific success criteria are included in the school improvement plan so that regular evaluation of its progress ensures that the school's targets are met. |
| The strategic use of resources | Good. All resources are used effectively. The school has good procedures to ensure that it gets best value for its money when purchases are made. |

The school has a sufficient match of teachers and support staff to teach the curriculum in full. The support assistants make a very effective contribution to pupils' progress. The school has good policies for the induction of newly qualified teachers, and staff new to the school. The accommodation is good. Resources for learning are good in most curriculum areas.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school and make good progress. • The teaching is good and helps their children to become mature and sensible. • The school is well led and staff are approachable and helpful. • The school works closely with them and they are kept informed of their children's progress. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount and type of homework. |

Inspection evidence confirms the largely positive views of the parents. The inspection team shares some of the concerns of a few parents about the homework their children are given. In Key Stage 2 the tasks given as homework are linked with the work being covered in lessons, parents are informed so they can help, and pupils' progress is enhanced as a result. However, this provision is less effective in Key Stage 1.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. When children are first admitted to the school initial assessments show that their attainment is well below that expected for their age. Children in the nursery class make good progress in their learning as a result of effective teaching. However, by the time they leave the reception class many children are not ready to move on to the National Curriculum. By this time they are achieving standards in line with those expected by the end of the Foundation Stage in physical development and personal, social and emotional development. However, their standards are still below those expected in knowledge and understanding of the world, communication, language and literacy, and mathematical and creative work. The nursery and reception class teachers, nursery nurses and support assistants work closely together in the mornings to plan and assess children's achievements. This helps to promote the good progress the children make in the mornings. However, the reception children achieve less well in the afternoon when they are taught as a separate class.
2. In the national statutory tests for pupils aged seven in 2002, the proportion attaining the levels expected in reading and writing was well below the national average. When compared with those of pupils from similar backgrounds the reading and writing results were still well below average. Of pupils aged eleven in 2002 the proportion attaining the levels expected in English were below average nationally, but well above the average for pupils from similar backgrounds. There was little difference between the results of boys and girls at both key stages. The pupils who are on the special needs register make good progress in English and are a testament to how carefully the school now assesses their individual needs in this subject and plans appropriately. Results of tests over the last three years show that the overall trend is upwards at the end of Key Stage 2 and in line with the national trend of improvement.
3. The 2002 national assessments in mathematics for seven year olds showed that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected attainment Level 2 was well below the national average. In the 2002 tests for pupils at the end of Key Stage 2, the proportion of eleven year olds achieving the expected Level 4 was well below the national average, and it was below average for those gaining the higher Level 5. Comparisons with schools in similar social circumstances indicate that these results were above average for eleven year olds. Results over a three-year period to 2002 show that the school is raising levels of attainment in line with the national trend of improvement.
4. In 2002 the results of teacher assessments in science for Year 2 showed that standards were above average, and above average when compared with those in similar schools. At Key Stage 2 the results last year were close to the national average overall but well above average for similar schools. There was little difference between the results of boys and girls and the school is raising levels of attainment in line with the national trend of improvement.
5. The target for pupils in the 2002 national tests, tasks and teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 2 were challenging and thanks to the efforts of the Year 6 teacher almost realised. The targets agreed for 2003 are also challenging but are likely to be realised in English, mathematics and science.
6. Throughout the school, the pupils progress well in speaking and listening because all staff give a lot of attention to learning in this area. The school has recognised the poor skills that many of the pupils have when they enter the school and provides good opportunities for the pupils to answer questions and to offer their ideas. As they move through the school they gain in confidence. By the end of Key Stage 2 standards are in line with national expectations. Pupils are encouraged to discuss their ideas in literacy and other lessons and listen attentively to the

contributions of other pupils and consider their ideas. For instance, very good work was seen in Year 6 when, as part of their geography topic, pupils learned to put arguments and counter-arguments, explain their thoughts coherently and take into account the views of others.

7. In reading, by the time the pupils leave the school in Year 6, standards of attainment are in line with those expected and the pupils are making good progress. However, by the end of Year 2 the standards are unsatisfactory and pupils make unsatisfactory progress. Most pupils understand how to sound out unfamiliar words, and use pictures and the context of the story to help reading. However, although work done in the reception class in the mornings gives the children a good start in gaining a basic sight vocabulary and knowledge and understanding of how to build words using sounds, this is not built on methodically as the pupils move through the key stage. By Year 6, most pupils read fluently and expressively and are independent and enthusiastic readers. They can explain their preferences and make comments on the themes and ideas in books. They read a range of fiction, poetry and non-fiction and they have a sound knowledge of the styles of different authors.
8. When the pupils leave the school standards in writing are in line with those found nationally. In Key Stage 2 the rate of progress increases and overall the pupils make good progress because the quality of teaching is good in Key Stage 2, especially at the end of the key stage. Teaching of writing in Key Stage 1 is unsatisfactory; this means that standards in writing are well below those expected by the end of Year 2, and the pupils make unsatisfactory progress. By the time they are seven the majority of pupils have not yet developed sound story writing skills because there are insufficient opportunities to practise the skills required to do this. There are opportunities for the pupils to cover the range of work specified in the National Literacy Strategy but expectations for pupils at all levels are not high enough and the teaching strategies being used are ineffective. The pupils have insufficient opportunities for producing sustained pieces of writing. Throughout the school the standards of handwriting and presentation are erratic. Although the school has an agreed script and handwriting is practised in most classes the standard is poor and skills that are learned are not carried through into the pupils' written work. Progress through Years 3 and 4 is slow because there is so much ground to be made up. However, by the end of the key stage significant progress has been made. Spelling and punctuation are more accurate and skills such as re-drafting a piece of writing are well developed. In Years 5 and 6 there are opportunities for the pupils to develop sustained pieces of writing and practise their writing skills. The pupils have good opportunities to write in an extensive range of forms. Stories show a clear start, middle and end, and characters, plot and language are well developed.
9. In mathematics, inspection evidence shows standards are well below those expected by the end of Year 2, but are broadly in line with expectations for their age by the end of Year 6. Standards are below those reported at the last inspection, but in this small school where cohort sizes vary from year to year, comparisons are unreliable. Many children enter the nursery with well below average attainment in early numeracy skills. They make good progress overall in the morning sessions of the Foundation Stage, moving from well below to below average standards of attainment in mathematics on entry to Year 1. However, there is a decline in the standards of attainment by the end of Key Stage 1, with pupils once more achieving well below average standards. By the end of Year 2, only a few pupils have developed a reasonable facility with number. While most recognise numbers to 100, count in twos and tens and solve simple problems of money and measurement, the majority lack understanding of tens and units, limiting their capability to calculate problems with higher numbers. Pupils make good progress throughout Key Stage 2, and in particular in Year 6, and are now achieving standards in line with expectations for their age by the time they leave school. Pupils in Year 6 have a sound grasp of mental strategies. They find equivalencies of fractions, convert decimals to whole numbers, measure angles and perimeter, and present their information using a variety of graphs such as block and line. Opportunities for pupils to apply their skills learnt in mathematics to other areas of the curriculum are developing, for example for measurement purposes in design and technology, science and geography.

10. Inspection evidence shows that, pupils make sound progress in science in Key Stage 1 and good progress in Key Stage 2. By the time they reach the end of Key Stage 2 at the age of eleven, attainment is in line with expectations for their age, and above average when compared with those of pupils in similar schools. The school has maintained the standards noted at the time of their last inspection. This is despite pupils' low attainment on entry, and the high percentage of pupils in the school with special educational needs. The majority of Year 3 pupils are beginning to understand how a switch breaks a circuit in electricity. However, many find it difficult to express their ideas coherently. In Year 5, pupils were able to come to sensible and well-supported conclusions in their investigations in sound. In Year 6 pupils have a good knowledge of different materials and use terminology such as evaporation, water vapour and particles accurately. Only a small minority of pupils in the current Year 6 cohort are unlikely to achieve the expected Level 4 in science by the end of the current year and overall attainment in Year 6 is in line with the national average.
11. All pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their abilities. They achieve well in relation to their prior attainment and against the targets set for them in their individual education plans. Their progress is reviewed well and measured against these targets each term. Good support from classroom assistants enables pupils to complete tasks successfully. They make satisfactory progress in literacy and numeracy. Their rate of progress improves towards the end of Key Stage 2 as a result of the consistently good teaching and support that they receive.
12. In art and design, design and technology, music, ICT, physical education, geography and history, standards achieved by pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 when they leave the school are in line with what could be expected for their age.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

13. Pupils' relationships with each other and adults are strengths of the school and make a very good contribution towards promoting their attainment and progress. Their personal development, behaviour and attitudes are good. Parents say their children enjoy school. This conclusion maintains findings at the time of the previous inspection. The attendance overall of the pupils has become worse and is now poor and limiting the progress of a significant number of pupils.
14. Relationships between pupils and with adults are very good and contribute to the quality of work in lessons. Pupils get on well with each other when playing games at break and dinner times. In the classroom the youngest respect each other's space when sitting close together on the carpet. There are occasional minor disagreements but, even amongst the youngest children in the nursery, they do not interfere with each other's work when working closely together. The excellent relationships established between the pupils and the teacher in the Year 6 class led them to have the confidence in their own abilities when revising their electrical knowledge during a science lesson. Pupils' good social development with others of different ages is shown by the group of pupils from Years 2 to 6 working on recycling as part of the sustainability project. Boys and girls and pupils from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds work together very well when doing group work in the classroom and when playing at break and dinner times.
15. The pupils' personal development is good. Pupils respond well to the opportunities to undertake responsibilities with the Year 6 pupils showing great maturity and initiative with the wide variety of tasks both when overseeing younger pupils and when helping the staff. They show respect for the views of others and their good spiritual development is particularly apparent during class council meetings. This provides excellent opportunities for pupils of all year groups, apart from reception, to organise the discussions themselves with the teachers rarely making any interventions. For example, Year 3/4 pupils not only listened attentively to others, the great majority of pupils felt able to contribute because they knew their classmates would not belittle their contributions. The older pupils are able to work independently as seen

when Year 5 pupils used the Internet to research water treatment during a geography lesson. Nevertheless, such opportunities occur less frequently in Key Stage 1 where the teachers direct much of the work too closely.

16. In general, the pupils' attitudes towards learning are good. They often concentrate well and show interest in what they are doing, as was seen particularly in a Year 3/4 numeracy lesson recognising multiples of five by counting 'Boogie Woogie'. They have the confidence to try and work out answers in front of their classmates. In most classes pupils settle quickly to group work in lessons and maintain their interest even when not being directly supported by adults in the classroom. When the subject matter is particularly interesting, they try hard and want to succeed as, for example, in a Year 1/2 history lesson comparing the present day with the Victorian period. Even the youngest pupils are keen to join in the work, as seen when the teacher used praise well to encourage the reception class children to understand letter sounds. Nevertheless, pupils lose interest when they do not fully understand what is expected of them, such as in a Year 5 mathematics lesson investigating area.
17. The pupils with special educational needs are well included and encouraged to take part in all the learning activities. They have very good relationships with the adults who support them when they are working in a whole-class situation, in a group, and individually. There are good arrangements and strategies in place to help pupils with emotional and behavioural problems, and these are successfully carried through. These help these pupils to improve their behaviour and join in fully with class activities. As pupils reach the top of the school their personal development improves, they develop a mature approach to dealing with problems and challenging behaviour is rare.
18. Pupils' moral development is good. The great majority of pupils behave well in the classroom, at play and lunch times. They are open, well mannered, polite to adults and to each other, courteous and welcoming to visitors. They move around the school in an orderly way. In addition they wait patiently for other classes when going to and from their rooms for assemblies. Most pupils behave well but in some of the lessons seen progress of the whole class was limited by the inappropriate behaviour of a few pupils. This was most apparent in the lower end of the school. Nevertheless, all the staff adopt a consistent approach to supporting behaviour. The result is that pupils know what is expected so that in the upper part of the school there is a well-established atmosphere of mutual respect between adults and pupils, ensuring a positive environment for learning.
19. Attendance is poor. The level of attendance has deteriorated since the last inspection and, last year it was well below the national average. This puts the school in the bottom ten per cent of schools across the country. The result is that over a quarter of the pupils in the main school are absent for more than four weeks during the year. However, the attendance level has improved slightly in the current year. Absences are mainly because of illness though a few parents insist on taking their children out of school to go on holiday. High levels of absence not only affect the attainment of individual pupils; other pupils are affected, as the teacher has to repeat work to help the absentee catch up. The attendance level of the nursery is exceptionally poor. In the term before the inspection it reached only 74 per cent which means that in a full year many of the children are absent for more than ten weeks. Although these children are not of compulsory school age it is a waste of a valuable resource. Unauthorised absence in the main school is well above the national average reflecting the difficulties the school has in obtaining reasons for absence from some parents. The great majority of pupils are keen to come to school and arrive at school early. Nevertheless a few pupils are often late by up to ten or 15 minutes and sometimes later. These late arrivals interrupt the first lesson, resulting in a loss of teaching time for all pupils. The school has improved its registration procedures since the last inspection and they now take place promptly at the start of the day.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

20. The overall quality of teaching observed varies considerably across the school. Two of the six teachers in school during the inspection were supply teachers who had little or no knowledge of the school prior to the week concerned. It is considerable credit to them that their teaching was never less than satisfactory, and sometimes good. The teaching observed in the nursery was often good, and in the reception class consistently satisfactory. Teaching in Key Stage 2 is good. However, other evidence shows that teaching in Key Stage 1 has been unsatisfactory for some time prior to the inspection.
21. The overall quality of teaching enables children to make good progress in the Foundation Stage. In Key Stage 1 lessons the progress has been unsatisfactory. The support provided by classroom assistants and parents to support pupils is good. The quality of classroom support in Years 1 and 2 was often responsible for the sound quality of teaching observed during the inspection. In Key Stage 2 progress is good. Most teachers here are aware of the very differing needs of pupils. Teachers are experienced and use a suitable range of appropriate strategies to develop pupils' learning. This was very apparent in a number of literacy and mathematics sessions when the teachers moved from whole-class teaching to group work.
22. The teaching in the nursery and reception classes was always satisfactory and often good in the lessons observed, reflecting the hard work of the teachers. There was a difference in the quality of teaching in the morning and afternoon lessons. The planning, enabled by the nursery teacher who is employed only in the morning, clearly identifies what children are to learn and all activities selected are designed to prepare children to make a sound start to the National Curriculum. The teachers are helped by the assessment co-ordinator to identify what is appropriate for groups of children of differing prior attainment in the nursery. Children of all abilities are given good support and so their progress is good. Classroom organisation is good. This strong picture is less good in the afternoon when the reception children are taught on their own. Here work is not always planned to match the differing abilities of children, and opportunities are missed to reinforce literacy and numeracy objectives.
23. The teaching at Key Stage 1 reflects sound subject knowledge across the curriculum. Teachers have implemented the literacy and numeracy initiatives satisfactorily overall. Planning in English and mathematics is sound and generally identifies clearly how groups of pupils of differing prior attainments are to be taught. However, levels of ability can vary considerably within these groups and little is done to make all lessons appropriately challenging. The provision for some subjects is also inadequate. The lack of rigour in the use of assessment means that the activities selected are not always appropriate to the identified aims in teachers' plans. Classroom organisation is generally sound, and teachers have good relationships with all pupils. Despite this sound picture, evidence of last year's pupils' work available in writing and the non-core subjects indicates that teaching in these subjects has been ineffective and not led to appropriate learning or progress by many pupils. Too often careless and untidy work is allowed to go unchanged and the expectations of pupils are too low.
24. Overall the teaching in Key Stage 2 is good, with some strengths in the provision for English and mathematics. The teaching at this stage is characterised by good subject knowledge and understanding and very clear planning, again principally in English and mathematics. The links between different subjects that the teachers occasionally make at this stage produce activities that are particularly valuable. The effective, but very different, teaching in Years 3/4, 5 and 6 is an example of where the individual teaching strengths of these teachers has been utilised to good effect through their careful day-to-day planning. A good example of the seamless planning was in an art and design lesson in Year 6. The photographs being studied to extend in a collage were from Tibet – the country they had been studying in geography. The music playing in the background was from Purcell – the composer they later focused on in a music lesson. This led to the effective discussion and was completed by the written work back in the classroom. What could have been disjointed was complementary and effective.

25. Throughout the school, class discussions are lively and challenging. Questions are well focused and designed to bring all pupils into the discussions. Teachers use a good range of methods and groupings that are well matched to the lesson's purpose. The quality of whole-class teaching in the literacy and numeracy sessions is generally good. Teachers lead these discussions well introducing new ideas with care and clarity. The ebullience of the Year 6 teacher was matched by the responses of the pupils as they made quick mental calculations to win a competitive game. All teachers are good role models, and the most effective teaching ensures that other pupils are also used as good role models too. This was particularly true of the music co-ordinator in Year 3/4 who sang and performed with real enthusiasm, and encouraged all pupils to do so. The resulting singing and playing from the pupils improved very well as the lesson progressed.
26. Teachers have good relationships with their pupils throughout the school. Most praise pupils to modify behaviour and reward good work. Instructions given to pupils are clear, and teachers listen carefully to pupils' replies and questions, and show they value them all. Teachers manage pupils very effectively which results in increasingly good behaviour. In a Year 6 lesson, the teacher was careful to use as good examples the completed work of one or two pupils who were displaying challenging behaviour. This kept their attention focused and that of others in the class.
27. Ongoing assessments to check pupils' understanding and progress were not apparent in many lessons in Key Stage 1. It was rare to see groups of pupils being targeted to check on the suitability of the lesson plans for the different levels of ability. Where assessments are made on a day-to-day basis, they are not always being used accurately and lessons are inappropriately challenging. This is not the case in Key Stage 2, and especially at the top of the school, where the teacher uses assessment in the lesson planning to promote pupils' progress on a systematic basis and effectively modifies this to meet pupils' individual needs. Marking varies throughout the school. The teachers of the younger pupils discuss their results, rather than just write comments in their books, and this is often effective. However, too often careless and untidy work is allowed to persist despite the school's policy on presentation. Homework is also used inconsistently. Although it supports pupils' progress in places in the school such as Year 6 where it is very effective, in other classes it is perfunctory and makes little contribution to pupils' progress.
28. The class teachers plan the individual education plans of pupils with special educational needs. The plans are reviewed on a termly basis. The new targets set are generally matched to the pupils' needs and identify the small steps needed for them to make progress; however, it is not always clear when or by whom they will be carried out. When the work is particularly well matched to the pupils' needs and the learning support assistants effectively use a range of teaching methods, maintain good standards of behaviour and manage the pupils well, the pupils make good progress. However, on some occasions the work for the support assistants to carry out is less carefully planned, as a result the needs of the pupils are not carefully addressed and this leads to a variation in their rate of progress. In Key Stage 1 an area for development for the school is to adopt a more rigorous approach to teaching basic literacy skills to improve standards of writing for all pupils.

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

29. The curriculum meets the requirements to teach the National Curriculum and religious education. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall, with strengths in the personal and social development of children and an enriching provision for their developing knowledge and understanding of the world. Provision for outdoor play is limited, with few opportunities for pupils to balance and climb. The school has appropriate plans to develop this area of provision.

30. The quality of learning opportunities for pupils in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory overall. They are enhanced by the additional support given to pupils through the Reading Recovery Programme, but the school takes limited advantage of other initiatives, such as the Additional Literacy Strategy, to enrich the scope of pupils' learning. The quality of the curriculum is good in Key Stage 2 because the teachers have maintained a good balance of subject provision, whilst successfully driving up standards in English, mathematics and science. Provision is enriched by residential visits for older pupils and the additional opportunities taken by staff to broaden pupils' experiences, for example a trip to the Millennium Dome.
31. The school implements the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy satisfactorily overall. This is particularly effective in Key Stage 2, resulting in pupils' standards rising to nationally expected levels by the end of Year 6. However, for many Key Stage 1 pupils, the opportunities provided through the strategies do not consistently match their individual stages of learning, resulting in unsatisfactory attainment and progress overall in English and mathematics by the end of Year 2.
32. The curriculum is well planned using a two-year rolling programme of topics, which effectively addresses the needs of the mixed-age classes and gives a good balance of subject provision over time. Whilst appropriately giving priority to the monitoring and development of English, mathematics and science, there is an effective rolling programme to ensure that all subjects receive a monitoring focus over a four-year cycle. Subjects at priority level are audited via the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in classrooms and pupils' work over time. Teachers' training needs are identified and met, and adequate levels of resourcing ensured. This strong focus by the head teacher reflects the school's intention that all pupils receive a high quality, balanced and relevant education.
33. As there are sound procedures in place for the initial identification and assessment of pupils with special educational needs, and for the assessment of their progress, the curriculum they are offered is generally appropriate. Class teachers, the special educational needs co-ordinator and learning support assistants work together to meet the pupils' individual needs. Individual education plans are in place and have suitable targets for improvement set; however, it is not always clear when or by whom they will be carried out. The pupils are taught in a variety of situations, being mainly supported within the classes but also on occasions withdrawn individually and to work in groups when this is more effective.
34. Improvement in the curriculum since the last inspection is sound. The school's provision for ICT is now satisfactory and has a strong potential to develop further. Pupils' standards of attainment have improved by the time they leave school due to detailed curriculum planning, the developing subject knowledge of teachers and the provision of a suitable range of tools and resources. Policies and schemes of work have now been developed for all subjects of the National Curriculum enabling pupils to be taught new skills in a consistent way.
35. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is good. The school's programme is closely linked to the religious education programme 'Here I am'. This translates into weekly timetabled 'class council' time, where pupils discuss wide-ranging personal issues such as bullying and relationships. The school has achieved accreditation as a 'Health Promoting School', so that the importance of a healthy lifestyle is embedded in curricular provision. Sex education is satisfactory. Drugs education is included in science. Swimming is provided for pupils in Key Stage 2. The 'Sustainability Project' enables pupils from differing age groups to discuss environmental initiatives. The group has already introduced a paper-recycling scheme, and is thinking of ways to protect animal habitats. This promotes good opportunities to develop citizenship.
36. Because school staff give time to organise a variety of clubs such as football, art and craft, environment and board games, provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. This enables pupils of all ages to extend their learning beyond the school day. Teachers provide

good opportunities for pupils to visit interesting places, for example Llandudno to study a contrasting geographical area, effectively extending pupils' day-to day experiences.

37. There are good links with the community. The school is active in creating opportunities to enrich pupils' learning, for example by effective liaison with the fire service, police, or initiatives using local scientists to conduct experiments in classes. All pupils regularly visit the local library. There are satisfactory links with the local secondary school.
38. Spiritual development is good. The family atmosphere engendered in this small school promotes a very supportive structure in which all feel valued and this contributes significantly to pupils' spiritual well-being. Sensitive displays in all areas of the building emphasise the school's unique Catholic dimension and daily prayer times appropriately reinforce this. There is a sense of reverence about school assemblies and there are good opportunities for personal reflection. For example, pupils have identified precious memories and ways in which to hold on to them. A system of house points and certificates enables pupils to celebrate success for academic achievements and performing good deeds.
39. Provision for moral development is very good. There is a strong sense of order in the school. This is because all staff adhere to the 'Traffic Lights' behaviour policy so that pupils experience consistency and a notion of fair play. Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons and is consistently very good in Year 6, demonstrating the school's ability to develop mature attitudes to learning as pupils move through the school. In some classes pupils are encouraged to celebrate the good deeds of others, for example, nominating a 'Special Person of the Week'. This positively reinforces the importance of caring for others.
40. Provision for social development is very good. Pupils' social skills are effectively developed in a number of planned ways. For example, in termly theme days, pupils are mixed across groups so that older support younger pupils. Older pupils are given additional responsibilities to help the smooth running of the school, such as preparing the hall for assembly. They become Buddies to pupils in Years 3 and 4, hearing them read on a daily basis. Such opportunities develop a sense of stewardship. There are very good relationships in all aspects of school life. Staff are very good role models, effectively demonstrating how to respond and communicate with others. The school provides a good range of visits that also contributes significantly to pupils' social development, for example, younger pupils visiting a local farm. The residential weekend field trip to Oakland's Outdoor Education Centre offers Year 6 pupils good opportunities to develop social awareness as they live and work together in an informal environment.
41. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory. The school offers a sound range of opportunities for pupils to learn about their own culture through visits to Bidston village or the Liverpool Philharmonic. There are regular visits from theatre groups and musicians. In art and music, pupils encounter the works of famous artists and composers. Pupils learn about major world faiths in religious education, and encounter other life styles in geography. The school has begun to plan interesting, wide-ranging theme days that introduce pupils to aspects of other cultures. For example, a recent 'Chinese Day' enabled pupils to experience Chinese food, art, dance and costume. However, in teachers' planning and work on display there is scope to increase pupils' awareness of the multi-cultural diversity that exists in Britain today.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

42. As at the time of the previous inspection, staff show appropriate concern for the needs of the pupils and provide good role models to encourage their development. Parents are pleased with the level of support in the school, seeing it as a caring community where staff are approachable if there are any problems. The procedures for monitoring pupils' academic performance and personal development and for providing educational and personal support and guidance are good.

43. The school has good procedures for child protection and for ensuring the welfare of the pupils. The head teacher is the designated person for child protection and the school follows local procedures. The staff generally have received guidance on how to deal with any situations that may arise and the school ensures new staff are fully briefed. The provision for first aid is good with several trained staff, records kept of any treatment and letters home to parents as appropriate. A health and safety policy is in place and the school's approach is audited regularly by the local education authority. The curriculum co-ordinators ensure that the teachers are aware of any potential hazards in their lessons and their plans show that they have very good awareness. Teachers ensure that pupils are made aware of health and safety issues during lessons such as science, physical education and design and technology. Risk assessments are in place for all activities and the school is aware that another review has to be undertaken in the near future.
44. The monitoring and support of pupils' personal development are good. Their personal qualities are recorded within the religious education programme with teachers keeping details of the development in their attitudes, behaviour and social skills. These qualities are enhanced by the various responsibilities the pupils have both within the classroom and around the school. The school encourages pupils to recognise the value of good work with, for example, the kindness award and, for the younger pupils, having their photograph placed in the friendship frame. The class council discussions run by the pupils are an excellent way of helping pupils to learn to listen to others and to be tolerant of other points of view. For example, when talking to an inspector, a Year 2 pupil recognised without prompting that he was saying too much and needed to allow his classmates to speak. The school methodically assesses pupils with special educational needs to gain a good picture of their difficulties. They are placed on appropriate levels on the special needs register and the necessary support is clearly explained in the individual education plans.
45. The procedures for promoting discipline and good behaviour and for preventing any oppressive behaviour are very good. Class rules and the code of conduct are on display and teachers discuss them with the pupils at the beginning of the year and refer to them as necessary at other times. The way that all staff give out stars to the youngest pupils and house points to the older rewards good behaviour. The behaviour policy recognises the needs of the pupils and reflects the philosophy of the school, emphasising praise and encouragement. The lessons seen during the inspection showed that the staff consistently adopt this positive approach. Though pupils could recall some bullying or name-calling in the past, such incidents are now rare and school takes rapid and appropriate action if any occurs. The pupils who show any sustained difficulty with behaviour are monitored well through the special needs system.
46. Overall the procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory, though the school's approach has some good features. Newsletters and other letters remind parents of the need for regular attendance and the importance of arriving on time. The school makes good use of the computerised system to enable teachers and the head teacher to monitor and analyse the registers regularly and contact parents as necessary. Any unexplained absence results in a telephone call home on the first day. Pupils with very good attendance receive certificates. The education social worker visits the school fortnightly and, as well as being actively involved with a few of the parents, has produced an action plan. Nevertheless, the school's efforts have not prevented the level of attendance being well below the national average for the past three years. The governors have not set any realistic, achievable targets for improvement and the school does not refer to outside agencies more than a few of the families with poor attendance or punctuality. In particular the school has not taken any effective action to improve the attendance level in the nursery.
47. The ways in which pupils' work and the progress that they make are checked shows an improving picture. The results from a good range of standardised and external tests are well analysed and are used to group pupils and set targets for cohorts and groups. The information gained has been particularly effectively used in Year 6 and contributes to the good progress

made by the pupils in that year group. The assessment co-ordinator is pro-active and has done a lot of work to ensure that throughout the school the agreed testing schedule is being carried out systematically. Good arrangements are in place for teachers to work together to examine the results from tests and identify areas for improvement. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress, in English, mathematics and science, are secure. In other subjects procedures for assessing and recording the progress of pupils are in the early stages of development, although the school has begun to use suggestions in the national guidelines that it is using to plan for each area of the curriculum.

48. The use made of the information gathered is only satisfactory. This is because although teachers are beginning to use assessment in their planning to promote pupils' progress on a systematic basis, this is more successfully carried out in Key Stage 2 and is most effective at the top of the school. The school could usefully consider setting more rigorous targets for all the groups of pupils as at present they concentrate on two groups within each year group. In Key Stage 1 insufficient use is made of the information gathered to focus on meeting individual needs and to have high enough expectations of pupils to achieve well. As a result in Key Stage 1 the overall progress made by pupils is unsatisfactory.
49. Pupils' progress is beginning to be tracked through the school and targets are given to pupils on an individual basis. Individual teachers use the targets set in different ways, for example they not always fixed at the front of the work books so that pupils can check their progress and see what they need to learn next. In addition the wording of the targets is often not 'child friendly' and this way of supporting pupils' progress needs further refinement.
50. Overall the ways in which pupils' progress is monitored and supported are good in Key Stage 2. In Key Stage 1 they are satisfactory. Teachers and adults throughout the school use praise and rewards to foster the pupils' efforts and support their progress. In Key Stage 2 homework is given regularly in a number of curriculum areas. It is well marked and comments made to help pupils improve. If pupils have not completed their work at home they are given an opportunity to do so in school. As a result the older pupils are beginning to develop a mature attitude to working more independently and taking responsibility for their own learning. In Key Stage 1 the picture is not so good. For example, the arrangements for the home/school reading partnership are not carried out consistently. Pupils only change their books once a week at the best and often not that frequently. Many parents conscientiously comment on their child's progress but there is no dialogue between parents and teachers to identify areas for improvement. This has a limiting effect on the progress of the pupils to learn to read.
51. The ways in which pupils with special educational needs are initially identified are good. The school uses a range of methods including the use of baseline assessments when the children enter school, together with teachers' assessments. There are satisfactory procedures in place for monitoring the academic progress of the pupils with special educational needs. As they move through the school their progress is regularly checked but the information gained is not always used to target what the pupils need to learn next. The support assistants are highly committed to helping the pupils they work with and this helps the pupils to be well integrated into the activities being followed by the rest of the class and to make the satisfactory progress seen. Statutory requirements with regard to special educational needs are fully carried out. There are effective arrangements in place to make good use of support from external agencies such as the local education authority's Special Educational Support Service and the educational psychology service.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

52. In their responses to the questionnaire and at the meeting with the inspectors, parents showed that they are pleased with all that the school provides. The inspection team supports many of their positive comments. Parents say that the school is well led and the teaching is good. Their children like coming to school, behave well and make progress from the level of support they receive. The school expects them to work hard, helps them to become mature and

responsible and provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. The school works closely with parents and they feel comfortable approaching the school with any questions; they are kept well informed about how their child is getting on. These reactions are similar to the comments made at the time of the previous inspection. Some doubts were expressed about the amount of homework but the inspectors concluded that the work the pupils are expected to do at home is appropriate in Key Stage 2, but could be improved for younger pupils.

53. The school has established satisfactory links with the parents. The staff in the school work hard to provide a sound range of information both in writing and with meetings and courses. The news and other letters describe the various activities that the pupils are involved in as well providing general administrative information. Every term, class teachers send home a very good leaflet explaining what they will be teaching their pupils. At the start of each school year the teachers hold class meetings to talk about their approach to homework, behaviour and the curriculum. Every morning and afternoon provides a very good opportunity for parents to see the teachers. They are available before the start of the day and all go outside at the end of the day when parents are collecting their children. The inspectors saw several informal conversations taking place and it is apparent that parents feel very welcome to talk to the staff. Almost all parents come to the formal meetings with teachers in the autumn and spring terms to find out what their children will be doing and to discuss their progress. The annual report on progress is sent home in the summer term. This report usually provides a reasonable summary for English and mathematics. Nevertheless it is poor for the other subjects, concentrating on the work covered or attitudes rather than the skills and understanding acquired. In addition, similar wording is used for most of the pupils in a class. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are appropriately involved in the setting and review of their individual education plans
54. Parents' involvement with the school makes a satisfactory contribution to its work and to the attainment of the pupils. Discussion with pupils showed that parents help them at home. Pupils are happy in school, work hard and are keen to learn. These attitudes reflect the extent to which parents encourage their children to respect the school and education process. They are also keen to come to activities involving their children; class and awards assemblies and masses are well attended, as are the consultation evenings. A number of parents want to help their children and the family literacy and numeracy sessions are over-subscribed. The school and parents are also interested in a course to learn about computers but, unfortunately, it was not possible to arrange one on a day suitable for parents. The Friends' Association is very supportive, arranging both fund-raising and social events. Some parents come to help in the classroom on a regular basis and many more are willing to help on trips out and making costumes for performances. There is also support from the extended family with grandparents coming to talk about life in the area as it used to be.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

55. The leadership and management of the school are good overall. The leadership of the head teacher is of a good quality. She has a very clear vision of the direction that she expects the school to take to ensure the best possible education for all pupils. This vision is that all pupils should receive the best possible opportunities in life as a result of the education they receive. She is a firm and caring leader with a high level of professional knowledge and expertise that is clearly reflected in all aspects of her work. Parents know that, at all times, they will be received with care and consideration to discuss matters of importance to them or to seek help when they are in need.
56. The head teacher is fully supported and complemented by an extremely capable deputy who is a teacher of high quality in her own right with the Year 6 class. The deputy matches the head teacher in her enthusiasm for promoting the highest levels of education and care for both pupils and their parents. Both have a clear understanding of their roles as senior members of the school. As a result, the school is united in its approach to guiding and teaching pupils and

is successful in achieving its goals. The consistently better standards now being achieved at Key Stage 2 are a testament to their effectiveness as a team.

57. The leadership structure is strengthened by the work carried out by the subject co-ordinators. Co-ordinators are clear about the roles that they fulfil and they do this well with varying degrees of effectiveness depending upon the length of time that they have held their specific responsibilities. The whole ethos of the school, and the attitudes of most teachers to their work, is such that they respect the individual parts they play in terms of guiding and monitoring the quality of their own work.
58. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good, as is the progress they make. The co-ordinator for special educational needs, who is the head teacher, works hard to carry out her role effectively. This includes the completion of paper work for statutory requirements, checking and reviewing pupils' progress, liaising with outside agencies, overseeing the organisation of the school's support for pupils with special educational needs, and meeting with parents, teachers and learning support staff. She ensures that the teachers are aware of procedures for identifying, assessing and providing for the pupils with special educational needs. The well-qualified governor with responsibility for overseeing the special educational provision has a clear picture of the needs of the school's pupils. The school's plan for improvement has identified the need to review special educational provision during this school year and to decide how it can be further improved.
59. The quality of monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance and the taking of effective action is good. Co-ordinators monitor the effectiveness of teachers' planning on a regular basis and ensure that these plans are put into practice. The whole staff have begun to contribute to discussions on effective teaching and the results of this combined approach were clearly observed during the inspection. The head and deputy monitor teaching through lesson observations and this has led to good progress in Key Stage 2 and two good new appointments. The urgent need for further training in Key Stage 1 has been made a priority in a separate action plan after lesson observations by the head teacher. The introduction of new staff to the school, including newly qualified teachers, is good. New teachers are given clear guidance, including a relevant induction sheet to support them as they settle in. Newly qualified teachers are monitored regularly to ensure that they develop in a positive way. They receive regular guidance and targets are set to help them grow in confidence and skills. To this end, they are provided with appropriate opportunities to observe other colleagues in action and so learn from the good teaching practice of others.
60. The governing body is very committed to the school and has a good understanding of their strengths and areas for development. They are led by an enthusiastic and experienced chair, who works very effectively alongside the head and staff. The effectiveness of the governing body in fulfilling its responsibilities is good. They take their responsibilities seriously and play a role in shaping the direction of the school. However, in conjunction with the head teacher they have not yet set any realistic, achievable targets for improving pupils' attendance, and this is now a matter of some urgency. Various standard committees now meet on a regular basis to ensure that the management of the school is effective. These include a curriculum committee that has a close liaison with the curriculum co-ordinators so that it is kept fully informed of what is happening in each subject. Some governors have a link with particular subjects so that the development of the subject can be monitored from year to year.
61. The school's improvement plan is good. It is designed to cover a period of three years through a general overview, with the current year broken down into fine detail. This is designed to deal with all relevant aspects of planning and action and relates various priorities accurately to the costs involved and to the budget implications. All teachers are involved with the development of this plan and co-ordinators take responsibility for developing their parts of it. The head teacher and governors are being careful to make sure that specific success criteria are included in the plan, so that regular evaluation of its progress occurs, ensuring that the school's targets are met.

62. Since the last inspection, the school has made sound progress with improvements in most areas of concern, despite the many changes of teacher and the different head teacher. The curriculum is well balanced and supported by policies and schemes of work for all subjects that are completely updated, re-written or clearly earmarked as part of a planned development programme. The curriculum provision for reading and ICT has been successfully improved in order to support pupils' attainment in these subjects.
63. The school has developed a soundly based financial plan linked to efficient procedures for monitoring the budget. Clear costings, related to the budget and the long-term plan, are in place and the progress of expenditure is being closely monitored. The school is now managing its finances efficiently. The day-to-day functions of the office are carried out professionally by the financial assistant and the office team. This ensures that all matters relating to income and expenditure are dealt with effectively. Specific grants are used for their designated purposes. The school's use of best value principles in deciding upon purchases of resources is satisfactory. The current budget is a potential problem as it could easily lead to an overspend. However, the head and finance administrator have already itemised where savings can be made in order to safeguard future developments, and very good discussions have been held with the governors to move the school forward.
64. There is a sufficient number of suitably qualified and experienced teachers to meet the needs of the school in teaching the curriculum. There is a good mix of longer-serving teachers and newer staff and of male and female teachers. Teachers are well supported by a large number of well-qualified learning support and teaching assistants who help the learning of all pupils throughout the school.
65. The school's accommodation is satisfactory. It is situated on a widespread but attractive site with large playgrounds and field. Children under five have an outdoor play area with a safe surface around climbing equipment, but the space is small and some activities are limited as a result. The computer suite has added an extra dimension to the teaching of ICT and is well used.
66. Overall the school's learning resources are sufficient for the needs of pupils in each subject and in many they are good. For example in design and technology, ICT, mathematics, music and geography they are making a significant contribution to pupils' learning experiences. In English the number and range of books available are improving. Pupils have access to an adequate range of fiction and non-fiction books, all in good condition. In addition all classes have a good stock of dictionaries and thesauri.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

67. In order to further raise standards in the school, governors, the head teacher and staff should:-

- 1) Improve pupils' overall progress by the end of Key Stage 1 by –
 - a) Carrying out rigorously the changes needed in teaching, after the good evaluation of what is working well and not so well, as in Key Stage 2, to help teachers improve and raise standards further.
 - b) Co-ordinating the Foundation Stage/Year 1 provision satisfactorily. Through planning together teachers should ensure that opportunities to extend or consolidate children's learning are not missed.
 - c) Ensuring that teachers at this stage use ongoing assessment to plan work that meets the specific needs of all pupils of differing levels of ability, but especially for those of average or below average ability. Teachers and subject co-ordinators should make careful use of all assessment, particularly in the short term, to ensure that their expectations in all lessons are matched to pupils' existing ability and all targets set are appropriately challenging.
 - d) Building systematically on the work done in the Foundation Stage, particularly in reading and writing. Areas identified for working on and pointers for improvement should be made clear to parents or other adults who help the children. The books pupils take home should be matched to the pupils' needs and the arrangements for the home/school reading partnership carried out consistently.

Paragraphs 1, 7, 8, 9, 15, 23, 27, 28, 31, 48, 49, 50, 59, 69, 71, 72, 85, 88, 91, 94, 96, 97,
99

- 2) Focus throughout the school on the presentation of pupils' work and the consistent implementation of the school's policy to improve spelling, handwriting and the layout of mathematical work.

Paragraphs 8, 23, 27, 77, 91, 92, 100, 128

- 3) Take further measures to improve attendance and punctuality. In particular, the school should set specific, measurable, achievable targets and deadlines for improvement in each class and establish a new sense of urgency about this issue amongst pupils, staff and parents. To back this up they should ensure outside agencies are fully involved with all those families, including those with children in the nursery, who show poor attendance and punctuality.

Paragraphs 13, 19, 46, 60

OTHER MINOR ISSUES WHICH THE SCHOOL SHOULD CONSIDER

- 4) Improve the effectiveness of the school's links with parents by ensuring annual reports on progress provide targets for academic improvement and, for all subjects, details of what pupils know and can do.

Paragraph 53

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | |
|--|----|
| Number of lessons observed | 40 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils | 15 |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| | Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|------------|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| Number | 1 | 3 | 18 | 18 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Percentage | 2 | 8 | 45 | 45 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

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

Information about the school's pupils

| Pupils on the school's roll | Nursery | YR – Y6 |
|---|---------|---------|
| Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils) | 10 | 99 |
| Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals | 0 | 59 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

| Special educational needs | Nursery | YR – Y6 |
|---|---------|---------|
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs | 0 | 4 |
| Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register | 0 | 38 |

| 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 | 9 |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving | 7 |

Attendance

| Authorised absence | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 7.1 |
| National comparative data | 5.4 |

| Unauthorised absence | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 1.5 |
| National comparative data | 0.5 |

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

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

| | | | | |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
| | 2002 | 9 | 4 | 13 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | Reading | Writing | Mathematics |
|---|----------|---------|---------|-------------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above | Boys | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| | Girls | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| | Total | 7 | 8 | 8 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above | School | 54 (71) | 62 (79) | 62 (71) |
| | National | 84 (84) | 86 (86) | 90 (91) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|----------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above | Boys | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| | Girls | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| | Total | 8 | 8 | 13 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above | School | 62 (79) | 62 (71) | 100 (79) |
| | National | 85 (85) | 89 (89) | 89 (89) |

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

- Data for boys and girls separately is omitted as the number in each category was not more than ten

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 |
| | 2002 | 9 | 7 | 16 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above | Boys | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| | Girls | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| | Total | 10 | 9 | 13 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above | School | 63 (73) | 56 (62) | 81 (77) |
| | National | 75 (75) | 73 (71) | 86 (87) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above | Boys | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| | Girls | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| | Total | 9 | 10 | 9 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above | School | 56 (76) | 63 (84) | 56 (92) |
| | National | 73 (72) | 74 (74) | 82 (82) |

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

- Data for boys and girls separately is omitted as the number in each category was not more than ten

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 | 97 | 1 | 1 |
| White – Irish | | | |
| White – any other White background | | | |
| Mixed – White and Black Caribbean | | | |
| Mixed – White and Black African | | | |
| Mixed – White and Asian | 1 | | |
| 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 | 1 | | |
| 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) | 6 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 16 |
| Average class size | 19 |

Education support staff: YR – Y6

| | |
|---|----|
| Total number of education support staff | 4 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 95 |

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

| | |
|--|----|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 1 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 10 |
| Total number of education support staff | 3 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 75 |
| Number of pupils per FTE adult | 3 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Financial year | 2002/2002 |
| | £ |
| Total income | 318011 |
| Total expenditure | 364002 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 3466 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 54090 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 8099 |

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 102 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 29 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 76 | 17 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 72 | 24 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 54 | 39 | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 38 | 28 | 14 | 3 | 17 |
| The teaching is good. | 83 | 17 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 76 | 17 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 86 | 14 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 79 | 17 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 72 | 24 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 59 | 37 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 66 | 34 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 62 | 21 | 3 | 0 | 14 |

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

68. The Foundation Stage unit comprises a combined morning nursery and reception class with one teacher and three nursery assistants. The school has given this the name 'Panda 1'. Another reception teacher, and one assistant from the morning session, then teach the reception class each afternoon; this is known as 'Panda 2'. Children enter Panda 1 in the term after their third birthdays, and move to Panda 2 in the September of the school year in which they are five. Due to staff absence at the time of the inspection, a supply teacher taught Panda 2.
69. Overall, provision for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. The quality of teaching is good overall for children of nursery age but there are weaknesses in provision for those of reception age. On entry to nursery initial assessments show that the attainment of the majority of children is well below average in all areas of learning. Good teaching enables children to progress well in their learning and acquisition of skills so that by the end of their first year as nursery aged children their attainment moves from well below to below average levels. This good progress slows for reception aged children. This is because there is no cohesive plan to meet their needs as they move between the differing organisations of morning and afternoon sessions. Whilst careful assessments are made of children's achievements over time in all areas of learning, there are no ongoing systems to check progress on a daily basis. This sometimes results in missed opportunities to provide structure at exactly the right level for individual children, limiting the progress they make. This is particularly so in early mathematical, writing and reading skills. Hence, when children enter Year 1, they are meeting the national standards of the early learning goals¹ in their physical and personal development. However they are still below in their creative knowledge and understanding of the world, and they fall to well below expectations for their age in early mathematical, reading, writing, and speaking skills.
70. The quality of teaching and learning in Panda 1 is good overall. All staff work hard to create a warm, welcoming and secure environment to make children's early years in school a positive experience. This is successful, so that children are happy and enjoy the mornings' activities. A significant strength is the very effective way in which adults manage children. Consequently, children listen carefully and behave very well. Time is used well so that children enjoy a purposeful range of enriching, child-centred activities. Staff have high expectations of children, teaching them to use appropriate vocabulary, for example, in literacy when they identify the author of a book. The teacher ensures that learning support assistants are involved in the planning process on a weekly basis. However, activities are sometimes planned in general terms, lacking a clearly defined learning objective for differing abilities of children. Some systems are too tightly planned, tying all staff to planned activities for too much of the session. This inflexibility of organisation sometimes limits opportunities for children to take decisions about their learning, for example, opportunities to get out and put away equipment, or to independently choose outdoor play.
71. Inspection evidence indicates the quality of teaching and learning for Panda 2 children is unsatisfactory as opportunities are missed to reinforce early literacy and numeracy skills and children read infrequently to an adult. Work is not always planned to match the differing abilities of children. This is a significant reason why children make limited progress in some aspects of their work.

¹ Planning in the Foundation Stage is geared towards pupils achieving standards known as the early learning goals in six areas of development – personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development; and creative development.

72. Co-ordination of the Foundation Stage is unsatisfactory. Because teachers do not plan jointly, opportunities to extend or consolidate children's learning are missed, limiting the progress made by a significant number of children. At an early age, learning becomes fragmented, and placed in compartments such as 'science' or 'design and technology', reducing children's opportunities to link areas of learning. During the current absence of the Panda 2 teacher, systems for hearing children read have broken down entirely, indicating a lack of effective co-ordination between the two classes. The co-ordinator has recently taken part in the 'Effective Early Learning' strategy, enabling her to effectively evaluate aspects of provision, and initiate positive changes, for example, learning support assistants now sharing in the planning process. However, these changes have not yet had time to make a positive impact on children's learning.
73. There is a well-structured induction programme enabling parents and children to visit the Nursery prior to entry, and a useful booklet outlining ways in which parents can prepare their children for school. Parents receive a half-termly curriculum plan outlining the main activities to be undertaken, but otherwise have few opportunities to be involved in their children's learning. Attendance is poor, with over 25 per cent of absence overall. More could be done to address this situation. Children with special educational needs are identified quickly and advice is sought from the co-ordinator for special educational needs. These children receive appropriate adult support and make satisfactory progress. Provision for outdoor play is satisfactory overall. Storage space for outdoor equipment is small, limiting the number of wheeled vehicles available to children. Opportunities to climb and balance are limited. The school has an appropriate plan to develop this area.

Personal, social and emotional development

74. Teaching of this aspect is good, and is a strength of provision. Children make good progress so that by the end of the Foundation Stage most will attain the early learning goal in this area of learning. The very supportive atmosphere created in Panda 1 helps children to feel secure and confident. The teacher ensures a quality start to the day through the simple daily act of worship. This effectively reinforces in simple terms the unique Catholic ethos of the school. Children respond positively to the daily 'Smiley Face' reward system that is used well to reinforce good behaviour. They behave well, listening carefully to teachers and others. Activities such as snack time are used appropriately to promote children's social development, as they learn good manners, to take turns and to share. They develop self-confidence when appointing the class leader for the day. The teacher plans an enriching programme of stimulating work, but children are often told which activities they may choose at other times in the session. This limits opportunities for children to initiate their own learning by accessing or putting away equipment or choosing from other well-structured activities not directly supervised by an adult.

Communication, language and literacy

75. Teaching is satisfactory overall. It is good for the development of speaking and listening skills. Owing to their low starting base on entry, most children do not reach standards expected for their age by the end of the reception year, but do make good progress and achieve well. The teacher plans lessons that effectively focus on extending speaking and listening skills. For example, through listening to the story of 'Jasper's Beanstalk', children learn to say the days of the week. The teacher asks questions, introduces new vocabulary and ensures that children understand new words such as soil, bean and plant. There are good opportunities to use puppets and models, for example, to act out the story of 'The Three Billy Goats Gruff'.
76. The teaching of reading is unsatisfactory overall. This is due to lack of continuity and provision between the Panda 1 and 2 classes. For example, Panda 1 children have good opportunities to listen to stories, and choose from a sound range of fiction and non-fiction books. They learn

key words, but these are taught in isolation of the reading scheme, and are the same for all children, irrespective of ability. For younger children there are no opportunities to share storybooks with parents at home. Many children identify their first names and appropriately use picture clues, but are not taught to track words as they read. When reading to an inspector this resulted in children reading by rote rather than looking carefully at individual words. In both classes, resources are labelled, but opportunities are missed to convey that print carries meaning by adding quality text to displays. Due to the absence of the Panda 2 teacher, children have read on only three occasions in the last eight weeks, thus losing continuity and reducing the rate of progress. Teachers maintain records of books read, but do not make diagnostic comments.

77. There are weaknesses in the teaching of writing. Most reception children write their first names and attempt early mark-making activities. Few develop firm pencil control. In Panda 1, reception-aged children have begun to learn the sounds made by letters, but have limited opportunities to practise these skills regularly through carefully structured activities. This, together with lack of procedures for detailed ongoing assessments of children's written work, results in children making insufficient progress over time. Opportunities to write for a variety of purposes in other areas of the classroom are limited. All adults do not use the prescribed handwriting scheme consistently. Most children will not attain the expected level of learning in the writing and reading aspects of the early learning goal.

Mathematical development

78. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Children learn to count in a number of interesting ways. For example, they gain a good understanding of the order of number by singing songs such as 'Five Little Buns' and counting the number of leaves on a beanstalk. They hop along a number line outdoors, and plant beans one at a time. These activities are relevant and make learning fun, enabling children to concentrate for long periods of time. Children recognise shapes such as circle, square and rectangle, and complete repeating patterns of differing colours. However, opportunities are missed to systematically assess individual children and to provide learning opportunities that carefully match their needs. This limits the rate of progress overall. At the end of their reception year only a small minority of children will achieve standards in line with those for their age in this area of learning.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

79. Teachers provide a good range of learning experiences to ensure that children make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the world. As a result of good teaching and effective use of resources, whilst children do not reach the standard expected in this area of learning, they make good progress and achieve well. Children learn sound design and technology skills as they use glue and a variety of materials to make 'feely' pictures. They learn early science skills as they use hand lenses and place varieties of beans in differing sets. They learn about the seasons as they dress teddy in appropriate clothing. Children use computers appropriately, confidently using the mouse to click on an item and drag to the required position.
80. Teaching is good. The Panda 1 teacher plans a good range of interesting activities. For example, in a topic about beans, one group of children examined different tins of beans, using their senses to decide on preference. A second group made bean shakers, listening carefully to the differing sounds they made. Another group placed beans in compost, prior to planting them in the garden. The good ratio of adults to children enabled each group to receive good support in their learning.

Physical development

81. Teaching is sound. Teachers provide sound opportunities for children to handle construction equipment, and use dough, paintbrushes and crayons. As a result, children's standards are satisfactory and most are on course to attain the early learning goal in this area of learning. Children demonstrate appropriate hand/eye co-ordination in many aspects of their work. For example, they carefully position beads on strings and paste small pieces of material onto collage pictures. Children have access to wheeled vehicles, but have few opportunities to balance and climb. By the end of the reception year all children can use space well, and skip, run, gallop and march with appropriate control. In one lesson observed, the quality of children's movements was hampered because many remained in outdoor shoes, and this restricted ability to move with varying degrees of lightness.

Creative development

82. Standards of creative development are satisfactory. Whilst children do not reach the expected level in this area of learning, they make good progress in the way they use and handle a good selection of tools, resources and materials. They enjoy playing in role-play situations such as the Giant's Castle, but overall below average speaking skills limit the quality of this creative play. For example, only one adapts voice and stance when answering the telephone. They use thick and thin paintbrushes to create effective pictures and a small minority make detailed figure drawings with limbs and facial features.
83. Teaching is sound. Teachers plan a comprehensive range of activities that enable children to learn new skills, and also express individuality in a variety of ways. Role-play areas are appropriate but lack opportunities for children to consolidate their learning in a planned way, for example, through the addition of counting, listening or writing activities.

ENGLISH

84. By the time the pupils leave the school, standards of attainment in English are in line with national averages. When the pupils enter the school their standards of attainment are well below national expectations. In Key Stage 1, the pupils make unsatisfactory progress and the standards they attain remain well below those seen nationally. As the pupils move through Key Stage 2 their rate of progress improves. In Key Stage 2 the pupils make good progress and the more able pupils achieve standards in line with their potential. This is because the standard of teaching is higher in Key Stage 2, in particular at the end of the key stage. The teachers have higher expectations of what the pupils are able to achieve and match the work more closely to the needs of the pupils. They make good use of the assessments to check the progress of pupils and plan work that addresses what they need to learn next.
85. At the time of the last inspection a key issue was to raise standards in English, at both key stages, by improving pupils' writing. This has been well addressed in Key Stage 2 where the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy has had a more positive effect. The subject co-ordinator for English is the head teacher. Her leadership has ensured a good improvement in standards in Key Stage 2. She has a clear vision of how to improve the quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 1 where the school has rightly identified English as an area to focus on for development.
86. Throughout the school, the pupils progress well in speaking and listening because all staff pay a lot of attention to learning in this area, and teaching is satisfactory and in Key Stage 2 is often good or better. The school has recognised the poor skills that many of the pupils have when they enter the school and provides good opportunities for the pupils to answer questions and to offer their ideas. By the end of Key Stage 2 standards are in line with national expectations. At the end of Key Stage 1, although standards remain low, the rate of progress is improving. The younger pupils show an interest in learning new vocabulary and confidently ask the meaning of words such as 'conjurer' or 'harp' when they come to them in a story. As they move through the school they gain in confidence. In Years 3 and 4 the pupils take part in a

lively poetry session using contrasting voices to portray patterns of rhyme and verse. Two more able Year 2 pupils are involved, with pupils from Key Stage 2, in a 'Sustainability Project' funded by Excellence in Cities. The group is meeting once a week and is giving the pupils good opportunities to think deeply about environmental issues and to express their opinions about how they could make a difference through their own, and the school's, actions. The pupils are encouraged to discuss their ideas in literacy and other lessons and listen attentively to the contributions of other pupils and consider their ideas. Very good work is seen in Year 6 when as part of their geography topic on mountains the pupils debate the arguments for and against tourism in the Himalayas. All of the pupils prepare and deliver speeches, confidently putting forward the points of view of different people, for example a village shopkeeper. They learn to put arguments and counter-arguments, explain their thoughts coherently and take into account the views of others.

87. In reading, by the time the pupils leave the school, standards of attainment are in line with those expected and the pupils are making good progress. However, by the end of Year 2 the standards are unsatisfactory and pupils make unsatisfactory progress. A small number of more able pupils progress well in reading but the teaching of reading overall in Key Stage 1 is unsatisfactory.
88. By the end of Key Stage 1 most pupils understand how to sound out unfamiliar words, and use pictures and the context of the story to help reading. The more able pupils read with expression and fluency but the proportion of pupils in this category is very small (two out of 16). The implementation of the National Literacy Strategy, in particular the word and sentence work, is providing a framework for the pupils to develop their word recognition skills. However, although work done in the reception class in the mornings gives the children a good start in gaining a basic sight vocabulary and knowledge and understanding of how to build words using sounds, this is not built on methodically as the pupils move through the key stage. The pupils are not often heard to read individually in school. This means that although for example in Year 2 the teacher identifies some areas that need working on, pointers for improvement are not made clear to parents or other adults who help the children. Nor is it clear how shortcomings or gaps in learning are dealt with systematically to promote progress in reading. The books the children take home are not always matched to the pupils' needs and the arrangements for the home/school reading partnership are not carried out consistently. Pupils change their books only once a week at the best and often not that frequently. Many parents conscientiously comment on their child's progress but there is no dialogue between parents and teachers to identify areas for improvement. This has a limiting effect on the progress of the pupils in learning to read.
89. By Year 6, the pupils read fluently and expressively and are independent and enthusiastic readers. They can explain their preferences and make comments on the themes and ideas in books. They read a range of fiction, poetry and non-fiction and they have a sound knowledge of the styles of different authors. The lower attaining pupils have the necessary skills for sounding out unfamiliar words and use these satisfactorily. Most pupils are able to use the contents, index and glossary in books to help them find information. However, as the school only uses colour coding in the non-fiction library, the pupils do not know how to use numerical cataloguing system and find books on different subjects at random.
90. When the pupils leave the school standards in writing are in line with those found nationally. In Key Stage 2 the rate of progress increases and overall the pupils make good progress because the quality of teaching is good in Key Stage 2, especially at the end of the key stage. Teaching of writing in Key Stage 1 is unsatisfactory; this means that standards in writing are well below those expected by the end of Year 2, and the pupils make unsatisfactory progress.
91. By the time they are seven the majority of pupils have not yet developed sound story writing skills because there are insufficient opportunities to practise the skills required to do this. The pupils know that sounds can be joined together to make words but some pupils are unable to build simple three-letter words successfully. The more able pupils know how to spell the most

frequently used words although errors in spelling are not consistently addressed. The pupils are beginning to use basic punctuation correctly. There are opportunities for the pupils to cover the range of work specified in the National Literacy Strategy but expectations for pupils at all levels are not high enough and the teaching strategies being used are ineffective. The pupils have insufficient opportunities for producing sustained pieces of writing.

92. Throughout the school the standards of handwriting and presentation are erratic. Although the school has an agreed script and handwriting is practised in most classes, the standard is poor and skills that are learned are not carried through into the pupils' written work. There are some good examples, especially at the top of the school, but too few pupils are using a neat, joined-up style; they often revert to a print style which is not commented upon by teachers. Where comments are made, improvements are not consistently insisted on. These features hinder the progress of pupils to write in a fluent and sustained way, and limit their overall attainment.
93. Progress through Years 3 and 4 is slow because there is so much ground to be made up. However, by the end of the key stage significant progress has been made. Spelling and punctuation are more accurate and skills such as re-drafting a piece of writing are well developed. In Years 5 and 6 there are opportunities for the pupils to develop sustained pieces of writing and to practise their writing skills. The pupils have good opportunities to write in an extensive range of forms. Stories show a clear start, middle and end, and characters, plot and language are well developed. One begins: "At about 5.30 a.m. the sun shone a beautiful mango colour and Tom set off to destroy the monster." Much of the writing is imaginative and holds the reader's interest well. Basing their stories on the form of 'Myths and Legends' a Year 5 pupil writes: "Now the strange, demanding voice came into his head saying, 'follow your mind'." Year 6 pupils write successfully and often movingly different sorts of poems, for example using the Tanka form a pupil begins: "The silent tree grows and continues Until people come, And demolish the great tree..."
94. The overall quality of teaching in English is satisfactory with significant strengths at the end of Key Stage 2. Relationships between adults and pupils are good and praise is used to enhance the pupils' self-esteem and keep them on task. There are some pupils who exhibit challenging behaviour and these pupils are generally well managed. Where the best teaching is seen the teachers have clear strategies for establishing secure basic literacy skills and they have high expectations of the pupils' abilities to succeed in the tasks set. Where the teaching is less successful the planned work is not closely matched to the pupils' individual needs and expectations are too low. The support assistants are highly committed to helping the pupils to make progress but on occasions their work could be better directed to make the best use of this resource. The overall use made of the information from tests is satisfactory. It is used to group pupils and to set targets for the groups. The school could usefully consider setting more rigorous targets for all the groups of pupils as at present they concentrate on two groups within each year group. The pupils' progress is beginning to be tracked through the school and targets are given to pupils on an individual basis. Teachers use these in different ways, for example they are not always fixed at the front of workbooks so pupils can check their progress and see what they need to learn next. In addition, the wording of the targets is often not 'child friendly'; in order to support pupils' progress better this needs further refinement. Across the school, work is marked regularly. Comments made are supportive and encouraging but rarely say whether the learning target has been achieved. There is little evidence of errors being corrected or strategies given for how the work might be improved.
95. The school makes good use of a range of ways to support the teaching of English. In Year 2 pupils take part in the well-organised Reading Recovery Programme. However, as this can only be used with a small number of pupils, its effect is limited. Throughout the school there are useful displays to support teaching and learning in English and good use is made of ICT skills in some year groups. The classes take it in turns to visit the local library where they are able to engage in activities to use research and reference skills. Literacy is used well in other areas of the curriculum such as history and geography. The school makes good efforts to support the development of family literacy and extend the skills of parents so that they can

better help their children, by providing courses and support groups. Parents give good help to the school, for example by taking part in the Better Reading Partnership. In the dedicated quiet reading period each day the oldest pupils read with Reading Buddies from Year 3 and this has a positive effect on the reading of the younger pupils and the personal development of the older ones.

96. However, there are significant areas for development to enhance the opportunities provided for pupils to engage in a literacy-rich curriculum. For example, limited use has been made of government initiatives such as the Additional and Early Literacy Strategies to support learning in English. There are insufficient reading books that match the needs of readers who are at different stages of competency. In addition the library is in need of cataloguing and general improvement in the way the books are stored and displayed.

MATHEMATICS

97. Standards are well below those expected by the end of Year 2, and are broadly in line with expectations for their age by the end of Year 6. Standards are below those reported at the last inspection, but in this small school where cohort sizes vary from year to year, comparisons are unreliable. Many children enter the nursery with well below average attainment in early numeracy skills. They make good progress overall in the morning sessions of the Foundation Stage, moving from well below to below average standards of attainment in mathematics on entry to Year 1. However, there is a decline in the standards of attainment by the end of Key Stage 1, with pupils once more achieving well below average standards. This is because the quality of teaching overall in Key Stage 1 is unsatisfactory.
98. Improvements to standards in last year's and the current Year 6 are good, and are due to the fact that the school now has a clearer view of the precise standards that pupils are achieving throughout the school. In Key Stage 2, they are making much better use of the information from assessment to set challenging targets for individual pupils. Checks on the quality of teaching and learning are also responsible for improvements to standards. Observations carried out by an external advisor had clear aims and identified specific aspects of pupils' learning requiring development. A common factor was pupils' ability to solve mathematical problems, and particularly written calculations. The Key Stage 2 teachers have been particularly responsive to these findings, building opportunities for problem solving into lessons. In Year 6, the consistently good quality of teaching, concentrating on mathematical language and problem solving techniques, has enabled pupils to make good progress. Again in Year 6, provision of an extra booster teacher has meant that pupils who are close to reaching the expected level in national tests have been given the additional impetus to achieve this target.
99. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory in Key Stage 1 and is good overall in Key Stage 2. Inspection evidence shows a significant weakness in teaching in Year 1 when work is not planned to carefully match the ability of each pupil, limiting the progress they make. This is particularly so for those of below average ability. The Year 2 teacher ensures that work is carefully matched to pupils' abilities, but those of below average attainment have significant problems when adding numbers, still requiring counters or using fingers, to solve simple calculations. This group, more than any other, has more catching up to do. This explains why in the 2002 national assessment tests for seven year olds 38 per cent of pupils did not reach national expectations.
100. By the end of Year 2, only a few pupils have developed a reasonable facility with number. While most recognise numbers to 100, count in twos and tens and solve simple problems of money and measurement, the majority lack understanding of tens and units, limiting their capability to calculate problems with higher numbers. Many pupils correctly identify a range of two and three-dimensional shapes, counting edges and corners. They find one half and one quarter of a circle or square. Pupils measure using kilograms, metres and centimetres. High

attaining pupils identify numbers to 1000. They use a sound range of mental strategies to solve problems, for example, when adding $127 + 54$, first adding the tens and then the units. There are strengths in teaching at Year 2. Pupils' work is marked regularly, the teacher's written comments showing effective ongoing assessment. Work planned contains a good degree of challenge; for example, high attaining pupils are often given extension activities or work with higher numbers. In Year 2, pupils' presentation of their work is poor, causing difficulty in tracing the mathematical processes used, and errors in calculations. Pupils record their calculations on squared paper, but the squares are too large, and do not suit this purpose, restricting the recording process.

101. In Years 3 to 6 the quality of teaching is good overall. The consistently good teaching in Year 6 is characterised by high expectations of pupils in all aspects of their learning, so that work is neatly presented. Pupils work with rigour and concentration, resulting in good work output. The very good relationships in the class are built upon mutual respect so that pupils have mature attitudes to their learning and behave very well. Additional support is effectively used to support groups and individuals. Teaching in Years 3 to 5 is satisfactory, with a mix of strengths and weaknesses. Teachers plan relevant activities that interest and motivate pupils. For example, when learning about area, pupils consider carpet measurement, and the difference between perimeter and linear measurement. Whilst pupils make satisfactory progress, the pace of learning is sometimes reduced when teachers plan work that is insufficiently challenging. Because teachers do not give challenging timescales, pupils do not always work hard enough, being capable of achieving more in lessons.
102. Pupils in Year 6 have a sound grasp of mental strategies. For example, in a lesson using metric and imperial measures, a pupil converted 3lbs to grams by doubling 450 to 900 and then adding 450. Because the teacher is perceptive to pupils' problems she ensures that they are given strategies to solve new work; for example, teaching pupils to solve 6.5×8 , by first doubling and then doubling and doubling again. The teacher encourages pupils to describe the strategies they have used. This is successful, enabling pupils to gain confidence in describing the processes undertaken. Pupils have covered a large amount of work, well supplemented by weekly homework. They find equivalencies of fractions, convert decimals to whole numbers, measure angles and perimeter, and present their information using a variety of graphs such as block and line. Opportunities for pupils to apply their skills learnt in mathematics to other areas of the curriculum are developing, for example for measurement purposes in design and technology and science.
103. In all classes, pupils with statements of educational need receive good support and work that is closely related to their individual education plans. Others with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall, but some teachers do not routinely plan for their specific needs, and this reduces the progress made. In a significant number of lessons observed, additional support was not used effectively in whole-class sessions, support assistants frequently sitting apart from the group rather than having a planned role at this time.
104. Due to staff absence, the head teacher is currently co-ordinating mathematics. In a short time, she has taken a range of strategic decisions to bring about improvements. She has a very good understanding of strengths and weaknesses in the subject. She monitors and evaluates the quality of teaching and learning and is initiating changes to address weaknesses in teaching. Assessments of pupils' learning are now good, and are enabling her to work with individual teachers setting realistic targets for pupils. This is a key reason why standards are now improving. In most classes, teachers use this information well to track the progress of groups and individual pupils and to plan future work. Through these initiatives the head teacher now has a clearer picture of the weaknesses that remain in Key Stage 1, and is well placed to bring about improvements and ensure consistency across the school.

SCIENCE

105. Pupils' standards of attainment are below expectations at the end of Key Stage 1. There are few pupils who demonstrate levels of knowledge and understanding expected of pupils of this age. Eleven year old pupils, including lower attaining pupils, make good progress in science and achieve standards which are in line with those expected for their age. This is similar to the findings of the 1998 inspection. Standards seen during the inspection show that pupils are gaining good levels of knowledge and understanding of the different areas of science, particularly in investigative science during Key Stage 2. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls.
106. The strong focus on practical and investigative science appeals to pupils and helps to develop their understanding of scientific processes. These, combined with the good teaching in Key Stage 2, are significant factors that contribute to pupils' good progress and their sound levels of achievement by the time they leave.
107. By the age of seven, pupils, including those with special educational needs, have a sound understanding of how to carry out and record a scientific investigation. They know that this involves solving a scientific problem, such as, "Do all seeds take the same time to germinate?" Pupils draw conclusions about their findings and accurately describe and record their observation using simple tables when appropriate. They understand that animals and plants need food in order to grow, and eating the right types of food keeps the body healthy. They know that different materials have different properties and through their investigations discover that processes such as heating and cooling change some materials. They investigate what happens to ice under different conditions and if sunflower oil will freeze. Pupils explore simple electrical circuits. They describe how the circuit works and make predictions about the effects of adding more bulbs. They are aware of the dangers associated with electrical appliances in the home.
108. By the time they leave school pupils have built on the scientific knowledge and understanding gained in previous years. They apply this knowledge and understanding to good effect when preparing and carrying out investigations and in discussion. Pupils have a good understanding of how to conduct a fair test and what is likely to happen if the variables are changed. They make predictions, carefully observe what happens and record and chart the results for analysis. Teachers use questions well to probe pupils' understanding and help them to use their knowledge to make deductions about other areas of enquiry. Pupils understand feeding relationships and that virtually all food chains begin with a green plant. They understand why various environmental conditions give rise to different organisms and that micro-organisms can be beneficial or harmful. They have carried out detailed work about the main functions of the most important human and plant organs and explored the effects of exercise on the pulse rate. Pupils know how to use keys to help them identify and classify plants and animals. They know about different materials and that some are conductors and other insulators. They apply this knowledge effectively to investigations into sound insulators.
109. The teaching of science is good in Key Stage 2. Teachers have good subject knowledge and lessons are well planned and organised. The good use of investigative and experimental science enables pupils to improve their enquiry skills and develop a good understanding of scientific principles. Teachers use scientific vocabulary confidently, share information clearly and give them interesting activities that stimulate scientific discussion. This is a strength of teaching; it motivates pupils effectively and they are eager to put forward their thoughts and ideas. All of this was evident in a Year 5 lesson on sound. Pupils responded well to the teachers' high expectations of work and behaviour. They enjoyed the lesson, worked hard and produced a good standard of work. There is good support for all pupils, with particular attention paid to those pupils who need extra help. This enables them to approach their work with confidence and to make good progress.
110. The subject co-ordinator has a good overview of the science curriculum. Since the last inspection guidance for teachers on what should be taught has been developed and this is

operating alongside national guidelines. There are now arrangements to check how well pupils are learning and their learning and progress are monitored at the end of each unit of work. The co-ordinator has some opportunities for monitoring teachers' planning and pupils' work.

ART AND DESIGN and DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

111. The standards the pupils attain by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are in line with those expected nationally in art and in design and technology. All the pupils have good access to the curriculum and make satisfactory progress in knowledge and understanding, and in developing skills. Inspection evidence shows that there is a similar picture in standards and progress to that found at the time of the last inspection. Throughout the school pupils enjoy their lessons in art and design and design and technology. They concentrate well and try hard in art and design activities. The pupils talk knowledgeably and enthusiastically about their work and can explain the techniques that they have used to achieve different constructions and effects. However, the evaluation of their own work and that of others, and identifying areas for improvement is underdeveloped. The subjects make a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of the pupils and help to extend and enrich their personal development.
112. In art in Year 1 the pupils paint cheerful and lively self-portraits although there is no use of colour mixing to represent skin or hair colours. Years 1 and 2 pupils make well-observed pencil drawings of plants, stones and cones. When they take part in a day on features of Hinduism they create fire pictures using a wash of icing sugar and water into which they drop food colouring, creating effective results. In Years 3 and 4 the pupils make colourful collage landscapes. They illustrate a topic contrasting the lives of poor and rich people in the 21st century using detailed drawings. They learn about the life of Mondrian and find out about his style of painting. In Year 5 the pupils are designing and making containers. They use clay to make pots and paint them in an abstract design. From a good collection of washed up seashore debris the pupils make a visually interesting arrangement and make good quality pencil drawings of the objects. Using pastels, charcoal, pencil crayons and chalk they add details of colour and texture to their drawings. As part of their project on the Ancient Greeks the Year 6 pupils produce wax-resist pictures of vases. They use fabric paint to design patterns in the style of William Morris and they decorate their designs using beads and sequins.
113. The Year 1 pupils' work in design and technology includes designing a house that would keep its occupants dry and warm. They construct a picture with a balloon that will move through the sky and this work is extended to make a figure with moving joints. Both Year 1 and Year 2 pupils make books with lever mechanisms to move features in the stories. This work is well extended in Years 3 and 4 where the pupils collaborate in groups to write a book and design the illustrations. These include pictures with flaps, sliders and hinges, and together with the good use of ICT skills to word process the text, combine to produce delightful and well-made story books. Design and technology skills of scale drawing, measuring, cutting and sewing are well used in a project to design and make a fabric money container. In Year 5 the pupils investigate design issues surrounding the qualities of biscuits and their packaging. They record the results of their findings by writing, drawing, constructing tables and taking digital photographs. Year 6 pupils deconstruct and then design, make and decorate slippers. The finished articles are of good quality and the pupils evaluate their design and construction and what they could change to improve them.
114. The overall quality of teaching in art and design and design and technology is satisfactory. The pupils have opportunities to experience and use a satisfactory range of media and materials. Some use is made of sketchbooks to practise drawing and to try new techniques. The teaching is characterised by good management of the pupils and well-organised resources. Good use is made of support assistants to ensure that all the pupils have good access to the curriculum. Throughout the school the adults value pupils' efforts and this helps them to develop confidence and self-esteem when working on art and design and design and technology projects. Some use is made of ICT skills. For example Years 3 and 4 use an art

program to make a repeating pattern and in Years 5 and 6 a graphic modelling program is used to design the 'perfect room'. However, throughout the school there is further scope for the use of ICT skills to be developed in the subjects. The school should also ensure that there are further opportunities for the pupils to use their imagination and experiment creatively in art and design sessions.

115. The subject co-ordinator has recently taken over responsibility for the subjects. She is enthusiastic and has planned measures to further improve the art and design and design and technology curriculum. For example she intends to foster links with the local and business communities to enhance the opportunities the pupils have to engage in art and design and design and technology activities. There is a weekly Art and Craft Club which extends the experiences of the pupils in these curriculum areas. The school is using the national guidelines to direct teachers' planning. This is helping to ensure that the pupils follow a structured programme to develop skills in the use of different media. The school is in the early stages of checking the progress the pupils are making in gaining skills and knowledge in art and design and design and technology processes.

GEOGRAPHY

116. Pupils at the end of Year 2 and 6 attain satisfactory standards typical for their age. Standards are similar to those found at the time of the last inspection. Inspection evidence suggests that the geography curriculum is appropriately covered and that most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress.
117. By the end of Year 2, pupils describe an appropriate range of geographical features such as woods, rivers and lakes. They successfully demonstrate an understanding of an environment different to their own, comparing and contrasting Beechwood with the small island of Struay. They name similarities and differences such as shops, pastimes and environmental features, developing an understanding that the number of people and the geographical location influences human features. Most make appropriate plans of the island.
118. The Year 6 teacher plans work that enables pupils to carry out detailed studies over a period of weeks, so that by the end of Year 6 most have a good understanding of geographical processes. For example, in their current topic, the mountain environment, pupils first learn subject specific terminology to describe their work, for example scree and glaciated valley. They research specific mountain areas, developing fact files about such diverse regions as the Lake District and the French Alps. They access the Internet to locate detailed information about weather, scenery, and the exploits of famous climbers. This in-depth study has placed them in a good position to understand the topographical changes taking place over time, and the good and bad effects of commercialism on areas such as the Himalayas.
119. Only one lesson was observed during the inspection, and this was judged to be of good quality. Inspection evidence suggests that Key Stage 2 teachers ensure pupils have good opportunities to develop research skills, using books, photographs and computers to source information. For example, in a study on water, Year 5 pupils researched sources of water in countries as diverse as Nepal and Ethiopia, understanding the implications of too little or too much water on a country and its people.
120. The Key Stage 2 teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to apply skills taught in literacy. For example, Year 6 pupils wrote balanced arguments prior to taking part in a debate for and against tourism in the Himalayas. This gave good opportunities to write in a report style, and developed confidence in speaking skills. In Year 5, the teacher ensures that pupils appropriately apply skills taught in mathematics, by producing graphs of rainfall, and calculating the percentage of water used for purposes such as washing and cooking. This enables skills to be practised in context. However, scrutiny of pupils' work indicates limited application of mathematical skills over time in most classes.

121. Co-ordination of the subject is good. The provision of a planned programme of work ensures that pupils develop knowledge and understanding in a consistent way. Assessment procedures are satisfactory overall. Pupils' work is assessed at the end of each topic, and teachers are beginning to use this information to adapt work to match pupils' needs. The co-ordinator scrutinises teachers' planning to ensure appropriate coverage of the subject. As part of a rolling programme of monitoring the curriculum, geography currently has priority status in the school development plan, indicating the importance placed on the wider curriculum by the school.
122. The school makes satisfactory use of the local area for fieldwork; for example, Year 2 pupils visit the Wirral Country Park. Older pupils carry out an environmental study, considering whether a local busy road should be closed to traffic. Further afield, Year 3/4 pupils visit Llandudno. They gain a multi-cultural perspective through studying the Indian village of Chembakoli. Such experiences enrich and inform the work that pupils undertake.

HISTORY

123. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is typical for their age. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection. In general, most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress across the school.
124. Only one history lesson, judged to be good, was observed during the inspection. This Year 3/4 lesson was well planned and prepared so that no time was wasted. The teacher captured pupils' interest through the use of pictures of famous pairs of personalities in current times, then maintained this well when teaching about Henry VIII and his six wives. This made the learning relevant. Through a range of effective strategies, pupils made good gains in their learning. For example, pupils were taught a rhyme to remember the fate of the wives, and reinforced this in an enjoyable way through the effective use of drama. Pupils were given very clear explanations of the work to be covered, enabling them to work with purpose. Activities were appropriate and closely matched to the differing abilities of pupils so that most achieved the objectives of the lesson.
125. The scrutiny of pupils' work shows that pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the past. In Years 1 and 2, pupils successfully compare Victorian times with life today. Using different sources of evidence, they identify similarities and differences between household items, and aspects such as education, work and relaxation. In their writing about Remembrance Sunday, pupils demonstrate understanding of previous major events and their impact on life today. Years 3 and 4 pupils have studied the Romans, their homes, weapons and technology. They identify the main changes brought about by Roman settlement in Britain.
126. The co-ordinator has developed effective subject guidelines that pay good attention to the development of pupils' research skills. This is successful and is increasing the scope of pupils' learning and private study. For example, Year 5 pupils make good use of secondary sources of evidence by examining census records to identify people's occupations in times past. They use the Internet to research 'Clues in Bones', and the lives of famous people. This work continues in Year 6 as pupils examine Greek artefacts, writing and pictures of ruins to extract information.
127. Teachers make good use of educational visits to provide first hand experiences for pupils. For example, pupils have visited Birkenhead Priory to study life in Tudor times, and Liverpool museum to examine Ancient Greek life styles and artefacts. On return to class, teachers plan suitable follow-up activities to maintain pupils' interest and consolidate their learning. Teachers use the local library very effectively to develop pupils' use of computers for information purposes.

128. The school encourages the local community to contribute to pupils' learning, for example, a grandparent talking about their childhood. The village of Bidston is used well as a resource for both history and geography. Teachers give appropriate opportunities for pupils to apply skills taught in English, for example using note-taking techniques, or recording a historical event in diary form. However, expectations of pupils' writing are inconsistent across the school so that in some classes pupils use simple written phrases that lack quality, and subject-specific words are spelt incorrectly.
129. Co-ordination of the subject is good. A rolling programme for monitoring lessons and analysing pupils' work has given the co-ordinator a good understanding of strengths and weaknesses in the subject and she is now well placed to make improvements in provision. The long-term plan follows national guidance and appropriately addresses the needs of mixed age classes. Teachers are beginning to assess pupils' achievements at the end of each unit of study but most do not use this assessment effectively to plan work that closely matches pupils' differing abilities.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

130. Standards in ICT are average by the end of Years 2 and 6. Pupils throughout the school make good progress in the aspects covered and the work seen exceeded the expected levels for pupils of their age in the handling and use of data and in word-processing. The improved standards and achievement reflect consistently good teaching and are significant improvements since the last inspection.
131. By Year 2, pupils understand that computers respond to commands and know the importance of giving precise instructions and sequencing them correctly. Their use of *Roamer* and *Roamer World* on the computer shows increasingly complex shapes being created as they make good progress. Most use the mouse and keyboard fluently and are beginning to make confident choices to achieve intended outcomes. Pupils learn how to draw and use colour to make individual designs. Pupils of all abilities are clearly at home with computers and confident in using them. In discussion, pupils in Key Stage 1 explained what they were trying to achieve and showed, for example, how to select colour and write simple text.
132. Pupils' recent work in Year 3/4 focused on the use of "Colour Magic" to make a repeating pattern for wrapping paper for presents. This builds into using graphical modelling in Year 6 to design 'My Perfect Room'. These planned activities show satisfactory improvement in technique from year to year. Teachers' planning and conversations with pupils show that pupils cover a wide range of interesting and relevant work that is well matched to their needs and abilities. By Year 6, pupils are fluent in the use of computers, knowledgeable about the uses and applications of ICT and show a good understanding of its value, impact and limitations. Most pupils are adept in the use of word-processing to improve and present their work. They combine text and images to make, for example, the page of a school newspaper. They access the Internet and use a CD-ROM to research topics, for example, in history, and use spreadsheets to manage, present and interrogate data.
133. Almost all pupils, including those with special educational needs, have good ICT skills and wide experience. This consistency of good achievement is a particular strength. It results from teachers' effective use of the school's new, well-equipped ICT suite to build pupils' skills systematically. It also reflects teachers' often good, and improving, subject knowledge. This gives them the confidence to take pupils forward by means of challenging work and imaginative projects. A good example of this is Year 6 pupils' current work on spreadsheets that builds well on the simple database work seen in the Year 3/4 class. In Year 6, with the teacher's guidance, pupils of all abilities were able to answer the question "What if?" when values in cells were changed.

134. This example also illustrates the way in which teachers skilfully link ICT with other subjects, in this case, mathematics and design and technology. Further examples link ICT with English, mathematics, music and art and design. These connections extend pupils' learning in each of the subjects and broaden their understanding of the ways in which ICT skills can be applied.
135. Older pupils have a good grasp of the uses of ICT and can consider ways in which it has added to, and sometimes detracted from, the quality of their lives. They point out, for example, its value in exchanging information, for example by e-mail, as a research tool and as a means of organising and presenting data. They appreciate its usefulness in improving the accuracy and presentation of their work. On the other hand, they comment that technology can be frustrating when it goes wrong. They realise, however, that its apparent shortcomings may result from inadequate information or incorrect commands. Pupils are enthusiastic about their ICT work and enjoy discussing it. They handle equipment sensibly and are very responsible. When working together, pupils support each other very well. Pupils' well-developed skills and the flexible, informed support that teachers provide enable pupils of all abilities to work independently at a suitable level.
136. The quality of teaching is good. Progress through the school is good. This results from the teachers' good subject knowledge, skilled management and ability to engage and motivate pupils. Teachers make lessons interesting, pace them well and set consistently high standards of work and behaviour. They question thoughtfully, checking pupils' understanding and encouraging them to think for themselves. They give clear explanations and use technology imaginatively to demonstrate and share ideas.
137. The subject co-ordinator is effective, enthusiastic and knowledgeable. He has a very clear idea of the strengths and weaknesses in the subject and good plans for its future development. Several teachers have good subject knowledge, which they valuably share, and recent training is helping to build a secure base of expertise in all parts of the school.
138. As yet there are no systematic procedures for monitoring teaching. Such procedures should be helpful in sharing further the features of effective teaching found in many lessons. The present planning systems ensure very good coverage but are not yet supported by systematic assessment procedures. These are important because, although teachers have brought most pupils to a good level of skill and knowledge by the time they leave the school, some differences in attainment remain. These result mainly from differences in pupils' experience of computers outside school. Concise assessment procedures should enable these differences to be accurately described. This should enable higher ability pupils, in particular, to be even more strongly challenged.

MUSIC

139. Pupils make good progress throughout the school, and standards are in line with those expected for pupils by the time they leave the school and in line with the position noted at the time of the last inspection. Pupils' singing at both key stages is at a standard expected for children of these ages. Pupils' rhythm and diction are good and the children are able to follow the shape of a melody. They listen carefully enough to sing at the correct pitch and keep in tune. They sing regularly in the weekly hymn practices and they join in enthusiastically. Pupils take part in concerts and public performances and make good progress in this aspect of their musical development. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, learn well.
140. In a good lesson, pupils in Year 3/4 had the opportunity to learn how music can tell a story. Pupils understand that sound can be used expressively. The teacher had chosen the music with great care and insight. The way that all pupils were able to play their own tunes on a wide range of instruments, and from their own pictures as a score, was impressive. Pupils in Key Stage 2 sing in unison and match their voices satisfactorily to the shape of the melody. They keep time with the piano and taped accompaniment. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 copy simple

rhythm patterns and show good control when playing percussion instruments, varying the volume to create a more interesting effect. They learned about, and appreciated, the different instruments of the orchestra in a good lesson observed.

141. In the lessons observed, the quality of teaching was good. Teachers' understanding of the requirements of the National Curriculum for music is good. Planning is good and the scheme of work is a whole-school overview, allocating topics to year groups and particular terms. Teachers work from national guidance supplemented by materials from the co-ordinator.
142. There is evidence of good, and continuing, extra-curricular activity. The school offers pupils the opportunity to learn to play an orchestral instrument, but few take up this opportunity. Resources for teaching the music curriculum are good, and are well organised. Assessment in music is effective, and dependent on individual teachers and the close attention paid by the co-ordinator.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

143. At the last inspection, pupils were attaining average standards at the age of seven, and above average standards at eleven. Evidence gathered during this inspection indicates that pupils' attainment is now average at the ages of seven and eleven. Teachers' planning shows that all requirements of the National Curriculum are met. Pupils' progress is enhanced by a very good range of extra-curricular activities.
144. In dance, Year 1 pupils learn to respond to music in an imaginative manner, and to convey ideas and feelings through their actions. For example, in one lesson pupils moved well to a variety of tunes such as 'Sally go round the Moon' and 'The Farmer in his Den'. They went on to move in time to music when enacting different shapes and used the space available very well. In gymnastics, Year 2 pupils learn to develop the actions of turning and rolling. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1.
145. In the lessons seen in Key Stage 2 pupils made good progress. In particular the Year 6 dance lesson was outstanding. The teacher was careful to make sure the pupils varied their speed, direction and levels throughout the lesson. She really made pupils focus on how they could improve their own performance by using them to demonstrate what they had learned. The moment she introduced the very appropriate music was memorable for all concerned. The Year 5 lesson on the playground was well planned and pupils made sound progress despite the very cold weather that some found quite distressing and a real distraction.
146. This good quality of teaching is based on a sound lesson structure with a warm-up, followed by a focus on skills or group activities, then a cool-down session at the end of the lesson. Effective use is made of demonstrations to teach techniques, illustrate good points and stimulate improvement. Pupils enjoy physical education lessons, work well co-operatively, behave sensibly, and try hard to improve their performances.
147. The school provides a sound range of activities within its curriculum. Appropriate arrangements are in place for swimming. A good range of sporting extra-curricular sporting clubs is offered, and the school enters teams in local competitions. The co-ordinator has not yet had opportunities to observe lessons and give teachers feedback on their practice. The school makes good use of its hall for dance and gymnastics. Resources for games and gymnastics are satisfactory.