

## INSPECTION REPORT

### **WESTON POINT PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Runcorn

LEA area: Halton

Unique reference number: 111002

Headteacher: Mrs K. Cawley

Reporting inspector: Mrs M. A. Palmer  
20646

Dates of inspection: 19<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> May 2003

Inspection number: 247068

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

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 4 – 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Castner Avenue  
Weston Point  
Runcorn

Postcode: WA7 4EQ

Telephone number: 01928 574593

Fax number: 01928 572405

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs B. Paget

Date of previous inspection: 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1998

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs M. A. Palmer 20646	Registered inspector	The Foundation Stage Science Art and design Music Special educational needs Equal opportunities	What sort of school is it? How well are pupils taught? Pupils' personal development School improvement
Mrs M. Roscoe 9984	Lay inspector		Attitudes, behaviour, personal development Partnership with the community Child protection and pupils' welfare Partnership with parents
Mr G. T. Storer 19830	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Design and technology Physical education	The school's results and pupils' achievements How well is the school led and managed?
Mrs S. Macintosh 20368	Team inspector	English Geography History Religious education	Curriculum and other opportunities Monitoring pupils' academic performance. Assessment
Mrs A. Heakin 30243	Team inspector	Special educational needs	Special Educational Needs Unit

The inspection contractor was:

TWA Inspections Ltd  
102 Bath Road  
Cheltenham  
GL53 7JX

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33 Kingsway  
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Weston Point Primary School is a well-established school situated in a small village community within Runcorn. Most of the pupils live in owner-occupied and rented housing in the surrounding area and almost a quarter come from communities beyond the village. With 132 pupils on roll, the school is smaller than many other primary schools. Within the school there is a Special Educational Needs Unit for seven pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, who travel in from outside the area. Pupil numbers have fallen since the last inspection. The area served by the school is seriously disadvantaged and 31 per cent of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. This is a high figure compared with schools nationally. Many children enter the school with attainment well below that normally expected of four-year olds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, including Statements of Special Educational Need, is well above that found in most schools. No pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds and none speaks English as an additional language. There is an increasing number of pupils moving into and out of the area. Last year, 22 pupils joined the school and eight left at times other than the start of reception and the end of Year 6.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is a very effective school. Pupils make very good progress during their time in the school. From a very low start, almost all attain the nationally expected standards in English, mathematics and science and a small number achieve above average standards by the time that they leave the school. The quality of teaching is very good overall and there are examples of excellent teaching in the reception class and in Years 4/5 and 6. The headteacher provides strong leadership. She receives good support from senior staff and from the governing body. They share a very strong commitment to improvement and together they are developing very good standards in many aspects of the school's work. The school manages its budget very rigorously and provides very good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Pupils of all abilities make very good progress, with the result that almost all attain average standards in English, mathematics and science by the age of 11 years.
- Pupils attain high standards in history by the time that they leave the school.
- Teaching is very good overall. Teachers promote pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills very effectively.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes and show a high level of interest and involvement in all aspects of school life. They behave very well and relationships throughout the school are excellent.
- Arrangements for pupils with special educational needs, including those pupils in the unit, are very effective. The school very successfully enables pupils to take a full and active part in school life.
- The school provides a very carefully planned programme of stimulating experiences, including educational visits, which very successfully reinforce and extend pupils' learning.
- The school promotes pupils' personal development, including spiritual and moral development, extremely successfully.

#### **What could be improved**

- Co-ordinators do not have enough opportunity to check on the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects and this weakens their contribution to school improvement planning.
- Attendance is well below the national average and the school is not doing enough to promote the regular attendance of all pupils.
- There is a weakness in the information provided for parents that reduces parents' effectiveness in supporting their children's learning.
- The school does not teach pupils enough about the ethnic and cultural diversity of British society.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school has achieved a good level of improvement since its last inspection in 1998. Pupils' achievements are considerably better than they were. From a low starting point, pupils make very good progress in learning so that almost all attain average standards by the time that they leave the school. By the end of Year 6, pupils attain higher standards in music and design and technology. The very high quality of pupils' personal development, attitudes and behaviour has been successfully maintained. However, attendance is deteriorating and is unsatisfactory. The school's procedures for monitoring and

improving the situation are not rigorous enough to be effective. The overall quality of teaching has improved and is now very good, with no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers have worked hard to improve the curriculum. Arrangements for children in the Foundation Stage<sup>1</sup> and for pupils with special educational needs are now very effective. Children in the reception class now have access to large apparatus and equipment to promote the development of their physical skills. Curriculum planning is more thorough because the school has adopted national guidelines for all subjects. All aspects of information and communication technology, design and technology and music are now taught. The school ensures that all pupils, including those in the unit, experience a very good range of high quality learning opportunities that very successfully promote their progress. The assessment of pupils' academic performance and monitoring of personal development has improved and is more structured and consistent throughout the school. Although the school has maintained strengths in its links with parents, there remain weaknesses in the information that parents receive. This reduces the contribution that parents can make to their children's learning at home. Procedures for child protection and health and safety have been improved and are now satisfactory.

## 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	E	C	A
Mathematics	D	E*	C	B
Science	D	E	E	D

**Key**

well above average    A  
 above average        B  
 average                C  
 below average        D  
 well below average   E  
 very low                E  
                               \*

When children enter the reception class, their attainments are well below average. They make good progress in learning, although by the end of the Foundation Stage most do not attain the standards normally expected of five-year-olds. Pupils of all abilities make good progress in Years 1 and 2. In the 2002 tests, all seven-year-olds attained the nationally expected standard<sup>2</sup> and a small number exceeded it in writing, mathematics and science. In the current Year 2, most pupils are again on course to attain the nationally expected standard and a small number is on course to exceed it. Pupils achieve well in Years 3 to 6 and in the 2002 tests for 11-year-olds, almost all pupils attained the nationally expected standard in English, mathematics and science. A small number exceeded this standard. Pupils' overall results were above average in comparison with similar schools and pupils made good progress compared with their results at the end of Year 2. In the current group of 11-year-olds, pupils are achieving well, although a greater proportion has special educational needs in the Year 6 class and in the unit. This means that the proportion of pupils on course to attain or exceed the expected standard is likely to be smaller than last year. Throughout the school, teachers support pupils with special educational needs very effectively. They ensure that work is carefully planned to match their needs and promote their learning. As a result, they make good progress and in some cases very good progress towards the targets in their individual educational plans. Standards in religious education are in line with those set out in the local authority's guidance. Standards in history are above average in Years 3 to 6. Pupils achieve satisfactory standards in all other subjects. There was insufficient evidence to make a judgement on standards in information and communication technology and physical education.

<sup>1</sup> The Foundation Stage begins when children reach the age of three and ends at the end of the reception year. It is a distinct stage, preparing children for later schooling and is based on six areas of learning: communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, personal and social development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical and creative development.

<sup>2</sup> The nationally expected standard for pupils in Year 2 is National Curriculum Level 2 and for those in Year 6 it is Level 4. Pupils achieving Level 3 in Year 2 or Level 5 in Year 6 are exceeding national expectations.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils are very enthusiastic and enjoy coming to school. They are fully involved and interested in the work they undertake.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave very well in lessons. There is no evidence of bullying or other unpleasant behaviour in the playground.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Pupils are mature and responsible. They show a high level of respect for the feelings of others. Relationships at all levels are excellent.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Attendance levels are well below the national average.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Very good	Good	Very 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 is very good overall. During the inspection, inspectors observed all teachers and teaching was satisfactory or better in all lessons. Half of the teaching seen was very good. There were examples of this quality of teaching in all phases of the school. There were examples of excellent teaching in the reception, Year 4/5 and Year 6 classes, where teachers' expertise and enthusiasm engages pupils very effectively and stimulates their curiosity and motivation to learn. The teaching of basic skills in English and mathematics is very good and promotes pupils' very good progress by the time that they leave the school. In these subjects, teachers plan particularly carefully and use the information from assessment to ensure that the work they set is firmly based on pupils' previous learning. In all phases of the school, teachers have high expectations of pupils' attitudes and behaviour and of their capacity to cope successfully with challenging work. As a result, pupils are very attentive, join in eagerly and work very purposefully. Teachers prepare very carefully to ensure that all pupils are fully involved and from their earliest days in school pupils apply themselves well and become increasingly independent. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very effective in the main school classes and the unit. There is very good teamwork between the teachers and classroom assistants, who have a clear understanding of what individual pupils are to learn. Their support very successfully improves the quality of pupils' learning. Teachers consistently set work for the relatively small proportion of higher-attaining pupils at a challenging enough level to allow them to attain above average standards, particularly in the core subjects<sup>3</sup>.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The school provides a very rich, wide-ranging curriculum with a very wide range of experiences that very successfully improve the quality of pupils' learning.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. These pupils are fully included and the school meets their individual needs very effectively.
Provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Teachers very effectively promote pupils' sense of wonder and their awareness of the beauty of the natural world. They enable pupils to develop a strong sense of self-worth and respect for others. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to learn about life in Britain's multicultural society.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is a caring school. Teachers know the children very well and respond quickly to their needs. Teachers use information from assessment effectively to plan work for pupils of differing abilities.

The school's partnership with parents is satisfactory overall. Excellent newsletters keep parents abreast of school events. However, the quality of some of the school's information is unsatisfactory because it does not tell parents all they need to know in order to make a worthwhile contribution to their children's learning.

<sup>3</sup> Core subjects are English, mathematics and science.



## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher's clear and purposeful leadership, along with effective support from senior staff, is resulting in improvements in the quality of education that the school provides. She successfully promotes a very strong sense of commitment and shared purpose within the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governing body fully supports and is proud of the work of the school. It conscientiously oversees the school's finances and rigorously monitors health and safety and security issues. However, there are some omissions in aspects of policy and of information for parents.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory overall. However, the co-ordinators' role in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The governing body uses the schools' budget and other grants very effectively, according to principles of best value and in the interests of the pupils.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teaching is good; they give children the support they need to overcome difficulties.</li> <li>Teachers have high expectations; they challenge children and help them to develop further.</li> <li>Their children like school; they are keen to be there early; visits and special events make learning fun.</li> <li>The school is helping their children to become mature, responsible and well behaved.</li> <li>Parents are comfortable in approaching staff with questions or problems.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The work that their children are expected to do at home.</li> <li>The information that parents receive about how their children are getting on.</li> <li>The range of activities outside lessons.</li> </ul>

There were 27 questionnaires returned and five parents attended the meeting for parents. Parents' responses overwhelmingly supported the school and the quality of education provided for their children. A small number of parents expressed concerns. The inspection strongly endorses the positive views. There is no evidence to support parents' concerns about the range of activities outside lessons. In the course of the year, staff offer a range of sporting, cultural and social activities outside lessons that effectively complement aspects of pupils' academic and personal development. However, take up is variable and clubs close from time to time when numbers dwindle. Teachers use homework effectively to reinforce and extend the work pupils do in school. However, the inspection finds that there are shortcomings in the information that parents receive about how their children are getting on. The pupils' annual progress reports do not give enough information about each child's strengths and weaknesses in all subjects and they do not contain targets for improvement.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. Standards of attainment are considerably higher than they were at the time of the school's last inspection. The school has done very well to maintain an upward trend in its results during a period when social and educational circumstances in the area have become more challenging. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school has declined. There are more pupils who face significant difficulties in their learning and there is a higher turnover of pupils. Despite these barriers to improvement, the vast majority of pupils make very good progress during their time in the school.
2. When children first enter the school, many are attaining standards that are well below those normally expected of four-year-olds. Children in the Foundation Stage get a good start to their education. They achieve well and make good progress in all areas of learning, particularly personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world and aspects of communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. A small number of children achieve the expected standards in these areas of learning. However, by the time that they are five years old, many are not achieving all of the early learning goals<sup>4</sup> for children of this age.
3. The school's results in the national tests and assessments for seven-year-olds in 2002 were below the national average in reading but on a par with schools nationally in writing and mathematics. Significantly, every single pupil attained or exceeded the nationally expected standard in writing, mathematics and science. This represents good progress during Years 1 and 2, even though the proportion of pupils that achieved the above average Level 3 was lower than in most schools. In comparison with schools facing similar social and educational circumstances, the 2002 results were average in reading, but were above average in writing and well above average in mathematics. These results are consistent with inspection evidence. All pupils in the current Year 2 have made good progress and almost all are on course to attain or exceed the nationally expected standard in reading, writing, mathematics and science. However, the school's results may vary from those of 2002 because this year's Year 2 is a very small group and so the performance of just one or two pupils may affect the school's scores considerably.
4. In the tests for 11-year-olds in 2002 the school's results were in line with the national average in English and mathematics, but well below average in science. Once again, it is significant that almost all pupils achieved the nationally expected standard in these subjects. The school's comparison with other schools goes down in science only because relatively few pupils achieved above average scores and this is perfectly understandable in the light of their low attainment on entry and their performance at age seven. Taking all of the core subjects together, pupils' performance was above the average for similar schools and they had made good progress from their scores at the end of Year 2. In the current Year 6, overall standards are somewhat lower. The proportion of pupils on course to attain or exceed the nationally expected standard is lower than last year. However, this apparent decline does not indicate a drop in the quality of teaching or in the progress that pupils make. This year there are considerably more pupils, both in the Year 6 class and in the special unit who, because of the difficulties that they face in their learning, are unlikely to achieve the expected standard. Nevertheless, pupils of all abilities are achieving well. Pupils with special educational needs are making good, and in some cases very good, progress towards targets in their individual education plans and pupils' overall progress from the levels that they attained at the age of seven has been good.

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<sup>4</sup> Early learning goals – these are standards that children are expected to reach by the end of their reception year.

5. Because teachers have a good understanding of most subjects and place considerable emphasis on the teaching of basic skills, standards in music have improved throughout the school and standards in design and technology in Years 3 to 6 are better than they were at the time of the last inspection. By the time that they leave the school, pupils attain satisfactory standards in these and in all other subjects seen during the inspection. Pupils' work in history is above the nationally expected standard in Years 3 to 6, as it was at the time of the last inspection. Pupils' attainments in religious education are in line with those set out in locally agreed guidelines. There was insufficient evidence to make overall judgements about the standard of pupils' work in information and communication technology and physical education, but the work that was seen was of a good standard. There is evidence that weaknesses in information and communication technology identified in the last inspection have been rectified.
6. Effective links with other subjects allow pupils to practise and consolidate the skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology in other areas of the curriculum. They use their developing skills effectively in 'real life' situations and this adds to their confidence, competence and the standards they attain. This is particularly effective in respect of pupils' writing and contributes significantly to the sound standards that pupils achieve.
7. The school successfully meets the needs of all of its pupils. There are no significant differences between the performance of pupils of different age, ability, gender or background. Boys and girls make equally good progress. Pupils with special educational needs do particularly well because the school has organised a very strong programme of support that gives these pupils every opportunity to take part in and benefit from all of the good quality learning experiences that the school offers to its pupils. Pupils in the special unit have frequent opportunities to work alongside other pupils and the school makes every effort to reintegrate these pupils into the main school as soon as practically possible. Teachers identify pupils with the potential for higher attainment and set work at a sufficiently challenging level to allow them to fulfil their potential.
8. Pupils who attend the unit make very good progress in learning. When they arrive, pupils are given a short time to settle down and then they are assessed in literacy skills and personal development. This information is used with any other available data to plan an appropriate curriculum for the pupil; realistic targets are set and reviewed continuously though there is a more formal termly review to ensure that all pupils make progress in their lessons and in their personal development. All pupils have individual educational plans and behavioural plans. These, combined with very good teaching and careful monitoring, are used to very good effect and result in pupils learning to manage their own behaviour and subsequently achieving success in their lessons.
9. Throughout the school, pupils make very good progress in their personal development. This is important because it prompts pupils to adopt very helpful patterns of behaviour and response and enables teachers to establish conditions in which highly profitable learning can take place.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

10. Pupils' attitudes to their work are outstanding. They are always attentive, responsive and show a real delight at being in school. Their behaviour overall is very good. Pupils' personal development and relationships are excellent. They take responsibility for many tasks in the classroom and increasingly around the school. Adults enjoy children's company and in response they are respectful and polite. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection, except for pupils' attendance, which is too low and therefore unsatisfactory.

11. The majority of pupils behave very well in class. They enjoy their well-planned lessons and easily become eagerly involved in classroom activities. The youngest pupils try to maintain eye contact with adults so they will know what to do next. Pupils are confident in lessons; they volunteer answers and share resources without fuss. Most pupils are alert to the teacher's instructions. Rare instances of silliness were seen when teaching did not hold everyone's attention. Pupils who have special educational needs have very good attitudes to their learning and try hard. Permanent exclusions from school are rare. However, two have occurred this year. This number is not remarkable and correct procedures were followed in all cases.
12. Behaviour is very good around the school, reflecting the thoughtful provision for social and moral development. Pupils from every class enjoy relaxed, friendly playtimes and lunch breaks. They understand what is expected from them and show high levels of self-discipline and confidence. For example, movement around school is calm and orderly. Outside class, pupils respond immediately to the playground whistle moving smartly into lines for re-entry into school. Many parents acknowledge that the school helps children behave well and become more responsible for their actions.
13. Pupils' personal development is given a high priority. Pupils show an awareness of the importance and value of the individual. They readily accept children less able than themselves or those with specific difficulties and offer encouragement. Staff promote spiritual, moral and social issues well. As a result, pupils are considerate towards others and increasingly thoughtful about other's feelings. For example, children hold hands to comfort each other readily. Children preparing for a 'wedding ceremony' gasped in amazement and exchanged compliments about each other's outfits. Pupils enjoy each other's company; they play very well in mixed gender groups and enjoy collaborating in class games. This good social development is due to the very wide variety of educational visits and residential activities that pupils experience during the year.
14. Pupils are keen to carry out responsibilities. Teachers expect them to help whenever necessary and they respond amiably. They bustle about, pleased to do so, either helping younger ones in the dining room or helping each other to dress in the reception class. One Year 6 pupil, unbidden, brought a drink of water to relieve a grateful adult's dry throat. A recently established school council meets each month and is currently devising ways to improve playtime activities.
15. Pupils attending the special unit have very positive attitudes to school and are well integrated into the school community. They are polite to staff and visitors and discuss their work courteously, explaining where they have difficulties and what they have learned previously. In assemblies and social times, such as lunch and break times, the pupils from the unit are fully integrated with the rest of the school. The other pupils are good role models and the calm well-managed school environment provides a supportive climate for this group of pupils who are learning to manage their own behaviour. Within the classroom, relationships between adults and pupils are very good. Although adults have firm expectations of behaviour, there is a relaxed atmosphere. This allows the pupils to become more confident and build up their levels of self-esteem.
16. The school's efforts to improve attendance are not effective. Attendance levels are unsatisfactory and show a downturn when compared to last year's figures of 93.8 per cent. At present, they are well below the national average. This is affecting the progress of a number of pupils and is a key issue for the school to address. Registration practice now meets all requirements and levels of punctuality are mainly satisfactory.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

17. The overall quality of teaching is very good and contributes strongly to the standards that pupils reach and their extremely positive attitudes to learning. During the inspection, teaching was satisfactory or better in all the lessons observed. Three-quarters of all lessons observed were either good or very good. There were examples of excellent teaching in the Foundation Stage and in Years 4/5 and 6. This is an improvement on standards reported at the time of the last inspection. Teaching in the reception class (Foundation Stage) gives children a good start in school. Teaching of pupils in Years 1 and 2 is good overall. Teaching is particularly effective in the Years 1 and 2 class, where the teacher is very skilled, experienced and confident. Teaching is very good overall in Years 3 to 6. Teaching of Years 4/5 and 6 is of a consistently high standard. This is most marked in Year 6, where the teaching is particularly dynamic and challenging so that pupils of all abilities are very well motivated to learn.
18. The teaching of children in the Foundation Stage has improved since the last inspection. The reception class teacher understands how young children learn. She plans sessions very thoroughly, identifying what children are to learn and how progress is to be made towards achievement of the early learning goals. She focuses strongly on promoting children's self-esteem and curiosity by consistent encouragement and by the careful preparation of stimulating learning experiences. Planning also gives good emphasis to the development of children's basic communication, language and literacy skills and to their mathematical development and, as a result, children's abilities to speak, listen and count develop well. There are very effective procedures for assessing children's attainment on entry and their progress towards the early learning goals. These enable the teacher to plan tasks and experiences that closely match what individual children need to learn next. The classroom is well organised. Thoughtfully presented activities and resources very successfully capture children's interest, increase their enjoyment of school and stimulate their involvement in all areas of learning. The role of the nursery nurse is very carefully planned. She supports the work of the class teacher very effectively and contributes significantly to children's learning.
19. Teachers have a good knowledge of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and, as a result, the teaching of basic literacy and numeracy skills is very good. Teachers plan well-structured literacy and numeracy lessons and ensure that pupils are clear about the purpose of their learning. This promotes a purposeful approach to tasks and activities. Pupils have regular opportunities to read and write. As a result, they read for pleasure and write with increasing confidence and independence. At the beginning of most mathematics lessons, teachers use a quick-fire question and answer session. This successfully engages pupils' interest and promotes their recall of number facts and accurate mental calculation. This adds significantly to the development of pupils' numeracy skills. Teachers often plan effective links between different subjects. This gives added to coherence to pupils' work and improves their learning. For example, children in the reception class moved like different animals in a dance lesson linked to hearing the story of Noah's Ark. In all classes, teachers ensure that pupils use information and communication technology as an aid to learning in other subjects, including art and design and technology, and, in doing so, reinforce their competence in the use of information and communication technology.
20. In all phases of the school, teachers plan very carefully for their lessons. In some instances, as with the reception class's *Grand Wedding*, preparations are made over a series of days. In this instance, the children's involvement in the arrangements very successfully promoted their communication skills by prompting them to respond to their experiences and to listen to the comments of others. Planning for classroom support assistants and student helpers is particularly effective. These additional adults know exactly what they are expected to do and how they should do it. For example, in a design

and technology lesson in the Years 1 and 2 class, the classroom assistant works with a group of Year 1 pupils as they select fruit and vegetables as part of their *Healthy Eating* topic. In this way, they receive the support they need in order to succeed and make progress. Teachers' plans regularly incorporate adequate time for a whole-class discussion at the end of the lesson. Teachers use this time effectively to sum up and reinforce what pupils have learned, celebrate pupils' achievements, assess their attainments and so lay the foundation for new learning.

21. Teachers regularly assess pupils' progress. This very successfully enables them to pitch their teaching at a level that builds on pupils' prior learning. Teachers also use assessment information to group pupils and to plan tasks that challenge pupils of differing abilities. This ensures that no pupils are left behind and that none are 'marking time' when they begin new work. This attention to detail has a direct bearing on the very good progress that pupils make over time. Furthermore, teachers evaluate each lesson, identifying on a weekly or sometimes on a daily basis those pupils who need additional support or who need to be moved on more quickly. This degree of care in planning ensures that pupils learn well in lessons.
22. Excellent relationships between teachers and pupils form the basis for the very good teaching and learning throughout the school. Teachers manage pupils well, so that they are ready and willing to participate in lessons. They make sure that all pupils understand what they are to do and they recognise and reward their efforts. In response, pupils become actively involved and work hard. For example, in the excellent numeracy lesson in Year 6, pupils grew in confidence and willingly explained their mathematical thinking because the teacher created a very positive atmosphere. She introduced the topic of multiplying and dividing decimals by focusing on the pupils' previous learning and giving them opportunities to try out their initial calculations on individual whiteboards. Throughout the lesson, she kept pupils fully involved and gave plenty of praise and recognition for their efforts and achievements.
23. Teachers employ a good range of teaching styles. There is a careful balance between direct teaching of the whole class and working with groups and individuals. For example, in the excellent literacy session in Years 4 and 5, the teacher inspired the pupils' interest in writing styles and then provided opportunities for them to work with partners and in small groups to plan and write a story. During this phase of the lesson, the teacher worked very effectively with groups, modelling the process of composing a story. The pupils became engrossed in their task and made very good progress in learning to be an author. In all classes, teachers and support assistants readily respond with encouragement to pupils' efforts. Teachers show the value they place on pupils' work by carefully mounting and displaying it throughout the school. They mark work regularly, although in some cases, comments do not show pupils how they have done or what they need to do to improve. Homework is successfully used to extend and complement the work pupils do in school, as when pupils in Years 1 and 2 kept a diary of the food they ate for a week as part of their investigations into *Healthy Eating*. Most notably, from their earliest days in school, teachers encourage pupils to take home a range of books and this contributes positively to their progress in reading and their enjoyment of books.
24. Teachers and support staff in all year groups work very effectively to ensure that pupils with special educational needs receive the support that they need. Individual education plans are clear and specific, providing good guidance to teachers in matching tasks to pupils' needs. When introducing activities, teachers consistently give precise explanations so that all pupils know what is expected of them. Teachers use thoughtful questioning to draw in less confident and lower attaining pupils, to ensure their involvement and to assess their understanding. Pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need receive very effective support from their class teachers and support assistants. All members of the school community are committed to ensuring that these pupils play an active part in school

life both inside and outside the classroom and benefit from all that the school has to offer. Teachers set suitably challenging work for higher-attaining pupils and so enable them to attain the standards of which they are capable.

25. The teaching of pupils attending the unit is very good. The teacher has a very good understanding of the pupils' personal and educational needs. To boost pupils' confidence, he presents tasks that are within their capabilities before extending their learning with more challenging activities. When pupils have difficulties with a concept such as negative numbers the teacher takes time to demonstrate how to work out the answer accurately. He encourages pupils to explain the rationale for their methods and answers, one recalling 'eight times four makes you snore' as an aid to his calculations. The teacher groups pupils for each lesson, based on their maturity and skills in the subject. He prepares the work of the classroom support assistant thoughtfully so that she supports specific pupils in a particular subject, while he works with others. Lessons are well planned with a range of short, well-focused activities so that pupils maintain their concentration. The teacher uses resources, such as *Snakes and Ladders*, as an effective teaching aid, using questions about poetry, plays, spelling and grammar as triggers for pupils to climb the ladders. The younger pupil plays the same game but focuses on basic word recognition. In literacy sessions, the teacher and classroom assistant work hard to encourage pupils to use their imagination as they improve their skimming technique and extract information from texts. When the older pupils share a text with the classroom assistant, they become confident and improve their ability to read with expression and volunteer predictions about the outcome of the story. The teacher plans good opportunities for pupils to develop their listening and speaking skills, as when they discuss their knowledge of religion, churches and the bible. At the end of each session (three times each day), pupils reflect on their behaviour and consider whether they have done their best, related well to each other and been respectful to the adults. This constant review is effective in making the pupils aware of their progress and motivating them to achieve more. The positive and sensitive approach to teaching in the unit results in pupils feeling secure in their learning and ready to take on new challenges.

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

26. The school provides a very good quality, stimulating curriculum for all pupils that fully reflects its aims and values. It incorporates the requirements of the National Curriculum and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. The curriculum for pupils attending the unit is better than it was because all subjects now have an appropriate time allowance and this contributes significantly to pupils' learning experiences. There are good arrangements for pupils' personal, social and health education. The school now has a policy, a scheme of work and a co-ordinator for personal, social and health education and is trying out a weekly timetabled 15-minute slot. As part of the Healthy Schools Initiative, the school is also trialling a healthy eating programme and having drinking water available in classrooms. The school is very proud to have just been awarded the 'Healthy Schools' Standard'. There is an appropriate programme of sex education and raising awareness of the dangers of drug misuse. This is supported by the school nurse. In addition, events such as a dance company's performance in the school successfully reinforce the school's teaching.
27. Clearly written curriculum policies are in place for all subjects. The school has made good use of recent national guidelines to review their policies and schemes of work and as a basis for teachers' thorough planning. This forms an effective framework for teaching and learning. Planning carefully reflects the needs of pupils of differing abilities and different ages in the mixed-age classes. Teachers use assessment information to group pupils according to their abilities. They plan that tasks are matched to pupils' prior attainment to enable them to make good progress. However, co-ordinators do not have the chance to

monitor how policies and planning in their subject are being put into practice in classrooms. The school has successfully implemented the national guidelines for literacy and numeracy as it has striven to raise standards in these subjects. It has focused particularly on improving pupils' writing, with additional time outside the literacy lesson devoted to it. Standards are now improving in writing due to the very good teaching and the additional opportunities in other subjects as well as English. In addition, teachers provide pupils with frequent opportunities and reasons to talk purposefully in lessons, whether explaining their mental mathematical methods or describing how a mangle works in history. Teaching is often lively so that pupils want to contribute their ideas and opinions and teachers encourage them to do so. Many become confident and articulate speakers as a result. There are frequent opportunities for pupils to use and develop their information and communication technology skills through their work in other subjects.

28. The school continues to make very good arrangements to ensure that all pupils have equality of opportunity and access to the curriculum, irrespective of their ability, gender or background. Teachers make every effort to ensure that the contributions of all pupils are celebrated and valued. All pupils have frequent opportunities to work together and to support each other's learning. This makes a significant contribution to their academic and personal development. Pupils attending the unit are fully included in regular whole school activities such as daily assemblies and physical education lessons. They have opportunities to attend clubs after-school with transport home and they join in educational visits with their year groups, including residential trips where appropriate. Pupils participate in school drama productions and two members of the class are representatives on the school council.
29. The school makes very good arrangements for the support of pupils with special educational needs in the unit and main school classes. This marks an improvement since the last inspection. Procedures for the early identification of pupils with special educational needs are secure. Teachers work with the special educational needs co-ordinator in drawing up pupils' individual work plans, which contain clear, achievable targets that are regularly reviewed and updated. In consequence, those pupils with special educational needs participate actively in lessons and in the life of the school. The school ensures that the arrangements outlined in pupils' Statements of Special Educational Need are in place and reviewed in line with the Code of Practice<sup>5</sup> guidelines. The small number of pupils attending the unit receive individual attention, support in accordance with their Statements of Special Educational Need and appropriate focus on their behavioural targets. In addition, the teacher maintains consistent and detailed monitoring of their progress. These arrangements support the pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties very effectively so that they make very good progress towards their individual targets. The school is keen to identify able pupils and teachers plan sufficiently demanding class work to ensure that pupils reach the standards of which they are capable.
30. The school gives careful attention to providing learning opportunities that very successfully meet the needs and interests of all pupils, including those in the unit. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Rich and exciting experiences such as the regular drama productions involving the whole school give pupils an interest and enthusiasm for learning and contribute significantly to their excellent attitudes towards school. Teachers organise a very good programme of educational visits to local museums and places of interest. From Year 2 upwards, pupils participate in residential visits that extend their learning in subjects including science, geography, history and art. In addition, they offer

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<sup>5</sup> [Code of Practice – this gives practical advice to schools and local education authorities about their responsibilities, duties and tasks to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs receive the most appropriate help and support to further their learning and personal development. This is a statutory duty under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001.](#) [Code of Practice – this gives practical advice to schools and local educational authorities about their responsibilities and tasks to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs receive the most appropriate help to further their learning and personal development. This is a statutory duty under the 1993 Education Act.](#)



pupils opportunities to develop new skills such as candle making, pottery, archery and woodcraft. Visitors to school include musicians and representatives of the police and local fire brigade. These activities bring learning to life. They add considerably to pupils' interest and enthusiasm for school and thereby to the quality of their learning and to the progress that they make. Staff offer a range of after-school activities including sports, music, French and science, all of which successfully extend and enrich the curriculum. However, attendance is variable and sometimes insufficient to make clubs viable. Some working parents find the timing difficult and this is to be reviewed with the newly elected school council.

31. Very effective links with the community and with partner institutions make a valuable contribution to pupils' education. The minister of the local church readily supports class topics and is a familiar visitor in school. Pupils regularly visit the nearby churches and Year 6's singing was recently recorded and broadcast by local radio. Through the 'Healthy Schools Initiative', pupils learned first aid skills with first aiders. The school maintains well-developed links with universities in Liverpool and York, a local museum and several nearby businesses. These arrangements enable pupils to take part in a wide range of worthwhile activities, including science and technology workshops.
32. Most of the children admitted to the reception class attend the 'in-house' playgroup, which has close links with and support from the school. Pupils take part in competitive cricket and rugby league competitions and tournaments with other primary schools. Very good links also exist with the local secondary school that allow pupils to have access to additional resources and challenging activities that improve their progress in subjects such as design and technology. All of these activities add to pupils' learning and promote effective social and cultural development.
33. The school has maintained the good quality of its arrangements for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development since the previous inspection. Daily acts of collective worship are of a mainly Christian character and meet statutory requirements. They contribute effectively to the quality of the school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
34. The school promotes pupils' spiritual development very effectively. A sense of spirituality and thoughtfulness is evident in the carefully prepared assemblies. Pupils have frequent opportunities to join in prayer, sing hymns and feel positive about themselves. However, moments of quiet stillness are sometimes too fleeting. Teachers consistently praise individuals' efforts and encourage them to feel good about themselves. The school provides pupils with appropriate insights into their own and others' values and beliefs through religious education lessons and assemblies. Pupils regularly visit the local church and also attend services. This contributes effectively to this aspect of pupils' spiritual development. Teachers successfully promote pupils' sense of wonder and awareness of the beauty of the natural world through assemblies, such as those focusing on seasons, and their work in a range of subjects. For example, children in the reception class gasped in awe at seeing a snail's shell through a magnifying glass.
35. The school fosters pupils' moral development very well. In assemblies and talking to pupils, teachers consistently encourage pupils to recognise their own individuality and worth. Assembly themes focus on issues such as 'rules' and 'being sensible' and staff are consistent in ensuring that pupils know what is expected of them and that they understand the difference between right and wrong. Teaching in subjects, including English, enables pupils to confront moral issues, such as those relating to 'being different' and 'racial discrimination'. Much of the school's provision is embedded in its everyday life and teaching. The headteacher and staff provide very good role models. They consistently treat pupils, other members of the school community and each other with courtesy and respect and this reflects in the attitudes and response of the pupils.

36. Arrangements for promoting pupils' social development are good overall. Very supportive and constructive relationships between teachers and pupils successfully promote pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Teachers heighten pupils' social awareness through assembly themes such as 'caring for each other', 'sharing' and 'being kind'. Teachers regularly expect pupils to work collaboratively in lessons and give pupils from Year 2 upwards the opportunity to participate in residential school trips. These activities successfully improve pupils' skills of co-operation and social interaction. Participation in team games, the small schools' sports competition and occasional tournaments promotes pupils' sense of fair play and teamwork. Teachers create good opportunities for pupils to exercise responsibility. For example, Year 6 pupils regularly work on computers with reception class children. Pupils also learn to share responsibility through the working of the school council. Teachers encourage pupils to reflect on the needs of others and give support to a range of charitable causes, including the British Heart Foundation. Pupils also share 'Harvest Festival' produce with the elderly at the local day care centre. Teachers ensure that pupils address aspects of citizenship as part of planned topics. However, teachers plan few opportunities for pupils to extend their knowledge and experience of life in Britain's multi-ethnic society.
37. There are satisfactory arrangements overall for promoting pupils' cultural development and some aspects are very effective. Pupils learn about their cultural heritage through such activities as the 'Canal Barge Adventure' project and visiting the local Town Hall. The school extends pupils' cultural awareness successfully through activities such as 'World Book Day' and a programme of carefully planned visits to museums, galleries and exhibitions. For example, Years 1 and 2 pupils learn about times past when they dress as young Victorians and visit Norton Priory. In art and design lessons, teachers successfully promote pupils' awareness of the works of a range of famous western artists. Teachers introduce pupils to major world faiths through work in religious education and occasional stories from Islam and Hinduism in assemblies. However, pupils' knowledge and understanding is fragmented and they have little understanding of the richness and diversity of other cultures.

### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

38. All teachers know their pupils well and work hard to ensure their happiness. Arrangements for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are good and reflect the trust between adults and pupils. There is an effective staggered induction programme that allows children to happily settle into routines. Classroom assistants encourage and guide pupils well, building self-esteem and supporting learning.
39. The school has dealt satisfactorily with the weaknesses concerning health and safety highlighted in the previous inspection. First aid cover is good because of trained staff who support pastoral care well. Parents are confident that their children are well looked after during the day. Procedures for child protection are satisfactory, as are health and safety procedures. These were previously judged inadequate. There have been some improvements. However, there are areas of weakness. Not all staff have had updated training to ensure their familiarity with child protection procedures and parents are not advised of their role in such matters. Checks on fire equipment and alarms have taken place and a survey of the premises has been completed. Risk assessments now cover aspects of the curriculum and visits made out of school. There is no risk assessment regarding the use of the school by pupils and adults at different times of the day.
40. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance levels are not rigorous or searching enough to be effective. Pupils' attendance is celebrated on an annual basis and the services of the education welfare officer are used in cases of concern. These procedures have not proved to be effective because attendance levels continue to fall. Some

monitoring of attendance occurs and action is taken, but not enough is done to systematically follow up absences as they occur. The school does not routinely contact pupils' homes on the first day of an unexplained absence or prepare parents for a firmer approach to raising attendance levels.

41. The monitoring and management of behaviour are very effective. Parents are happy with the standard achieved and feel they or their children can readily approach all staff if they have fears or concerns. Rules are straightforward and understood by pupils. Teachers manage their classes well and pupils enjoy the praise and rewards that are given for good behaviour and effort. Assemblies are successfully used to show that care and consideration for others, regardless of difference, is important. Pupils and parents are confident that any unacceptable behaviour will be dealt with promptly.
42. The school cares very well for pupils with special educational needs. In their individual education plans, targets are comprehensive so that parents can appreciate their importance. This helps to promote success and involve parents in a partnership. Consistent and detailed monitoring of pupils' progress supports progress across all curriculum areas. Pupils who attend the special unit are supported well. Since the last inspection the school has introduced assessments of pupils' attainment on entry to the unit and improved the assessment and recording systems to include all areas of the National Curriculum. This is a good improvement and results in very good teaching and learning for these pupils. Pupils' academic progress and personal development are tracked on a daily basis. An initial priority for the pupils is to learn to manage their own behaviour well enough to enable them to make progress in their lessons within the unit. They then progress to lessons in the main part of the school. To this end, pupils are involved throughout the day in assessing their own behaviour. The unit works on a reward and consequence system with pupils earning free choice activities if they keep to the class rules and achieve their personal behavioural targets. All pupils try their best to achieve success. At the time of the inspection, one pupil had fully integrated and others were building up a staggered integration into classes. There are insufficient unit staff to accompany pupils into the mainstream classes and provide instant ongoing encouragement. Consequently, the success of the integration is largely due to parental encouragement and effective liaison with the very supportive class teachers.
43. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers monitor pupils' learning in lessons and make notes on their weekly planning sheets. They use this information to 'fine tune' their planning to the needs of pupils in the class, including higher-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. Throughout the school, teachers use assessment information effectively to group pupils according to their abilities and to plan support for individuals and groups of pupils. This close attention and monitoring helps pupils to make very good progress overall during their time in school.
44. Teachers' skills and confidence in assessing, recording and monitoring pupils' progress are better than they were because staff meet together regularly to assess pieces of pupils' work, which are maintained in portfolios. This happens termly in English, mathematics and science and once a year in other subjects. The school supplements the annual national tests and assessments in Years 2 and 6 by using the optional tests available for pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 and their own assessments. There are termly assessments against National Curriculum levels for English, mathematics and science, with an ongoing record of how well pupils are achieving in information and communication technology. In addition, the school reviews pupils' progress regularly as they move through the school. For example, from Years 3 to 6 pupils have regular reading and spelling tests. Each half term teachers assess a piece of writing and set a target for improvement which they review the following half term. This is effective because pupils' are actively involved in the process and motivated to improve. Pupils have similar targets set for mathematics and personal

development. These arrangements give teachers valuable information about standards throughout the school and enable them to track and closely monitor pupils' progress. Arrangements in other subjects are less formal. Teachers assess whether pupils are achieving the learning aims of the topics. However, this is not effective in assessing how well pupils' skills in a subject develop over time, such as mapping skills in geography. The school recognises that this is an area for development.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

45. Parents are very satisfied with what the school provides and achieves. The questionnaires and the meeting with parents before the inspection show that many parents are positive about what the school does for their children's personal development and the progress they make. Links with parents and consequently the impact of their involvement on the work of the school are satisfactory. Parents like the high expectations teachers have of the pupils and the values taught. Many say their children like school. A small number of parents are less happy about homework arrangements and information about progress. Some are critical about the provision of activities outside of lessons. A very full range of visits occurs during the year, including residential experiences for pupils. Various clubs run when sufficient numbers of children enrol for them.
46. Parents learn of the school as a community through frequent and lively, well-presented newsletters. These deal with information about general news or diary dates and social events. Parents can chat to staff informally at the start and end of each day. There are general consultation meetings with parents each term. At the end of the year, progress can be discussed in detail. Staff always offer other means of speaking to those parents who cannot attend meetings.
47. Overall, however, the quality of information that the school provides for parents is unsatisfactory because it does not help parents know how to make a good contribution to their children's achievements. This matches the judgements of the previous inspection when communication with parents was said to be 'variable'. These arrangements reduce the effectiveness of the link between home and school. Parents say that they are unaware of forthcoming topics and that not enough detail is provided in pupils' annual progress reports. These are still unsatisfactory and inconsistent in how they describe areas where progress has slowed. Most describe what has been achieved in three subjects of the curriculum. Often, what the whole class has covered is described for parents, rather than each child's progress in each subject. None helpfully include a target for improvement. The prospectus does not provide information about how parents could help children learn. Nor does it include areas of learning for the youngest pupils. The governors' annual report to parents contains most of what it should. It omits to inform parents of the targets for pupils' achievements the school is working towards and when each governor's term of office expires. Opportunities are missed to ensure parents know about homework arrangements and their role in supporting their child's reading. For example, few home-school reading diaries show a helpful two-way dialogue between teacher and parent.
48. The social life of the school involves parents fully. They raise funds through 'Parent and Teacher' activities and support assemblies and concerts well. Some parents sign a home-school arrangement and try to keep the promises within it. The majority appreciate the school's work in recognising their children's strides in personal achievement. The school is aware that absence levels are adversely inflated when parents take unauthorised term-time holidays. Too few parents recognise that this practice is far from ideal.
49. Parents of children with special educational needs throughout the school are kept informed about their progress and are involved in discussing their targets at review meetings. The teacher in charge of the special unit has effective links with parents and with other support agencies. There is an 'open door' policy and parents are encouraged to visit the school.

However, this can present difficulties, as the pupils attending the unit do not live locally. The teacher and classroom assistant visit homes if necessary and liaise with the receiving schools when pupils are due to leave. The parent-pupil-school partnership agreement properly outlines the school philosophy and the actions that may be taken if a pupil becomes aggressive or violent. The school maintains contact with parents to keep them fully informed about their child's progress and ensures parents are included in the more formal annual reviews of progress.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

50. The headteacher provides effective leadership that gives a clear direction to the work of the school. She has maintained a strong focus on raising standards and, as a result, standards in English, mathematics and science are considerably higher than they were at the time of the previous inspection. She has also ensured that there have been improvements in almost all of the other areas identified for action after the previous inspection. Above all she has maintained the morale and commitment of staff during a period in which pupil numbers have declined and social and educational circumstances have become more challenging. As a result, staff share a very strong sense of purpose and teachers, classroom assistants and administrative, supervisory and premises staff work together as effective teams. The atmosphere within the school fully reflects its principal aims, which set out to:
- enable children and staff to develop their full potential;
  - provide a lively, stimulating curriculum;
  - foster partnership with the wider community;
  - integrate pupils with special educational needs into the full life of the school.
51. Most of the tasks of school management fall to the headteacher. Members of staff have accepted responsibility for co-ordinating the development of curriculum subjects, managing the provision for pupils with special educational needs, mentoring student teachers and overseeing aspects such as assessment. However, this delegation is not adding to the overall efficiency of school management because the school has not provided some of them with the time or opportunity to fulfil these responsibilities thoroughly. Consequently, even though informal networks are strong and staff communicate freely and give mutual support, the processes of monitoring and evaluating the school's work are not as rigorous as they should be. There is very little systematic monitoring of standards and quality by classroom observations and observations that do take place do not always have a clearly identified purpose or extend to all subjects. While they have resulted in improvements to the teaching and learning, they do not provide the quality of management information required for sustained improvement and to ensure consistency in all aspects of the school's work.
52. Governors are very supportive of the school and they are proud of the esteem in which it is held in the community. They bring a wide range of business, commercial and community experience to their role and give freely of their time and expertise to support the work of the school. They fulfil most of their statutory duties effectively, although some aspects of policy and of information for parents fall below current requirements. They are well informed by the headteacher about the school's work and the headteacher encourages governors to become more involved in the school by fostering a climate in which questions and challenge play an increasing role. As a result, governors are confident in placing parental concerns on the agenda or expressing strongly held principles when they discuss the school development plan.
53. Governors know and value the strengths of the school and the quality of leadership that the headteacher provides. Their role in shaping its direction is satisfactory but they do not monitor many aspects of the school's provision at first hand and this leads to some variations in their awareness of relative strengths and weaknesses. For example, governors

are particularly rigorous in their monitoring and taking action on matters of health and safety and in their drive to improve the security of the school site. Similarly, their monitoring of the school's budget is extremely thorough. Conversely, however, the governing body does not hold the school to account or intervene in important issues such as pupils' attendance levels and this weakens the school's response to the present unsatisfactory situation.

54. This is an inclusive school. Its aims and values place strong emphasis on all pupils having equal access to what the school offers. The headteacher and the special educational needs co-ordinator manage this aspect of the school's work effectively, with the result that these aims are reflected well in its life and work. They ensure that the school adheres to the Code of Practice and that pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need receive their full entitlement to additional support. This makes a strong contribution to the learning of about a quarter of the pupils in the school and, as a result, these pupils make good progress. All receive effective support from teachers and assistants who help them. Because it is organised and managed well, the work of classroom assistants and learning support assistants is very effective. Pupils with special educational needs, including those in the unit, participate in almost all of the special events, such as educational visits, sports coaching and performances for parents. This level of inclusion speeds the reintegration of pupils in the unit into the main school. There is, however, one weakness in this area of the school's arrangements. The governing body does not routinely sample parents' opinions as part of the decision making process and this weakens the school's partnership with parents.
55. The school's financial planning is very good. There are very good financial links between the school's budget and the priorities set out in the school's development plan. This is an important factor in ensuring that most of the school's targets for development are successfully met. Governors understand and consider best value principles in their financial dealings, as well as comparing the pupils' attainments with those in other schools. Funds for special purposes are used very well. Notably, the very effective use of grants for pupils with special educational needs results in good provision for these pupils and this fosters their good progress. Recently, the school has held a relatively large amount of surplus money in its budget. This money has been earmarked for a range of suitable purposes, including maintaining staffing levels and 'cushioning' the school from the worst effects of fluctuating intakes to the reception class and the increase in pupil mobility. The school has suitable plans to ensure that, should these events not adversely affect the school's financial position, most of the school's funds are spent on the current pupils.
56. The number of teaching staff is good for a school of this size. Class sizes are quite low and pupils benefit from additional time that teachers can devote to them. There is a satisfactory mix of age, experience and expertise amongst the teaching staff. The governing body has introduced good arrangements for managing the performance of staff. Teachers' targets for improving the quality of their work relate closely to the school's main development priorities but also address teachers' individual professional development needs. The headteacher and a senior member of staff review these targets annually. All newly appointed teachers receive good support from other members of staff. This support enables them to settle into the school and become increasingly effective. There are agreed procedures for the induction of newly qualified teachers but there are currently no new entrants on the staff. During the inspection there was a student teacher in Year 1. Student teachers receive effective support from an experienced mentor as well as having access to a full programme of training and visits that help them to develop and improve the quality of their teaching.
57. The nursery nurse, classroom assistants and learning support teacher work very effectively to complement the work of the teachers and provide well-planned support to individuals and groups. Class teachers manage the work of support staff very effectively. This ensures a high level of sensitive, good quality personal support for pupils of all levels

of attainment. Office staff and those responsible for school meals and the cleanliness of the school make a good contribution to the efficient and hygienic day-to-day life of the school.

58. Accommodation is good overall. Staff make good use of the space in classrooms and outside in the corridors. The classrooms are very attractive areas. One classroom for older pupils has settees where pupils love to sit when the teacher gathers them together. Staff show how highly they value the work of the children by the way it is displayed. Outdoor play facilities have improved since the last inspection and are now good, including the outdoor facilities for the youngest children's physical development. However, this area is not secure so that children cannot have free access to it and have to be directly supervised at all times. The school provides a disabled toilet and a ramp to the main entrance and the unit. There are no disabled pupils on roll at present. The pleasant well-lit library was completed in 1999 and was used as additional teaching space up to 2002. Although it is still used for teaching small groups, classes and pupils are beginning to use it to borrow fiction and non-fiction books.
59. Learning resources are satisfactory overall. There are now more computers available in each teaching area and the library. Resources in information and communication technology and in design and technology are now satisfactory. For children in the Foundation Stage there are large climbing and balancing apparatus and wheeled vehicles. These are improvements since the last inspection. Recent funding has been focused on the purchase of textbooks, so that the stock of non-fiction books and artefacts in subjects such as history and religious education, though adequate, is limited and teachers supplement the resources themselves. In addition, the school's use of educational visits and residential trips adds to the quality of resources. They bring subjects to life for pupils and make learning more meaningful.
60. The headteacher and administrative assistant make good use of computer technology to improve the efficiency of the school. The school maintains pupils' records, attendance data, some assessment data and the school's budget on the office computers. Staff have secure administrative and information and communication technology skills and use them effectively to analyse data, identify trends, track the school's budget and prepare reports for the headteacher, governing body and local education authority. This enables the headteacher and governors to make decisions on the basis of accurate and up-to-date information and so adds to the overall efficiency of school management and administration. The governors' finance committee is very efficient in its monitoring of the school's budget. As a result, specific grants are spent for their designated purpose and the school operates within its budget. Budget setting takes full account of the long-term plans of the school and different priorities are carefully matched against the funds available. As a result, the school is successful in meeting most of its targets in the school development plan. In relation to the overall effectiveness of the school, the quality of education that the school provides and the achievements of its pupils, the school provides very good value for money.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

61. In order to extend the school's current achievements, the governors, headteacher and staff should jointly:
- (1) improve co-ordinators' role in school's strategic planning by:
    - ensuring that all subject co-ordinators have planned opportunities to gather information about standards in their subjects by observing teaching and learning; (paragraphs 51, 81, 85 and 89)
  - (2) raise attendance levels by:
    - setting a target for improvement for each class and involve the whole community in working towards it;
    - following up absences daily and contacting parents promptly on the first day of a pupils' unexplained absence; (paragraphs 16, 40 and 48)
  - (3) improve the school's information for parents by:
    - giving parents information that they can use to become involved and knowledgeable about their children learning at school and particularly with children's reading at home;
    - improving pupils' progress reports so that they make clear statements about the amount of progress each child has made in every subject and how they can improve when progress has slowed;
    - encouraging their involvement in a partnership to reduce casual absences, term-time holidays and work towards raising attendance levels up to the national average;
    - ensuring that the governors' annual report to parents includes all the information that it should; (paragraphs 47 and 52)
  - (4) improve pupils' social and cultural education by:
    - planning the content of teaching, particularly in art and music, so that multicultural aspects are more regularly and thoroughly covered;
    - ensuring that assemblies and acts of worship recognise and celebrate the beliefs and festivals of other faiths and cultures;
    - ensuring that a multicultural dimension is better represented in subject resources. (paragraphs 36-37, 93, 113 and 124)



## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	34
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	34

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	3	13	9	7	0	0	0
Percentage	9	41	28	22	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 approximately three percentage points.

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	132
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	43
<b>Special educational needs</b>	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs	8
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	33
<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0
<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	22
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.8
National comparative data	5.4

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
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	-	-	11

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	-	-	-
	Girls	-	-	-
	Total	10	11	11
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	91 (87)	100 (91)	100 (74)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	-	-	-
	Girls	-	-	-
	Total	10	11	11
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	91 (87)	100 (78)	100 (87)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	-	-	16

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	-	-	-
	Girls	-	-	-
	Total	15	14	14
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	94 (68)	88 (59)	88 (73)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	-	-	-
	Girls	-	-	-
	Total	14	11	15
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	88 (55)	69 (59)	94 (64)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

**Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils on roll
White - British	132
White - Irish	0
White – any other White background	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0
Black or Black British - Caribbean	0
Black or Black British – African	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0
Chinese	0
Any other ethnic group	0
No ethnic group recorded	0

**Exclusions in the last school year**

Fixed period	Permanent
3	2
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0

*This 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)	7.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18
Average class size	22

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	37

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	0.75
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	0

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2001-2
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	£
Total income	391,299
Total expenditure	365,829
Expenditure per pupil	2,670
Balance brought forward from previous year	30,093

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate 20.5%

Number of questionnaires sent out	132
Number of questionnaires returned	27

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	62	30	4	4	0
My child is making good progress in school.	59	30	11	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	56	33	11	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	48	26	22	0	4
The teaching is good.	66	30	4	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	51	26	19	4	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	60	33	7	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59	37	4	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	48	37	11	4	0
The school is well led and managed.	52	37	7	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	52	41	4	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	30	19	7	11

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

**AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

62. The arrangements that the school makes for children in the Foundation Stage are very good. Children join the school full-time in the September before their fifth birthday. Parents and children visit the reception class and meet their teacher informally several times before starting school. These arrangements very successfully promote a smooth transition between home and school and enable links with home to begin to be established. Also, children attending the independent playgroup housed within the school become familiar with the reception class teacher because they meet her and share the outside play area each day.
63. Many children enter school with knowledge, skills and understanding that are well below average for their age. The teacher and nursery nurse work very hard to ensure that the reception class is calm and welcoming. This ensures that all boys and girls settle securely into school life and are very well motivated to learn. They make good overall progress. However, because of their very low starting point, most children do not attain the early learning goals for children of their age by the end of the Foundation Stage. Children's learning is particularly successful in personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world and aspects of communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. A small number of children achieve the expected standards in these areas of learning.
64. The quality of teaching is very good. This is an improvement since the last inspection when teaching was good. The class teacher and classroom assistant work very well together. The classroom assistant is clear about what the children are to learn in the course of each session. She supports groups and individuals purposefully and makes a significant contribution to children's learning. The teacher has a good knowledge and understanding of how young children learn and her very detailed planning successfully incorporates the required areas of learning. She assesses children's skills shortly after they start school, using local authority materials. The teacher and nursery nurse note children's achievements and create a range of records. The teacher uses the results of these assessments to identify development and learning priorities for each child. The classroom is very thoughtfully organised with a good range of resources to stimulate children's curiosity and encourage them to become independent learners. There is direct access to an outdoor area, which is used by the playgroup at particular times. The teacher plans a stimulating range of activities to provide the children with valuable opportunities to learn by working on a more active scale than is possible indoors. For example, on a blustery day they make bubbles and observe the effect as they blow away in the wind. However, this area is not enclosed. Consequently, children cannot move freely between the classroom and the outdoor area because adult supervision is required at all times. These arrangements limit the use of this very valuable learning resource.

**Personal, social and emotional development**

65. Children make very good progress in their personal, social and emotional development and most attain average standards for their age. This is because the teacher arranges a wide range of stimulating experiences that very successfully promote children's interest and excitement in learning. The children are happy and well used to the classroom systems. The teacher has very high expectations of children's involvement and they respond very eagerly. Almost all are confident in the familiar classroom setting and show a very good degree of independence in their approach to activities and daily routines. They put on their aprons for art and craft activities and clear away equipment at the end of sessions, with a minimum of adult help. They are highly motivated to learn, settling quickly to tasks and concentrating hard. They handle books and equipment carefully. When

moving around school, as when they go to the hall for assembly, they behave sensibly and co-operatively. They are patient and take their turn. Teaching in this area of learning is very good. The teacher and nursery nurse clearly value each child's efforts and give lots of individual praise and encouragement. Very carefully prepared activities successfully promote children's awareness of their own feelings. As children dress in appropriate finery and actively participate in a *Grand Wedding*, involving the local minister, they readily share their experiences of joy and wonderment, using very simple terms. Plans include regular opportunities for children to celebrate and have fun as they learn. For example, they dress up as letters for a 'sounds party'. Such arrangements very effectively build children's self-esteem and promote their confidence in learning and in their relationships with others.

### **Communication, language and literacy**

66. Children make good gains in their communication, language and literacy skills, although the standards that they attain are below average for their age. Many children enter school with very immature speaking skills. The teacher plans regular opportunities for them to talk to adults and each other. At the beginning and end of sessions, children and adults sit in a circle to talk about their tasks and activities. The teacher asks well-directed questions and consistently extends children's vocabulary, often with the help of a puppet. This successfully engages children's interest and they make good progress in developing their speaking and listening skills. Children enjoy sharing stories and rhymes and joining in with repeated phrases. The quality of teaching is very good. Staff take every opportunity to promote children's confidence and communication skills. Carefully prepared activities successfully stimulate children's interest in letter sounds, reading and writing. From their earliest days in school, children regularly take home a range of books to share with their parents. They demonstrate confidence in handling books and the majority recognise familiar words and begin to associate letters and sounds. Lively activities and games successfully reinforce their learning and encourage the children to see learning as fun. For example, a group plays skittles with the nursery nurse. This involves rolling a ball at letters and matching letter sounds with appropriate items. The children regularly practise writing patterns, using a range of markers. They also enjoy forming letter shapes from play dough. They understand that writing conveys meaning. Almost all write their own names and a small number write simple words and phrases independently.

### **Mathematical development**

67. Children make good progress in developing mathematical understanding, although many do not attain average standards in all aspects of this area of learning. Children make very good progress in counting. Most children count reliably to 10. A small number of higher-attaining children confidently identify and order numbers to 20 and beyond, which is ahead of many children of their age. The quality of teaching is very good with lots of planned activities to promote children's mathematical development. Children develop a secure sense of number, order and sequence through regular counting routines and activities. For example, with the nursery nurse's support, a small group of lower attaining children sequence numbers within 10 on a washing line. Many children make good progress in saying the number that is one more than a given number and some children can find one less than a given number. However, they do not use the vocabulary involved in adding and subtracting or relate addition to combining two groups of objects or subtraction to 'taking away'. Many children know the names of colours and some common two-dimensional shapes. Staff regularly seize opportunities to reinforce children's mathematical skills and check their understanding through well-directed questions. Also, in the course of the day they regularly introduce number songs and rhymes that successfully support children's learning.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

68. The teacher gives a high priority to this area of learning because many children enter school with very limited knowledge and understanding of the world. Throughout the year, she thoroughly plans a programme of stimulating topics that successfully engage children's curiosity and promote children's learning. As a result, most children attain standards that are average for their age. They learn about the properties of materials, such as sand, water and clay, by handling and working with them. They make good progress in understanding the needs of living things through practical activities throughout the year. These include planting seeds and going on minibeast hunts in the school grounds. They gain further knowledge and understanding of the living world through visiting the nearby park and walking on Runcorn Hill. The teaching of this area of learning is very good. The teacher plans activities in which children can be actively involved. For example, they make very good progress in distinguishing between past and present by looking at their own teddy bears, those of their parents and those of their grandparents. They successfully reinforce their learning by visiting the teddy bear exhibition at Liverpool Museum. Careful preparation ensures that the children's activities extend previous learning. This adds relevance to their work, stimulates their interest and very successfully promotes progress. For example, children draw a map of their walk in the vicinity of the school and use a programmable toy to retrace the route in the classroom. Also, children have regular opportunities to use a range of simple computer programs that soundly support their learning.

### **Physical development**

69. Significant aspects of children's physical development are below average for their age. Children are self-assured and move safely in and around their classroom. They enjoy regular opportunities to be active in physical education lessons when they run, walk and are beginning to skip with confidence. However, although most children avoid bumping into each other, their co-ordination and control are limited. The quality of teaching is very good. The teacher prepares meticulously to provide children with safe and exciting experiences that reinforce and extend their physical development. She also consistently extends children's knowledge and understanding of vocabulary associated with their movement, as when she describes the movement of animals in a dance session, encouraging children to 'prowl', 'stomp' and 'bound'. She has very high expectations of children's involvement. They listen attentively and respond promptly to instructions. The class teacher and nursery nurse are very calm and supportive. They successfully encourage all children to participate fully. The teacher plans regular opportunities for children to practice climbing and balancing on benches and mats in the school hall. They also have sessions during the day for vigorous free play outdoors. They have space to run energetically and use the large wooden apparatus and wheeled vehicles. This marks an improvement since the last inspection, when there was a lack of such equipment. The teacher carefully arranges activities that successfully promote children's physical development alongside other areas of learning. For example, children fit together number jigsaws and thread beads in particular sequences. They frequently use construction materials, glue and paintbrushes independently. However, the teacher and nursery nurse give plenty of encouragement when children handle simple tools, such as scissors, as many demonstrate limited manipulative skills.

### **Creative development**

70. Children make good progress in developing their creative skills, although they remain below average for children of their age. They join in readily with number rhymes and enjoy joining the rest of the school for hymn practice. They make very good progress in learning to distinguish sounds when they explore the effects of scraping, tapping and shaking a good range of musical instruments and everyday objects, such as wooden spoons. However, they demonstrate very limited rhythm when they clap and march during action songs. The quality of teaching is very good. The role-play area is very thoughtfully set up as a garden centre to encourage children's collaboration and use of imaginative language. However, children often play alongside rather than with each other and initiate few ideas of



their own. Adults intervene very effectively and extend children's play by acting out familiar situations and successfully drawing children's attention to props to promote their ideas. Staff ensure that stimulating materials and tools are accessible to the children. They have frequent opportunities to draw using pencils and a satisfactory range of markers. They take particular care when they use their sketchbooks, as when they drew snowdrops in the spring. The teacher plans activities, which very successfully engage children's interest, as when they paint doves of peace and mix paint to achieve different shades of blue after looking at Picasso's work

## ENGLISH

71. Most Year 6 pupils are on course to achieve average standards in the national tests. However, fewer pupils are likely to achieve above average standards than nationally. In addition, the current Year 6 includes pupils with special educational needs, including pupils in the unit, who are not on course to achieve the average standard. This means that the overall results are likely to be lower than last year. However, by Year 6 standards are above average in speaking and listening due to the many and varied opportunities pupils have to develop these skills. Overall, in their time at the school pupils, including those with special educational needs, make very good progress to reach their present standards, given the low attainment on entry for many. This is due to the very good teaching and learning opportunities provided for them.
72. Girls and boys participate equally well and effectively in lessons. There is no significant difference in their performance in tests. Teachers work hard to motivate reluctant readers and writers and, as a result, most reach the expected standards. One of the effective strategies to encourage reluctant readers, particularly boys, was to take them to a local bookshop to choose books for school that they wanted to read. Teachers make their lessons exciting and challenging so pupils are keen to participate and learn. They include a wide range of visits and visitors and activities, which interest and enthuse pupils. For example, the top two classes put on a performance about aspects of life in the 1960s to an audience of parents. All the pupils then interviewed parents very confidently about their school days and were interested in what they found out, particularly about corporal punishment, which added to their research of the period. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported encouraged by teachers and classroom assistants so that they participate fully in lessons. They make good progress because the work they do very closely matches their needs, as outlined in their individual education plans.
73. Strengths in the subject are:
  - very good teaching overall;
  - teachers' high expectations;
  - setting targets for pupils so that they improve and achieve well;
  - the very good progress pupils make, including those with special educational needs, in their time at school;
  - the above average standards pupils achieve in speaking and listening by Year 6;
  - pupils' very positive attitudes to and enthusiasm for learning;
  - teachers' use of assessment in planning for pupils of different abilities;
  - the high standard of presentation of work in pupils' books.
74. Areas for development are:
  - more frequent teaching of reading in groups to raise standards;
  - more involvement of parents and carers in their children's reading;
  - monitoring of teaching by the co-ordinator to spread the very good practice throughout the school.

75. Attainment is average in speaking and listening at the end of Year 2 and above average at the end of Year 6. Pupils' speaking and listening skills develop well by the age of seven due to the many and varied opportunities teachers plan in lessons for them to talk and listen. Consequently, most pupils achieve the expected level by the age of seven. This includes some pupils with speech and language difficulties, who make very good progress to reach the expected level. In a history lesson, for example, pupils recall accurately the names and purposes of the artefacts used in washing in Victorian times, such as a mangle. 'You feed clothes into it. One holds the side, to catch the clothes, and one turns the handle'. This shows good ability to describe the process accurately, using appropriate vocabulary. Teachers build on the good progress pupils make in Years 1 and 2 so that by the age of 11, standards are above average in speaking and listening. They incorporate many good opportunities into their planning for pupils to talk and listen in formal and informal situations across a range of subjects. As a result, most pupils speak confidently and are used to expressing their ideas and explaining, both with adults and with each other. In mathematics, pupils talk about their methods, drawing on appropriate mathematical language; in a lesson about civil rights and racial discrimination, pupils define terms such as 'discrimination' and 'segregation' accurately showing they understand the issues well. Teachers encourage pupils to express their opinions and feelings, with good results. 'Discrimination hurts, whatever form it takes', contributes one pupil sensitively. Teachers ask very pertinent, open-ended questions that make pupils think. For example when planning a story based on the Apollo 11 mission, the teacher asks, 'Is it more difficult to plan where you know the plot?' 'I think it's easier as you have done a lot of research', says one pupil. 'Harder, it's harder to imagine what it would be like', says another. Pupils often work in pairs talking purposefully about their work and each other's, for example their piece of writing or the book they are reading.
76. Almost all pupils attain average standards in reading at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. A small proportion exceeds these standards. Pupils' knowledge of sounds, letters and simple word building develops well in reception and Year 1 where pupils already have a confident and positive approach to reading. They are very familiar with the composition of books and recognise features of non-fiction such as the contents page and understand its purpose. This is a good standard for Year 1. This is developed further by the good opportunities in Year 2. For example, many pupils read out to the class the questions they have composed, reading clearly and in the style of a question so others hear and understand. They develop efficient basic book skills. For example, they explain the use and purpose of contents pages and the index in a non-fiction book and understand the difference between fiction and non-fiction. A wide range of reading abilities is represented in Year 3. The majority of pupils attain or exceed average standards. However, many pupils sound out words effectively to help them read but do not use other cues such as the pictures and the context to help them understand. As pupils move further up the school they develop a range of strategies that they use to help them read unfamiliar words and understand what they read. For example, older pupils re-read a sentence to help them understand the meaning. They read with increasing confidence and fluency and standards improve as a result. Older and higher-attaining pupils develop skills to look beyond the literal meaning in a piece of text. For example, they look for clues in a newspaper article as to how the person is feeling and with very good teaching they pick out the words and phrases that give them clues. Pupils' reading development is also well supported in other subjects, such as history, when they undertake research from books or the Internet. Pupils read regularly in class, which promotes their progress. However, their opportunities for reading in groups are more limited. Although younger pupils say they read to parents and carers at home, as well as adults at school, comments in reading record booklets seen are filled in mainly or wholly by school staff. This is a missed opportunity for dialogue with parents and to increase their involvement in their children's learning.
77. Standards in writing are average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. A small proportion of pupils achieves above average standards by the time they leave the school. Pupils have

regular opportunities to develop their writing and basic skills are well taught in Years 1 and 2. Consequently, they achieve well by the end of Year 2. Teachers provide pupils with a clear purpose for their writing, which includes accounts of visits, letters and instructions. They learn to structure their work appropriately. For example, using their visit to the teddy bear museum as a stimulus, pupils recount their visit and develop their ideas into a sequence of sentences. Specific lessons on aspects of grammar are effective in helping pupils develop their writing. For example, most understand the difference between a statement and a question. Working in pairs, they compose questions then write them remembering appropriate punctuation and plausible spelling. Pupils' writing develops further as they move up the school due to the continued good teaching and good opportunities. Teachers ensure older pupils have a very clear idea of what they need to do at each stage of the writing process and how to improve their work through targets set for them by the teacher. Pupils also use the prompts that the teachers display at the front of the class to support aspects of their writing, such as connectives, openers, punctuation and 'ambitious vocabulary'. Teachers motivate pupils to write through providing a wide range of stimuli and methods of support so all pupils are enthusiastic writers because they know what they want to write and how to go about it. For further support and to build confidence, pupils work in pairs when planning their writing and learn to help each other through sharing ideas and commenting on each other's work. All these strategies are very effective in developing the quality and range of pupils' writing. Pupils take a pride in the presentation of their work, which is of particularly high quality throughout the school. Pupils develop a joined and legible handwriting style. In addition, teachers use computers effectively. For example, lower attaining pupils word process the plans for their writing so that they can amend it easily and improve what they write.

78. The quality of teaching is very good overall and contributes strongly to the standards that pupils reach and their confident approach to the subject. Teachers make use of every available opportunity to reinforce what pupils are learning. As a result, pupils make very good progress during their time in school. The oldest pupils learn particularly successfully because their teachers are very enthusiastic and involve them very actively in their work. Teachers' secure understanding of the National Literacy Strategy is evident from their detailed planning. They are also adept at tailoring literacy lessons to the specific needs and ages of the pupils. This enables pupils to achieve well. Lessons have clear learning intentions and proceed at a brisk pace. This ensures that pupils have a clear idea of what they are learning and they approach their work purposefully. Teachers make lessons interesting and exciting so pupils are keen to learn. When the teacher says to a group of pupils that they can finish their story for homework, they are so keen to continue their writing they all say 'Yes!' enthusiastically. Teachers establish excellent relationships with pupils. Pupils also work well together, in pairs and groups, settling to their tasks quickly and achieving well. Teachers use homework very effectively to promote the work done in class. In science, younger pupils keep a diary of what they eat over a week and older pupils carry out research for their topics and write a structured plan for their writing to develop and discuss in class.
79. In Year 2, both the specialist teaching assistant and the teacher assess each pupil's progress in meeting the learning intention of the activity so that future planning takes this into account. This is very good use of day-to-day assessment that responds well to the needs of pupils and monitors their progress closely. All teachers make notes on their weekly planning sheets about pupils' progress that help them match pupils' needs closely. Older pupils have literacy targets which they review termly to see if they have improved and met them before setting a new target. This works well and pupils' writing improves as a result. This means pupils are very aware of their own learning and what they need to do to improve. They set targets such as 'To develop my characters in my stories' or 'To improve my spelling by checking them in a dictionary'.

80. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' social and moral development, for example when learning about all forms of discrimination, particularly focusing on racial discrimination and Martin Luther King in 1960's America. Pupils show sensitivity and empathy and a mature attitude when discussing such issues.
81. The curriculum overall is very good. Assessment systems are now in place which track pupils' progress as they move up the school. Teachers use this information and their own assessments to place pupils in ability and age groups for literacy so that the work matches pupils' needs very closely. Greater emphasis on developing pupils' writing has led to good improvement and an ability to generate pupils' enthusiasm for writing by lively teaching and the stimulating opportunities that they create for pupils. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable and experienced. The headteacher and co-ordinator monitor teachers' weekly planning and the whole staff come together termly to moderate samples of pupils' work, as well as meeting informally. However, no one has an overview of teaching in the subject as no one observes lessons. Nor do colleagues have opportunities to watch each other teach. Focusing on one aspect of teaching to observe, such as strategies for teaching reading in groups, for example, would indicate where the strengths lie and how these could be used to raise standards. Pupils have additional opportunities to develop their speaking and listening and literacy skills, for example when preparing, script-writing and performing an annual big production in July, involving Years 4,5 and 6. On 'World Book Day' the juniors took story sacks to the infants and performed for them very successfully. This helped to build their confidence. The curriculum is enriched by such activities, which interest and excite pupils, as well as visits and visitors. Classroom resources are good and reasonably plentiful. Resources in the library are satisfactory. Library stocks need building up to compensate for the books that used to be supplied by topic kits on loan locally which added to the provision. Pupils now use the library regularly and also borrow books to read at home.

## **MATHEMATICS**

82. Standards in mathematics are higher than they were at the time of the last inspection. Pupils achieve average standards. Almost all pupils currently in Year 2 are firmly on course to attain or exceed the nationally expected standard. In the current Year 6, most pupils are in line to attain or exceed the nationally expected standards. However, there is a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs, both in the Year 6 class and in the unit. These pupils are making good progress towards their personal targets, but are unlikely to achieve the nationally expected standards because of the difficulties that they face. Nevertheless, the fact remains that pupils of all abilities are making good progress in Years 1 and 2 and in Years 3 to 6 and that for many pupils, progress in mathematics over time is very good.
83. By the end of Year 2 almost all pupils count accurately to over 100. They have very good recall of number facts to 10 and use this effectively to solve basic addition and subtraction problems. They count on and back in twos and fives and identify and continue number patterns. Higher-attaining pupils recall the more simple times tables and know that division is the inverse of multiplication. Most pupils name common two- and three-dimensional shapes and the higher attaining describe how many sides and angles or faces and vertices they have. By the time that they are 11 years old, most pupils know their times tables well enough to solve both multiplication and division problems involving two-digit numbers and use written methods confidently to add, subtract, multiply and divide. They understand fractions and percentages and calculate and estimate proportions with a reasonable degree of accuracy. They collect and display information in a variety of ways and are able to interpret graphs and charts accurately. Throughout school, all teachers emphasise the importance of mathematical understanding. Consequently, pupils of all ages confidently explain their thinking and problem solving strategies to others.

84. Teaching has improved and most pupils achieve well because:
- the co-ordinator has managed the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy effectively and this has brought a greater consistency to the teaching of mathematics that is helping to raise standards over time;
  - the school has rectified the weakness identified by the previous inspection and so the mathematics curriculum ensures that pupils cover all aspects of mathematics more thoroughly;
  - planning emphasises the development of number skills, which are helping to improve mathematical understanding. Mental agility work forms a lively part in most lessons, improving pupils' confidence and the speed and accuracy of their thinking. When teachers target questions skilfully, as in the Years 1 and 2 lesson on mental strategies for adding and subtracting, pupils of differing levels of attainment benefit and make good progress;
  - pupils reinforce their mathematical understanding effectively through work in other subjects. They take measurements of plant growth in science, weigh ingredients in food technology, measure and cut components to size in design and technology and use information and communication technology to produce graphs as, for example, in Years 4 and 5;
  - very careful planning helps teachers build on pupils' prior learning. In this respect, teachers use on-going assessment information very effectively to match the work carefully to pupils' differing needs and abilities. For example, in the Years 1 and 2 class the teacher used her notes from the previous planning to ensure that her groups were working at the right level and were building on what they had achieved in earlier lessons;
  - teachers have high expectations of their pupils and successfully establish very effective working routines and work related behaviour from the pupils. As a result, pupils think carefully, their work rate is high and they persevere with challenging tasks. This was evident, for example, when a pupil in Year 6 explained to other pupils how to divide a two-digit number by 1,000 and what each digit in the answer represents. This quality of response adds to pupils' progress in most lessons;
  - teachers monitor pupils' work in progress very effectively and intervene to improve pupils' progress. For example, in an excellent Year 6 lesson on place value, the teacher noted that pupils in a particular group did not need to complete all of the set work because they already had a secure grasp of what they were doing. By moving them on to the next stage in the process, the teacher ensured that they made the best possible progress during the lesson;
  - the school adds to the quality of the curriculum by arranging visits, visitors and special events that very successfully enhance pupils' enjoyment of the learning of mathematics;
  - teaching and non-teaching staff work as very effective teams. Classroom assistants know exactly what is expected of them and this enables them to support teaching and learning very successfully. As a result, the school is able to meet the needs of all pupils more effectively because classroom assistants provide additional support for pupils with special educational needs or help higher-attaining pupils move on to more challenging work, for example solving more complex money problems with a Year 2 group.
85. The school's mathematics co-ordinator leads the development of the subject effectively. Her high quality teaching sets an excellent example for others to follow. She has provided the necessary training and support for staff to ensure that the National Numeracy Strategy is fully in place throughout the school. She has led the introduction of a new scheme of work that effectively meets the needs of pupils and staff. However, the co-ordinator does not monitor standards and quality by observing lessons and this reduces her ability to plan for further improvements in this subject.

## SCIENCE

86. Standards in Years 2 and 6 are average. Most seven year olds are on course to attain the nationally expected standard. Some pupils are working at a higher level, particularly in their approach to practical tasks, but none are on course to exceed the average standard overall. In Year 6, a small number of 11 year olds are on course to exceed the expected standard for their age. However, there is a high proportion of pupils with significant special educational needs in the year group, including pupils in the special unit. These pupils are not on course to achieve the expected standard. This is likely to have the effect of depressing the school's overall results. Despite this, pupils throughout the school are achieving well in science. There is no difference between the performance of boys and girls. Teachers and support assistants ensure that pupils with special educational needs in infant and junior classes are fully integrated into all classroom activities. They make very good progress towards the targets set for them. Teachers plan work that appropriately challenges higher-attaining pupils so that they achieve to their full potential. For example, when working on air resistance, higher-attaining Year 6 pupils confidently devise, carry out and refine their own experiments.
87. In Years 1 and 2, pupils develop a confident approach to science. They identify household objects that use electricity and have experience of simple circuits involving wires and buzzers. They sort materials according to their properties and are beginning to distinguish between natural and man-made materials. They enjoy experimenting to find a material that is suitable for a teddy bear's umbrella. In Years 3 and 4, pupils extend their understanding of plants and animals in the local environment. Year 4 pupils make good progress in understanding how to use keys to identify and classify them. Year 5 pupils gain a secure understanding of the life processes of living things. They make good gains in learning about the life cycles of human beings and flowering plants.
88. Teaching is good and aspects of teaching throughout the school are very effective. As a result, pupils are enthusiastic learners. Teaching in Year 6 is very well focused and pupils make particularly marked progress in their final year in school. Overall, pupils make good gains in learning from Year 1 to Year 6 because:
- since the last inspection, the school has revised the scheme of work and teachers' long- and medium-term plans ensure a well-balanced programme of topics, incorporating national guidelines;
  - teachers plan lessons very carefully to include a focus on investigational work as a basis for all science topics. This very successfully motivates pupils and promotes their understanding by enabling them to observe, explore and answer questions. For example, Year 4 pupils add water to a variety of solids and discover for themselves that some solids are soluble and others insoluble;
  - teachers throughout the school plan a particularly broad range of visits, including those to an outdoor education centre, science fair and museums. Visitors to school promote pupils' learning about health and hygiene, water, electricity and materials. These arrangements very successfully engage pupils' interest in science and support learning;
  - teachers have good subject knowledge that enables them to give clear explanations to pupils;
  - there is a strong emphasis on extending pupils' scientific vocabulary so that they communicate their ideas with increasing clarity;
  - teachers have very high expectations of all pupils' independence and sensible behaviour. In response, pupils settle purposefully to their tasks. When working in small groups pupils collaborate very effectively and share resource materials sensibly;
  - teachers make very good use of question and answer sessions to stimulate interest and check for the depth of pupils' understanding of new knowledge. Pupils are very attentive and demonstrate careful listening by their responses;
  - pupils have opportunities to reinforce their learning and extend their thinking by explaining what they have learned at the end of a session. For example, Year 2

pupils make it clear why they do not include chocolate in their plans for a balanced meal;

- teachers have very good relationships with pupils and often inject a touch of humour into lessons. This very successfully reinforces pupils' willingness to be involved, share ideas and make predictions;
- pupils enjoy science lessons and are keen to talk about their current topic. They take pride in their neatly presented and carefully illustrated work;
- teachers ensure that classroom support assistants are very clear about what pupils are to learn in the course of the lesson. Consequently, they work very purposefully with individuals and small groups and support pupils' learning very effectively;
- teachers link investigations in science with topics in other subjects. This promotes pupils' interest and reinforces their learning. For example, Year 5 pupils' work on diet and health effectively extends their learning about *Keeping Healthy*;
- pupils reinforce their literacy skills in science lessons as they regularly write about their investigations, describe fair tests and make evaluations. They also practice their numeracy skills through work in science, as when pupils in Years 1 and 2 measured in centimetres how far different objects moved when pushed and recorded their findings on a block graph;
- teachers encourage pupils to strengthen their information and communication technology skills by using the Internet for research. For example, Year 5 pupils find information about the heart, muscles and organs to extend their learning about the human body;
- throughout the school, teachers sensitively promote pupils' wonder at the natural world through their learning about living things. In this way, work in the subject makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual development.

89. The recently appointed co-ordinator provides good leadership for the subject. She is committed to raising standards in the subject. She has recently led a review and update of science equipment so that all classes have ready access to sufficient clearly labelled and accessible resources. She gives help, advice and support to her colleagues. However, there are no arrangements for her to monitor classroom practice, which reduces her effectiveness in planning future developments based on first hand information.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

90. Pupils attain satisfactory standards in their work in art and design. Around the school, pupils' carefully mounted and displayed work shows a satisfactory range of two- and three-dimensional work. This incorporates the use of various media including paint, charcoal and clay and techniques such as collage and printing.
91. Pupils' knowledge and understanding build progressively. The youngest pupils work effectively with paints, mixing to achieve particular colours. They work in the style of Picasso and design and make sculptures using paper and a range of fabrics. Following a visit to a local church, Year 2 pupils transfer their images of signs and symbols onto polystyrene tiles. They print with these to produce striking black and white repeated patterns. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 use watercolours to capture the shades of the sunset during a visit to an outdoor education centre. In Years 4 and 5, pupils carefully examine a painting by Canaletto. They select and study one detail from the work and paint it in the style of the artist. Year 6 pupils extend their colour mixing skills. Using only primary colours they carefully combine paints to achieve the exact tones they want to use.
92. As no art lessons were observed in the course of the inspection, it is not possible to make an overall judgement about the quality of teaching and learning in the subject. Evidence from teachers' planning and documentation, talking to pupils and analysing completed work and displays indicates that teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are secure. Pupils clearly enjoy art and design work and are keen to talk about their current

and completed topics. Teachers' planning for art is based on the most recent national guidelines. These form a sound basis for planning topics and regularly assessing pupils' learning. In order to broaden pupils' awareness and understanding of aspects of art and the work of artists and craftspeople, teachers plan visits to galleries and incorporate art activities into other outings. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 examine wood sculptures during their walk on Runcorn Hill. Teachers plan art topics to support and extend work in other subjects. This successfully boosts pupils' interest and promotes learning. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 learn to weave with paper and a range of materials in work linked to *Joseph's Coat* in religious education, and materials, in science. Older pupils paint pictures of Viking characters and long boats to reinforce their work in history. Pupils in Year 6 study *Pop Art* and the work of Andy Warhol as part of their history work based on the 1960s. Pupils also illustrate metaphors to reinforce their literacy work. They enjoy explaining how their paintings illustrate such expressions as, 'laugh one's head off'. Throughout the school, pupils use computer programs to produce patterns and effects. For example, when studying pointillism, Year 4 pupils use a graphics program to produce work in the style of Georges Seurat. This soundly reinforces their information communication and technology skills.

93. Pupils' learning in art makes a valuable contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, pupils' growing appreciation of the natural world, as seen in Year 1's studies of bluebells and Year 6's pencil sketches of leaves, successfully supports their spiritual development. Moreover, learning about the work of artists makes a valuable contribution to pupils' cultural development. However, there are not enough planned opportunities for pupils to learn about the work of non-western artists and craftspeople.
94. The well-qualified co-ordinator enthusiastically leads and supports the staff and this contributes to the quality of work produced throughout the school. There are, however, no opportunities for the co-ordinator to observe teaching and to evaluate aspects of pupils' learning. This reduces her ability to plan for improvement based on a thorough knowledge of strengths and weakness in the current arrangements.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

95. Standards in design and technology have improved since the last inspection, when standards were found to be unsatisfactory in Years 3 to 6. Now, pupils of all abilities throughout the school are achieving satisfactory standards and the vast majority achieves the nationally expected standard by the time that they leave the school.
96. Standards have risen and pupils are learning well because:
- teachers are more systematic about the teaching of skills. They plan projects thoroughly so that pupils regularly re-visit and, in doing so, reinforce the skills of investigating, designing, planning, making and evaluating;
  - the curriculum for design and technology is good. It provides pupils with worthwhile opportunities to work with a good range of materials and to learn how to use tools and making techniques effectively. Examples of recent projects include dream catchers and playground models in Year 1, Joseph's coat of many colours and sock puppets in Year 2, plaster casts and stick puppets in Years 3 and 4 and powered fairground rides in Years 5 and 6;
  - the design and technology curriculum is fully inclusive. Both boys and girls take a full part in all projects and, as a result, make equally good progress. Similarly, pupils with special educational needs receive the support they need to participate fully and to benefit from all of the design and technology opportunities that the school provides for its pupils;
  - projects are both relevant and appealing to the pupils and so stimulate their interest and imagination and motivate them to succeed. For example, making models of a



new Runcorn/Widnes bridge is very 'close to home' for many pupils in Year 6 and so makes their work on strong structures very relevant. It also serves to strengthen their appreciation of local issues;

- teachers link work in design and technology to work in other subjects. This gives added meaning and purpose to pupils' work across the curriculum and allows them to apply and reinforce the skills that have learned. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 strengthen their information and communication technology skills when they use a control program to operate barriers and lights made from construction apparatus. Similarly, pupils in Years 4 and 5 reinforce their understanding of aspects of Viking culture when they make pop-up books featuring aspects of their visit to the Jorvik museum in York;
- the school enhances the curriculum very effectively. Educational visits, such as those to the Jorvik museum or 'Plastics Playtime' at York University, provide excellent starting points for projects. They provide a wealth of ideas and information and bring pupils' learning to life;
- special events, such as the 'Young Engineers' competition in association with a local college, the 'Set Point' problem solving challenge and visits from representatives of local industries also add to the quality of pupils' learning. Pupils use tools and equipment that are beyond the resources of most primary schools and the quality of such experiences improves pupils' interest in and enthusiasm for the subject.

97. The co-ordinator has done a good job since the last inspection. She has improved the curriculum so that it covers all aspects of design and technology more thoroughly. She has maintained and developed links with the local industrial and educational community that contribute to the quality of pupils' learning and she has ensured that the school has the necessary resources to present pupils with challenging projects, such as the making of controllable vehicles. There are, however, no opportunities for the co-ordinator to get an overview of standards in the subject or to identify areas of weakness by observing lessons and this reduces her ability to plan for further improvements in this subject. There are also currently no arrangements for the regular assessment of pupils' attainment in design and technology. Planning is not firmly based on what individuals and groups know, understand and can do and on a systematic evaluation of what they need to learn next. Teachers plan work at different levels of difficulty or provide additional support for pupils on the basis of their informal understanding of pupils' abilities and needs. Since teachers do know their pupils well, this procedure is adequate.

## **GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY**

98. By the end of Year 2, standards are average and by the end of Year 6 they are average in geography and above average in history. This is because the school teaches a particularly rich curriculum in history and pupils acquire a very extensive range of skills. From talking to pupils and co-ordinators and from looking at samples of pupils' work and teachers' planning, it is evident that the curriculum is well taught and pupils make good progress, particularly in history. Pupils with special educational needs enjoy the work and are well supported so that they make good progress. Teachers plan topics that are very well extended by visits and visitors. This enhances pupils' learning by bringing the subject alive and making it meaningful. 'Visits help you to understand', explains a Year 6 pupil.

99. Strengths in these subjects are:

- good planned opportunities for learning to take place;
- visits and visitors;
- residential trips;
- above average standards in history by Year 6;
- work that matches closely pupils' different needs so all achieve well.

100. Areas for development are:

- the teaching of geography skills and how to monitor pupils' progress in them;
  - the teaching of world geography;
  - monitoring of teaching.
101. Year 2 pupils learn about maps and physical features through an imaginary island taken from a story used in literacy lessons. They draw their own map with features such as houses located accurately from the stories and labelled. They learn about the physical features of the island, for example the forest, farmlands, mountains and sea, and include them on their maps. The field trips and residential visits pupils undertake in their time at the school afford them good opportunities to develop their geographical skills and understanding. For example, they work out and plot their routes on maps and the Internet before they go. When there, for example in Barwardsley, they learn about land use by making comparisons between their own local area around the school and the rural locality. In discussion, pupils in Year 6 show a good understanding of what they have studied. They competently explain the difference between weather and climate and give examples to illustrate this, such as 'tropical climate, near the Equator'. They describe the water cycle showing they have a good understanding of it, as they do the course of a river from source to sea. They use appropriate vocabulary to describe the processes such as 'tributaries', 'meanders' and 'erodes'. This shows they are successfully understanding and learning due to good teaching and well planned experiences.
102. By the age of seven, most pupils have a secure understanding of the past and how things change over time. Pupils recently visited Norton Priory Museum to gain first hand experience of a Victorian washhouse. With the help of artefacts and photographs, pupils recall in great detail the sequence of stages in the washing process that they were shown at the museum. They remember the names and purposes of artefacts such as 'dolly tub', 'dolly stick' and 'mangle'. They are very clear that this is not how washing is done now. First hand experiences such as this, allied to good teaching, mean that pupils understand and learn very effectively. Pupils' research and enquiry skills, understanding of chronology and knowledge of the past develop well in their time in the juniors, so that by the age of 11 they are above average. This is evident from pupils' work. Pupils undertake a great deal of research on the Romans covering different aspects of life. They set themselves questions and research the answers for themselves. They discover facts about Ancient Rome and the slaves, clothes and food. They contrast what people thought then with what they think now. For example, a pupil observes, 'Nobody thought slavery was wrong'. This shows good insight and awareness of differences in attitudes between then and now, in addition to a knowledge of factual differences.
103. To celebrate the school's fortieth birthday, Years 4, 5 and 6 undertook a history project on the 1960s. This involved researching an aspect of life in the '60s, such as fashion, and putting on a performance for parents about life in the 1960s, based on what they found out. Parents were involved from the start. They sent in photographs and made costumes in 1960s style for the performance. This included music, fashion, dancing and social comment about the period. After the performance, pupils asked parents questions about particular aspects of their school life. This very successfully reinforced and extended their understanding of the differences between school life then and now. Many of the parents had attended the school themselves as youngsters and pupils were intrigued by some of the responses to their questions. One boy exclaimed, 'You got rapped on the knuckles if you forgot your homework!' As a result of experiences such as this, pupils learn to ask questions with growing confidence, obtain information and take notes. They are keen to find out as much as possible and to show the research in their files. In this way, teachers create very effective opportunities for pupils to develop their enquiry skills.
104. In the course of the inspection no geography lessons were observed. Two lessons were seen in history, both of which were good. Evidence from work in books and talking to pupils indicates that both subjects are well taught and pupils learn well as a result.

Teachers are enthusiastic, particularly about history, and have good subject knowledge so that pupils are eager to learn. One pupil writes of the topic on the Romans, 'No topic is as good'. Teachers set work that matches pupils' needs closely so that they all achieve well. Pupils take a real pride in their work. Within topics, teachers provide opportunities to extend pupils' speaking and listening and literacy skills. In addition, pupils' regularly reinforce their information and communication technology, research and enquiry skills.

105. The school has highlighted geography as an area for development. While local and residential trips afford pupils valuable opportunities to develop mapping and fieldwork skills effectively, there is less focus on world geography to broaden pupils' geographical knowledge and understanding. This limits pupils' opportunities to learn about a range of world cultures. Staff come together to moderate pupils' work annually which informs teachers' assessments of children's standards in the subject and makes their assessments more reliable. However, there is no overview of teaching and learning in classrooms. This limits the co-ordinator's ability to monitor the development of pupils' skills and to celebrate and share the good practice that exists and so raise standards further.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

106. During the inspection the school's timetable arrangements meant that it was only possible to inspect one information and communication technology lesson. Consequently, there is insufficient evidence to make judgements about standards, the overall quality of teaching and learning or about pupils' response to the subject. However, teachers' planning indicates that all elements of the National Curriculum receive satisfactory attention. This is an improvement since the last inspection, when aspects of the information and communication technology curriculum were unsatisfactory.
107. Arrangements for information and communication technology are better than they were because:
- staff have undertaken extensive training and the information and communication technology co-ordinator provides in-house support to reinforce teachers' understanding and confidence;
  - the school bases its planning on national guidelines that ensure a more systematic coverage of the different strands of the National Curriculum for information and communication technology;
  - the school has most of the resources necessary to cover the curriculum thoroughly. When the need arises, however, the school has links with a local secondary school that give teachers and pupils access to full information and communication technology suite facilities and to a range of software beyond that normally available in primary schools;
  - teachers plan purposeful links with other subjects. In consequence, pupils use information and communication technology as an aid to learning in other subjects and, in doing so, reinforce their competence in the use of information and communication technology;
  - where there are still gaps in teachers' knowledge and understanding as, for example, in the more complex applications of control technology, the school brings in people with the necessary expertise to teach this aspect of information and communication technology effectively. Consequently, there is a programme for all pupils in Years 5 and 6 to work in small groups with the visiting 'expert'. This arrangement was seen in operation during the inspection. The pupils involved on that day were very enthusiastic and showed good levels of confidence and competence. They were able to write and amend a program that made a barrier move and lights to go on and off.
108. In the lesson that was seen during the inspection, teaching and learning were satisfactory. The teacher used a range of effective strategies such as a popular game to reinforce pupils' ability to frame questions with 'Yes' or 'No' answers. The teachers' instructions on

the use of the computer had errors that caused the pupils some confusion. However, their basic skills were such that they were able to overcome such difficulties and complete the task successfully.

109. The co-ordinator has successfully led the drive to improve the curriculum and to raise standards, as described above. However, she does not have the opportunity to see colleagues at work and so her monitoring of standards and quality is largely informal. She must, therefore, rely on others to highlight strengths and weaknesses and this reduces her ability to 'fine tune' the system now that it is in place.

## MUSIC

110. Pupils throughout the school reach average standards in music. Pupils have weekly music lessons and there is a hymn practice for the whole school. Planning indicates that pupils cover all elements of the curriculum, with regular opportunities to sing, perform, compose and listen to music. This marks an improvement since the last inspection.
111. Pupils know a wide range of songs and hymns. They sing tunefully and confidently in assembly. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 create and develop their musical ideas, using a range of percussion instruments. For example, they create musical effects when they think about Bonfire Night and to accompany the story of *The Great Fire of London*. They understand that sounds can be represented by symbols and they produce simple compositions. In the observed lesson, pupils in Years 3 and 4 played untuned and tuned percussion instruments with control and most pupils maintained a steady beat. They handle instruments with care. They are keen to participate actively and to learn a new song. They follow instructions promptly, work very co-operatively in groups and enjoy performing for the rest of the class. Older pupils enjoy making music and exploring how sounds can be played in combination. They compose tunes in small groups and record their work using symbols to represent the instruments. Pupils have opportunities to listen to and appraise music. For example, Year 6 pupils are eager to identify the animals represented in *The Carnival of the Animals*.
112. There is insufficient evidence to form a judgement about the overall quality of teaching and learning. However, observation of one lesson and pupils' singing in assembly, teachers' planning and talking to pupils indicates that teachers' knowledge and understanding is secure. In the lesson observed, a notable feature was the very good relationships between the teacher and pupils. Her carefully directed questions and words of encouragement ensure that pupils with special educational needs are fully involved. Ready praise and patience promotes pupils' confidence so that all pupils are willing to share their ideas, listen to others and behave very well. As a result, pupils make good progress in the course of the lesson.
113. During the year, pupils take part in a good range of activities including musical productions, assemblies and services in school and in the local church. The younger pupils also participate in the local 'Infant Music Festival'. A teacher runs an extra-curricular recorder group. This reinforces and extends the skills of those involved. Teachers frequently play a range of recorded music as pupils enter and leave assembly and this promotes pupils' awareness and listening skills. Pupils have very few opportunities to use their information and communication technology skills to compose or to change and combine sounds. Occasional activities, for example music workshops led by a visiting adviser and visiting musicians such as 'Super Samba', contribute successfully to pupils' musical development. In addition, the older pupils sing for the elderly at Christmas. Overall, music makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' social and cultural development. However, there are too few musical activities planned to extend pupils' knowledge and experience of music from differing cultures.

114. The co-ordinator leads the subject effectively. With the staff, she has worked hard to overcome weaknesses identified in the last inspection. The school has introduced a new scheme of work based on national guidance and additional resources to support teaching and learning. These include musical instruments and CDs. The co-ordinator readily advises and supports colleagues. However, there are no arrangements for her to monitor teaching and learning in the classrooms. This limits her effectiveness in planning for further improvement in the subject.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

115. During the inspection, the school's timetable arrangements meant that it was only possible to inspect one physical education lesson and this was conducted largely by coaches from a local rugby club. Consequently, there is insufficient evidence to make judgements about standards, the overall quality of teaching and learning or about pupils' response to the subject. However, teachers' planning indicates that all elements of the National Curriculum, including swimming, receive suitable attention.
116. In the lesson that was inspected, the quality of teaching and learning was very good. The lesson was very successful because:
- the coaching staff had excellent levels of knowledge, understanding and expertise. They were also very effective communicators. They used these skills to generate very high levels of enthusiasm, commitment and energy on the part of the pupils;
  - the session included a good range of training drills that kept the pupils interested and involved;
  - the coaches used a healthy amount of competition to focus pupils' efforts and to give added purpose to the exercises;
  - the pace of learning was high. This was a high energy, all action session. Pupils got good value from every minute;
  - the degree of inclusion was impressive. Pupils played in mixed gender teams and the coaches were very conscientious in giving equal attention, encouragement and praise to both girls and boys. Year 6 pupils from the special unit took part alongside all of the other Year 6 pupils in school;
  - the class teacher also participated and so the whole session benefited from the very good standards of behaviour and response that she has established;
  - the quality of pupils' response was very good and added an extra dimension to the quality of their learning. All pupils were very keen to participate and gave 100 per cent effort. They were highly competitive, yet showed sportsmanship and consideration for others. All pupils, including those who were less well equipped for physical activities, participated to the full;
  - in this lesson the majority of pupils performed at a higher standard than would normally be expected of pupils of this age.
117. While these very high standards cannot be taken as representative of all physical education in the school, neither are they a 'one off'. The school enhances its basic physical education curriculum very effectively with regular opportunities for pupils to benefit from expert coaching, to participate in activities outside lessons and to take part in competitive events. These events cover activities such as rugby, netball, cricket, soccer and dance and add considerably to the range and quality of the learning experiences that pupils receive.
118. The co-ordinator for physical education is doing a sound job. He has improved the quality of planning for physical education by introducing national guidelines and improved schemes of work. He uses his expertise to support colleagues and to provide in-house training. He has also secured additional resources for the subject, such as those recently acquired to improve the teaching of gymnastics. There are, however, no regular

opportunities for the co-ordinator to monitor standards and quality by observing lessons and this reduces his ability to plan for further improvements in this subject.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

119. Standards in religious education broadly match the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils, including those with learning difficulties, make satisfactory progress. The teaching seen was good. The curriculum meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education and incorporates the new national guidelines. Teachers use the new guidelines to plan their lessons and to assess pupils' progress in meeting the key learning intentions. All pupils develop a sound understanding of Christianity and study Islam and aspects of Judaism.
120. Strengths in the subject are:
- teachers' good knowledge of their pupils;
  - work that matches closely pupils' different needs so all achieve well;
  - links with local churches.
121. Areas for development are:
- greater understanding of Judaism and Islam;
  - a wider range of visits and visitors representing the major faiths studied;
  - monitoring of teaching.
122. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 begin to develop an understanding of what is special about a place of worship after a visit to two local churches of different Christian denominations. Encouraged by the teacher, some pupils recall the smell and textures of wood and stone, the music and sound of singing. Enlarged photos of significant parts of the church such as the altar, the font and some of the symbols help to remind pupils of their visit. This reinforces their understanding and recognition of Christian symbols and their significance to Christians. Some pupils understand that a symbol is 'a picture to remind you of God'. They know a fish 'is a secret sign of being a Christian'. Pupils are familiar with a range of stories from the Bible. For example, they write about 'The Prodigal Son' and sum up, 'When he had money he had friends but it went he had no friends'. In the work seen, older pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the major events in the life of Jesus. They learn about basic tenets of Judaism and compare aspects of Judaism with Christianity, such as places of worship and holy books. In their study of Islam, pupils find out why Muhammad is important to Muslims and how he lived his life, what Muslims believe and how they express their belief through practices such as giving alms to the poor and going on Hajj. Some of this they find out from their own research, making a good contribution to their enquiry and literacy skills. When discussing the life of Martin Luther King and racial discrimination, pupils in Year 6 show sensitivity and empathy and good knowledge and understanding of the issues.
123. The lesson seen was good. Through skilled questioning, the teacher elicited the feelings of the pupils as well as their developing understanding. She explained clearly so that pupils knew what to do. She used photographs effectively to promote pupils' interest and discussion. Also, pupils accessed a useful website that reinforced their understanding of the significance of different symbols. The teacher and classroom assistant maintained excellent relationships with the pupils who worked hard to please them as a result. Pupils settled to their work quickly and collaborated well when required to do so. The teacher matched the activities closely to the needs of the pupils so that all were included and achieved well in the lesson.
124. Islam and Judaism are studied, in line with the locally agreed syllabus and national guidelines, mainly in Years 2 and 4. However, there are few planned opportunities to confirm pupils' knowledge and understanding and to broaden their understanding of the

diverse and culturally rich nature of modern society. As a result, pupils in the present Year 6 have little retained knowledge of major faith traditions and how they relate to each other and to Christianity. Young pupils have visited two local Christian churches and gained a good understanding of what is special about a place of worship. However, pupils do not have opportunities to extend their learning by visiting other places of worship, such as a mosque and a synagogue. There are few planned references in assemblies to festivals in faiths other than Christianity. Staff come together to moderate pupils' work annually which informs their assessments of children's standards in the subject and makes teachers' assessments more reliable. As the co-ordinator has no opportunities to gain an overview of teaching and learning in classrooms, opportunities are missed to spread the good practice and use that to raise standards.