

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **HELSEBY HILLSIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Helsby, Frodsham

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique reference number: 111004

Headteacher: Mr Rob Seabrook

Reporting inspector: Mrs Penny Parrish  
22380

Dates of inspection: 27 – 30 January 2003

Inspection number: 247069

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 4 – 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Bates Lane  
Helsby  
Frodsham  
Cheshire

Postcode: WA6 9LN

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs P Walker

Date of previous inspection: November 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
22380	Mrs P Parrish Registered inspector	English Art and design Music	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are the pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9327	Mr S Vincent Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
29504	Mrs S Herring Team inspector	Mathematics Design and technology Physical education Provision for children in the Foundation Stage. Special educational needs	
8070	Mr J Haves Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Geography History Religious education Educational inclusion	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Helsby Hillside is an average sized primary school, overlooking the Mersey estuary on the verge of Runcorn. The buildings date back to 1910 and, appropriately renovated, provide attractive and suitable accommodation. The 212 pupils, boys and girls, on roll are between the ages of four and 11. The levels of attainment of pupils when they start in the Reception class are generally above average. Fewer pupils than average, four per cent, are eligible for free school meals. A below average number of pupils have special educational needs (11 per cent); most of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties, one pupil has a Statement of Special Educational Need. Almost all pupils are of white British ethnic background. The school has experienced staffing difficulties over the past two years, but three teachers on permanent contracts were appointed in September 2002 and the situation is now resolved. The school is popular within the locality and places are oversubscribed.

### HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Helsby Hillside provides well for its pupils. The quality of teaching is good and the curriculum is interesting and well thought out. Standards by the end of Year 6 are above average in literacy and numeracy. The school is well led and managed. Recent staff appointments have added considerably to the strength of the school; the school has a good capacity to raise standards further. Considering the good educational provision and its average costs, the school provides good value for money.

#### What the school does well

- By Year 6, standards are above average in English and mathematics, and also in design and technology and physical education.
- Pupils have positive attitudes and their behaviour is very good. They concentrate very well and work with interest and independence.
- Provision for the pupils in Reception and Years 1 and 2 is of a consistently high standard. Pupils are given a very good start.
- The teaching is good overall and almost one in three lessons is very good. Consequently, most pupils progress well and enjoy learning.
- The curriculum is of good quality; a wide range of interesting experiences is provided.
- Pupils benefit significantly from the very good support provided by parents.

#### What could be improved

- Standards in science are lower than in English and mathematics.
- The presentation of pupils' work should be better; this is having a negative effect on standards and accuracy in English, mathematics and science.
- The procedures for checking on the quality of the school's performance lack rigour.

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

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

Since the school's last inspection in November 1997, improvement has been satisfactory. Standards have improved broadly in line with the national trend but results have been inconsistent in both Year 2 and Year 6. Issues from the last inspection relating to the management of the school have been suitably addressed through setting up a senior management team; whole-school policies and schemes of work of good quality have been established, with an appropriate involvement of the

governing body. Suitable systems for assessing pupils' progress are now in place and useful target-setting arrangements have been recently introduced to help pupils to track their own progress. Satisfactory gains have been made in standards in pupils' writing. The school has recently organised a system for helping pupils to select reading books, but there is still work to be done on providing more guidance for lower attaining pupils in the junior classes.

Improvements in teaching have been generated by the national strategies in literacy and numeracy and the introduction of performance management for staff. Resources for information and communication technology (ICT) have made good improvement through the recent establishment of a computer suite. Provision for the pupils' cultural development has improved and is now good.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with				Key	
	all schools			similar schools	well above average	A
	2000	2001	2002	2002		
English	A	D	B	D	average	C
mathematics	A	D	A	B	below average	D
science	B	D	D	E	well below average	E

Results tend to fluctuate in both Year 2 and Year 6. Staffing problems are now resolved and standards are improving. Attainment in Year 6 is now above average in English and mathematics, and average in science. In mathematics, one or two very high attaining pupils may take the results to well above average, as in 2002. Standards are improving in science but could be a little higher. English results in 2002 were just less than the average for similar schools. In science, results were well below those for similar schools, but standards are now improved. Targets set for Year 6 are generally met but results fell short of the targets in 2002. In Year 2, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is above average, and average in science. In other subjects, including religious education, standards at least meet the expectations set nationally in both Year 2 and Year 6. In design and technology in Year 2 and Year 6, in music in Year 2 and in physical education in Year 6, standards are higher than average. There was insufficient evidence to make an overall judgement in art and design, or in music by Year 6. At the end of the end of the Reception class, standards are above average. Children maintain their above average attainment on entry to school and exceed the early learning goals set nationally; their personal, social and emotional development is well above average. Pupils achieve well overall but the school's tracking of pupils' progress lacks rigour and more could be done to make sure that the school's good provision results more consistently in high attainment.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy school; they are keen to learn and apply themselves willingly to their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils are friendly, polite and very well behaved both in lessons and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils are mature and responsible and generally very considerate of the views and feelings of others. Relationships between all in the school are very good and provide a very equitable basis for teaching and learning.

Attendance	Well above average; in the top ten per cent of schools nationally. Pupils arrive punctually and well prepared each day.
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## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching and learning is good with a significant proportion of very good and, occasionally, excellent teaching. In Years 1 and 2, teaching and learning are good in all subjects and very good in English. In Years 3 to 6, teaching and learning are good in English, mathematics, design and technology, geography, history and physical education; in all other subjects they are satisfactory. There was insufficient evidence to make an overall judgement on teaching in art and design, in geography for Years 1 and 2, or in music for Years 3 to 6. The teaching generally meets pupils' needs well, including those of children in the Reception class and pupils with special educational needs.

The strengths of teaching are in the very good management of the pupils, the good understanding of the requirements of the curriculum, effective methods of teaching that engage pupils well and the efficient teaching of basic skills, such as literacy, numeracy and ICT. As a result of the good teaching, pupils learn well; they are interested in their work and put a good deal of effort into their learning. The targets set for learning in literacy and numeracy help to focus both teachers and pupils on the next steps. In one lesson observed, teaching and learning were unsatisfactory because the teaching was not sufficiently focused and the pace of learning was too slow.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The statutory curriculum is in place, enriched by imaginative tasks and a good range of visits and visitors to school. Pupils enjoy their lessons and say they like finding things out for themselves.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. There is early identification of special needs. Individual education plans are regularly reviewed and generally provide good guidance for teachers and parents. Additional literacy support in class is effective.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Provision for moral and social development is particularly strong and the outcome is evident in the high standards of behaviour and friendliness in the school. The arrangements for helping pupils to find out about their own and other cultures of the world are good and have improved well since the last inspection.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school takes very good care of its pupils; provision for their safety and the promotion of their personal and social skills is very good. Systems in place to enable the school to check the academic progress of pupils are good but not always used fully to ensure that the school is doing its best to raise standards.
The school's partnership with parents	Parents hold the school in very high regard and make a very good contribution to what the school achieves. Staff provide parents with a good range of information about what children are doing at school and the progress they are making.



## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher and senior management team provide a clear and effective lead to the work of the school, resulting in good educational provision. The school is committed to continuing improvement and has a good capacity to raise standards further.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body fulfils its responsibilities well. It takes a keen interest in the quality of provision in the school and is instrumental in moving the school forward. There is more work to be done on monitoring the effects of actions prioritised in the school development plan. Statutory duties are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory overall. An effective performance management system is in place for teachers, suitably linked to priorities set for the school. Assessments lead to clear targets for pupils in literacy and numeracy. The review of the quality of work in pupils' books by senior staff lacks rigour and this means that action to promote improved learning is occasionally delayed.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. The school's budget is suitably managed and appropriately allocated to priorities set within the school development plan; systematic checks on the outcomes of expenditure are limited, however. The governors apply the principles of best value satisfactorily.

The school is staffed with suitably qualified and experienced teachers and teaching assistants. Although there are fewer support assistants than in most schools nationally, particularly for mathematics, a good number of volunteers provide extra help in most classrooms. The accommodation is satisfactory and good use is made of available space. Learning resources are generally good in quality and quantity. Book stocks are rightly in the process of being updated and improved.

## 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>• Their children enjoy school; activities are interesting and the quality of care is good.</li> <li>• The school expects the pupils to work hard, the teaching is good, and pupils make good progress. The amount of homework is right.</li> <li>• Behaviour is good and the school helps its pupils to become mature and responsible.</li> <li>• The staff are committed, friendly and work well with parents. Parents generally feel well informed about progress.</li> <li>• The school is well managed and led.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The range of activities made available outside lessons</li> <li>• The regularity and consistency of homework in some classes.</li> </ul>

About a third of parents returned a questionnaire on their views of the school and 22 attended a pre-inspection meeting with the registered inspector. The inspection confirms and agrees with the positive views of parents and finds that parents are justly proud of the school's provision. The progress of pupils is good at present while the school recovers from a period of significant change in staff, but the good provision and higher than average attainment of pupils on entry mean that standards should now rise. The current range of extra-curricular activities is generally satisfactory, although continuity has been marred by recent staff changes. The headteacher quite rightly has set

a priority on establishing new staff well in their posts. Homework patterns do vary and parents are right to expect a more regular timetable; this is managed very efficiently in some classes.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Standards in English and mathematics by Year 6 are above average. In English, standards are similar to those achieved in national tests in 2002; in mathematics, standards are marginally lower. Standards in science are average, which shows an improvement on last year's below average results. Over the past two years, standards in science have dipped compared with the national trend, mainly because of staffing difficulties. Although staffing issues are now resolved and standards are higher, a lack of rigour in observing and recording investigational work and in using scientific vocabulary, for the higher attaining pupils in particular, is keeping standards at an average level overall.

2. The overall improvement of standards in English, mathematics and science in Year 6 between 1998 and 2002 has been broadly in line with the national trend. Pupils' performance in English and mathematics in the national tests in 2002 showed a significant improvement on the results in 2001. Pupils' performance in science showed a slight improvement on results in 2001 but remained below average, failing to regain the above average standards of previous years.

3. Standards in the national tests at the end of Year 2 in 2002 were as follows:

- In both reading and writing, results were above both the national average and the average for pupils in similar schools.
- In mathematics, results were in line with both the national average and the average achieved by pupils in similar schools.

4. These results show significant improvement on the school's performance in the previous year, with particularly strong improvements in writing and mathematics at the higher level (Level 3). Standards in 2002 are similar to those at the time of the last inspection in reading and writing but are a little lower in mathematics. Results in Year 2 have fluctuated significantly in the intervening years.

5. Standards of the present Year 2 are above average in reading, writing and mathematics and average in science. Standards have continued to improve, especially in writing and mathematics, because the teaching is of consistently high quality. There has been a slight fallback in science compared with teachers' assessment in 2002.

6. Baseline assessments of pupils entering the Reception class indicate that their attainment is higher than average overall. Standards are in line to be above average, overall, by the end of the Reception year and well above average with regard to the children's personal, social and emotional development. This consolidates their above average attainment when they enter the school and reflects the above average standards reported in the last inspection. These standards are due to the good quality of teaching, backed by a lively and interesting curriculum.

7. Overall, pupils' achievement and progress are good relative to their prior attainment, particularly in view of the staffing difficulties in the school over the past two years. However, in relation to those of similar schools, standards do not always meet the average. Since their standards when they enter the school are generally above average, they could achieve higher standards, particularly in science. New staffing appointments have strengthened the school significantly, new target-setting procedures are in place and a period of stability is likely to promote higher standards year on year. Targets set for the end of Year 6 tests have been moderate and achievable.

8. Pupils with special educational needs generally make good progress against the targets set in their individual education plans. Because the classteachers write the plans themselves, in

consultation with the co-ordinator, they are well aware of the targets set and generally plan suitable work to help the pupils to succeed. The targets of most of these pupils relate to literacy and there are good systems and additional support in place to help pupils make good progress. There is work to be done on devising suitable reading programmes for lower attaining pupils to resolve occasional problems with inappropriate choices of books. The pupil with a Statement of Special Educational Need is helped to make good progress through daily support in class and regular specialist support of high quality.

9. The school has focused on providing learning opportunities that match the pupils' differing abilities and this is largely achieved. In particular, this work has brought improvements in meeting the needs of the higher attaining and the gifted and talented pupils. In consequence, improvements are being made in reading, writing and mathematics at the higher levels in national tests. In mathematics in 2002, a small number of pupils attained a very high level for their age in both Year 2 and Year 6.

10. As in the national picture, girls tend to attain more than boys in English, although in the 2002 national tests, boys in Year 6 achieved better than the girls. The school is trying to address uneven attainment through supplementing its stock and lesson plans to include types of books and styles of writing that are likely to appeal more to boys. There are two male members of staff to provide role models. There is no consistent pattern of uneven attainment between boys and girls in mathematics or in science, as is the case nationally. No significant differences in the performance of boys and girls were noted during the inspection, although it is noticeable that groups targeted for extra support in literacy are mainly of boys. The local education authority has systems in place to monitor the progress of girls and boys to help to identify underachievement. The monitoring systems in school are not linked to computer programs to aid analysis. This means that thorough analysis is not readily available and pupils making insufficient progress are occasionally overlooked.

11. Pupils generally develop their literacy and numeracy skills well because of good teaching and the effective implementation of the literacy and numeracy strategies. Information and communication technology skills are not developed fully in other subjects; since the opening of the new computer suite in September, this situation is steadily being resolved.

12. In other subjects, attainment in both Year 2 and Year 6 meets the expectations set nationally. In design and technology, pupils produce skilful mechanised models and attainment is higher than average in both Year 2 and Year 6. In music, attainment is above average in Year 2; in physical education, attainment is above average in Year 6. In art and design in Year 2 and Year 6, and music in Year 6, there was insufficient evidence to make a judgement.

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

13. As reported in the last inspection, pupils' attitudes to their work and their willingness to learn are very good and are a strength of the school. In almost all lessons seen during the inspection their attitudes were judged to be good or very good. Pupils are keen to please their teachers, they contribute ideas and effort and enjoy finding things out and being successful. For example, in a science lesson in Year 5, there were animated discussions in small groups as pupils investigated soil samples; in a religious education lesson in Year 2 based on the Christian ceremony of marriage, the pupils were entranced and enjoyed dressing up and playing the roles with great seriousness; in a physical education lesson in Year 6, pupils persevered to improve their hockey skills without any waste of time.

14. Behaviour in lessons and at break times is very good. Very rarely do pupils need to be reprimanded. Boys and girls play well together in the playground, and when there is occasional unacceptable behaviour it is dealt with promptly. There have been no recent exclusions. Relationships between adults and pupils and between pupils are very good. The atmosphere in the school is friendly and welcoming. During the inspection, pupils were invariably polite, helpful and

confident. As at the time of the last inspection, the pupils' very good attitudes to their work and their good behaviour continue to be a significant factor in the good learning achieved.

15. Pupils' personal development is very good. From the time they are admitted to the Reception class, they begin to make rapid progress in their personal and social skills. Their concentration becomes more sustained, they take a good interest in their activities, learning to take turns and to help each other. Pupils become increasingly articulate and confident in answering questions and talking in front of the class. They begin to work co-operatively together in pairs and groups, and say they enjoy lessons where they learn by finding out themselves. They are increasingly aware of the needs and feelings of others, which arises from the personal and social curriculum as well as their studies of the faiths and beliefs of different people around the world. Many pupils take part in charitable fund-raising activities and they know that many children have more difficulties in their lives than they do. They consider their work on the school council to be very important and they know they are representing the views of their peers. The pupils' knowledge of their own learning increases very well as they grow older. The younger pupils can talk about the things at which they are good and the things they find difficult. The older pupils in Years 5 and 6 can talk very clearly about their strengths as well as their targets for improvement. Pupils develop good self-confidence and mutual respect because of the school's successful provision for their personal development; all pupils feel valued and included. This helps the pupils with special educational needs, in particular, to make good progress.

16. The attendance rates are well above average and are amongst the top ten per cent nationally. There is virtually no unauthorised absence and pupils are punctual. Pupils themselves say that they enjoy school and are very happy to be there. Parents are keen that their children should benefit from regular attendance and make the most of what the school offers.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

17. The quality of teaching and learning is good and a significant proportion of the teaching is of very good and, occasionally, excellent quality. Since the last inspection, when teaching and learning were also judged to be good, standards have been maintained. As in the last inspection, good teaching was seen in every class and very good teaching in almost every class. Of the 52 lessons observed, one lesson was of unsatisfactory quality.

18. The national strategies for literacy and numeracy, introduced since the last inspection, account for significant changes in the style of teaching that are enabling the school to keep pace with improving standards nationally. Pupils learn well in both these areas and most make suitable gains in learning to achieve above average standards in Year 2 and Year 6. Recent results in national tests in Year 2 and Year 6 indicate that a generally increasing proportion of pupils achieve at a higher level in both literacy and numeracy. As a result of staff changes, the teaching of literacy in Years 1 and 2 has improved well since the last inspection and is now of very good, and sometimes excellent, quality. This very good teaching has yet to fully impact on standards through the school but it augurs well for future improvements and the consolidation of high standards in the school. As at the time of the last inspection, the teaching in literacy in Years 3 to 6, is good overall, although the quality of the lessons observed varied from very good to unsatisfactory. One lesson observed in literacy was of unsatisfactory quality; in this lesson, clear objectives linked to skills to be developed were not established, the teaching lacked a clear focus, and too little was expected of the pupils. Since the last inspection, teachers have worked to devise methods that take the pupils' writing skills forward more successfully and their commitment to improvement has enabled more pupils to reach a higher level in both Year 2 and Year 6.

19. The basic skills of numeracy are taught well and this gives pupils an early confidence to handle numbers with ease. All lessons are well planned to take account of the National Numeracy Strategy and the pupils respond well to the quick-fire questions at the start of the lesson to develop their arithmetical skills. In most lessons there is a good level of challenge and pupils are regularly

required to explain their thinking and methods. For example, pupils in Year 4 explained a variety of methods for adding tens and units in their head and were keen to check the teacher's answers. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills in other subjects; for example, counting components in design and technology and measuring the rate of change in science.

20. In other subjects, the teaching is consistently good, and often very good, for pupils in Years 1 and 2; in geography and art and design, there was insufficient evidence on which to make a judgement. For pupils in Years 3 to 6, teaching is good in design and technology, geography, history and physical education. It is satisfactory overall in science, ICT and religious education. In music and in art and design in Years 3 to 6, there was not enough evidence to make a judgement. The teaching of ICT has improved overall since the introduction of the computer suite earlier this year. This means that teaching is more frequent and a greater breadth and depth of learning are achieved. The addition of an interactive teaching board is needed to make the most of the new resources.

21. Planning systems have improved well and are based on suitable schemes of work in all subjects, a good improvement since the last inspection. Lessons are well organised and managed and, in literacy and numeracy, generally meet the differing needs of pupils well. Teachers share the objectives for learning with pupils at the start of each lesson; pupils are generally clear on the purpose of each activity and this leads to effective learning. Day-to-day assessment systems are in place and usefully guide future plans for teaching. Very good relationships are established between staff and pupils and this means that learning takes place in an atmosphere of friendliness and co-operation.

22. Effective support is generally provided for the pupils with special educational needs and they are helped to take a full part in all activities. Teachers are responsible for writing individual education plans and so are well aware of pupils' targets. Work is well planned to suit the needs of individuals and questions are targeted well to enable all pupils to participate fully in the lesson. This was seen in a mathematics lesson in Year 5 when pupils with special educational needs answered questions on tenths, making good gains in their learning, whilst other pupils answered related questions on hundredths and thousandths. Good use is made of simple resources to help pupils to understand. For example, pupils in Year 1 use cubes and a number line to develop a sound understanding of addition to 10. There is a good level of additional support in literacy and this is accelerating the learning of pupils with special educational needs. Work in small withdrawal groups, using a good range of strategies and approaches, such as a multi-sensory programme and additional literacy strategies, is effective in advancing pupils' learning. Occasionally, however, specialist help is not sought soon enough for pupils making very slow progress and the school tries to manage unsupported for too long. Relationships between pupils, teachers and support staff are very good, and the genuine pleasure shown by adults when pupils conquer a particular difficulty motivates pupils well. There is little additional support in numeracy lessons but teachers plan work well to suit the needs of individuals to help them to learn.

23. Work is generally suitably matched to the differing needs of pupils and the school has focused well on improving the challenge for higher attaining pupils in particular. This is largely successful, as when higher attaining pupils in an English lesson in Year 6 worked on deciphering a much more complex text than other pupils. Sometimes the pace of work for these pupils is too slow, as when higher attaining pupils in Year 4 worked through a task in English that was too easy before moving on to tackle suitably challenging work.

24. A strength in the teaching which supports effective learning is the focus on the fundamental skills and the school's commitment to active, 'hands-on' learning. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills through the teachers' good questioning skills, which provoke reflection and analysis of facts. For example, pupils in Year 5 thought long and hard to present possible reasons for the high mortality rates in Victorian England. In mathematics, pupils have opportunities to explain their methods of calculation and practise the skills learned through solving problems, as when the pupils in Year 4 used their new understanding about calculating area

to work out the size and cost of a carpet. Science lessons routinely include investigations and teachers go to considerable trouble to set up useful tasks. In Year 5, the teacher collected samples of soil from three different locations across the county to enable pupils to examine their different features very closely and at first hand.

25. The marking of pupils work varies across the classes but is good overall; it is very good, and sometimes excellent, in Years 4 and 5 where it includes very pertinent comments to pupils, giving specific feedback on their successes and setting clear targets for future learning. Marking is backed up well by the target-setting system in literacy and numeracy. A good range of classroom displays provides support for pupils' learning, reward for their efforts and help to establish a suitable learning environment. Homework varies in the efficiency with which it is managed. Some teachers manage it very well, and pupils and parents know exactly what to expect when. Reading homework is used regularly by all classes and has a very positive effect on standards in the school. Parents agree that homework is generally suitable in quality and quantity but sometimes irregularly set.

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

26. The school provides a curriculum of good breadth and balance for pupils from Reception through to Year 6. It meets all statutory requirements well. Whole-school policies and schemes of work guide teaching plans, which represents a sound improvement since the last inspection. The provision for teaching religious education is well matched to the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus and all pupils participate in the subject.

27. Children in the Reception class receive a rich and varied range of experiences that are securely based on the nationally recommended areas of learning for their age. Throughout the school, an appropriate emphasis is placed on the teaching of literacy and numeracy. Suitable provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is in place. The new guidelines for citizenship are being incorporated; opportunities for teaching these skills are identified within existing curricular areas.

28. There are a number of strengths in the school's provision. In literacy, reading is promoted very effectively, with good opportunities within lessons and through homework assignments. The school is currently focusing on improving writing skills and this is leading to improvements in standards. Good opportunities are provided in many lessons for speaking and listening. Numeracy skills are taught effectively and there is a good emphasis on applying mathematics to problem-solving. More attention is needed to improving provision for activities involving shape and data-handling. In science, there is a strong emphasis on investigative work and all strands of the science curriculum are effectively planned. Some attention is needed to developing pupils' skills in observing and recording experiments.

29. Increasing use is being made of information and communication technology (ICT), both in promoting basic computer skills and using these to investigate the wider uses of personal computers. Some curricular areas, such as English, are further advanced in using ICT than others, but the long-term plans for ICT now identify good opportunities across the curriculum. In religious education, pupils have good opportunities to study Christianity and two other world faiths. Additionally, pupils have sufficient opportunities to discuss spiritual and moral issues.

30. The provision for PSHE and citizenship is good and is supported by an appropriate range of school policies. These include the governing body's approved policy for sex and relationships education and a health education policy. The PSHE curriculum is currently being re-evaluated. There is a draft scheme of work, which identifies the provision within subjects such as science and religious education. Specific support is also in place; for example through the use of visiting speakers to promote drug awareness issues and the school nurse to promote health education and first aid training.

31. The school ensures that the curriculum is available to all its pupils. Good provision is made for the pupils with special educational needs. Work is generally well planned to suit individual needs and there is a good level of additional support to help pupils to achieve their literacy targets. Care is taken to ensure that pupils do not regularly miss out on other subjects when they are working in small withdrawal groups. Pupils are developing a suitable level of independence as they manage the changes between working in class and in small groups.

32. The provision of extra-curricular activities is generally satisfactory. Pupils studying the humanities benefit from educational visits that broaden their experience of both the locality and the wider world. In addition to occasional clubs for the older pupils, the school organises two residential visits, one involves pupils in arts activities and the other in outdoor pursuits. The school recognises the concerns expressed by some parents, that the activities do not cater for the needs of younger pupils and often incur costs to participate. Now that the school has a more settled staff, the arrangements can be reviewed and, already, a choir and a recorder club are being considered for the future.

33. The school makes satisfactory use of the local community to extend the curriculum. Educational visits and specialist visitors are regularly organised to broaden pupils' experiences. There are well-established links with two local churches. The pupils visit them and the ministers are regular visitors to the school. The local social club is used by the parents' association and the Helsby Link Club is open to pupils at the start and end of the day. Through contacts in the construction industry the school has acquired teaching materials to help with the design and technology curriculum and there has been a generous donation from the Ford Motor Company which has been used to buy computer software and library books.

34. The staff work closely with the playgroups in the area, keeping in regular contact for the benefit of both the parents and children who eventually join the school. There are good contacts with neighbouring primary schools, where staff organise sports tournaments, as well as joint training and other programmes for teachers. The school has well-established and productive links with Helsby High School, to which most of the pupils eventually transfer. By the time the pupils reach transfer age, most will already have visited the secondary school to use its sports field and science facilities. There are occasional teacher exchanges and a full programme of liaison and induction for parents and pupils during their final year at the primary school.

35. The provision for personal development is very good; it is a strength of the school and has improved since the last inspection. School assemblies provide appropriate opportunities for the spiritual development of the pupils by allowing them to explore issues of faith and to reflect upon them. For example, the story of the 'Good Samaritan' helps pupils to recognise that caring for one another can cross cultural boundaries. Prayer is used effectively to place this story within the context of religious belief. Within the curriculum, pupils gain good experiences that help them understand the impact of belief upon action. In religious education, pupils in Year 6 explore and discuss the beliefs which motivated Gladys Aylward to work as a missionary in China. There is a positive ethos in many lessons, which encourages pupils to reflect upon their learning and this is found in the effective questioning which leads to thoughtful discussion. There are good opportunities for creative development through activities such as dance, musical tuition and different forms of artwork. The emphasis on investigative work, in such subjects as science, encourages pupils to ask questions and pursue enquiries.

36. The school has a clear moral code and defines this very effectively. It is reinforced both formally and informally throughout the school. Clear expectations are in place for good behaviour and respectful relationships between one another. All staff are aware of these expectations and receive appropriate guidance. For example, the mid-day staff have regular meetings with the headteacher to discuss pupils' behaviour at lunchtimes. All staff make use of the 'star and steps' procedures for rewards and sanctions; pupils are given clear guidance to understand the parameters of acceptable behaviour. They use these to establish codes of conduct within their classrooms. The rights of children are also clearly promoted; for example, through display and



discussion.

37. There is a clearly expressed emphasis upon the fundamental values which underpin the life of the school to promote social development. The school encourages pupils to take responsibility for their actions. The elected school council meets regularly to discuss issues of interest to pupils and their views are made known to the headteacher. Educational visits, for example to Tattenhall Education Centre, provide corporate experiences for pupils. Pupils have opportunities to take responsibility for charitable fund-raising and participating in local community life. They act as monitors in school to supervise movement in the corridor and help to set up equipment for physical education. A residential visit to the Fairbourne Adventure Centre provides good opportunities for pupils to develop both physical and social skills.

38. The school's cultural provision has improved since the last inspection. Through a range of subjects pupils have good opportunities to explore their own cultural assumptions and values. For example, in history they are able to match current childhood aspirations with those of children in the locality one hundred years ago. Pupils have good opportunities to explore the traditions underpinning their own lives, through visits to the theatre and local museums. A poet in residence has provided valuable insights into language and literacy. Good links exist with the Cultural Resource Centre in Chester, which enable staff to present pupils with a range of images that promote cultural awareness. The school effectively presents pupils with experiences from alternative cultures. There are good examples in school of Kenyan art and music. A visiting speaker helps pupils to experience Indian music, art and cookery. A visiting artist has explored Aboriginal art with groups of pupils. On occasion, assemblies focus upon differing world faiths; for example, Hinduism and Judaism. These provide valuable spiritual and cultural experiences for all pupils.

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

39. The school takes very good care of its pupils. It works hard to ensure that all pupils have full and equal opportunities to develop both their academic and social skills. Strengths reported in the last inspection have been maintained.

40. The headteacher personally manages the arrangements for child protection, health and safety very effectively. Procedures for child protection are properly organised and staff meetings are used to maintain awareness and to discuss any concerns about any child's well-being. The health and safety policy is comprehensive. Individual responsibilities within the school are properly defined and all the routines of classroom safety, fire drills, first aid, medicines and general welfare are dealt with consistently. The site is secure and well maintained for the pupils' safety.

41. The systems for the monitoring and management of behaviour are particularly effective. The 'Five Golden Rules' are straightforward and the high expectations are understood by pupils. Teachers manage their classes very well and pupils enjoy the rewards that are given for good behaviour and effort, such as 'marbles in the jar' that add up to class treats. For any misbehaviour than might occur, the school's 'Steps' system provides a sequence of sanctions. When, occasionally, incidents do recur, teachers work with individual pupils on a behaviour journal and this is done with the full involvement of parents. The personal, social and health education curriculum contributes effectively to the welfare of the pupils, dealing with sex and relationships education, drugs awareness, good health and environmental awareness. School assemblies are used to exemplify good behaviour, care and consideration. Parents are very pleased with the standards of behaviour achieved. Pupils say the school is a friendly place.

42. The procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good. Registers are properly completed and absence is accurately analysed. Should the attendance or punctuality of an individual pupil become a concern, action can be taken quickly. This rarely happens as parents are very diligent in getting their children to school regularly and on time.

43. There are good procedures for assessing pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science; the use made of the information is satisfactory overall. The information is used well to identify pupils deemed to be gifted and talented or who have special educational needs, but the school is not as effective in addressing the needs of those older pupils who are just below average, to help them to reach the required standard in English and mathematics. There are clear records tracking pupils' progress over time, but they are not monitored sufficiently closely to give prompt support when progress falters. Individual targets are set for pupils in literacy and numeracy but insufficient reference is made to these in lessons to focus pupils' attention on what they need to improve. The school analyses the results of national tests to identify areas of weakness, and this has led to a recent focus on interpreting data in mathematics and science.

44. There are good procedures for assessing the progress of children in the Reception class from the initial baseline tests through the nationally recommended Early Learning Goals, and work is generally well planned to suit the needs of individuals to help them to achieve well. An area for development is to extend the process for higher attaining pupils who have achieved the required standard to record their work to reflect their higher level of understanding.

45. There are good assessment procedures for pupils with special educational needs, who are identified quickly. Individual education plans are drawn up by the classteacher and the targets are usually clear and manageable. In a small minority of cases they are too general to be effective in focusing on the particular needs of the pupil. The teacher and the special needs co-ordinator regularly review targets and parents are consulted at each stage. Occasionally the mechanism for tracking pupils' progress over time is not monitored sufficiently to be effective in picking up an individual's lack of progress over a sustained period and so additional help is not available as soon as required. Literacy is the main area identified on individual education plans and so this is where the school has concentrated its resources to good effect. Pupils are placed in groups within their class so that work can be more readily designed to suit their differing learning needs.

46. The procedures for monitoring and supporting personal development are satisfactory. Class teachers have the primary responsibility for pastoral care. They are responsible for discussing this element of pupils' progress with parents each term and for writing about it in the pupils' annual reports.

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

47. The questionnaires completed by parents before the inspection show that they are very happy with most aspects of the school. Parents say their children like school; they are very pleased with the approachability of staff; they share the school's high expectations that pupils will work hard and behave well; they are very happy that the school is led and managed well. These views were confirmed strongly by those parents who attended the parents' meeting with inspectors.

48. Parents are given a good range of information about the school in the prospectus and the annual report of the governing body. There are newsletters from each class each term and, amongst general class news, there is information about homework and forthcoming topics. Day-to-day matters are dealt with by individual letters. Older pupils have homework diaries and these can also be used for messages. Nevertheless, a number of parents said they were uncertain about when homework should be expected and a number also said they would like more notice of forthcoming events. The school has promised to review both these concerns to try to make the situation clearer. Parents also said they were pleased with the opportunities for them to talk to staff informally at the start and end of each day. Scheduled discussions with class teachers take place each term and these are very well attended. The school has worked to improve pupils' annual reports and these are now good. They give parents a clear picture of progress, particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, as well as an overall view of the pupil's personal development.

49. At the parents' meeting, great appreciation was expressed of the commitment and approachability of the staff. Parents spoke of occasions when the headteacher and staff had taken exceptional trouble to provide information or to resolve concerns. As children join the school, introductory meetings for parents provide helpful information on the school's procedures and begin to establish a productive relationship between school and home. A sensible home-school agreement clarifies the responsibilities of the school and expectations of the home in supporting the pupils' learning. Guidelines on how to help with reading practice at home are appreciated by parents. Parents of children with special educational needs are generally kept well informed about their children's learning programmes and progress, and are suitably involved in discussing new targets and helpful methods for supporting learning at home. The school has recently begun to seek parents' views through sending out a questionnaire and now needs to refine this work to ensure that views of the whole parent body can be taken into account on a regular basis by the senior staff and governing body. The overall good quality of information and the approachability of the staff form effective links between the school and home, which contribute to the high levels of satisfaction expressed by a very high proportion of the parents.

50. Parents make a very positive contribution to the life of the school and what it achieves. There is always very good support for school events, assemblies, concerts and school teams. The school has been successful in recruiting an exceptionally large number of parents who work as volunteers in the classrooms. They make a regular commitment and their work is planned and organised to give very specific help to the teachers. Their efforts are valued by the school and planned for effectively and make a positive contribution to the standards achieved. A very active parents' association organises social and fund-raising events on the school's behalf. Their recent efforts have been quite outstanding and have provided a varied range of science equipment, video display facilities and large toys for the youngest pupils. These funds also help to subsidise the cost of school visits and ensure that the maximum number of pupils benefit.

51. Parents make a valuable contribution to their own children's progress. They ensure that their children attend school regularly and this is reflected in the very high attendance levels achieved. Parents share the school's high expectations for its pupils and their support, for example, the dress codes and behaviour policies very well. Almost all parents are keen to attend interviews with teachers to discuss their children's progress, and the homework tasks set are well supported by the majority of parents.

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

52. The leadership and management by the headteacher and senior management team are good. There is a clear sense of educational direction in the school. The headteacher and new senior management team are working hard to organise an education of good quality for the pupils in their care and they are largely successful in their endeavours. The two key stage managers apply themselves well to the task of raising the quality of provision in the school and use considerable initiative in introducing new managerial systems to take standards forward. The staff team is committed and enthusiastic, teaching is good and the curriculum is of good quality.

53. The school's self-evaluation procedures are satisfactory overall and improving, but there are gaps to be resolved. A review of test results has focused attention suitably on improving the teaching in writing and the achievement of higher attaining pupils, and this has largely been successful. The deputy headteacher bears a heavy burden of responsibility, holding many key roles, including that of Year 6 teacher. This leaves her little opportunity to check the progress of pupils in her department regularly and systematically, and dips in standards sometimes go unnoticed. Little use is made of computer programs to aid accurate and thorough analysis of pupils' annual test results and occasionally pupils 'slip through the net' and their underachievement is not resolved sufficiently promptly. Opportunities for subject co-ordinators to observe teaching and learning do not link sufficiently to the priorities identified in the school development plan.

54. The governing body is effective and conscientious in its endeavours to meet its statutory responsibilities. Many of the governors are parents of pupils or former pupils and show a long-standing commitment to the school. The governing body has been instrumental in leading the school forward well through the appointment of new staff of high calibre, ensuring that candidates fully meet the needs of the school. Governors monitor finances appropriately and have had a significant input into the refurbishment of the facilities for the use of the youngest children and the installation of the computer suite. In partnership with the senior management team, the governing body has set out policies for most aspects of the school's work, and these provide useful guidance to staff. There is a strong commitment to provide for the needs the pupils well. Specific grants are appropriately targeted. The work of the school office is very efficiently organised by the school's clerical assistant and procedures are suitably secure.

55. The school development plan tackles in the main the right areas for improvement in the school. However, it is a complex document and does not provide a clear basis for review of action. The means for measuring the success of action taken and expenditure incurred are not sufficiently linked to clearly identified outcomes for pupils or improvements in standards. This limits the rigour with which governors and senior managers check on the success of actions and the value of expenditure undertaken.

56. The management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs has recently changed hands and the commitment and enthusiasm of the new co-ordinator are helping to ensure that pupils make good progress. Money and resources are appropriately used to enable support to be targeted on the areas of greatest need. Currently this involves extra support for pupils in literacy. Little additional support is available in numeracy lessons. All records are up to date and pupils' progress is reviewed regularly against the targets set in individual education plans. However, procedures for monitoring pupils' progress over longer periods are not always used with sufficient speed to identify those in need of specialist assessment and support. There is no regular provision for the co-ordinator to be released from classroom duties to enable her to liaise with outside agencies and follow up referrals for support. Occasionally this leads to a delay in getting additional support where needed. There are some shortages in structured reading materials to meet the needs of pupils with specific problems in learning to read.

57. The school has a satisfactory number of teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum. Many have joined the school recently and an effective and improved teaching and management team is taking shape. Support staff, although less in number than in most schools nationally, are suitably qualified and contribute well to the standards achieved by pupils. The school has put in place good procedures for assessing the performance of teachers, based on the satisfactory monitoring of their teaching by the headteacher and other senior teachers and the consequent identification of appropriate areas for development.

58. Although nearly a hundred years old, the buildings have been refurbished with care to provide a good working environment for both staff and pupils. Everywhere is clean, bright, cared for and decorated very well. Very attractive displays make the school welcoming to pupils, staff and visitors. Suitable plans are in hand to provide an outdoor learning area for children in the Reception class. However, the accommodation has some disadvantages. The school field is some distance away and the undulating playground is not very suitable as an alternative; space available for a library is minimal; the ICT suite, though well equipped, is cramped when being used by a whole class. Teachers work hard to ensure that these drawbacks do not affect what the pupils can do and learn. Overall, therefore, the school's accommodation is satisfactory.

59. The school has a generally good range of resources to teach all of the subjects of the curriculum. Resources for the Foundation Stage and the subjects of mathematics, information and communication technology, religious education, geography and physical education are particularly good. Reading books have been reviewed recently and new ones bought to support the National Literacy Strategy, and an audit and update of the school library is in progress.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

60. The governors, headteacher and staff should take the following action:-

- [i] Raise standards in science by:
  - improving the pupils' use of scientific vocabulary;
  - increasing the pupils' precision and accuracy in carrying out and recording experiments;
  - improving the quality and accuracy of pupils' written work.

*[Paragraphs 1, 2, 91 - 96]*
- [ii] Improve the presentation of pupils' written work to at least a suitable level for their age, to ensure sufficient accuracy in their work.

*[Paragraphs 78, 86, 88, 94]*
- [iii] Establish an efficient and rigorous system for checking on the quality of the school's performance that:
  - ensures that the school development plan is clear and concise, and identifies intended outcomes for action linked directly to specific gains for pupils;
  - checks regularly and sufficiently on the quality of teaching and learning in English, mathematics and science;
  - links subject co-ordinators' monitoring to the priorities in the school development plan;
  - allows the co-ordinator for pupils with special educational needs a regular time allocation to review their progress;
  - uses a computer management programme to thoroughly and effectively analyse school data on pupils' progress.

*[Paragraphs 10, 22, 43, 53, 55 - 56]*

The following less important areas for development should be included in the action plan:

- Improve the organisation of reading resources for lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs in Years 3 to 6.

*[Paragraphs 8, 79]*
- Develop a school portfolio to provide evidence of standards in art and design, as a basis for establishing and raising standards and for school assessment purposes.

*[Paragraphs 97- 102]*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	52
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	34

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	15	24	11	1	0	0
Percentage	2	29	46	21	2	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 almost two percentage points.

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	N/a	212
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/a	9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	N/a	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	N/a	23

#### English as an additional language

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

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.5
National comparative data	5.4

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
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	18	12	30

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	17	16	17
	Girls	12	12	11
	Total	29	28	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (90)	93 (93)	93 (93)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	16	14	18
	Girls	12	11	12
	Total	28	25	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	93 (90)	83 (83)	100 (93)
	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	15	16	31

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	14	14	15
	Girls	13	11	14
	Total	27	25	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	87 (69)	81 (73)	94 (87)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	14	15	15
	Girls	12	12	14
	Total	26	27	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	87 (62)	87 (66)	94 (79)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

<b>Categories used in the Annual School Census</b>	<b>No of pupils on roll</b>	<b>Number of fixed period exclusions</b>	<b>Number of permanent exclusions</b>
White – British	185	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	22	0	0

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	7.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	27
Average class size	30

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

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	81

***FTE means full-time equivalent.***

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001/02
	£
Total income	416,254
Total expenditure	402,741
Expenditure per pupil	1,965
Balance brought forward from previous year	6,712
Balance carried forward to next year	20,225



### Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	9
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	9

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.

### Results of the survey of parents and carers

#### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	212
Number of questionnaires returned	63

#### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	54	41	5	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	56	38	5	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	41	52	5	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	44	43	11	0	2
The teaching is good.	61	32	5	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	48	43	10	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	76	22	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59	37	5	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	40	48	13	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	57	39	3	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	54	41	3	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	19	43	21	6	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**

61. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good, maintaining the strengths identified in the last inspection. There is no nursery provision available in the school and children join the Reception class in the September of the school year in which they have their fifth birthday. Currently there are 29 children attending full-time and the class is staffed by a qualified teacher and two part-time teaching assistants. There is a good level of regular voluntary support, which contributes well to children's learning. Good induction procedures enable children to settle into school life quickly; these include the teacher visiting children in their pre-school nurseries and a planned series of visits to the Reception class by children and their parents.

62. Assessments early in the first term show that the majority of children enter school with levels of attainment that are above average, overall, and particularly strong in the key areas of speaking and listening and personal development. The broad and highly stimulating curriculum, based extensively on learning through practical activities, is combined with consistently good teaching to enable children to make good progress in their learning and maintain their above average levels of attainment. By the time they transfer to Year 1, the vast majority achieve above the expected level in all areas of learning and their personal, social and emotional development is well above average.

63. The quality of teaching is consistently good; the teacher has a very good understanding of how young children learn. Every opportunity is taken to pose questions to encourage the children to think and to explain; for example, children explain that the toy car needs to be pushed or pulled before it will move. The teacher's high expectations lead children to be precise, as when children were asked to correct the use of the word 'naughty' when they meant 'unkind'. Good use is made of effective assessment procedures to track the children's progress and to plan work that is well matched to the needs of individuals. The good range of practical activities help children to achieve a good understanding, although an extension of their skills in recording the work they have done is needed, for example in mathematical activities. A strong feature of the management of the Foundation Stage is the very good co-operation and teamwork between teachers in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2, and this prepares children very well for the next stage. For example, the teachers are working in co-operation to improve the children's spelling skills. A good range of resources of high quality supports learning. At present, there are limited facilities for the children to work outdoors, but development of the area adjacent to the Reception classroom is in progress.

### **Personal, social and emotional development**

64. The teaching is very good in this area of learning, leading to children achieving standards that are well above average. There is a high expectation that children will take care of their own personal needs; for example, children get themselves changed for a gymnastics lesson and explain that they must put their own clothes together on a chair so that they do not get mixed up with those of others. The interesting range of activities motivates children to learn, and there are good opportunities for children to reflect at the end of a lesson and to discuss what they have achieved. For example, children give the thumbs-up sign to acknowledge the shapes they have managed to identify. Clear rules, such as 'No teasing or unkind words', help children to form good relationships and to develop a respect for each other. They show good consideration of others, for example, when they recognise the need to be quiet as they walk to the hall to avoid disturbing the work in other classes. Stories are chosen well and demonstrate good behaviour, such as helping the children to appreciate the value of sharing and making friends in the playground. A high focus is

placed on developing the children's independence; for example, they tick off their names when they have worked at the computer; and also on co-operating with each other, as when taking on characters in the role-play area. The children tidy away what they have used as a matter of course and are aware of and obey the explicit rules for the number of children allowed in each activity.

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

65. By the end of the Reception year, the attainment of most children is above the level expected and the children achieve well. The quality of teaching is good. Because the teacher has a very good understanding of the needs of the age group, very high expectations of behaviour and very good relationships with the children, they soon extend their learning, for example, of letter sounds and shapes. With encouragement, they put familiar words into sentences in the correct order, such as 'I went to the beach'. The higher attaining children are encouraged to build their own words using their knowledge of letter sounds and the teacher is working to improve the number of standard spellings they learn in preparation for their transfer to Year 1. The use of wipeable boards and pens encourages all the children to take part, safe in the knowledge that mistakes are soon changed. They become engrossed in the task, concentrating hard and eager to do their best. A suitable reading programme is provided for the children so that they gradually read more and more of their reading books. The most able are already reading simple books with confidence.

66. Language for thinking is developed through the use of imaginative role-play and through a good range of practical tasks and work linked to knowledge and understanding of the world. Most children have a good command of language and they really enjoy the imaginative stories devised by the teacher and the nursery nurse to extend their thoughts and skills of discussion, as on the day a 'letter' arrived from 'Grandma' inviting the children to join her on holiday. Preparations involved lots of profitable discussions. Questioning by the staff helps the children to think and talk about what they see and hear. The teacher and the nursery nurse are quick to see when the children need guidance to focus and extend their thinking. Adults use a wide vocabulary that helps to promote the children's learning and work in successful co-operation to extend children's communication, language and literacy skills.

### **Mathematical development**

67. Teaching is good, enabling above average attainment, overall, by the time the children start in Year 1. The vast majority of the work is appropriately practical, including counting, playing games and investigating real-life problems. However, very little is recorded, which is a shortcoming.

68. Most children can count and order numbers to at least 20, and at registration time they can work out that if 2 children are absent there must be 27 sitting on the carpet. Following very good questioning by the teacher, higher attaining pupils were able to deduce that the majority of children had brought a packed lunch as they could see more lunch boxes than the total of six children who were choosing a hot dinner. Children develop a good understanding of shape through activities such as relating plastic shapes to objects they see on the 'shape' walk around school and show their awareness of the properties of shapes as they identify the hidden ones, using clues from the teacher. Higher attaining children differentiate well between a cube and a cuboid, saying the cuboid has "rectangles on it", and lower attaining children know that the dice is a cube. Most pupils can continue a pattern of two colours and higher attaining children are confident in continuing a pattern of three.

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

69. The teaching in this area is very good and standards are above average. Children gain a good understanding of the world around them through a very interesting and varied range of first-hand experiences and through challenging questions that provoke them to think. Children look closely at a variety of houses before designing and making their own, using construction kits and subsequently discarded materials, folding flaps in the card to allow the doors and windows to open. They are curious to find out how things work and use their knowledge to predict what will happen.

For example, they predicted that a car would move faster and further if the ramp were raised. Teaching and learning are enhanced by visits further afield, and the children enjoyed retracing their journey to the science museum, where they joined in activities that promoted their understanding of sound and sight. When baking biscuits, they learn the need to wash their hands first and also to weigh the ingredients carefully. They explore the differences between wet and dry sand and observe the changes in wet leaves that are kept in a tray. They are developing a good understanding of information and communication technology and manipulate the computer mouse deftly to find where Ted is hidden.

### **Physical development**

70. The teaching of physical development is good and so children make good progress and achieve above average standards. In gymnastics and dance lessons, children show a good awareness of the space around them and move confidently around the hall without bumping into others. The teacher's clear explanation of moving a ball around their body helps children to develop good control. Good provision is made for the very few children whose movements are less controlled by giving them larger equipment to grasp. The vast majority know they can move in a variety of ways, such as running, skipping and jumping, and can link several movements together to form a sequence. They know that exercise helps to keep them healthy and that moving quickly makes them feel warm. They respond well to instructions and the high expectations of the teacher in their control and use of scissors, pencils, pens and paintbrushes.

### **Creative development**

71. The attainment of most children exceeds the early learning goals set nationally for the end of the Reception class and most children achieve well. The quality of teaching is good overall and sometimes very good; this means that skills are developed well and prepare the children very well for their next stage of education. Good planning successfully allows the children time to explore and experiment with ideas, materials and activities. After sharing a book about a train ride, the children worked with the teacher to illustrate the coastline scene using brushes, in a choice of widths, with ink wash, with detail overlaid with black felt pen. The children control the brushes very well and all pictures show form and detail that can be explained by the artist. They work hard and thoroughly enjoy using the materials. Most work on until their task is complete, concentrating very well, enjoying creating their own work and proud to display their efforts to the teacher.

72. The children enjoy listening to and moving to music. They explore differences in volume as they 'pass a sound round the circle'. The children enjoy passing the 'magic box' which lets out a very loud sound, and the very quiet whisper of 'Hello'. This work on sound awareness prepared the children well for the next stage of the lesson when they used untuned percussion instruments to make music. Staff help the children to feel secure as they try new experiences and sensitively teach children how to control watery inks or to explore ways in which our bodies move through music and dance.

## **ENGLISH**

73. For pupils in both Year 2 and Year 6, attainment is above average overall. Pupils in most year groups are moving forward at a good pace after a fallback due to the unsettled staffing situation over the past two years. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, enjoy their work and achieve well. Overall standards are similar to those at the time of the last inspection, although there has been some inconsistency year on year. In response to issues raised in the last inspection about handwriting, spelling and punctuation, improvements have been satisfactory.

74. Standards are higher in reading than in writing, reflecting the position nationally. The pupils' reading skills are secure throughout the school and pupils get considerable extra practice through reading their books regularly at home. Very thorough teaching of letter sounds, blends and

frequently used words begins in Reception and continues apace in Years 1 and 2. Pupils in Year 1, for example, busily use wipeable boards to take part in the class spelling practice. Relationships are very good and this gives pupils the confidence and interest in trying out the proposed words. They enjoy the challenge of words such as *chicken* or *carrot*. The pupils' good interest means that they learn to recognise words quickly, enjoying the imaginative reading and writing tasks devised to provide practice.

75. Teaching and learning are very good in both Year 1 and Year 2, and teachers skilfully plan rich learning opportunities that interweave the skills of reading and writing in a way that captivates the pupils, encouraging them to become involved and to try their best. In an excellent lesson in Year 1, the teacher seamlessly linked an informal dramatisation of the story of Red Riding Hood with discussions, reading, writing and spelling activities. Pupils enjoyed sharing the book and remembering the name of the author. They made a plan with the teacher which mapped out the main features and used this as a basis for re-enacting the story and for sharing writing a summary of the story with the teacher. The text written by the teacher was exciting and captured their interest well; the vocabulary was descriptive and sometimes unusual, catching the pupils' attention and providing a good model for their own work. Following this a good number of higher attaining pupils wrote their own versions of the story with a very good level of independence. Lower attaining pupils worked on re-assembling cut-up sentences, each including an interesting adjective, establishing from the start that good writing needs to include description. For pupils with special educational needs and those who require a little more help with learning, an extra literacy program is arranged with the teaching assistant to ensure that pupils achieve all they can to provide a firm foundation for future learning.

76. In Year 2, pupils are generally confident readers and writers for their age. The teacher devises fun styles of learning that stick in the pupils' minds. A useful ruse to help the pupils enjoy checking and improving their work is the 'sentence doctor' game, in which sentences are checked out to make sure they have correct spellings and punctuation and tell us all we need to know. Pupils enjoy the challenge of 'memory sentences', where they hold a sentence in their minds then reproduce it from memory on wipeable boards. Throughout, the teacher encourages correct letter formation, spelling, handwriting and punctuation. Pupils are left in no doubt about the teacher's high expectations and they respond to her challenge by concentrating exceptionally well and trying their very best. Consequently the pupils' achievement is high and progress is very good. They explain that unfamiliar words can be spelt out more easily by 'chunking' them, or breaking them into sections.

77. In Years 3 to 6, the quality of teaching and learning is good overall but the lessons observed ranged in quality from very good to unsatisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge and generally teach the basic skills of reading and writing well. Teachers are becoming skilled at analysing texts with pupils within the start of the literacy hour and this is helping to develop pupils' understanding of their reading well. The learning objectives set for the lessons are generally very specific and are linked closely to the development of skills rather than the description of an activity. These are diligently shared with pupils and used in the best lessons to keep teaching and learning on track. However, the class teaching element of the lesson is not always demanding enough to really challenge the pupils. For example, pupils in Year 4 clearly understood that they were to learn to identify the key features of an informative text. The teacher's exposition was very clear and the questioning was good, leading pupils to really think about the style of text they were studying. However, although they worked very hard in the lesson, the individual work that followed was too simple for the higher attaining pupils and their progress was limited. They were ready to go on more quickly than other pupils to researching and planning their own text. In a very good lesson in Year 5, pupils were fully challenged as they worked to identify common features of a Greek myth. The teacher's good subject knowledge and enthusiasm transferred to the class and they were thinking very hard about the characters in the story of Theseus and the Minotaur. It was obvious to them all that Theseus was a hero, but the teacher asked pertinent questions about his actions until they realised that there was a 'dark side' to his character. This close analysis supported the pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development very well.

78. In Year 3, the pupils' reading makes good progress but their progress in writing slows. Pupils' work is often untidily presented and carelessly written, making it difficult to read. Although very neat work is practised in handwriting books, it does not transfer in the main to other work. In an unsatisfactory lesson observed, the pupils' skills did not build to a suitable level because the focus for teaching and learning was not sufficiently clear. The pace of the lesson was too slow and too little learning was achieved in the time available.

79. For pupils with special educational needs or others who need extra help with reading or spelling, the school organises additional literacy activities with trained teaching assistants to supplement their work in class. This is working well and the school has expanded support into the majority of literacy lessons. The school has not organised fully the reading programme for pupils with special educational needs, however. These pupils choose their own books from too wide a selection and sometimes struggle with unsuitable materials. There is a shortage of graded reading books to meet the needs of such pupils.

80. In speaking and listening, the attainment of pupils when they enter school is above average overall and high standards are maintained throughout the school. Poetry is used well by teachers to highlight for pupils the impact of chosen words. For example, pupils in Year 6 worked on witches' spells in the style of Shakespeare's Macbeth. Photographs show pupils stirring 'cauldrons', wearing 'witches' hair' and chanting their spells, with lines such as "Twice the anger of thunder and snow, twice again and off they go! Hit the potion with flash and fear, add the dead man's rotten ear, potion, potion, healing lotion". In Year 6, there is a high proportion of above average, articulate pupils who discuss and analyse texts and their work well. Their skills in speaking and listening help to accelerate their progress across the curriculum, in lessons such as design and technology and religious education. In looking at features of formal writing styles, their teacher provided a suitably challenging text to stretch their skills; they worked on a very complicated solicitor's letter to decipher the message and try to translate it into plain English. The interesting curriculum in the school helps to extend the pupils' speaking skills well as they analyse what they have learned through discussion.

81. Opportunities are provided for pupils to read for research in subjects such as history, and pupils in Year 6 recall researching books and computer programs for information about the Ancient Greeks. The school library is in the process of being updated and at present provides a sparse base for study. Opportunities for writing within other subjects are not always planned well or used fully, and written work is sometimes sketchy in content and style. An example of good written work in history was by pupils in Year 5, in which they wrote about Victorian times from a pauper's viewpoint. Information and communication technology is increasingly being used to extend work in English.

82. The subject co-ordinator is new to the post but has got off to a good start in working to raise standards. A well thought out action plan is in place and the two Key Stage co-ordinators work together on checking teaching plans regularly across all classes. There is no programme yet in hand to organise regular checks on the standard of learning evident in pupils' workbooks. Staff moderate samples of pupils' writing within staff meetings in order to keep in touch with the different levels of attainment of the national curriculum. The teachers' performance management programme is used as a basis for reviewing teaching and while it is based on English, it is useful for developing teaching in the subject. Analysis of differences between the results of boys and girls has led to changes in the teaching programme for reading and writing. It now provides a better balance between factual and fictional texts. Resources are broadly satisfactory. There are some children's books of good quality in school but there are some shortages.

## **MATHEMATICS**

83. Attainment is above average in both Year 2 and Year 6 and most pupils achieve well. This

shows satisfactory improvement since the last inspection but good improvement on the average results achieved in national tests in 2002. These higher standards are now broadly in line with standards in other schools with pupils from a similar background. Attainment in numeracy is stronger than in aspects of shape and handling data. A strong element through the school is pupils' ability to apply their skills in solving problems through regular opportunities to explain their methods and thinking. However, recently unsettled staffing has meant that some gaps in learning remain, affecting standards overall. Attainment is improving. The strong teaching in Years 1 and 5 is resulting in standards in these classes that are well above average and this augurs well for the future.

84. The pupils' achievement is good overall because the teaching is good, overall, and the planning of work is generally closely matched to the needs of pupils of different abilities. Progress is accelerated in Year 5 because the teaching is of very good quality throughout the year, and a high level of challenge is set for all pupils. Progress is less marked in Year 3, where the pace of learning numeracy skills is too slow. Good assessment procedures are used effectively to identify pupils who are particularly able or who have special educational needs. Suitable provision is made for both groups, particularly in Year 6 where classroom support is available, enabling these groups to achieve well.

85. By Year 2, most pupils have a good understanding of numbers to 100 and can work out multiplication using the two, five and ten times tables. Through a good range of practical activities, pupils are able to make good connections in their learning; for example, linking their knowledge of tables to calculating the number of sides on three pentagons. Higher attaining pupils are challenged to extend their skills and become confident in adding hundreds, tens and units and in multiplying with higher numbers. Lower attaining pupils gain a sound understanding of number by relating tens and units to tenpence pieces and pennies. Most pupils can identify and name the common two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes, and can investigate irregular shapes to find which are symmetrical or not. Higher attaining pupils look to find those shapes that can be folded in different ways and remain symmetrical. Pupils have some experience of displaying information in graphical form, such as Venn diagrams, though work on drawing graphs and interpreting information is limited.

86. By Year 6, pupils have extended their knowledge of the number system well and can explain the effect of multiplying and dividing by ten and a hundred, including decimals, and have a good recall of multiplication tables. However, the unsettled period when they were in Year 5 means that there are some gaps in their learning. They can match decimal and fraction equivalents, though their experience of percentages is limited. Higher attaining pupils are confident in calculating long multiplication choosing from a variety of methods, and lower attaining pupils can double numbers to a hundred. Through regular opportunities to solve problems and puzzles, all pupils are quick to spot and use patterns and this helps their understanding. Pupils in Year 6 have completed only a limited range of work on shape and measurement. They can use the appropriate units for measuring length and weight, though they have insufficient experience of drawing and measuring angles accurately to achieve the higher levels. Pupils have gathered information to complete a good range of graphs and charts, though progress is held back in this area because of pupils' untidy presentation and lack of precision.

87. The quality of teaching is good overall. The teaching is consistently good in the infant classes, in which the imaginative use of resources of good quality aids understanding and leads to good gains in pupils' learning. The teaching is good overall in the juniors, though inconsistent across the classes. Learning is satisfactory in Year 3 and very good, because of high expectations and pace, in Year 5. A good feature of all lessons is the clear explanations given to pupils to help them to understand and get on with their tasks independently. This was seen in Year 2 when the teacher demonstrated how to fold a paper shape to check whether or not it was symmetrical.

88. In the best lessons, the pace of the oral part of the lesson is brisk, pupils being required to think quickly and recall facts, which helps to improve their skills in arithmetic well. Very good questioning, targeted well to pupils of different abilities gives pupils the chance to explain their

working and so clarify their thinking. In a very good lesson in Year 5, the teacher assessed pupils' responses quickly and moved them on to the next stage, leading pupils to a good understanding of decimal and fraction equivalents from tenths to hundredths. Lessons are generally interesting and suitably practical leading to an enthusiastic response from the pupils and motivating them to learn well. The time at the end of lessons is used effectively for pupils to evaluate what they have learned. For example, pupils in Year 4 discussed the different methods they had used to find the area of the shapes and related this well to how they might use their new skill in everyday life. In the less effective lessons, the pace is too slow; for example, higher attaining pupils in Year 3 were required to sit for a long time waiting for others to work out problems, which they themselves could solve mentally almost instantaneously. A general weakness is the low priority placed on the presentation of pupils' work, which inhibits the pupils' ability to work out problems and calculations systematically. Similarly in some classes there is an over-reliance on worksheets, which restricts practice in setting out sums. In those lessons where additional help is available, classroom assistants support groups well and make an effective contribution to pupils' learning.

89. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills in other subjects. For example, pupils in Year 1 measure their houses in centimetres in design and technology and pupils in Year 6 measure force using Newtons in science. Only limited use is made of information and communication technology to support learning in mathematics.

90. The responsibility for managing the subject has recently changed hands and co-ordination is satisfactory overall. Lessons and plans have been monitored regularly. However, there has been insufficient focus on using the information, backed up by checking the quality of the work in pupils' books, to identify areas of weakness in order to give support in raising standards.

## **SCIENCE**

91. Attainment is average overall in both Year 2 and Year 6 and most pupils achieve satisfactory progress, including those with special educational needs. Evidence indicates that standards are set to improve, largely owing to changes in staff that have improved the quality of teaching. In Year 5, for example, the teaching is good and standards are now rising to above average.

92. By Year 2, pupils have a suitable understanding of living things, materials and forces. In both Year 1 and Year 2, pupils progress well because the teaching is good and they experience a wide range of investigational activities. For example, pupils know that magnets attract certain materials but not others and they complete an experiment by recording their findings accurately. In their work on forces, pupils progress at an appropriate rate, from simple experiments identifying the difference between push and pull, to more complex work on grip and friction. In Year 2, they consolidate their learning effectively because of skilful questioning by the teacher that explores vocabulary and helps to clarify their knowledge and understanding. A good emphasis is placed upon investigative science and pupils actively participate in useful experiments. However, they need close support to enable them to carry these out competently. Some good extension work is planned, which helps to meet the needs of more able pupils in an appropriate manner. On occasion, more attention should be given to ensuring that experiments are carried out with precision, so that pupils can manage them more easily and make accurate observations. The very good behaviour of pupils and their positive attitudes towards learning result from effective teaching strategies for managing pupils' behaviour and, for the most part, carefully planned lessons.

93. By Year 6, pupils gain a good range of experience across all areas of the well-planned science curriculum. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 classify plants and animals accurately and are able to conduct appropriate experiments into growth. They begin to investigate solids and liquids and contrasting materials. This helps them to understand what constitutes a fair test. In Year 5, work in some lessons leads to higher than average attainment. This is because the knowledgeable teaching presents challenging questions and is firmly based upon scientific enquiry. Here pupils conduct careful investigations into soils and recognise the importance of accuracy in method and



recording. In other work, they investigate electricity and gravity, drawing appropriate conclusions from their experiments.

94. The pupils in Year 6 have worked hard during this school year to improve their abilities in science, having suffered some disruption in their teaching programme whilst in Year 5. They enthusiastically use experimental methods to investigate dissolving solids. They know the method to use and they work with independence to conduct such experiments. They make valid predictions, which they test, and then record their observations, knowing the importance of a fair test. More able pupils conduct their work carefully and record their findings in considerable detail. However, a number of pupils are not precise enough when carrying out and recording their experiments, by failing to time an experiment accurately, for example. Sometimes the use of vocabulary is inaccurate; for example, describing salt dissolving as 'melting'. The way the pupils present their work varies and is not always good enough, as when they fail to use the scale on a ruler when drawing a measuring beaker. Some written work is untidy. These factors diminish overall standards.

95. For pupils in Years 3 to 6, the standards of teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In some lessons they are good. Teachers are keen to promote investigative work. They plan and provide many good opportunities for this and ensure that pupils are challenged to succeed. On occasion, useful extension work is set for the more able pupils and there are some appropriate procedures for supporting pupils who find the work difficult. Good use is made of dialogue to encourage active responses, and the effective management of behaviour ensures that pupils are well-behaved and keen to work. However, not enough attention is paid in some classes to accuracy when teaching the basic skills of conducting and recording an investigation. Insufficient use is made of information and communication technology to extend learning in science.

96. The curriculum offers good opportunities to all pupils because it is effectively planned and enriched, for example, by exciting educational visits. Work in science supports the development of literacy skills well but could do more to support the development of numeracy. The good range of assessment procedures now in place provides detailed information of pupils' progress. However, individual targets are not set, so pupils do not always know what they should do to improve their work. There are staff in post, including the new co-ordinator, who are well qualified in science and there is a clear determination to raise standards. A thorough action plan provides useful pointers for the future. Overall, the school has made satisfactory progress in science since the last inspection.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

97. Insufficient evidence was available to make clear overall judgements on attainment or teaching and learning in art and design by the end of either Year 2 or Year 6, or to assess the extent to which the school has improved since the previous inspection. The school keeps little evidence of past work, which is an area in need of development in order to establish the standards expected for each year group and to provide a means of assessing the school's performance in the subject.

98. In the lessons observed, teaching was good. In Year 1, artwork has been inspired well by educational visits and visitors. Pupils showed a good ability to portray Ewloe Castle in their own style and then the buildings and people, seen on a visit to Manchester, in the style of LS Lowry. Much of the artwork evident in the school uses black pen drawings and coloured ink washes, and pupils become accomplished in their use. By Year 5, pupils responded well to the work of the African artist, Gakonga, with perceptive drawings portraying African dance, in black pen and bold coloured ink washes, highlighted sometimes with gold. The creativity of individual pupils was evident; the form and colour reflected the style of Gakonga well.

99. In their work with the visiting Indian artist and dancer, Bisharka, pupils in Year 1 showed a good standard of response to the story of the Indian goddess, Pavarti. Again, detailed drawings in

pen provided outlines for ink washes, with sequins used to add texture and detail. Pupils wrote, "We moved our hands like peacocks, our arms like trees." An Indian wall hanging provided a starting point for detailed pattern work in wax with a coloured ink wash.

100. The work of a variety of famous artists is used as a starting point for the pupils' own work. In Year 2, pupils responded to the work of William Morris by making their own drawings of plants, flowers and leaves on polystyrene blocks and printing them in repeat patterns. In Year 3, good teaching made sure that the pupils were very familiar with examples of Goldsworthy's work and were able to use it as inspiration for their own. In Year 5, pupils worked to mix paint in shades and tints that portrayed feelings and moods evident in The Highwayman poem by Charles Causley. The introduction to the lesson and the analysis of moods and feelings were very good and added significantly to the pupils' spiritual development. Insufficient time, however, was made available for pupils to put their thoughts into practice and to develop their paint shading skills. Some evidence of mixing paint colours was seen in sketchbooks in Years 3 to 5, but no work was available to show the outcomes of this practice within paintings.

101. Evidence of work in Year 6 showed a careful representation of Greek vases using charcoal and chalk pastels at a suitable level for the pupils' ages. There was, however, very little evidence of work in sketchbooks and little evidence of the development of pencil drawing skills through the school or of the use of paint except for occasional work to practice different shades of colour. The school's scheme of work indicates that these skills are planned but insufficient evidence was available of these basic subject skills to be able to judge overall standards.

102. The co-ordinator is recently appointed and management has not yet moved beyond organising resources. Opportunities are planned to review teaching and learning in lessons. Resources are adequate, overall, but there is a need for a wider range of examples of the work of other artists.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

103. Pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 attain standards that are above average for their age and make good progress. This maintains the good standards identified in the last inspection. A strong feature is the planned opportunity for pupils to examine a range of commercial products to consider important features before designing and making their own articles. Skills are taught systematically, enabling all pupils, including those with special educational needs, to achieve well.

104. By Year 2, pupils can join different materials in a variety of ways, such as by gluing, folding, stapling and using paper fasteners. They draw clear plans for their designs and list all the materials that they will need. Their finished products are of good quality. For example, the houses they have made show good attention to detail, such as using brass fasteners for door handles and making flaps so that windows open, and relate closely to the original design. Pupils evaluate their designs critically and make suggestions for improvements.

105. By Year 6, pupils have had good experiences of disassembling a variety of products to gain a good understanding of how things work and also the sort of components needed; for example, pupils in Year 6 took apart some musical instruments and drew and labelled all the parts they saw. This helped to inform and improve the quality and practicality of their own designs. A good range of moving toys were designed and made, which incorporated mechanisms such as axles, pneumatics and electrical components to make them work. In a good working model, pupils fitted batteries to make the rotors on their helicopter spin round. Pupils evaluate their finished designs to measure success. An area for development is to be more rigorous in the final evaluations of their work so that they can identify possible improvements for next time.

106. The teaching is good overall throughout the school. A strong feature is the planning to give pupils opportunities to experience all elements of the design process. Teachers work co-operatively on a topic to ensure that skills and techniques are taught progressively. For example,

pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 are asked to design a house, following close observation of local buildings. Pupils in Year 1 draw and practise their designs using construction bricks before making their own from boxes, whilst pupils in Year 2 use the computer to try out their designs. Pupils respond well to the high expectations of the teachers. Pupils in Year 5, for example, measured their designs carefully and adjusted the cam to improve the quality of movement of the waddling penguins they were making for children in Reception. Good questioning helps pupils to spot key factors in commercial designs, such as when pupils in Year 4 identified the need to have good fasteners on money containers to keep the contents safe. The topics chosen are interesting and appealing and motivate pupils to learn. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills as they measure their materials and list what they have to do. Some use is made of computers but this is at a limited level for the older pupils.

107. Management of the subject is satisfactory overall. There is a clear overview of what is to be taught each year and resources are sufficient for the purpose. Simple assessment procedures are in place but progress is not yet recorded systematically. There has been no opportunity to monitor the quality of lessons or of pupils' work.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

108. Attainment meets the expectations set nationally for Year 2 and Year 6 and pupils' achievement is satisfactory.

109. By Year 2, pupils' mapping skills are appropriately developed and they are able to draw and label maps of their local environment. They know the purpose of a map and recognise simple symbols to guide their interpretation. Pupils study contrasting environments through educational visits, such as to the city of Manchester and the rural area of Ewloe in north Wales. No lessons were observed in Years 1 and 2 and there is insufficient evidence on which to reach a clear judgement on the quality of teaching in these years.

110. By Year 6, most pupils, including those with special educational needs, show an appropriate range of skills across the subject. When studying India, they locate specific towns and rivers and identify key facts on the topic of Chembakolli village. Pupils gain useful insights into sustainable development through a study of their locality. They recognise how the environment can be improved and protected and draw conclusions which they apply in a wider context. Pupils develop their mapping skills effectively. In Year 5, pupils learn to recognise the significance of contour lines and symbols on a map. By Year 6, pupils are able to locate features by accurately calculating six figure grid references. The teaching is good overall for pupils in Years 3 to 6. Strengths are good attention to subject skills, a secure knowledge and understanding of the subject and the effective use of interesting resources and activities to aid good learning.

111. The subject supports the development of numeracy skills effectively. The use of information and communication technology is increasing and, for example, is beginning to support statistical work. Links are made with artwork in Year 1 and music in Year 2, where the cityscape observed on a visit to Manchester provided the basis for further work. Overall improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

## **HISTORY**

112. Attainment meets national expectations by Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. There are examples of higher standards of achievement in some lessons.

113. By Year 2, pupils have developed a number of basic historical skills. They accurately sequence events on a time line and use this to good effect when studying transport. Pupils are aware that people and places change over time; they can distinguish between the modern and past

eras. In this, they benefit from a museum visit, where they see steam locomotives, bi-planes and vintage cars. Their knowledge and understanding are effectively consolidated through classroom discussion. In a very good lesson, pupils were able to make valid comments upon the flights of Amy Johnson and compare these with journeys they had undertaken. Overall, teaching and learning are good in Years 1 and 2, and sometimes very good. This is because stimulating resources are used to good effect. Pupils are carefully managed and skilful questioning involves all in discussion. In response, pupils are well behaved and readily involve themselves in their learning.

114. By Year 6, pupils gain appropriate levels of knowledge and understanding across a wide curriculum. The teaching is good overall in Years 3 to 6 but past work indicates that it varies between classes. As a result, standards are better than average in Years 4 and 5 and satisfactory in Years 3 and 6. Pupils improve their knowledge and understanding through studying contrasting topics, such as the Ancient Egyptians and the Victorians. Pupils make good use of evidence and develop their skills by studying, for example, diaries and letters. A number of pupils in Year 5 wrote lively accounts with empathy on themes from past eras; for example, as pauper apprentices in the workhouse. In Year 6, written work lacks detail, overall, but pupils demonstrate a fuller understanding in discussion, encouraged by working in groups in class to explore a topic. Pupils are able to clearly explain their work on the Ancient Greeks, offering valid judgements upon features of the civilisation and also explaining how evidence was gathered for their topics from a range of sources, including the Internet.

115. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject and use this effectively to involve pupils in a wide range of interesting work. The local environment is used effectively to extend the pupils' learning. In Year 5, pupils visited a local cemetery to research differences in the mortality rate in Victorians times. Linked with other work, this very effectively encouraged and enabled the pupils to consider the effects of poor hygiene and cramped living conditions on people's health and the types of disease prevalent at the time. The inscriptions on gravestones helped pupils to understand the feelings of families experiencing early bereavement. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, are keen to learn and demonstrate a good degree of initiative.

116. The co-ordinator provides good leadership by enhancing the scheme of work to provide a varied curriculum in which pupils have good opportunities to study interesting characters in history. The subject encourages pupils to work independently and use resources carefully to research topics. Very good use is made of educational visits, which further improve curricular provision. Further work is needed to improve pupils' presentation of written work and to develop specific tasks for more able pupils. Overall the improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

117. Attainment broadly meets the standards expected nationally by both Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils' progress is improving as a result of the recent introduction of a new computer suite but this will take time to impact on overall standards. In Year 2, pupils are achieving well and have acquired a suitable range of basic skills. In Year 6, pupils' achievement is satisfactory, overall, although sometimes good.

118. By Year 2, pupils use the keyboard and computer mouse competently. They quickly build upon prior learning and use these skills in a number of ways, including word-processing and artwork. The teaching is good. The basic skills are effectively taught through clear demonstrations and the good use of questions. Teachers have a secure knowledge and understanding of the subject, plan carefully and manage lessons so that pupils work at a good pace. As a result, pupils quickly access the required program and write a range of sentences, such as were used as greetings on Christmas cards. Pupils know how to select upper and lower case letters, and how to change the font and letter size. They are beginning to discriminate between these, selecting the most appropriate choice for the specific task. Pupils know how to select art images to combine with text and they use a paint program to experiment with colour, line and shape. They are

beginning to experiment with control activities, using a floor robot. Pupils are confident when using computers and work effectively in pairs, the more able pupils demonstrating considerable levels of independence for their age.

119. By Year 6, pupils acquire appropriate skills in word-processing and use these effectively to produce stories, poems and descriptive prose. They combine text and graphics competently and use these skills in lessons such as English and history. Younger pupils build effectively upon earlier learning to explore varied uses of text and graphics. They use control routines to program the on-screen 'turtle' to form various letter shapes, such as 'L' and 'T'. The higher attaining pupils quickly learn to use a 45-degree angle to form the letter 'A'. Older pupils broaden their experience, using spreadsheets to collate data and display it visually, using graphics. Increasing use is made of the secure Internet connection to research information in other subjects. Although standards are average overall, there are examples of higher attainment within some lessons, such as when pupils in Year 6 worked to produce a multimedia presentation, incorporating sound and using hyper-links to switch between pages. They developed an awareness of specific needs of users by tailoring their story to the needs of pupils in Year 2. Owing to recent staff changes, the national programme of training in computer work is yet to be completed. Staff expertise in the required areas for teaching varies but the overall standards of teaching and learning for pupils in Years 3 to 6 are nevertheless satisfactory, and a number of good features are evident and a clear enthusiasm and willingness to learn.

120. The co-ordinator provides good leadership and has set clear priorities to raise standards. There has been a good improvement in resources since the last inspection following the setting-up of the computer suite and very good improvement overall. The lack of an interactive white board, however, reduces the impact of whole class teaching in some lessons. For example, demonstrations on using the keyboard cannot easily be seen by the whole class. Computer technology is not yet used sufficiently within other subjects, such as science, but the school's recent purchase of laptop computers could now be used to good effect.

## **MUSIC**

121. Attainment exceeds national expectations by Year 2. Owing to timetable arrangements, insufficient evidence was available to judge overall attainment by Year 6; singing during school hymn practice time was of a satisfactory quality. In Year 2, pupils achieve well because the teaching is very good due to the good subject knowledge of the teacher. For these pupils, the high standards of the last inspection have been maintained.

122. In the music lessons observed in both Year 1 and Year 2, the teaching was of at least good and sometimes very good quality. Pupils in Year 1 listened to contrasting compositions by Mussorgsky and succeeded in imagining what sort of pictures the composer might be representing with the different sounds within his music called Pictures at an Exhibition. Appropriate suggestions were given for the different types of pictures that might be seen in an exhibition. The class then very successfully devised different types of music using a variety of percussion instruments that might accompany the wolf's appearances within the story of Red Riding Hood. Decisions were recorded effectively, using words and signs, so that they recalled well the sounds when it was time for the performance. Pupils were able to follow the rhythm well for their ages and their performance improved through repetition and practice. The excellent class management meant that a very good balance was achieved between helping the pupils to relax, give of their best and thoroughly enjoy taking part in the performance. The lesson then returned to the recorded compositions of Mussorgsky and parts were identified which might represent the mood of the story, such as where the wolf was hiding behind a tree, waiting for an opportunity to carry out his malevolent plan.

123. In Year 2, pupils used the experience of their recent visit to Manchester to devise a class composition representing city sounds. They learned that 'texture' in music can be created by synchronising different 'layers' of sounds. A good quantity of instruments of good quality and suitable range enabled groups of pupils to devise their element of the hustle and bustle portrayed in

the music, showing a good level of creativity. Voices were added to represent vehicle sounds and people's voices. The teacher orchestrated the piece as it was recorded for review by the pupils, who were thrilled to identify their own parts. The lesson was finalised well with George Gershwin's composition, An American in Paris, which pupils listened to with rapt attention now that they were experienced composers of music portraying city sounds.

124. Singing in school assembly time was satisfactory for both Year 2 and Year 6. However, opportunities are sometimes missed within assembly times to use music to enhance the spiritual element of the occasion. The name of the recorded music played during and after assembly is not displayed to add to the pupils' understanding and experience of the work of different composers and different instruments.

125. Musical instrumental tuition is available for pupils who choose to take part, on payment of fees. There is no choir at present but plans are in hand to re-establish one for interested pupils. Occasional opportunities exist for pupils to take part in local musical events, such as the recent 'Rock for Africa' charity event.

126. The co-ordinator is newly appointed and, at present, is rightly giving priority to other managerial duties. However, as a music specialist, she has a good contribution to make to the standards in music in the school.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

127 Standards in physical education are broadly in line with national expectations in Year 2 and are above average in Year 6. This maintains the standards identified in the last inspection. A good feature is the breadth of the curriculum, giving opportunity for pupils to experience the full range of physical activities, including dance from different cultures, and residential visits in Year 4 and Year 6 to participate in outdoor pursuits. This makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. All pupils are suitably challenged and achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs are fully included in all activities and make good progress.

128. By Year 2, pupils are aware of the benefits of exercise and know that vigorous activities make them feel warm. They show good control when holding symmetrical shapes and higher attaining pupils can hold a handstand safely for a short time. Pupils have good opportunities to watch each other and make constructive suggestions for improvement, such as keeping feet together to improve the overall body shape. They link a series of movements together well, demonstrating creativity and fluency.

129. In Year 6, pupils are developing good games skills, such as dribbling in hockey and stopping the ball using the correct face of the hockey stick. In dance, they achieve good fluency and control as they link a series of movements together as they move around the hall. They show good attitudes as they co-operate in groups to devise a routine for performance and then refine their movements. They are aware of the benefits of exercise, as this is promoted well by the school, and can describe its effects on the body. Most pupils can swim the recommended distance by the time they leave school.

130. The teaching is good overall and this promotes learning well. Teachers are suitably dressed for physical education lessons and demonstrate skills and techniques well to focus pupils' attention. This was seen in Year 6, when pupils adopted the correct grip following a clear demonstration by the teacher. The teaching of dance is a strong feature. This was seen in a very good lesson in Year 4 where the teacher structured the lesson well, starting with body shapes and then adding sound, giving pupils good opportunities to develop dance skills, working on their own and then trying more complex movements working with a partner. Lessons are generally interesting, which motivates pupils to participate fully and achieve a good standard. All lessons have a suitable warm-up and cool-down, though occasionally the pace of the main activity slows and some pupils

become restless. This reflects the fact that lessons are a little too long for pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 and they lose concentration. Learning is enhanced by a satisfactory range of after-school activities and by residential visits, which include good instruction in orienteering and outdoor pursuits.

131. The management of the subject is good, with good co-ordination of a rich curriculum. The co-ordinator sees teachers' plans but has not had the opportunity to monitor the standard of teaching and learning in lessons. Teachers assess pupils' progress through observation but there is not an agreed format for recording their development. There is a good range of resources of good quality to support learning.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

132. Standards of attainment meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus by Year 2 and Year 6. Progress over time is satisfactory for all pupils from Year 1 to Year 6.

133. By Year 2, pupils understand the importance of ceremony within the Christian faith. Overall standards of teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2 are good. In a very good lesson, supported by the local minister, who is a governor of the school, pupils in Year 2 improvised a Christian wedding ceremony. The minister provided an excellent explanation of how the ceremony is conducted and their participation made the ceremony realistic and meaningful to the pupils. They were able to recall the main participants in a wedding, naming and identifying the bride and groom. They are aware that this is a special occasion and some are able to link this to their own family history. Most pupils have an understanding of other special ceremonies, such as harvest festival. They know this is a time of giving and sharing and they write and illustrate their experience of taking part in a harvest breakfast.

134. Assemblies provide additional, good opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of Christian beliefs. The story of the Good Samaritan enables them to discuss concepts of caring and helping one another. Such initial experiences help to inform subsequent discussions in class, where pupils are able to demonstrate their knowledge of Biblical stories and an understanding of their meaning. On such occasions, pupils benefit from hearing teachers and guest speakers as part of well organised lessons and assemblies, which promote interest and learning very well.

135. By Year 6, pupils have a sound understanding of the basic values which underpin the Christian, Islamic and Hindu faiths. They know that Hindus worship in the home and temple and that sacred artefacts are important to them. Pupils have a basic understanding of the five pillars of Islam. They make good use of research skills to gather information and begin to recognise the disciplined approach many Muslims adopt for prayer. They begin to identify similarities and differences between world faiths and express their ideas in a sensible manner. Pupils' behaviour is good and many display a mature approach to discussion.

136. Most pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith well. They know that Christ is regarded as the 'Son of God' by Christians and as such is believed to have told parables and performed miracles. Pupils are able to recall a number of these and go on to form links with the ceremony and customs of the church. They recognise how belief can influence action, by studying significant individuals such as missionaries and preachers. Whilst standards overall meet expectations, in some lessons they exceed them, particularly in discussions. Here pupils make good use of appropriate language to share their own beliefs and feelings within the context of the topic under discussion. Standards of teaching and learning are satisfactory overall; at times they are good, especially when teachers are promoting discussion. However, insufficient written recording of work is undertaken. Occasionally, the pace of lessons is too slow and pupils have insufficient time for either individual research or recording information.

137. Plans for learning match the syllabus requirements effectively and are well supported by a good range of resources. The subject promotes all pupils' personal development well, providing

good opportunities for discussion and reflection. Local churches and their ministers are a valuable additional resource and make a good contribution to the overall curriculum. The school is developing links with other faith organisations. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.