

INSPECTION REPORT

FAIRFIELD JUNIOR SCHOOL

Widnes

LEA area: Halton

Unique reference number: 111197

Headteacher: Mrs I Hodkinson

Reporting inspector: Mr G T Storer
19830

Dates of inspection: 13th – 16th January 2003

Inspection number: 247091

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Peelhouse Lane Widnes Cheshire
Postcode:	WA8 6TH
Telephone number:	0151 424 0123
Fax number:	0151 420 0856
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs L Foster
Date of previous inspection:	24 th November 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
G T Storer 19830	Registered inspector	Inclusion Art and design Design and technology Physical education	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? School improvement How well is the school led and managed
M Milwain 13459	Lay inspector		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Attendance Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development How well does the school care for pupils? Partnership with parents
M A Palmer 20646	Team inspector	Special educational needs English Music	Assessment
D Matthews 18505	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Religious education	Curricular and other opportunities
M Madeley 22657	Team inspector	English as an additional language Mathematics Geography History	Teaching and learning Financial management

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SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Fairfield Junior School is situated in a residential area close to the centre of Widnes. It serves a socially diverse community living in the surrounding area and further afield. With 336 pupils on the school roll, this school is larger than other primary schools nationally. The school is presently over-subscribed, although successively lower intakes mean that pupil numbers are set to fall over the next three years. There is unemployment in the area and a considerable number of families experience hardship. Almost a quarter of the pupils is known to be eligible for free school meals. This is close to the national average but does not fully reflect the disadvantages of the school's social and educational circumstances. Pupils' attainments on entry to Year 3 vary from year to year. However, attainment on entry has improved over the last four years and is now above that normally expected of seven-year-olds. The number of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need is about average for a school of this size. A small number of pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds and two speak English as an additional language. The school population is quite stable and so the turnover of pupils in any year is low. Last year, nine pupils entered the school and five left at times other than the beginning of Year 3 and the end of Year 6.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This school provides a good education for its pupils. Pupils make good progress during their time in the school; most attain or exceed the nationally expected standard in English, mathematics and science by the time that they leave the school. Pupils achieve particularly high standards in many aspects of their personal development. The quality of teaching is good overall and there are examples of very good teaching in many classes throughout the school. The recently appointed headteacher already has a clear view of the way ahead and is an effective manager. She receives good support from senior staff and from the governing body. Together they are developing very good standards in many aspects of the school's work. The school manages its budget well and provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The proportion of pupils achieving or exceeding nationally expected standards¹ in English, mathematics and science is higher than in most similar schools².
- Pupils have very positive attitudes and their behaviour is excellent; they are confident, independent and work very hard. This quality of response makes a significant contribution to their learning.
- Relationships between pupils and between adults and pupils are excellent.
- Teaching is consistently good. Teachers' management of their pupils is particularly effective.
- The school provides a rich and stimulating curriculum that also fosters pupils' personal development very effectively. Arrangements for promoting pupils' spiritual and moral development are excellent.
- The headteacher provides effective leadership. She ensures that the school's fundamental aims are at the very heart of its life and work.
- The staff have a very strong commitment to the pupils and the capacity to bring about further improvements.

What could be improved

- Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are not high enough.
- Procedures for monitoring the school's performance and for bringing about improvements are not rigorous enough.
- Teachers do not use assessment information effectively in many subjects to plan the next stages in pupils' learning.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has maintained a satisfactory rate of improvement since its last inspection. Teaching is even better than it was. There are more frequent examples of good, very good or excellent teaching throughout the school. The school has kept up its high standards in relation to pupils' attitudes and to the quality of relationships within the school community, but pupils' behaviour is even better than at the time of the previous inspection. The curriculum has improved in that it makes more effective provision for pupils'

¹ The nationally expected standard for 11-year-olds is National Curriculum Level 4. Pupils achieving Level 5 at the end of Year 6 are exceeding national expectations.

² Similar schools are identified on the basis of the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.

personal development, with the result that pupils' spiritual and moral development are now excellent. The school's assessment procedures are more systematic than they were and some aspects of the school's use of assessment information have improved. However, there are still weaknesses in teachers' use of assessment information as a guide to their planning. Key staff use new technology very effectively and this makes aspects of management and administration even more efficient than at the time of the last inspection.

STANDARDS

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

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

Most pupils make good progress during their time in school. In recent years, overall standards have risen considerably but there was a dip in the school's results in 2002. The 2002 results do not indicate weaknesses in teaching and learning because they reflect a year group in which one pupil in every five had special educational needs, most notably in aspects of literacy and numeracy. Additionally, the school's assessments indicate that this was a group in which fewer pupils had the potential for the higher levels of attainment. In this context, the 2002 results were satisfactory. Although the school's average points score was below the national average in English and mathematics and average in science, the actual proportion of pupils achieving or exceeding the nationally expected standard was above similar schools in mathematics and well above similar schools in English and science. Almost all pupils made sound progress in relation to their attainment on entry and to the difficulties they faced. However, despite making sound progress, more pupils that year did not achieve the average Level 4 and fewer achieved the above average Level 5 and that is why the school's overall test scores declined. The work of pupils currently in Year 6 indicates that standards are set to rise again in 2003. More pupils are on course to achieve both the average and the above average standard in English and mathematics, while last year's good standards in science are being maintained. Pupils attain satisfactory standards in most other subjects seen during the inspection, but pupils' attainments in ICT are below the nationally expected standard for pupils in junior schools. There was insufficient evidence to support a judgement on overall standards in history and music. Almost all pupils make good progress and this includes the small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language. A small number of pupils with special educational needs do not achieve the expected standard but they make good progress in relation to the targets that are set for them.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are enthusiastic and enjoy coming to school. Most work hard and take a real pride in the quality of the work that they produce.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. There is no evidence of bullying or of any other unpleasant behaviour.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Staff and pupils treat each other with respect, which contributes strongly to the very pleasant and harmonious atmosphere around school.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Close to the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is good. During the inspection, teaching was satisfactory or better in all lessons and there was a high proportion of good, very good or excellent teaching. There was good teaching in most classes and frequent examples of very good and at times excellent teaching, most notably in Year 6. The teaching of the basic skills in English and mathematics is good. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' attitudes and behaviour and of their capacity to cope with challenging projects. As a result, most pupils are attentive, join in well and persevere with their work. Teachers' management of their pupils is very effective. Teachers ensure that pupils are interested, involved and motivated to succeed. Most teachers plan carefully and use methods that encourage pupils to be increasingly independent and to take responsibility for aspects of their work. This improves the quality of pupils' learning and promotes very effective personal development. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. There is good teamwork between class teachers, support teachers and classroom assistants that improves the quality of pupils' learning. These pupils make good progress towards the targets that are set for them. Teachers usually set work for higher-attaining pupils at a sufficiently challenging level to allow them to attain above average standards in core subjects³ by the time that they leave the school. However, this does not always extend to other subjects because teachers are not making enough use of assessment information to match work precisely to the needs of individuals and groups within the class. Teachers use homework well to extend pupils' learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The school teaches all the subjects that it should and enriches pupils' experience with a very good range of educational visits, special events and activities outside of normal lessons.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The school complies fully with the Code of Practice ⁴ and ensures that these pupils are included in and benefit from everything that the school offers to all its pupils.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. These pupils receive sensitive yet effective support that allows them to participate fully in all activities and to make good progress alongside others in the class.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Pupils are mature and sensible and contribute very well to the school as a community. The promoting of pupils' spiritual and moral development is particularly successful.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is a very caring school, but there are still weaknesses in teachers' use of assessment in their planning.

The school has the overwhelming support of most parents and works in successful partnership with them. However, there is scope to improve the quality of pupils' annual progress reports.

³ The core subjects are English, mathematics and science.

⁴ Code of Practice – this gives practical advice to schools and local education authorities about their responsibilities, duties and tasks to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs receive the most appropriate help and support to further their learning and personal development. This is a statutory duty under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher's leadership provides clear educational direction for the school. Combined with effective support from senior staff and governors, this results in a good level of commitment and teamwork amongst the staff and a renewed focus on the raising of standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governing body is conscientious in ensuring that the school meets statutory requirements. Governors are well informed and very supportive. However, much of their current monitoring is informal, so there is scope for a more systematic approach that would allow them to hold the school to account for what it achieves.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory. Procedures for monitoring aspects of the school's work are not rigorous enough to ensure that the improvement plan identifies the most important areas for development. Some staff with subject management roles do not get enough time to carry out responsibilities or to influence school improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The governing body uses the school's budget and other grants effectively, according to principles of best value and in the interests of the pupils.

Staffing levels in the school are satisfactory. Additional teachers and classroom assistants and support staff make a worthwhile contribution to pupils' learning. The school has plentiful resources for the teaching of most subjects.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school expects pupils to work hard and achieve their best. • The school is helping their children to become mature and responsible. • Teaching is good. • Parents are comfortable in approaching staff with questions or problems. • The school is well led and managed. • Pupils' behaviour is good. • Their children like school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities outside lessons.

There were 174 questionnaires (52 per cent) returned and 7 parents attended the meeting for parents. While the responses of most parents strongly supported the school and the quality of education provided for their children, a very small number of parents expressed concerns. The inspection strongly endorses parents' positive views but finds no evidence to support their concerns. The range and quality of activities that take place outside of lessons are very good. Staff offer an extensive range of sporting, cultural and social activities for pupils that effectively complements aspects of pupils' academic and personal development. This is greater than the provision in many other schools of this size.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievement

1. Pupils' attainments on entry to the school vary considerably from year to year but the trend over the last four years has been one of improving standards. Many pupils in the school's last intake achieved above average levels in the national tests for 7-year olds.
2. This trend of rising standards is also apparent in the school's results for 11-year-olds. Test scores for pupils at the end of Year 6 improved steadily from 1999 to 2001 when they were above the national average overall, indicating that almost all pupils were making good progress during their time in the school. However, in 2002, there was a downturn in the school's results. In the 2002 national tests, standards in English and mathematics were below the national average and standards in science were in line with the national average. Despite this dip in the results, the school's overall test scores over the last four years have improved at a similar rate to scores in schools nationally.
3. This dip in the school's results does not indicate weaknesses in teaching and learning or in the standards that pupils achieve. The reasons for this are:
 - in the 2002 test group, one pupil in every five had special educational needs. Most of these pupils faced difficulties in aspects of literacy and numeracy and this fact reflects in the results of the tests in that year;
 - the school's assessments and yearly tracking also indicate that pupils entering the school in 1998 were not attaining the same high levels as the most recent intake. Fewer pupils in the 2002 Year 6 test group had the potential for the higher levels of attainment than in preceding years;
 - despite these barriers, the school's average points scores in English and mathematics were in line with the average for similar schools and well above average in science;
 - indeed, the actual proportion of pupils achieving or exceeding the nationally expected standard was above similar schools in mathematics and well above similar schools in English and science. The school did well to achieve these results given the difficult circumstances;
 - almost all pupils made sound progress in relation to their attainment on entry and to the difficulties they faced and, for many, progress was good. However, more pupils that year did not achieve the average Level 4 and fewer achieved the above average Level 5. That is why the school's overall results declined.
4. The work of pupils currently in Year 6 indicates that standards are set to rise again in 2003. The school is making more use of assessment data to identify pupils with the potential for higher attainment and those in need of a boost to get them to the nationally expected level. Consequently, the dip in the school's results has been corrected. More pupils are on course to achieve both the average and the above average standard in English and mathematics and last year's good standards in science are being maintained.
5. Pupils attain satisfactory standards in most other subjects seen during the inspection, but pupils' attainments in ICT are below the nationally expected standard for pupils in junior schools. Current planning does not result in an in-depth coverage of all elements of the National Curriculum in ICT, with the result that pupils' skills in, for example, control technology are well below the level expected of 11-year-olds. There was insufficient evidence to support a judgement on overall standards in history and music but, during the inspection, the standard of pupils' singing in Years 5 and 6 was good. Standards in religious education are in line with those set out in the locally agreed guidelines.

6. There are no significant differences in the progress of pupils of different gender, ethnicity or background. The number of pupils with special educational needs is average for a school of this size. Some of these pupils face quite profound difficulties that result in below average standards by the age of 11 and this affects overall standards as reflected by test results. However, where a pupil has a Statement of Special Educational Need, the good support, closely focused on the individual, results in good progress across a wide range of areas. The two pupils with English as an additional language are also making good progress. They have sufficient English to cope as well as pupils of similar ability, although they do sometimes lack the technical vocabulary or understanding of idiom that their peers have picked up from home. These pupils also receive sensitive yet effective support that allows them to participate fully in all activities and to make progress alongside others in the class. All pupils make very good progress in their personal and social development. This progress is an important factor that allows all pupils to adopt extremely helpful patterns of behaviour and response and enables all teachers to establish conditions in which profitable learning can take place.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

7. Strengths:
- pupils have very good attitudes to school;
 - behaviour in lessons and at breaktimes is excellent;
 - pupils make very good progress in aspects of their personal development;
 - relationships are excellent.
8. The pupils at Fairfield are very proud of their school; this is evident in the quality of their work and in the way in which they treat their surroundings. At breaktimes, Year 6 pupils collect litter in the playground. Those on litter duty take their work seriously; they begin to understand how we can all be affected by the actions of other people. The relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils and their peers are excellent. These relationships are clearly evident in lessons and were put to good effect in the preparation and execution of an outstanding dramatic presentation by a group of Year 6 pupils for a whole-school assembly. The exceptional quality of their work was firmly rooted in very good levels of teamwork, co-operation and mutual support along with a willingness on the part of every single pupil to give of his or her very best.
9. Pupils' very positive attitudes and the quality of their response make a significant contribution to standards throughout the school. Pupils really enjoy coming to school. This reflects in the way that many arrive before the start of the school day and quickly settle down in their classrooms to their own chosen work. Pupils have very good attitudes to school and involve themselves fully in lessons. In a personal, social and health education lesson, pupils in a Year 5 class were reluctant to end a discussion on their place in the community, even though it was the close of the school day. Pupils discuss their work with adults in a meaningful way and clearly express their likes and dislikes. Pupils co-operate very well with each other; in lessons they willingly share resources and when working in pairs or groups they discuss and share ideas constructively. They respond very well to challenging tasks and make a real effort to succeed. They take great care over their work and show a pride in the result.
10. All pupils achieve very good standards in aspects of their personal development. They are very reliable and trustworthy. Small groups work outside the classroom with the minimum of supervision, getting on with their work quietly and with concentration. Pupils throughout the school use computers sensibly and Year 6 can be trusted to use hot wax safely when making their batik prints. There are opportunities for pupils to take personal responsibility for tasks around school. For instance, Year 6 pupils set up the overhead projector and set out the hall for morning assembly. Concern for others is also evident in the significant amounts raised annually for a variety of charities both local and national.

11. Pupils' behaviour is excellent. When moving around school, between lessons and at breaktimes, pupils do so in a quiet and orderly manner with very little intervention from the staff. All staff encourage pupils to be aware of the effect of their actions on themselves and others. As a result, they are pleasant and courteous to adults and to each other. There were no pupils excluded from school during the preceding school year and there was no evidence of bullying or any other form of oppressive behaviour during the period of the inspection.
12. Pupils use self-assessment to enhance both their academic and personal development. They do this through the 'reflections' book and in the annual progress report to parents. The positive effects of this can be seen in pupils' excellent behaviour and in the very positive attitude that they have towards school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

13. Teaching and learning are good. Every lesson that was seen during the inspection was at least satisfactory and seven out of every ten lessons were good or better. Furthermore, nearly a quarter of all lessons were very good or excellent. This is a significant improvement on the last inspection when only about a half of the lessons was good or better. Teaching was consistently strong, especially in Years 5 and 6, where there were regular examples of very good and excellent teaching. In subjects, teaching and learning were good in English, mathematics, science, history, art and religious education. It was satisfactory in the small amounts of geography and physical education observed and there were insufficient lesson observations to make judgements in music, ICT and design and technology.

Teaching was good because:	The impact of good teaching is that:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers have high expectations • Teachers manage pupils well and relationships are very strong • Teachers use assessment well • Teachers set appropriate, interesting homework • Teachers teach the basic skills in English and mathematics well • Teachers use resources, including ICT, well 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils write beautifully presented topic work and try very hard in every lesson • Pupils are extremely well behaved and well motivated • Groups for extra support are regularly reviewed and changed • Pupils develop good attitudes to homework • Pupils make good progress • Lessons are lively and interesting

14. The teaching methods of both the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are well established in the school. As a result, teachers teach the basic skills well, such as letter sounds and spelling in English and arithmetic skills in mathematics. Teachers are sufficiently confident in the planning and delivery of this work to adapt their plans to meet the needs of the pupils. For example, topics are sometimes held over to another week if more work is needed to ensure that their learning is secure. Similarly, teachers use on-going assessments well in both subjects. They adapt daily plans in the light of what has gone before in order to prepare suitably challenging tasks for the various groups of pupils. This careful matching allows most pupils to succeed at their own level and improves the progress that they make in English and mathematics but is not evident in science or in any of the other subjects of the curriculum. Teachers mark pupils' work accurately and regularly, giving praise where it is deserved. However, they do not show how work can be improved, nor do they use marking to set or revise specific subject targets.
15. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Teachers very successfully create an atmosphere of trust and encouragement and pupils respond with a willingness to

be involved and to learn. There is effective teamwork between the special educational needs co-ordinator, teachers and trained support assistants so that all pupils are enabled to participate fully in lessons and small group work. Teachers give clear explanations to ensure that all pupils know what is expected of them. Teachers use carefully targeted questions to involve all pupils in discussions and to assess pupils' understanding. As a result, pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets on their individual education plans.

16. Teachers manage their pupils very effectively. The school has a well-established system for recognising pupils' efforts, achievements and positive attitudes. Teachers use this system consistently and fairly. Pupils value the 'rewards' that they earn because they come in the form of the trust and respect of their teachers and peers. Pupils behave extremely well and are highly motivated because their teachers care about them, make lessons as interesting as possible and support their learning in every way possible. As a result, they are always attentive and work really hard. As pupils get older, teachers give them the opportunity to be independent and to show initiative in the way that they organise themselves and their work. Pupils respond very well and rise to the challenge of teachers' high expectations in this regard. This high quality of relationships and interactions was at the heart of an extremely successful dance lesson in Year 6, that later became the centrepiece of an outstanding assembly. The pupils were confident, uninhibited and performed to a very high standard because the teacher had really made them believe that they could do it.
17. Teachers use resources well in order to bring lessons to life for the pupils. They use photographs, artefacts, atlases and images from the Internet as well as educational visits and visitors to the school to arouse pupils' interest, promote curiosity and reinforce learning. The school has the necessary apparatus to enable pupils to undertake scientific investigations and complex processes such as batik printing. The quality of such experiences contributes strongly to pupils' very positive response and the very effective climate for learning throughout the school. Teachers also use computers effectively to prepare tasks and to illustrate their teaching points. For example, using images and other information from the Internet added greatly to pupils' understanding of climate work in geography. Teachers also give pupils suitable opportunities to use ICT as part of their work in subjects such as English, mathematics, history and art.
18. Teachers make good use of homework to further pupils' studies. Spellings and reading books go home regularly, as do multiplication tables. Pupils often become so interested in their work that they want to take their topic books home, either to complete work or to give extra time to their presentation. Teachers encourage these practices as they are totally in keeping with the school's aim to foster a sense of pride and ownership in the pupils.

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

19. The school provides its pupils with a rich curriculum. It builds effectively on the requirements of the National Curriculum and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education by giving pupils experiences that foster their learning well. As a result, pupils are interested in their work and enjoy school.
20. The school provides well for pupils with special educational needs. Procedures for the early identification of pupils with special educational needs are secure. Teachers and the special educational needs co-ordinator draw up specific and achievable targets for pupils' individual work plans. These are regularly reviewed and updated, with the involvement of the special educational needs support assistants. Pupils with special educational needs participate actively in lessons and in the life of the school, including after-school sporting

and musical activities and, as a result, they make good progress towards the individual targets that are set for them.

21. The school's arrangements for teaching the skills of literacy and numeracy are good, particularly in the way that teachers develop these skills in other subjects of the curriculum. For example, pupils in Year 6 improve the accuracy of measuring liquids in millilitres during their science work. Class teachers identify more able pupils and plan more demanding work to challenge them in English and mathematics lessons. However, this is not consistently the case in other subjects. In Year 6, a maths club is set up for part of the year, so that mathematically able pupils can experience challenging activities and so extend their skills.
22. There are very good enrichment activities outside lessons. There is a wide range of educational visits that includes residential weekends and a visit to a European country. These opportunities significantly broaden pupils' understanding of the world far beyond the confines of the school. They also enhance pupils' social and personal development well. Sporting and musical opportunities feature strongly in after-school activities. Parents appreciate the high quality of school productions and assemblies that make a very effective contribution to pupils' skills in the performing arts, notably in drama, speech and mime.
23. Access to the curriculum is well planned for all pupils, including travellers, those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. This is because the school cares about all of its pupils and ensures that this concern is reflected in what it provides for them. All pupils feel secure and so they benefit from the curriculum that the school provides. Some of the school's policies do not include guidance for newly appointed teachers about how pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language will be included.
24. The school caters very well for the personal, social and health education of pupils throughout the school. As at the time of the last inspection, this aspect of the school's work is a strength because it helps pupils to become responsible citizens who carefully consider each decision that they make. The school places strong emphasis on healthy living. For example, Year 6 pupils give very detailed consideration to a balanced and nutritious diet. Teachers cultivate pupils' personal development very well. All teachers ensure that pupils think carefully about their attitudes and behaviour and they enable them to evaluate their own progress. Assemblies contribute very well to pupils' personal development, for example, through imaginative reflections on the destruction of rainforests.
25. The school receives good contributions from the local and wider community. A range of visitors lead lively assemblies that engage the pupils well and enable them to reflect on important issues. Teachers organise regular workshops that not only incorporate parents well but foster pupils' skills, for example in art. The school uses the 'Life Education Caravan' to support its work on health and sex education. It also involves pupils in making decisions about the proper place of drugs. Visitors to the school include a local poet, wildlife speakers and theatre groups.
26. There are satisfactory links with other organisations. Good links with a local secondary school result in pupils using equipment that supports learning well, particularly in design and technology and science. Outside organisations support pupils' sports skills by coaching, for example in hockey, football and cricket. However, the school's links with the local infant school do not result in Year 3 teachers receiving detailed information about the achievements of individual pupils to use in the planning of what these pupils need to learn next.

27. There is, however, one notable weakness in the curriculum. Although the school teaches information and communication technology, the planning for this subject is unsatisfactory. It does not rigorously ensure that all pupils systematically develop skills in all aspects of the subject as they move through the school. This adversely affects their achievements by the time they reach the end of Year 6.

Pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development

28. Strengths:
- provision for spiritual development is excellent;
 - provision for moral development is excellent;
 - provision for social development is very good;
 - provision for cultural development is good.
29. The provision for pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is very good overall. At the time of the previous inspection this aspect was judged to be a strength of the school and this is still the case. The school has a well-established programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) for pupils. This is based on the values of respect, care and consideration for others. The effective application of these principles throughout the school can be seen in the way in which pupils behave in lessons and in the playground. Relationships and sex education are dealt with sensitively as part of the study of life processes; as a result, pupils approach these aspects of growing up without embarrassment.
30. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is excellent. In religious education, pupils show respect for sacred texts and for aspects of the major world religions. Striking displays of religious artefacts that give pupils further insights into the beliefs and practices of others reinforce these feelings of respect. Teachers provide pupils with many opportunities to reflect on their own lives and the life of others. For example, in a whole-school assembly pupils thought about the feelings of a friendless boy described in a poem. Similarly, discussions about refugee children by pupils in Year 6 have resulted in some very insightful and sensitive work, both in English and in art. Pupils often experience a sense of wonder through art and drama. In a Year 5 lesson, pupils looked at illustrations from the Book of Kells and were excited to discover that creatures were to be found hidden in the calligraphy. The quality of dance and drama in an assembly led by a Year 6 class held the whole school spellbound, as pupils sensitively portrayed the rainforest and its creatures. Many members of the audience, pupils, parents, staff and visitors, were deeply moved by the experience.
31. Provision for moral development is also excellent. Whenever pupils infringe the school's code of conduct, teachers require them to undertake a form of self-assessment that really makes pupils reflect on their own actions and how they can affect other people through what they do and say. This gives pupils a very clear understanding of the impact of their actions on others and strengthens their understanding of right and wrong. In personal, social, and health education lessons pupils discuss bullying and its effects and learn how to make the right decisions on the basis of 'right' and 'wrong' when confronted by moral dilemmas. The teacher asked a Year 6 class what they would do if a friend were stealing money to buy cigarettes. As a result of this challenging topic, pupils realised that difficult decisions sometimes have to be made and that these can affect friendships.
32. The provision for pupils' social development is very good. Through the example set by the staff, pupils show care and respect for one another. Social values are promoted well by adults throughout the school, and pupils are encouraged to care for and take responsibility for themselves and others. A Year 4 pupil was seen helping two of her peers to catch up with some work that they had missed through absence on the previous day. The opportunities provided for pupils to carry out tasks around school develop pupils' sense of

responsibility, for example setting up the hall for assemblies and litter patrols in the playground. Residential visits by pupils in Years 3 and 6 help them to learn to live in a group and to develop social skills. Aspects of citizenship play a prominent part in PSHE lessons. For example, pupils in a Year 5 class looked at their street and the relationship between their family and their neighbours. Questions such as, 'How many people do you know well?' and 'How many houses have elderly people living in them?' very effectively stimulate pupils' thinking about how communities function and about their own place in the local community.

33. The provision for pupils' cultural development is good. Through art and music lessons, pupils develop an awareness of a range of styles in both the visual and performing arts. Music by the 'composer of the week' is played at the start of the daily assembly. Displays around school give pupils an opportunity to look at the life of people in other times and in other cultures. However, other than in art, pupils have fewer opportunities to gain first-hand experience of non-western cultural traditions. Visits to museums and other places of interest add to the range of learning opportunities. In religious education, pupils learn about Christianity, Hinduism and Islam. The annual residential visit abroad by Year 6 pupils gives them a first hand experience of life in a different European culture.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

34. Strengths:
- the promotion of good behaviour;
 - the personal development of pupils.
35. Weaknesses:
- teachers' use of assessment information in their planning.
36. The school has good policies and effective procedures in place to ensure that pupils are safe and well cared for. There are good procedures for child protection. The current arrangements comply fully with locally agreed guidelines, and regular up-dates ensure that all staff know exactly what to do when the need arises. The governors, in conjunction with designated members of staff, conduct careful health and safety checks on the school premises. School visits are well planned and a member of staff carries out a risk assessment before each visit so that staff can provide adequate supervision. The school buildings are clean, bright and maintained in generally good condition and the school grounds are free from litter. There are enough trained first aiders on the school staff to deal satisfactorily with any minor accidents that occur.
37. The school's procedures for monitoring and improving pupils' attendance are satisfactory. Teachers record pupils' attendance or absence correctly and accurately at the start of both morning and afternoon sessions. Clerical staff monitor pupils' attendance daily and the education welfare officer carries out regular checks in order to follow up any frequent, prolonged or unexplained absences.
38. There are very good arrangements for monitoring and promoting pupils' personal development and all staff carry out the agreed procedures very consistently. There are two comprehensive policies relating to behaviour: the Praise, Celebration and Reward Policy and the Care and Control Policy. These policies are extremely effective in establishing the excellent procedures used by the school to promote and monitor good behaviour.
39. The 'ladder' or 'mountain' of achievement chart used in every class gives pupils the opportunity to assess and monitor their own behaviour and personal progress throughout the year. Pupils have a very mature attitude to this process and, as a result, they learn to recognise the overall effect of a single action on their life. Pupils learn to set their own

targets and they are proud to show visitors the badges earned, which demonstrate their personal achievements. The reward system is highly regarded by pupils, especially the freedom badge, which demonstrates a degree of trust placed on them by their teachers. As a result of gaining the freedom badge, pupils are, for instance, allowed unsupervised use of the school library. This enables pupils to develop research and independent learning skills. This is a very caring school and the consistent application of these policies and procedures, and the example set by the staff, results in the outstandingly good behaviour of pupils both in lessons and at breaktimes.

40. The school's arrangements for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic performance are satisfactory overall. However, there are weaknesses in the way the school uses assessment information to guide planning. There are well established procedures for regularly assessing what pupils know, understand and can do in English and mathematics, involving the use of both statutory and optional tests and teachers' assessments. However, the assessment of pupils' progress in other subjects is less secure. The school recognises this as an area for development and a system has now been introduced for regularly recording pupils' attainment in all subjects of the National Curriculum. Nevertheless, consistent approaches to assessing the development of key skills in subjects such as science, information technology and music are not yet embedded in the school's work.
41. The experienced assessment co-ordinator carefully analyses the results of national tests and the other assessments teachers carry out to look for trends or areas of weakness in teaching and learning. This has led to additional attention being paid to areas of pupils' work, such as punctuation and spelling. She also scrutinises assessment information in order to evaluate the performance of groups of pupils, such as boys and girls. In addition, the co-ordinator uses assessment information very effectively to enable the school to set individual targets for pupils' future attainment. Teachers use assessment results carefully to track pupils' progress from year to year and to identify those pupils who are in need of additional help and support, particularly in English and mathematics.
42. The school successfully promotes the wellbeing of pupils with special educational needs by very strongly encouraging mutual respect between all pupils. The school is committed to the early identification of pupils' special needs and arrangements are in line with the special educational needs Code of Practice. The special educational needs co-ordinator maintains detailed records for each pupil. She ensures that individual education plans are drawn up and updated regularly. These specify clearly what pupils need to concentrate on in order to improve. Class teachers make good use of the plans and this enables pupils to learn well and make good progress.
43. Nevertheless, the school's use of assessment information as a guide to planning is unsatisfactory. In English and mathematics, teachers use assessment information effectively to group pupils according to their abilities and to plan tasks that meet their needs. In other subjects, however, because assessment procedures are informal and often lack rigour, teachers lack precise information about what individual pupils or groups within the class know, understand and can do. Consequently, they are unable to plan tasks that build carefully on what pupils have already achieved. This means that there are times when work is either too easy or too difficult for particular pupils and this reduces the progress that they make.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

44. The school has an effective partnership with its parents. The results of the pre-inspection questionnaire to parents and the comments made at the parents' meeting indicate that parents have a very high regard for the school. Parents particularly like the school's 'open door' policy that makes them feel comfortable approaching staff with questions or problems. Virtually all parents who expressed an opinion thought that staff have high expectations and that they help pupils to become mature and responsible.
45. The school's links with parents are satisfactory overall and many of the strategies that the school uses to inform and involve parents are good. The induction process for pupils entering the school provides parents and children with an opportunity to visit. There is an attractive 'Welcome to Fairfield' booklet and a well-produced prospectus, which provide useful information for parents who are new to the school. In addition, regular, termly newsletters and frequent 'flyers' keep parents informed about forthcoming events. Annual reports on pupils' progress are issued to parents prior to the final parents' evening of the year. This meeting gives parents an opportunity to discuss their child's progress with the teachers. However, the reports are unsatisfactory because they do not give parents enough information on what their children know, understand and can do in all subjects of the curriculum, nor is there any indication in most reports of what pupils need to do in order to improve further.
46. Parents make a very good contribution to the work of the school. There has been a very positive response from parents of children entering Year 3 to the home/school agreement. Teachers make good use of homework to reinforce what is taught in lessons and parents make a very good contribution to their children's learning through their strong support for the school's homework policy. Parents have a formal opportunity each term to discuss their child's progress with the teachers. However, a good number take advantage of the school's informal 'drop-in' sessions or the 'open door' policy to discuss any concerns with staff at any convenient time. These initiatives help parents to give more effective support to their children both at home and at school.
47. Pupils from each class in turn lead a weekly achievement assembly that is well attended by parents. Following the achievement assembly the school holds a workshop for parents. This arrangement works well because it gives parents the chance to work alongside their children on a variety of subjects. Many parents take advantage of this opportunity and, as a result, they gain a useful insight into the work of the school. It also enables them to gain additional knowledge and understanding that will help them to support their children's learning. During the week of the inspection, pupils from a Year 6 class and their parents enjoyed a successful art workshop. The work produced in this workshop will eventually form part of a three-dimensional piece of art to be displayed in school.
48. The 'Friends of Fairfield' parent-teacher organisation raises significant funds to provide useful resources for the school. Equipment provided by parents in this way, for example the sound and lighting installation in the hall, add to the quality of the education provided to the pupils at Fairfield.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

49. The recently appointed headteacher and senior members of staff provide effective leadership for the school. The deputy and assistant headteachers have provided both continuity and stability during the understandable period of turbulence surrounding the appointment of a new headteacher. For her part, the headteacher has quickly begun to identify areas of strength and weakness in the work of the school, to establish what needs to be done and to ensure that staff work as a united team. This has enabled the school to make satisfactory improvement since the last inspection and, although there are still

issues to address, its capacity to succeed is now very good. Central to this has been communicating the school's fundamental commitment to the education of the 'whole child', with a very strong focus on promoting pupils' personal and social development as well as raising academic standards. The school is succeeding in both of these areas. The school's results are set to improve again following a temporary setback in 2002 and pupils' behaviour and their response to what the school offers is even better than at the time of the previous inspection. As such, it is well placed to make further improvements.

50. Members of staff have accepted responsibility for co-ordinating the development of curriculum subjects, managing the provision for pupils with special educational needs and overseeing aspects such as assessment. However, this delegation of management responsibilities is not yet having the impact that it should in terms of improving standards and quality. This is because the school has not provided most staff with the time or opportunity to fulfil these responsibilities thoroughly. Much of the monitoring is informal, other than that associated with the school's official performance management programme. Co-ordinators talk to their colleagues and see work on display but they do not regularly check on teachers' planning, sample pupils' work systematically or observe their colleagues' teaching. Consequently, their evaluation of the school's work is not as rigorous as it should be. The headteacher and key staff have undertaken some monitoring of standards and quality by observing teachers at work but these observations do not always have a clearly identified purpose or extend to all subjects. Such observations have contributed to improvements in the teaching and learning of English and mathematics but they have yet to provide the quality information required for fully effective improvement planning. Therefore, the monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching are unsatisfactory.
51. Governors are very supportive and are proud of the high esteem in which the school is held in the community. They fulfil their statutory duties effectively. The headteacher encourages governors to be involved in the school by fostering a climate in which questions and challenge play an increasing role. The chair of the governing body visits school very regularly and her informal monitoring adds considerably to the information which governors receive. As a result, governors are more confident in, for example, contributing to the debate on budget allocations. Governors know and value the strengths of the school and the quality of leadership that the headteacher provides. Their role in shaping its direction is satisfactory, but they do not monitor many aspects of the school's provision at first hand and this leads to some variations in their awareness of relative weaknesses. For example, governors are particularly rigorous in monitoring and taking action on matters of health and safety and in evaluating potential risks to pupils, for example on educational visits. However, they do not hold the school to account in relation to its main priorities in raising pupils' standards of attainment.
52. This is an inclusive school. Its aims and values place strong emphasis on all pupils having equal access to what the school offers. The headteacher and the special educational needs co-ordinator manage this aspect of the school's work effectively, with the result that these aims are reflected well in its life and work. They ensure that the school adheres to the Code of Practice and that pupils with statements of special educational need receive their full entitlement to additional support. This makes a strong contribution to the quality of their learning and, as a result, these pupils make good progress. All receive effective support from teachers and a good number of assistants who help them. Because it is organised and managed well, the work of classroom assistants and support teachers is effective. The school's work with the small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language is also organised effectively. They receive the necessary on-going support that enables them to take part fully in all activities and to make rapid gains in their confidence and competence in the English language.
53. There are sound financial links between the school's budget and the priorities set out in the school's improvement plan. The school's financial planning is suitably forward looking

and governors are already making plans that extend beyond the current financial year. For example, they are well aware of the potential implication of fewer pupils coming to the school in future years and have already begun planning for this eventuality. Governors understand and consider best value principles in their financial dealings, as well as comparing the pupils' attainments with those in other schools. Funds for special purposes are used well. Notably, their effective use of grants for pupils with special educational needs results in good provision for these pupils, and this fosters their good progress. However, the current school improvement plan is not as efficient as it could be in moving the school forward. This is because, in some subjects, monitoring and evaluation are weak and so many of the proposed targets are too general to have a real impact on standards and quality.

54. The number of teachers is satisfactory for a school of this size, and there is a good mix of age, experience and expertise. The governing body has introduced suitable arrangements for managing the performance of staff. Suitable objectives that are linked to the school's main development priorities have been set for each member of staff and these are to be reviewed annually. All newly appointed teachers receive effective support from other members of staff that enables them to settle into the school and become increasingly effective. The procedures for the induction of newly qualified teachers are good. Newly qualified teachers receive on-going support from an experienced mentor as well as having access to a full programme of training and visits that help them to develop and improve the quality of their teaching.
55. The school has a satisfactory number of classroom assistants who work closely with the teachers and support pupils effectively in their learning. Classroom assistants know the pupils really well and relationships between the pupils and the adults in the classroom are excellent. This promotes a very effective climate for learning and ensures very good levels of personal support for pupils of all levels of attainment. Teamwork between classroom assistants and teachers is good, and the same sensitive, good quality personal support is evident when classroom assistants work with lower attaining pupils or with pupils with statements of special educational need.
56. The school has good resources that effectively support the teaching of most subjects. Resources for ICT have improved since the last inspection but there are still gaps, notably in the resources available for control technology. Resources for art and design are very good and contribute significantly to pupils' achievements in this subject. The school's environmental area supports work in science effectively and the playing field provides good facilities for aspects of physical education. The school makes very good use of the locality as a resource for pupils' learning; visits take place to many places of historical, geographical, environmental and cultural interest, both nearby and further afield. The school also fosters effective links with other schools and sporting organisations that extend the school's resources and facilities, for example for teaching aspects of physical education and design and technology.
57. The accommodation provides satisfactory facilities for the teaching of the primary curriculum. The playground is small for the number of pupils on the school's roll and the surface is now deteriorating and could in time become hazardous. However, the school extends the play area available to pupils by using the extensive grassed areas, when weather conditions permit. Work has already been undertaken to ensure that disabled pupils have access to the building and that there are suitable facilities for their use. However, internal steps still pose a potential difficulty for wheelchair users or for those with other disabilities. The building is clean and well maintained. Displays around the school value the pupils' work and add to the character of the school.
58. The headteacher, administrative assistant and the bursar make very good use of computer technology to improve the efficiency of the school. Pupils' records, attendance data, some

assessment data and the school's budget are maintained on computer. Staff have good administrative and ICT skills and use them very effectively to analyse data, identify trends, track the school's budget and prepare reports for the headteacher, governing body and local authority. This enables the headteacher and governors to make decisions on the basis of accurate and up-to-date information and so adds to the overall efficiency of school management and administration. The governors' finance committee is effective in its monitoring of the school's budget. As a result, specific grants are spent for their designated purpose and the school operates within its budget. Budget setting takes account of the long-term plans of the school and different priorities are carefully matched against the funds available. As a result, the school is successful in meeting many of its targets in the school improvement plan. The school provides good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

59. In order to extend the school's current achievements and to further raise standards of attainment, the governors, headteacher and staff should jointly:

- (1) raise standards in information and communication technology by:
 - i) improving planning so that pupils' learning in all year groups, but particularly in Year 6, builds more systematically on what they have learned before;
 - ii) improving the school's resources, so that teachers can teach all aspects of the curriculum in ICT effectively;

(paragraphs 5, 27, 103-5)

- (2) improve the school's evaluation of its performance and the subsequent planning for school improvement by:
 - i) agreeing and delegating management roles and responsibilities for all senior staff and curriculum co-ordinators;
 - ii) ensuring that all staff with management responsibilities undertake training that enables them to observe teaching and learning and evaluate other aspects of the school's work effectively;
 - iii) establishing an on-going programme of classroom observations and other key tasks as part of the curriculum development process in all subjects;
 - iv) involving governors in the formal monitoring of standards and quality;
 - v) using the outcomes of monitoring to inform staff development, curriculum and whole-school improvement initiatives.

(paragraphs 50-51, 69, 71, 78, 84, 91, 93, 97, 99, 102, 105, 111, 116, 121)

- (3) improve teachers' planning in the medium and shorter term by:
 - i) identifying the criteria that are to be used in assessing pupils' attainment and progress in all subjects;
 - ii) ensuring that all staff receive the necessary training to apply these criteria consistently;
 - iii) devising a manageable way of recording assessment information so that it is readily available to teachers when topics or skills are re-visited;
 - iv) ensuring that teachers use assessment information more systematically to identify what pupils of different levels of attainment need to learn next.

(paragraphs 14, 35, 40, 43, 82-83, 89, 91, 97, 99, 102, 110, 121)

OTHER ISSUES THAT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE SCHOOL

- a) ensure that pupils' annual progress reports tell parents more about what their children know, understand, can do and need to do next in order to improve further (paragraph 45).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

53

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

32

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	2	9	26	16	0	0	0
Percentage	2	19	49	30	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	336
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	80
Special educational needs	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	41
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	5

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.6
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 2 (Year 6)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2002	31	49	80

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	21	19	28
	Girls	41	39	45
	Total	62	58	73
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	78 (82)	73 (70)	91 (96)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	17	19	24
	Girls	41	39	42
	Total	58	58	66
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	73 (77)	73 (76)	83 (90)
	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

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	324	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	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	0	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: Y3 – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	14.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.5
Average class size	28

Education support staff: Y3 – Y6

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	85

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001 / 2002
	£
Total income	688,384
Total expenditure	656,153
Expenditure per pupil	1,941
Balance brought forward from previous year	4,781
Balance carried forward to next year	39,712

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate – 52%

Number of questionnaires sent out

336

Number of questionnaires returned

174

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	71	25	2	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	65	33	1	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	65	33	1	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	49	44	6	1	0
The teaching is good.	71	27	1	1	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	60	34	5	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	77	22	1	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	78	22	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	62	33	3	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	62	36	1	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	66	33	1	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	52	37	8	2	1

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

ENGLISH

60. Pupils attain standards in English expected for pupils by the age of 11 years. Standards are similar to those reported when the school was last inspected. In the national tests at the end of Year 6, overall standards of attainment rose in recent years. However, there was a marked dip in 2002 when the proportion of pupils with difficulties in reading and writing had a significant impact on results. In the current Year 6, more pupils than last year are on course to exceed the nationally expected standards. Consequently, overall results are set to rise again.
61. Factors that contribute to pupils' achievements by the time they leave the school, include:
- pupils have valuable opportunities to participate in school drama productions and class assemblies. This enables them to develop assurance in addressing a range of audiences;
 - pupils have ready access to a good range of books and additional time beyond the daily literacy hour to enjoy them;
 - teachers plan tasks, in subjects such as history and religious education, which provide opportunities for extended writing;
 - the school identifies and effectively supports those pupils who need additional help with reading and writing;
 - teachers are sensitive to the needs of individual pupils and ensure that all are included in classroom activities;
 - the effective support provided by the school means that pupils make good progress in learning to speak English as an additional language;
 - teachers establish excellent relationships with pupils. This promotes pupils' very good attitudes to learning in English. Pupils are eager to contribute their ideas orally and apply themselves very well to reading and writing tasks.
62. However, many pupils could achieve better results in aspects of their learning because:
- they do not systematically use their knowledge of letter sounds and other clues in the text to help them to tackle unfamiliar words;
 - their lack of experience in using the school library limits their opportunities to develop some aspects of book and information retrieval.
63. Attainment in speaking and listening is good. Teachers consistently extend pupils' vocabulary and promote their interest in new words. Pupils listen well and this contributes to their good progress in lessons. In a lesson focusing on a creature in *The Hobbit*, Year 3 pupils eagerly suggested vividly descriptive words for an imaginary beast. Teachers praise pupils' efforts and encourage all pupils to listen thoughtfully to each other's work so that they readily share their ideas in the knowledge that they will be welcomed and respected. For example, Year 5 pupils of all abilities confidently suggested characteristic features of a Greek legend in a lively revision of previous work. Teachers plan regular opportunities for pupils to reinforce and extend their speaking and listening skills, as when they read out their work at the conclusion of an activity. In a Year 6 lesson, for example, pupils gathered eagerly to share the 'promotional leaflets' they had written and to suggest alternative expressions that might improve each other's work.
64. Standards in reading are broadly average, although in all age groups there is a wide range of abilities. Teachers plan regular opportunities for pupils to read texts together as a class and also to participate in small group reading sessions, led by the teacher or classroom assistant. There is now a strong emphasis on strengthening pupils' knowledge of letter sounds and spelling patterns, in literacy sessions and support group work. This is improving the range of words pupils read on sight and spell. However, pupils do not

consistently use their knowledge and other clues in the text to help them tackle unfamiliar words independently. Throughout the school, teachers encourage pupils to take books home regularly. Classroom book collections contain a good selection of fiction and non-fiction books to appeal to both boys and girls. Almost all the pupils interviewed during the inspection are keen readers who talk readily about the characters and key events of their reading books. By Year 6, the more able discuss the plot of their book, predict future outcomes and sometimes compare books with others they have read. However, pupils of all ages sometimes select books to read that are too difficult for them. When this happens, pupils struggle to understand or explain what they have read and this hampers their fluency and limits their progress.

65. Most pupils attain the expected standards in writing. However, throughout the school pupils display a very wide range of writing skills. Teachers plan a good variety of stimulating writing activities, which they present in an enthusiastic way so that pupils of all prior attainment are very well motivated and settle to their tasks with interest. Pupils' writing includes newspaper articles, instructions, letters, play scripts, stories and poetry. Pupils successfully improve their work by drafting and redrafting. In all age groups, they frequently use a dictionary or thesaurus to check spellings or extend their understanding of words. Teachers consistently encourage pupils to plan their writing as a means of organising and developing their ideas and opinions. As a result, pupils' work in Years 5 and 6 is increasingly structured, imaginative and thoughtful. Following an animated discussion, for example, Year 6 pupils made notes in preparation for writing a letter supporting or opposing the building of a factory in a rural town. Pupils choose their words carefully and convey their ideas in a lively way. Teachers take every opportunity to promote pupils' confidence in their ability to use words adventurously. As a result, most pupils readily express their ideas imaginatively and at length, using increasingly complex sentences. However, a small but significant number continue to experience difficulties with punctuation and spelling. Teachers have very high expectations of the way in which pupils present their work and respond very positively to all pupils' efforts. The school has introduced a more structured approach to teaching handwriting. Pupils practice regularly and almost all pupils' handwriting is fluent, legible and neatly joined. Pupils have good quality books for their completed work and they take great pride in presenting work carefully for display around the school.
66. Pupils maintain excellent relationships with each other and with their teachers. They enjoy sharing and discussing their work constructively with each other. They are very interested in their work and they concentrate very well. As they grow older, pupils work with increasing independence. Teachers plan activities, which successfully encourage pupils to use their literacy skills to support learning in other subjects. For example, as part of their history topic, Year 5 pupils write announcements to be read out by the town crier, giving news of the Battle of Bosworth. In assembly, pupils of all ages collaborate in composing an acrostic poem, to reinforce their reflections on 'friendship'. Pupils also practise their information and communication technology skills when they use word processing programs to produce well-presented work for display.
67. The quality of teaching is good. In Years 5 and 6 it is frequently very good because teachers:
- make clear their particularly high expectations of pupils' involvement and pupils respond by applying themselves very industriously to their tasks;
 - ensure that individual pupils are clear about what they have to do to raise the standard of their work;
 - set very stimulating tasks, which effectively challenge pupils according to their differing levels of attainment;
 - maintain a very good pace throughout the lesson so that pupils' motivation is very successfully maintained.

68. Throughout the school, teachers have secure subject knowledge. Their weekly plans are well focused and they are clear about what they want the pupils to learn. They share this with pupils at the beginning of the lesson and regularly remind pupils in the course of their activities. This very successfully promotes pupils' purposeful approach to their work. Teachers actively engage pupils' interest with their lively approach and often with a touch of humour. They are consistently supportive, receptive to pupils' contributions and successful in boosting their confidence. Pupils follow their teachers' instructions promptly and behave very co-operatively. Teachers use well-targeted questions to stimulate pupils' thinking, reinforce their learning and confirm their understanding. Teachers actively check pupils' progress in the course of lessons and know pupils' strengths and weaknesses well. They mark pupils' work regularly. The marking of the older pupils' work is particularly valuable, as it consistently indicates what they can do to improve as well as encouraging their efforts. Teachers regularly gather information from these sources in addition to the current systems of assessment and record keeping and the results of tests. This knowledge is used well as a basis for setting individual targets, planning work for different groups of pupils at appropriate levels and directing support towards individuals in order to improve their basic skills and raise standards. Teachers work closely with support assistants. They are well briefed and give particular support to lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, enabling them to participate purposefully. Teachers routinely set reading and spelling homework, alongside other tasks, and many pupils are well supported at home. These activities positively reinforce their learning.
69. The school gives priority to the promotion of pupils' literacy skills and splendid displays of work around the school demonstrate how teachers value pupils' efforts. Activities such as visits to school by poets and theatre groups increase pupils' interest and involvement in their learning. However, the English co-ordinators have no opportunities to monitor classroom practice. This situation is unsatisfactory because it limits their ability to identify and disseminate the very good practice that is found. It also prevents them from targeting advice and support to colleagues when needed, based on classroom observations.

MATHEMATICS

70. Strengths:
- standards are improving year on year;
 - teaching and learning are good;
 - pupils have extremely positive attitudes towards mathematics;
 - analysis of national test data is comprehensive.
71. Weaknesses:
- teaching and learning are not monitored closely enough.
72. Standards attained by pupils in Year 6 are similar to the national average. This judgement differs from the most recent national test scores, which showed a decline on the previous year's results, particularly in the proportion of pupils achieving the above average level (Level 5). However, the school did narrowly exceed the national average for the percentage of pupils achieving the nationally expected standard (Level 4). This apparent decline did not reflect a problem with teaching and learning in the school. It was specific to the pupils in that particular lower attaining group. The school's tracking of pupils' progress and targets for pupils in Year 6 predict a rise in the numbers reaching both the average and the higher level. The work of pupils currently in Year 6 is consistent with this view. Whilst the school may not achieve the very challenging target that has been set, standards are clearly set to rise again. More pupils than last year are firmly on course to attain or exceed the nationally expected standard.
73. Standards at both the average and higher levels have been rising consistently for the last five years because of the school's good use of the National Numeracy Strategy and

consistently good teaching. There is very little difference between the standards achieved by boys and girls. However, few pupils with special educational needs have specific targets in mathematics. Those who do have targets receive good support from teachers and assistants, particularly in respect of carefully selected and graded tasks, and are making good progress at their own level.

74. The current Year 6 pupils have made good progress during their time in the school. Higher and average attaining pupils have a good understanding of number to one hundred thousand and use the four rules of arithmetic on whole numbers and simple decimals with confidence. Lower attaining pupils struggle with long multiplication and aspects of division. All pupils are aware of the simple relationships between percentages, fractions and decimals, with higher attaining pupils being able to tackle harder examples like one-eighth. Most pupils calculate and draw angles quite accurately and both create and ask questions of graphs well. They all tackle probability with enthusiasm and most confidently explain what they have done in simple terms using appropriate vocabulary.
75. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have very positive relationships with pupils and all use similar strategies, such as praise and humour, to motivate and enthuse their classes. Pupils respond extremely positively, work very hard, behave impeccably and, as they get older, show increasing levels of independence in the way they work. An exceptional example of this was a superb lesson on probability in Year 6 where, thanks to inspired teaching, the pupils learned how to count and represent probabilities very quickly. Teachers use resources very well to help pupils understand difficult ideas. For example, a teacher in Year 6 used a computer program very effectively to demonstrate the concept of angles. The teaching of basic skills is effective throughout the school and is an important contributory factor in the progress that pupils make. In Year 3, skills of doubling and halving were taught well and because of this, pupils were able to explain their mathematical thinking very clearly. Teachers in Year 5 concentrated on the multiplication tables and found interesting and amusing ways of teaching them, so as to keep the pupils motivated. Teachers also teach complex skills well because they have good subject knowledge and understand how children learn. In a lesson on area in Year 4, the teacher prepared actual squares for her pupils to make and count the areas more easily and this practical task improved the quality of their learning. Teachers mark work regularly and accurately, giving praise where it is due, but do not indicate to pupils how they might improve their work. If teachers were to set pupils one or two individual targets it would focus the pupils' learning and give even greater direction to their efforts.
76. The teachers use computers well for planning, demonstration and to reinforce pupils' learning. All lesson plans are word-processed and can be modified and used again, thus saving valuable teacher time. In Year 3, pupils used a lively multiplication program to support their arithmetic work, whilst pupils in Year 6 coped well with a difficult program, which had them measuring angles to an accuracy of one degree. Pupils regularly use their mathematical skills in other lessons. For example, they create line graphs of heart rates in science and accurately measure the hypotenuse of a triangle in order to make the body of their cars in design and technology.
77. The school makes effective use of the National Numeracy Strategy to structure the teaching of mathematics. Because of this, the school teaches all the required aspects of mathematics. The recommended lesson structure is solidly in place, giving added consistency to the teaching, and teachers work hard to give pupils tasks at their level, which challenge and extend their learning.
78. The management of the subject is good in every respect, except that the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, which is a new initiative this year, has yet to yield the information necessary for the further development of the subject. The termly planning is sufficiently detailed to enable teachers to plan their topics and individual lessons. Test

scores are very carefully analysed and the information gleaned influences the composition of groups receiving additional support and occasionally what should be taught or revised. There has been good training for colleagues, for instance on the plenary session, and the co-ordinator has benefited from opportunities to visit other schools, bringing back elements of good practice and ideas. The school has good resources for the teaching of mathematics and teachers use them effectively in order to make complex ideas easier for pupils to understand.

SCIENCE

79. In the 2002 national tests for pupils at the end of Year 6, the school's results were in line with the national average. Pupils had made good progress in relation to their attainment on entry. In 2002, the proportion of pupils attaining or exceeding the nationally expected standard in science was well above similar schools. Evidence from the work of pupils currently in Year 6 indicates that almost all are on course to achieve the standard that is normally expected of 11-year-old pupils. These findings reflect those at the time of the last inspection and are consistent with the most recent national tests.
80. Most pupils in Year 6 understand that scientific ideas are based on evidence and have the necessary skills to conduct simple investigations. For example, they take repeated measurements to support their conclusions about the growth of seedlings. Most know the importance of altering one variable in an investigation and keeping other aspects the same to make their tests reliable and fair. Pupils use scientific instruments well to improve the accuracy of their investigations, although some lower attaining pupils find this difficult, for example when measuring 170 millilitres of soil. Higher attaining pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of food types including a range of vitamins, proteins and fats. Most pupils have a sound knowledge of the place of the earth in space and of the nature of solids, liquids and gases. Some lower attaining pupils have less clear understanding of science terms, such as 'solution' and 'gas'. Most pupils know about a satisfactory range of physical processes including evaporation, sieving and filtration.
81. Teaching is good. As a result, pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, learn well and they make good progress in lessons. The numerous strengths in teaching include the following:
- teachers manage pupils very well and they have very positive relationships with them. As a result, pupils have good attitudes to their learning in science and their behaviour in lessons is exemplary. They work well together, sharing ideas and they are very respectful of teachers and one another. They listen well to their teachers and usually have good levels of concentration. This greatly improves the quality of their learning and makes a very good contribution to their personal development. Teachers expect pupils to do their best and to present their work with pride. As a result, pupils work very carefully and neatly;
 - teachers and some classroom assistants have good subject knowledge. They give clear explanations, for example of why bubbles are spherical in shape, and use questions well to develop pupils' learning. In this way, teachers encourage pupils to think analytically;
 - teachers use lesson summaries effectively to extend learning. Notably, the summary in one Year 4 lesson featured bulbs lighting up when pupils answered questions correctly. This imaginative strategy fostered good learning as well as pupils' positive attitudes;
 - teachers make effective links between science and other subjects. There are good opportunities for speaking and listening. When teachers give pupils opportunities to talk about what they have found out, their understanding develops well. Recording the results of scientific investigations as charts or graphs reinforces mathematical understanding, and projects in design and technology give pupils the chance to apply what they have learned about electrical circuits;

- teachers use resources well to motivate pupils and to focus their attention on key aspects of their work. In Year 6 for instance, fictional diets are used effectively to help pupils to look critically at different foods.
82. The main weakness in teaching is:
- teachers do not always cater sufficiently well for the needs of pupils of different levels of ability. Although their marking of pupils' work is sometimes helpful, for example in developing thinking about different materials, teachers do not always provide pupils with tasks that accurately match their needs. For example, their learning slows when teachers give pupils worksheets that they do not fully understand, such as those in a Year 3 lesson about the function of different plant parts.
83. The school's curriculum for science ensures thorough coverage of all elements of the National Curriculum and reflects recent national guidelines. Planning for science gives a good emphasis to teaching the skills of scientific investigation and makes a strong contribution to pupils' growing understanding of healthy living, for example by encouraging Year 6 pupils to look analytically at the values of different foods. The school's constructive links with a local secondary school result in pupils using good quality resources, for example when exploring electric circuits in Year 4.
84. Factors that currently restrict improvement in the school's arrangements for science and the standards that pupils achieve include:
- teachers do not always take enough account of the assessments of pupils' achievements in their planning. Although there are secure systems for measuring and recording pupils' attainments as they move through the school, the information that this system provides is not used rigorously to plan what they need to learn next;
 - the school does not have arrangements that enable the science co-ordinators to evaluate the work in science throughout the school. Notably, they have not yet observed teaching to identify its strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, they have limited knowledge of what is happening in Year 6, including progress towards the targets that have been set for these pupils. Current arrangements are unsatisfactory because they reduce the co-ordinators' effectiveness in managing the development of this subject so as to raise standards further.

ART AND DESIGN

85. Pupils throughout the school attain high standards in their work in art and design. Around the school, pupils' carefully mounted and displayed work shows a very good range of two- and three-dimensional work. By Year 6, pupils are familiar with a wide range of materials, tools and techniques used in art, craft and design. For example, they confidently use pencils, paint, pastels, charcoal, inks, fabric, recyclable materials and clay and are competent in drawing, painting, printing, weaving, modelling, collage and batik. They also learn to appreciate the work of other artists, in a range of styles and cultural traditions, and use this understanding very effectively as the starting point for their own original work.
86. By the time that pupils leave the school, their work in art and design is above the standard normally expected for their age. Pupils make good progress and attain high standards because the quality of teaching is good.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good and enables them to present topics in a very lively, confident manner and stimulate pupils' interest with well-selected resources. For example, in an effective lesson in Year 5, the teacher used striking pictures of ancient manuscripts to inspire her pupils. Pupils gasped in wonder when they saw their own initials in Celtic-style script and were highly motivated to produce careful copies and original interpretations.

- Teachers often plan art projects that link with topics in other subjects. Such links add relevance to pupils' work and give added purpose to their learning. For example, in work linked to literacy, Year 6 pupils produce high-quality, stylised portraits that evoke feelings such as sadness, loneliness and deprivation to illustrate their original poetry about refugees.
 - Teachers have very high expectations of pupils' response and of their capacity to cope with challenging projects. They communicate their expectations clearly and have the necessary skills to help pupils to succeed. As a result, pupils persevere with difficult tasks. They work with a meticulous care and attention to detail that improves the quality of their learning and the standard of their finished work. For example, pupils in Year 3 use shading and cross-hatching effectively to blend three colours subtly to create a background effect.
 - Teachers and classroom assistants boost pupils' confidence by responding very positively to their ideas and efforts. This ensures that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, are fully involved in art activities. As a result, these pupils readily apply themselves to art projects and make good progress alongside others in the class.
87. The curriculum in art and design is rich and stimulating. A very good range of educational visits, visitors, special events and well-organised projects, such as the production of large-scale panels to accompany drama presentations, reflect the school's strong focus on the expressive arts. They bring the subject to life and greatly enhance the basic curriculum by raising pupils' awareness and adding to their enthusiasm for art. Pupils' learning in art makes a valuable contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, pupils' appreciation of the beauty of the natural world effectively supports their spiritual development, as seen in Year 6's striking environmental art undertaken during a visit to Delamere Forest. Similarly, pupils' knowledge and understanding of the work of Western and non-western artists and craftspeople promotes their cultural development very effectively.
88. Pupils have ample opportunities to explore their ideas and develop their own designs. Year 6 pupils are confident and have the necessary skills to work independently. They are highly motivated to create original designs for their batik prints, working very co-operatively in small groups supported by a classroom assistant. This very effective use of small groups ensures that pupils have the 'quality' time that they need to develop and apply skills and to complete work to a high standard.
89. The co-ordinator for art provides good leadership and supports colleagues well. Planning for art has been improved and is now based on national guidelines. Consequently, pupils experience a varied, yet very systematic programme of activities that extends their understanding, skills and techniques as they move through the school. However, the school has only recently introduced arrangements for the assessment of pupils' progress. This means that teachers do not have the information they need to plan pupils' work on the basis of a clear understanding of what pupils have achieved and what they need to learn next. This is unsatisfactory. A very good range of resources is well organised in topic boxes to support teachers' planning and the presentation of their lessons.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

90. During the inspection, the school's timetable arrangements meant that it was not possible to inspect any design and technology lessons. Consequently, there is not enough evidence to make judgements about the quality of teaching and learning or about pupils' response to the subject. However, teachers' planning and examples of pupils' completed work indicate that all elements of the National Curriculum receive appropriate attention and that pupils attain satisfactory standards. As part of their project on musical instruments, pupils in Year 5 examine real instruments in order to find out how they work and to

generate ideas for their own models. Year 6 pupils make careful plans and design drawings before making their motorised vehicles. Plans include drawings of different elevations and the exact dimensions of the proposed vehicle. Pupils in Year 4 evaluate their purses, saying what works well and what could be improved. Throughout school, projects give pupils experience of a satisfactory range of materials and construction techniques.

91. The teachers responsible for managing and developing work in this subject have reorganised the topic cycle in the light of new national guidelines and have produced a detailed scheme of work which supports teachers' planning satisfactorily. They have developed effective links with a local technology college that provide pupils with access to resources and teacher expertise beyond that available in their own school. This link adds considerably to the quality of pupils' learning in design and technology. However, the subject co-ordinators are not as effective as they might be. The headteacher has recently introduced a long-term rolling programme for the monitoring of teaching and learning. However, there are currently no formal, on-going arrangements for the co-ordinators to monitor standards or to evaluate the quality of teachers' work in this subject. Therefore, co-ordinators do not have a clear view of what needs improving in their subject. This situation is unsatisfactory because it seriously restricts the impact of planning for the future development of the subject. Arrangements for assessing pupils' attainments in design and technology are also part of a very recent initiative. Consequently, teachers do not yet have the information that they need to plan for pupils on the basis of their prior attainment in the subject. This too is unsatisfactory. Pupils do not always make as much progress as they should because teachers do not know what they have already achieved and what they need to learn next.

GEOGRAPHY

92. Strengths:

- pupils make satisfactory progress and attain the standards normally expected for their age;
- teaching and learning are satisfactory;
- visits have a very positive impact on pupils' personal development;
- resources are good and used well to aid pupils' learning.

93. Weaknesses:

- teaching and learning are not monitored effectively enough.

94. Standards in Year 6 are similar to those found in most schools and this is the same as at the last inspection. Pupils know where they live and how and why Widnes has changed over the years. They compare their homes and way of life with other places, like Chester and a village in India. Educational visits to an outdoor centre give them an opportunity to study the countryside. They know about rivers and how they change the landscape and they are beginning to understand how sun, sea and altitude affect climate. Most pupils know how to use an atlas, its glossary and the key to maps, although lower attaining pupils' weaker literacy skills sometimes let them down.

95. Progress is satisfactory throughout the school. Those with special educational needs make sound progress because teachers are aware of their needs and prepare work that they can do comfortably. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress. They are learning the technical language for the first time and some of the concepts, such as climate regions, are very new, yet they have an understanding of them.

96. Lessons were only observed in Years 3 and 6 so there is insufficient evidence to evaluate the overall quality of teaching and learning. Teaching was satisfactory in the lessons seen. In both years, teachers used resources well to help pupils understand maps and climate. The Year 6 teachers made very good use of the Internet to show climates and

weather patterns and this helped pupils to appreciate the global picture. Pupils responded very positively, listened well and tried hard at their map work task. In Year 3, pupils again behaved very well and co-operated with the task, even though the map of the school was hard for many of them to understand. In both classes, the tasks involved colouring maps or plans and pupils gained little extra learning from doing them.

97. Management of the subject is satisfactory. All aspects of the National Curriculum are taught and there are good guidelines on the teaching of specific geography skills within each topic. The good range of educational visits offered by the school enhances pupils' learning and their personal development. The school's extensive resources add significantly to the impact of teaching. However, the timescales within the subject's improvement plan are too vague for it to be the basis for raising standards and the monitoring of teachers' planning and pupils' work lacks rigour. The recently introduced pupils' record will be useful in the future but current assessment procedures are unsatisfactory.

HISTORY

98. Strengths:

- the pupils' presentation of topic work is very good overall, and outstanding in Year 6;
- teaching in year groups seen during the inspection is good;
- plentiful resources of good quality are used well to enhance learning;
- displays are very effective in presenting pupils' work.

99. Weaknesses:

- teaching and learning are not monitored effectively enough.

100. The history topic in Year 6 will be taught in the summer term, so there were no history lessons in Year 6 to observe nor was there any current pupils' work to scrutinise. Thus, no judgement can be made about attainment and progress by the time pupils leave the school. From a few high quality examples of pupils' work available from last year, it is clear that the breadth of study is adequate, that pupils willingly complete significant parts of their topic for homework and that the presentation of their topics is of a very high standard.

101. Teaching and learning were observed in Years 4 and 5 and were good. Pupils greatly enjoyed their lessons. They were very interested in the Victorian photographs in Year 5 and, as a result, offered sensible suggestions as to what they could see. The teacher did not give pupils enough time to assimilate the 'census' information but even so, pupils tried hard to answer her questions. Pupils in Year 4 not only had fun but also learned a great deal about being a 'time detective' when they looked at bags of 'evidence' and tried to guess who it belonged to. The best teaching saw pupils go through a practice bag before being let loose on their own sample. Pupils learned to draw conclusions. One pupil rightly said, 'He's an away supporter', because the information included a football programme, match ticket and, crucially, directions to the ground. 'A home supporter would know where the ground is!' he said. Throughout the whole school the displays of pupils' work and historical objects that teachers mount are of a very high quality. They raise the profile of the subject and get pupils interested in history, even before they start their topics.

102. The management of the subject is satisfactory. There is good guidance to help teachers to plan and very good resources that enhance their teaching. The 'historical skills' document is very good and is already helping teachers to ensure that pupils are taught the appropriate skills. However, the monitoring of teachers' planning and pupils' work lacks rigour. As a result, the co-ordinators do not have an in-depth appreciation of standards or of the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. This is unsatisfactory because it slows the pace of development in the subject. Assessment procedures are at

an early stage of development and are currently unsatisfactory. The co-ordinator's file of pupils' work is a good start to assessment but each piece needs careful annotation before being of use to other teachers.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

103. By the time that they leave the school, pupils' attainments in information and communication technology are below the standard normally expected of 11-year-olds.

This is because:

- there are weaknesses in the way that teachers plan pupils' learning. For example, there are gaps in what is planned for pupils in some years. Notably there is no coherent planning for Year 6 pupils to ensure that they will develop the skills that they have begun to learn in previous years;
- although the school has arranged to borrow equipment from a local secondary school, teachers have not planned well enough for some of this to be incorporated systematically into pupils' learning. For example, throughout the school pupils have very few opportunities to programme robots on the floor and on screen or to experience other aspects of control technology. As a result, Year 6 pupils have poor skills in this aspect of the subject;
- there are weakness in the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in this subject. Although the school is aware that the subject needs to be improved, the co-ordinators have not been able to gain a sufficiently clear view of how the weaknesses in planning affect pupils' attainments. Notably, they have not yet observed teaching to find out what impact the planning has. Similarly the co-ordinators have not yet reached a clear view of pupils' achievements. This restricts their capacity to lead improvements to the subject, despite it being a priority in the school's improvement plan;
- as at the time of the last inspection, teachers' use of assessment information is unsatisfactory. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and evaluating their progress have only just been introduced. Teachers, therefore, have too little information about what individual pupils can and cannot do to be of use in planning their future learning.

104. Because of these weaknesses, pupils do not make enough progress as they move through the school. In Year 4, for example, pupils are slow when using the keyboard and mouse to edit text. Year 5 pupils do not develop the necessary skills to work independently when combining pictures and text. In Year 6, many pupils learn to combine text and pictures well, though this does not include sound. Most pupils have poor skills in using programmable devices that make things happen in predetermined ways, such as lighting bulbs up in a sequence. This is because they have had too few opportunities to develop these skills. Pupils in Year 6 have recently begun to send e-mails and this has begun to address their limited achievements in communication skills. Because many pupils have had little regular access to the Internet and to CD ROMs, their research skills are relatively weak. Higher attaining pupils know about on-line banking, but most pupils do not have a good understanding of the range of ways information and communication technology is used in the world beyond the school.

105. Too little teaching of information and communication technology was seen during the inspection to judge its quality throughout the school. In the lessons seen, however, there were no weaknesses that might contribute to the current lower-than-expected standards of attainment. This reinforces the view that current problems stem from inadequate planning and monitoring rather than unsatisfactory teaching. Effective features in the teaching observed were the teachers' very good relationships with pupils, their clear explanations and their lively manner. Teaching in Year 4 makes good use of higher attaining pupils to support pupils who are less confident and skilled. Pupils' recorded work shows that teachers make some use of information and communication technology to support learning in other subjects. For example, pupils in Year 4 use equipment to sense temperature and to record their findings on printed line-graphs as part of their work in science. There are also numerous examples of pupils using ICT to present written work to a high standard, as

when pupils in Year 5 use italic fonts to record their Town Crier's messages. However, these isolated examples of genuinely good practice do not amount to a coherent programme, with a clear and systematic focus on the development of key skills. This is why standards remain relatively low. The school is wisely seeking to extend the subject's use to a wider range of subjects.

106. Pupils show very good attitudes to ICT. They are keen to use computers and do so safely and very sensibly. They concentrate well on teachers' explanations and they behave very well. They co-operate to support each other's learning and persevere even when they are at first unsuccessful.

MUSIC

107. Pupils have weekly music lessons and there is a fortnightly hymn practice for the whole school, both of which are planned and taught by the music co-ordinator. Although observations were limited to one lesson and pupils singing in assembly, it is evident that pupils attain high standards in singing by the time that they leave the school. However, there was insufficient further evidence available to determine overall standards in music or the quality of teaching and learning.
108. Pupils have regular, planned opportunities to sing, play musical instruments, perform, listen and respond to music. They enjoy music lessons and are keen to talk about musical events in which they have been involved. The co-ordinator and staff ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, have every opportunity to take part in musical activities, including instrumental tuition. Pupils for whom English is an additional language participate actively alongside the other pupils. The co-ordinator plans activities for class teachers to use with their classes following their music lessons. These include creating and developing musical ideas in simple compositions. However, these plans are not always used. This limits the opportunities pupils have to develop their composing skills.
109. Pupils know a wide range of songs and hymns. They control their voices well and sing tunefully and expressively in assembly. Introducing the theme of the observed lesson with Years 5 and 6, the teacher played a current 'pop' song, which successfully engaged pupils' interest. They listened attentively and followed instructions well. As a result of such a well-planned approach, pupils make very good progress in learning to sing in four-part harmony. The co-ordinator has very good subject knowledge. His approach is lively and his ready praise and patience promotes pupils' confidence. He motivates pupils' involvement very successfully. They behave very well and say that they find music 'fun'.
110. However, arrangements for assessing pupils' progress are unsatisfactory. As six classes have their music lesson together, the teacher has very little opportunity to gain an accurate picture of each pupil's level of competence in the subject. This means that he cannot 'fine tune' planning of lessons to the needs of individual pupils. In the observed lesson, all pupils are given similar tasks, with no reference to their individual skills and experience. This limits pupils' progress.
111. The experienced co-ordinator works energetically to ensure that musical activities are an enjoyable element of school life. However, he has no opportunities to monitor teaching and to evaluate aspects of pupils' learning throughout the school. This reduces his capacity to build on the strengths and to rectify areas of weakness that exist in the current arrangements. There is a good range of well-maintained resources that are used frequently. Plans are in hand to further extend the range of keyboards to facilitate pupils' use of information and communication technology to change and combine sounds.

112. During the year, pupils take part in a good range of musical events including assemblies, Christmas productions and Harvest and Easter services, to which parents are invited. These occasions enable pupils to gain experience of performing for a range of audiences and give opportunities for their efforts and achievements to be celebrated. Pupils also have opportunities to learn to play recorder, ocarina and brass instruments. These activities successfully promote the skills of those involved. Pupils successfully extend their knowledge of a good range of composers and their work by listening to recorded music as they enter assembly. Their repertoire of songs includes those from different parts of the world. From time to time, groups learn songs that link well with their work in history, such as Second World War songs. Consequently, music makes a very strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

113. By the end of Year 6, pupils reach the expected standards in all aspects of the physical education curriculum that were seen during the inspection. However, the work in dance produced by pupils in Year 6 was well above the standard normally expected of pupils of this age. Inspection evidence and teachers' planning for physical education indicate that all elements of the National Curriculum receive satisfactory attention. The arrangements for outdoor and adventurous activities are better than in many schools. All pupils have the opportunity to attend two residential visits as well as participating in related activities on the school site. Pupils of all levels of attainment make sound progress in the areas covered. Pupils with learning, physical and behavioural difficulties receive effective support that enables them to take a full part in most physical education lessons, experience success and make satisfactory progress.
114. Pupils in Year 3 know how to exercise safely. They explore basic skills and actions confidently. They balance on different parts of the body and effectively combine travelling and balancing actions. Pupils in Year 4 select suitable jumps to combine into simple gymnastic sequences, although some of their movements lack co-ordination and control. By Year 5, pupils' movements are becoming more refined. They choose their own jumping and rolling actions to exemplify the theme of flight. By Years 6, pupils move very expressively in response to music. They control and co-ordinate their movements very well, altering the rhythm, speed and level of their movements in response to music and sound effects. Their movements are very confident, sensitive and refined. Pupils know the importance of warming up before exercise and perform routines carefully to exercise different parts of their bodies. They combine movements into more complex sequences, which they practise, refine and perform with a very good degree of accuracy, precision and control. They evaluate their own work and the work of others in order to improve the quality of their finished work. All pupils have the opportunity to learn to swim and most reach the expected standard by the time that they leave the school. There are regular sessions outside of lessons that give pupils the chance to participate in coaching and competitive sports. These activities are well attended and give those who are interested or who have particular abilities the opportunity to build on the standards that they achieve.
115. The quality of teaching and of pupils' learning is satisfactory. Most teachers have secure subject knowledge. Their planning is usually sound because it identifies suitable objectives. However, procedures for assessing and recording pupils' attainments in physical education have only just been introduced. Consequently, most planning is based on examples from a commercial scheme and levels from the National Curriculum, rather than on what pupils know, understand and can do. Teachers who are less confident occasionally fail to adapt lessons from the commercial scheme of work to take account of the needs of the group or to other constraints, such as the time available. When this happens, teaching and learning are not as effective as they might be. Teachers give clear explanations and instructions and they monitor pupils' response carefully. When monitoring and instruction combine to create a focus on improving the quality of pupils'

work, as for example in an extremely effective dance lesson in Year 6, they give a clear focus to teaching and learning that improves pupils' progress enormously. All teachers have successfully established very positive patterns of behaviour and response and they use an appropriate balance of praise and challenge. This quality of pupils' response allows lessons to flow, keeps pupils active and involved and effectively maintains the pace of their learning.

116. The headteacher has just introduced arrangements to enable co-ordinators to check on standards and on other aspects of the work in their subjects. The co-ordinator will be given time to have an in-depth look at the work in physical education as part of a rolling programme covering all subjects. However, this is not due to happen for some considerable time and meanwhile the co-ordinator relies on informal contact with colleagues and irregular 'snapshots' of what is going on. This situation is unsatisfactory because it seriously restricts the impact of the co-ordinator's planning for the immediate development of the subject.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

117. The attainment of pupils in Year 6 meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. All pupils make sound progress. This reflects the judgements at the last inspection. Pupils gain good insights into the major world religions as they move through the school. In Year 3 they make Diwali lamps, for example, and they come to understand their significance by studying the Hindu story of Rama and Sita. By the end of Year 6, pupils also know about important aspects of Islam. They understand the role of mosques in Muslim communities and the place of the Qu'ran in the everyday life of followers of Islam. Higher attaining pupils have a good knowledge of other religions and describe, for example, how Buddhists sometimes give up their possessions because of their beliefs. Most Year 6 pupils have a sound understanding of what worship is, though not all lower-attaining pupils have a clear grasp of the differences between Christian and Muslim worship. Pupils know about Christian symbols including the cross, candles and wine and what each represents. They know about the significant events in the lives of Christ and Buddha and they are familiar with a range of texts that are sacred to other religions.
118. The subject makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development because:
- teachers value pupils' ideas and questions;
 - they very effectively encourage pupils to respect the values and beliefs of others, such as the esteem in which they hold sacred writings;
 - they provide time for pupils to reflect on important issues, such as those in the Parable of the Pearl. This thoughtful approach leads pupils to express original ideas about their own thoughts and feelings.
119. The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is good. Teachers have very good relationships with their pupils that help to create a calm and reflective atmosphere in lessons. They have good subject knowledge and this enables them to explain things clearly and accurately in a way that helps pupils to understand. They are patient with pupils with special educational needs and careful to include them fully in discussions and other activities. This level of care ensures that pupils with special educational needs succeed and make good progress alongside others in the class. Teachers in general, and the co-ordinator in particular, are good at conveying the 'special' nature of aspects of religion, such as the sacredness of the Bible and other texts. They do this by talking in a quiet and respectful way that grasps and retains pupils' attention. Teachers use homework well to support pupils' learning in lessons. For example, Year 6 pupils collect meaningful 'sayings' that form a good basis for future learning about the stories that Jesus told. Occasionally, the tasks that teachers set do not extend pupils' learning as well as they could. For example, the requirement for Year 5 pupils to rewrite Proverbs from the

Bible does not develop their skills, knowledge or understanding as well as other tasks might.

120. Because of the strengths in teaching, pupils have very good attitudes to religious education. They behave very well and are sensible and responsible. When teachers value what they say, pupils confidently raise questions, for example about 'family' Bibles. A particularly strong feature of pupils' work in religious education is the pride with which pupils in all year groups present their work. This is most significant in Year 6 and it echoes all teachers' high expectations and the respect that they accord to this subject.
121. Arrangements have not yet enabled the subject co-ordinator to observe teaching and learning first hand. As a result, she does not have a comprehensive knowledge of what is working well and what can be done to develop the subject further. In common with most other subjects, assessment arrangements are very new and are not yet providing teachers with the information that they need to plan effectively for pupils of differing abilities.