

INSPECTION REPORT

HALLWOOD PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL and NURSERY

Runcorn

LEA area: Halton

Unique reference number: 111210

Headteacher: Mrs Carole Howard

Reporting inspector: Rob Crompton
7230

Dates of inspection: 6th – 9th May 2003

Inspection number: 247093

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Hallwood Park Avenue Hallwood Park Runcorn
Postcode:	WA7 2FL
Telephone number:	01928 716336
Fax number:	01928 714315
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Colin Keen
Date of previous inspection:	17 th November 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
7230	Rob Crompton	Registered inspector	The Foundation Stage Science Information and communication technology Music English as an additional language	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? <i>The school's results and achievements</i> How well are pupils taught?
19436	Michael O'Malley	Lay inspector	Educational inclusion	How high are standards? <i>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</i> How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
21142	Pat McGraw	Team inspector	Special educational needs English Geography History Religious education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
32249	Nigel Grimshaw	Team inspector	Mathematics Art and design Design and technology Physical education	How well is the school led and managed?

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Leicestershire County Council
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County Hall
Glenfield
Leicester
LE3 8RF

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is smaller than other primary schools nationally, with 176 boys and girls aged from three to eleven. Twenty-eight children attend the nursery on a part-time basis. Pupils mainly live locally. The level of pupil mobility has been very high because the area around the school was completely redeveloped over the last ten years. As children enter the nursery, most have poor social skills, their language is under-developed and they have a very limited knowledge of life outside their immediate home environment. Across the school, about half the pupils have special educational needs, most of whom have learning difficulties. This is more than twice the national average. One pupil has a statement of special educational need, which is a little lower than the national average. All pupils have a White British background. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals (64 per cent) is well above average. The school is part of the Halton Educational Action Zone¹ (EAZ).

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school where children thrive. It successfully provides for all pupils. They make good progress through the school because the teaching is good. Standards are improving, although attainment in English and science by Year 6 is below average. Pupils benefit greatly from the care taken to ensure that they have the best possible chances to succeed. They know that they are valued and they rise to the high expectations of learning and behaviour. Relationships are excellent. The head teacher provides very strong leadership and a clear direction for staff and pupils. Governors carry out their responsibilities well. There is a strong sense of community and team spirit. All involved in the school have a high level of commitment to raising standards. Parents appreciate all that is done to support their children and they hold the school in very high regard. It gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- The head teacher provides very good leadership and inspires staff and pupils to strive for success.
- Good teaching means that pupils progress well.
- Learning support assistants make a very valuable contribution to pupils' learning.
- Excellent relationships and highly effective provision for personal development make a strong contribution to pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour.
- The rich curriculum, together with wide range of extra-curricular activities, extend pupils' experiences and enhances their learning.
- The school takes great care to ensure that pupils feel valued and that they have equal opportunities to succeed.
- Pupils' progress and personal development is closely monitored so that their individual needs can be met.
- Priorities for development are clear and very effective action is taken to achieve them.

What could be improved

- The standards attained by eleven-year-olds in English and science.
- The role of co-ordinators in improving standards.

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

¹ Educational Action Zones are set up to support schools in areas of social deprivation in raising standards.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

There has been good improvement since the school was previously inspected in November 1997. Standards have risen significantly. Teaching has improved and the curriculum is better organised. Minor omissions from governors' statutory documents have been addressed. The school is well placed to improve further.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	D	E	E	D
mathematics	E	E	E	D
science	E	E	E	D

Key

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

As children enter the school, most have limited social skills. Their level of literacy and numeracy skills is well below that usually achieved by most children of a similar age. They have little knowledge of the world outside the home and their physical and creative development is weak. Due to consistently good teaching, most children make good progress. In particular, they are settled into school life and are enthusiastic about learning by the end of reception. Although their language and creative skills, and knowledge and understanding of the world are still below the level expected by the end of reception, most have sound numeracy skills. Their social and physical development is sound.

As the table shows, the standards achieved by eleven-year-olds have been well below national averages in recent years. The picture is more positive when results are compared to those of similar schools. The school has a high proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals and a high level of pupil turnover. Letter grades should be treated with caution, as the number of Year 6 pupils in 2002 was very small. If one or two had scored a little more highly the grades would have all been B, indicating above average performance. The inspection found that standards are gradually improving and most pupils are making good progress and reaching their potential. In mathematics, for example, pupils are achieving in line with the national average. In English and science, too few pupils in Year 6 are working at the level needed to achieve average results but most are doing as well as they can. In subjects which are less reliant on literacy skills, pupils do better, achieving good standards in art and design, design and technology, geography and physical education. Attainment in information and communication technology (ICT), history, music and religious education is in line with the national expectations for eleven-year-olds.

Test results of seven-year-olds in reading, writing and mathematics have been well below average in recent years. Attainment has improved significantly in these key subjects and standards are broadly as expected at this age. Pupils achieve good standards in physical education and reach the expected levels in all other subjects.

Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards their individual targets. Gifted and talented pupils also make good progress.

Careful tracking of pupils' progress enables the school to set targets for eleven-year-olds. These vary from year to year but do contain an appropriate element of challenge. Pupils are on course to meet the targets.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils enjoy learning and have very good attitudes to school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils behave very well in lessons, around the school and when on educational visits.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between pupils and staff are excellent and pupils get on very well with one another. The school is a harmonious community where the atmosphere is relaxed but purposeful. Pupils' personal development is good.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory. Punctuality is good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Consistently successful teaching across the school is the main reason that pupils make good progress. Teachers have excellent relationships with pupils. Their enthusiasm is picked up by the pupils who try their best to succeed. Teachers plan lessons very well so that work is set at the right level. They take imaginative approaches and adopt a brisk pace. Teachers and pupils are very well supported by the dedicated and skilful learning assistants. The assistants use their initiative and take care to establish the main points that teachers want to get across. This means that pupils often benefit from small teaching groups where they can share their uncertainties and receive immediate help. Pupils with special educational needs and higher attaining pupils particularly gain from the good adult/pupil ratio and make the same good progress as other pupils.

A strong feature of pupils' learning is their understanding of how they are doing and what they need to learn next. This is made clear during lessons and is reinforced effectively on an individual level. Pupils value the time that teachers spend with them to set and review their personal targets regularly through the year.

Literacy and numeracy skills are taught well. Teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to practise these skills in a range of subjects. This is a significant factor in the progress made. What pupils lack in literacy skills is to some extent made up by their developing level of independence. They will usually have a go. They are secure in the knowledge that teachers encourage them to try things out and not to worry about making mistakes.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. Pupils benefit from a rich curriculum. A wide range of activities support pupils' learning and personal development.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Staff work hard to include pupils with special educational needs in all aspects of school life. They receive good support and progress well.
Provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. There are many opportunities for pupils to explore their own and others' ideas, to develop a sense of right and wrong and to work constructively with others. Racial equality is promoted well.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares very well for all pupils and gives them very good support and guidance. Assessment systems are very effective in identifying and recording how pupils are doing and in monitoring their personal development. They are used well to set work at appropriate levels. Attendance is monitored satisfactorily.

The school has a good partnership with parents that helps to support children's learning. Parents are encouraged to raise concerns and keep the school informed about their children. Consultation evenings are well attended. Parents encourage their children to take part in activities after school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher gives clear leadership. She is well supported by the deputy and senior management team. Management by subject coordinators is good but their leadership role in promoting high standards needs more emphasis.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are enthusiastic, supportive and involved. They recognise the school's strengths and areas for development.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Assessment information is analysed carefully in order to identify strengths and where improvements could be made.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Teachers and learning assistants are deployed very effectively. Long term financial planning is sound.

Staffing levels are very good. Teachers and learning support assistants have a broad range of expertise and experience. Accommodation is very good and all available space is used effectively. Learning resources are satisfactory overall but there are some shortages in the class and school libraries and in the nursery and reception classes. The school seeks best value effectively when making decisions about spending.

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 teaching is good• The school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best• Their children are making good progress• They feel comfortable approaching the school with questions or problems	Parents are happy with all aspects of the school's work.

The inspection confirmed parents' positive views.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. When children start school, their attainment is much lower than usually found at this age. As a result of the effective provision in the Foundation Stage², most children make good progress. Although their literacy and creative skills are still below the level expected at the end of the reception year and their knowledge and understanding of the world remains weak, most children meet the early learning goals³ in other areas. They have appropriate social skills, a sound grasp of early mathematical ideas and their physical development is broadly as expected. A small number – about five or six children - exceed the goals in most areas.
2. Although the previous inspection judged standards to be broadly average, since then, the results of national tests for seven and eleven-year-old pupils have been well below average in almost all aspects of English, mathematics and science. Standards in reading and mathematics at the end of Year 2 have been particularly low, with pupils being about a year behind those in other schools nationally. However, over the last four years, results have improved at least in line with the national trend. This is a considerable achievement, given the circumstances in which the school works. The level of pupil mobility is very high and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is also very high at 64 per cent. Over half of the pupils have special educational needs. When these factors are taken into account, the picture is far more positive. The inspection team found that, due to the hard work of teachers and the considerable efforts of pupils, most pupils do as well as they can.
3. Results in the 2002 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, when compared to those of similar schools, are encouraging. Reading was above average and writing and mathematics were well above average. The number achieving higher levels was average in reading, above average in writing but well below average in science. The inspection found that attainment of the current Year 2 pupils in these three subjects was average, indicating that the school is on course to do better than most similar schools in this year's tests.
4. Before 2002, the results of eleven-year-olds were rising. The decline last year is explained by the small number of pupils and the absence from the test of pupils who were expected to achieve well. A more accurate picture of the school's performance is the steep rise in results in mathematics and science over four years. These show that pupils recently were over a year ahead of those taking the tests four years ago. Improvement in English is less marked, although there is an upward trend. The inspection team found that pupils are making good progress. Although attainment in the current Year 6 class is below average overall in English and science, individual pupils – including those with special educational needs and higher attaining pupils - are mostly doing as well as they can because of consistently good teaching. In mathematics, pupils are making particularly good progress and most are achieving the expected levels. Looking at attainment in other year groups, with the exception of English, standards are broadly in line with national expectations – a considerable achievement considering the generally low levels of attainment as children start school.

² The Foundation Stage is from the child's third birthday to the end of the reception year.

³ The early learning goals set out the level of attainment expected in six areas of learning: personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical and creative development.

5. Pupils' literacy and skills reflect the below average standards in English but much has been done to improve teaching in these areas and pupils are making good progress. Pupils have satisfactory numeracy skills and use these increasingly well in other curriculum areas.
6. Eleven-year-olds achieve good standards in art and design, design and technology, geography and physical education – subjects that have significant practical elements and are less dependent on literacy skills. Attainment in all other subjects is broadly in line with expectations. There are no significant differences in the standards achieved by boys and girls. Seven-year-olds reach average standards in all subjects, except physical education, in which pupils do better than expected for their age.
7. Pupils with special educational needs generally make good progress. Progress is best when teachers match work closely to pupils' individual targets and monitor how well they succeed in meeting these. Learning assistants support pupils very well in class. They help them to play a full part in oral lessons and to make progress in their individual work. Progress is slower when individual education plans do not give enough detail for teachers to plan sufficiently small steps or when work is not matched to pupils' individual needs
8. High attaining pupils make good progress and, by the age of eleven, demonstrate particularly good literacy skills. They make good progress and benefit from the brisk pace of teaching, particularly in the Year 5/6 class. Teachers and learning support assistants provide challenging work which meets their needs and promotes high levels of questioning which allows pupils to reason and suggest alternatives. In Years 1 and 2, there are few high attainers. This is because pupils' starting points are very low. By the age of seven, these pupils achieve average or just above average levels.
9. With the assistance of the local education authority, the school sets targets for eleven-year-olds in English and mathematics. These vary from year to year but current targets are appropriate; they are based on pupils' previous attainment and include a suitable element of challenge. The quality of teaching and the positive attitudes of pupils suggest that the targets will be met or exceeded.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Pupils enjoy learning and have very good attitudes to school. They behave very well in lessons and around the school; their personal development is very good and there are excellent relationships between pupils and staff. The high standards noted at the previous inspection have improved further and this helps pupils learn well.
11. Pupils are very keen to come to school and many take part in extra activities, such as football, aerobics, and the computer club. They are very willing to learn and respond well to good teaching. For example, in a Year 1 mathematics lesson, the pupils were fully absorbed and keen to contribute to discussions about symmetry. In science, Year 2 pupils were enthralled by the growth of seeds. Pupils are keen to ask and answer questions. They listen attentively and get on with the tasks set. Pupils work hard and are keen to improve. When one boy was asked why he liked school, he said, 'I like the work.'

12. Pupils behave very well in lessons and this makes for a calm learning atmosphere. They behave very well in the dining room and playground. They are friendly and polite. They know what standard of behaviour is expected and respond well. Pupils take good care of equipment especially when working on computers. They handle books with care and tidy away neatly and quickly at the end of lessons. There is no racism and bullying is rare. Any incidents are quickly and effectively addressed.
13. Relationships are excellent. Pupils respect one another's views, and share ideas. They readily cooperate. For example, in a Year 2 physical education lesson, the pupils were improving their football skills. They worked well in pairs and groups, encouraging and praising each other for good performance. Pupils are well mannered and considerate. They respect the teachers and are keen to please.
14. Pupils' personal development is very good. They grow in confidence in response to the praise and encouragement they receive. They settle to both group and independent work quickly. Pupils are sensitive to the needs of others and they are aware of their impact on others. For example, in Year 6 the pupils keep a book about themselves titled 'No-body's perfect'. Pupils respect differences. For example, Year 1 pupils were studying the Hindu story of Rama and Sita. They were interested, thoughtful, and praised each other for their contributions. Pupils have mature attitudes. For example, a Year 6 pupil explained to one of the inspectors, 'History isn't my favourite subject but I work hard at it because I know it will be useful to me in the future.'
15. The older pupils help responsibly with the daily routines such as collecting computer tokens or helping in the office. As play leaders they take responsibility for other pupils, and they support reading and writing with the younger pupils. Younger pupils take responsibility as classroom helpers and clearing away equipment. Pupils in the nursery and reception develop independence through choosing activities and making up their own games. The school council gives pupils a say in what happens in school.
16. Attendance is satisfactory. Punctuality is good, so registration and lessons start promptly.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

17. Consistently effective teaching is the main reason why pupils' progress is good and accelerating. Three quarters of lessons observed were good and a third very good or excellent. There was no teaching that was less than satisfactory. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. Throughout the school, teachers forge very good relationships with pupils. This means that most pupils usually try their best to earn their teachers' approval.
18. Nursery and reception staff provide a stimulating learning environment that appeals to young children. They have a very good understanding of how young children learn. All staff have high expectations for learning and children respond positively to these. They engage children in conversations as frequently as possible to encourage their language development and to find out their level of knowledge and understanding. There is a good balance between adult led activities with specific outcomes in mind and those that children choose themselves. Less confident children are very well supported and the few higher attainers are guided through activities that offer a good level of challenge. Detailed planning sets out the tasks for each group, and often for individual children, ensuring that all have opportunities to build on their existing knowledge, understanding and skills. As a

result of the good teaching, children progress well and are well prepared for further learning in Year 1.

19. Lessons in Years 1 and 2 are well structured. Teachers are clear about what they want pupils to learn. They frequently share this with them at the beginning of lessons and review it in summary sessions at the end. Skilful questioning encourages pupils to contribute ideas without the worry of getting things 'wrong'. In offering suggestions and talking them through, pupils' understanding grows. Teachers' clear explanations enable pupils to settle down quickly to work and help to maintain the good pace of learning in most lessons. Imaginative approaches, such as the 'Number Bond Pond' in Year 1, often captivate pupils. Practical activities, such as growing seeds in Year 2, feature strongly and enhance learning.
20. Teachers in Years 3 to 6 are very good at managing behaviour and channelling pupils' energies into worthwhile activities. In some lessons, the teacher's own enthusiasm drives things along. This was most notable in English, mathematics and physical education. Year 3 pupils were very keen to follow-up their residential visit because the teacher motivated them so well. In the Year 5/6 class, the teacher turned potentially uninspiring revision tasks into an excellent lesson by challenging and chivvying pupils, giving them confidence in their own abilities. Pupils are encouraged to 'think aloud' in mathematics; this helps teachers to identify strengths or gaps in their understanding and allows pupils to learn by 'eavesdropping' on discussions. Sometimes teachers provide an effective 'running commentary', as in a highly effective games lesson with Year 6 pupils, when the teacher continuously reinforced learning as pupils practised hockey skills. A strong emphasis is put on developing the appropriate vocabulary in subjects such as science and physical education. Key words relating to particular subjects or topics are often displayed prominently in classrooms.
21. Teachers successfully encourage pupils to take increasing responsibility for their own learning as they move through the school. Pupils are aware of their individual targets and the progress they are making. They work well, thinking through problems for themselves during investigations in mathematics, science and ICT. They work cooperatively with a good level of independence. For example, Year 6 pupils worked very well in pairs and groups researching the Internet and preparing presentations about different countries.
22. The key skills of literacy and numeracy are well taught. Lessons are planned carefully so that ideas and skills are introduced progressively through the school. Teachers have a good knowledge of English and mathematics, which enables them to anticipate pupils' difficulties and misconceptions, and to plan accordingly. Learning support assistants make a very good contribution to many literacy and numeracy sessions, enabling classes to be taught in small groups. Work in most lessons takes account of pupils' prior attainment. Teachers set homework regularly and pupils complete it because they see the benefit of doing so.
23. Teaching in all subjects is at least satisfactory and good in most. Strengths in teaching across this range of subjects mean that pupils respond positively in most lessons and make good progress. Very good teaching was observed at least once in all year groups.
24. The school's determination to enable all pupils to do as well as possible is reflected in the care taken to ensure that boys and girls with different levels of prior attainment are equally supported. It is most successful in this aim, with most pupils doing as well as they can. The quality of teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Where it is most effective, pupils are challenged and supported in order to meet their specific needs. Consequently, they make good progress. Higher attaining pupils are

supported well. They are given suitably challenging work and good opportunities to develop independent study skills.

25. There are no significant weaknesses in the teaching but some lessons could be improved. For example, teachers could ask more questions that are open-ended in order to draw more effectively on pupils' existing understanding. Occasionally pupils are unsure about what they have to do because this is not explained clearly enough. The arrangement of desks in Years 4, 5 and 6 sometimes restricts co-operative work and the opportunities for staff to focus attention on small groups of pupils. As a result of these minor weaknesses, pupils occasionally do not make the good progress that is generally evident in lessons.

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

26. The school provides a very rich and varied curriculum which meets all statutory requirements. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection when there were weaknesses in history, geography and religious education. Very good cross-curricular links and frequent first hand experiences through visits, give considerable coherence and relevance to pupils' work.
27. The school takes every opportunity to include all pupils fully in its curriculum provision and all aspects of school life. There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs. Problems are identified early and extra support is organised to help them make good progress. Teaching takes account of pupils' preferred learning styles and helps them address obstacles to their learning. Additional help is given to families where necessary to help them support their children's learning. Higher attaining pupils are well supported as they are set appropriately challenging work.
28. Children in the nursery and reception classes enjoy a broad and balanced curriculum which is taught well. The school encourages children to have a very positive attitude to learning from an early age and this permeates all areas of the curriculum. The school has successfully integrated the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy into planning across other subjects. This enlivens pupils' interest and motivation. Speaking and listening, reading, writing and number work are emphasised and parents are encouraged to play an active role in the learning. The school's strategies for supporting parents, such as borrowing books in the nursery and reception classes, are helping to improve pupils' skills in reading.
29. Planning takes account of the different ways in which pupils learn and encourages pupils to make the most of all learning opportunities. Computers are in constant use. Residential visits contribute greatly to learning and personal development. Pupils practise and develop their enquiry skills and gain good knowledge of places in Britain, some of which are very different from Runcorn. The school has received two national achievement awards, for improvement in English and mathematics and has been awarded a 'gold mark' for physical education.
30. Extra curricular provision is very good and well attended. Examples of clubs, other than sport which currently operate include computers, board games, art and craft, and homework. An aerobics class runs weekly for pupils, parents and staff. A teacher from the high school teaches French to Year 6 pupils on a weekly basis. These additional activities contribute significantly to pupils' self-esteem and expectations of themselves.

31. Provision for pupils' personal development is very good and makes a significant contribution to their progress. Good personal, social and health education promotes a healthy lifestyle – for example, drinking water and eating fruit – and it helps to develop pupils' self esteem.
32. Assemblies and religious education lessons make a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual development. Teachers cherish pupils' sense of wonder and are skilful at using pupils' curiosity to make learning fascinating. A good example of this was when Year 1 pupils were observing and smelling herbs. As they tried to guess what each one was, they touched the soft, smooth fronds and their faces lit with delight. Teachers show that they value pupils' ideas and feelings by listening closely to them and praising their efforts. A good example of this was the whole school assembly when pupils were awarded certificates. Pupils sat with rapt attention as the various achievements from each class were celebrated.
33. The school promotes a very good understanding of right and wrong. All adults have high expectations of pupil behaviour and they respond very well. Teachers and assistants are good role models and help pupils to develop a sense of fairness and justice. They encourage pupils to cooperate by varying the make up of groups so that pupils learn to cooperate with different personalities and abilities. Most classes have a 'problems pot', where pupils write any problems they have. These are discussed and quickly resolved. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and to care for younger members of the school. Year 6 pupils are trained as play-leaders to support younger children at breaktimes. Teachers take every opportunity to emphasise the school's clear moral and social code.
34. The school makes very good provision for pupils to study a range of cultures. Festivals are regularly celebrated. Commonwealth Day provided a good opportunity for pupils to investigate different lifestyles and try out national costumes. Racial equality is promoted well. Pupils learn about their own culture and explore others through visits, events and visitors. For example, younger pupils visited the local church and a visitor from Ghana worked with all pupils to act out a traditional African story.
35. The school builds effective links with the community. Local businesses support the school financially and visits by dentists, road safety officers, police and the school nurse make an important contribution to safety education and community support. Liaison with high schools is good and has improved considerably since the start of the Educational Action Zone. Pastoral and curriculum links ensure that pupils are confident to move to their chosen school. Teachers benefit from regular contact with schools facing similar challenges.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

36. The school cares very well for its pupils and has maintained the high standards noted at the previous inspection. The staff know the pupils very well and provide a caring atmosphere that contributes greatly towards their learning. Pupils' confidence and self-esteem are promoted through excellent relationships and every aspect of school life.
37. The school is working towards the Healthy Schools Standard and has achieved awards for 'healthy tasty tuck' and the 'sports mark'. There are satisfactory arrangements for child protection, but there has been no recent training for staff. There are good procedures for health and safety. The school regularly checks the premises for hazards, and makes improvements where necessary. First aid coverage is good and staff are aware of those pupils with medical conditions.

38. The procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are satisfactory. All unexplained absence is followed up, including telephone calls on the first day of absence. There are effective procedures for monitoring and improving punctuality. The school reminds parents about the importance of good attendance and punctuality. Good attendance is rewarded with certificates and unsatisfactory attendance is followed up. The procedures for promoting good attendance could be improved further by giving a higher profile to attendance, discouraging term time holidays more vigorously, and systematically using the computer data to keep teachers and governors better informed of trends.
39. Effective measures monitor and promote good behaviour and personal development. Staff expect high standards and reinforce good behaviour by consistently recognising and encouraging it. Pupils know what is expected. There is good supervision at break and lunch-time, and the lunchtime supervisors have received training and guidance on managing behaviour. Parents are kept well informed about the behaviour policy and the school is quick to involve them when there are problems. The school is very effective in promoting good relationships.
40. Assessment and recording systems are very good and have improved significantly since the last inspection. Teachers keep detailed day-to-day records and assess pupils' progress systematically at the end of each unit of work. Different coloured highlights are used well to indicate what pupils have learned each year. This builds up an easily accessible, cumulative record which is passed from teacher to teacher. The system is used effectively in all subjects except religious education where assessment procedures are not sufficient to track progress and spot gaps in pupils' learning.
41. An annual schedule provides a clear picture of assessment procedures for all staff and governors. The school has a wealth of data from a range of sources, including national tests, standardised tests used in Years 3, 4 and 5, and teacher assessments. This is put to good use in monitoring performance and setting year group targets. Teachers use assessment information to arrange grouping in subjects such as English and mathematics so that pupils can be set work at the right level. A strong feature is the increasing use of information technology in analysing data to identify strengths and weaknesses in pupils' performance and to present findings in a readily accessible form, such as a table or bar chart.
42. Pupils with special educational needs are given good support. Their needs are assessed effectively and their progress is monitored closely. They are given work and support to help them improve. This builds their confidence and helps them make good progress. For a minority of pupils, targets in their individual education plans are not sufficiently sharp for the outcomes to be easily measurable when progress is reviewed. Where assessment information shows that pupils have particular gifts and talents, careful thought is given to how they can be encouraged and supported, for example, by arranging extra tuition or entering sporting competitions.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

43. Parents are very pleased with the school. About half of the parents completed the questionnaire. These parents and the few who attended the parents' meeting are extremely positive about the school. At the previous inspection, a significant number of parents were unhappy about homework. Parents are now pleased with the arrangements for homework.
44. The school has a good partnership with parents. Many parents are keen to support their children's education and are confident about approaching the school with any concerns.
45. Parents are kept well informed. The information pack for parents provides a good summary of the school's aims and provision. Half termly newsletters keep parents well aware about what is going on in school and notices for parents are posted at class doorways. There are good arrangements for keeping parents informed on progress. Teachers are readily accessible and the school is quick to involve parents if there are problems. The previous inspection noted weaknesses in the end of year reports. Reports are now good. They are clear about progress in English, mathematics and science, and they include targets for improvement. However, they are not clear enough about progress in other subjects.
46. The school does all it can to involve parents of children with special educational needs. They are kept well informed about their children's needs, and how they can help. They are involved in setting targets for improvement.
47. Parents' contribution to their children's learning is good. Good arrangements for introducing parents and children to the nursery and reception classes help children to settle in quickly. A number of families need additional support and the school works closely with them and other agencies on their behalf. Many parents support their children at productions, festival celebrations, and fund-raising activities. There are courses for parents on such things as helping children with writing, reading, and mathematics, and meetings to explain about national tests.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

48. The headteacher provides very good leadership and management and is well supported by the senior management team. Everyone feels valued and all take great pride in the school. Governors are actively involved and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Teaching and support staff are very well deployed. Accommodation is utilised effectively. Appropriate priorities for improvement are identified and appropriate action is taken. There is a very high degree of commitment to improve. The school applies the principles of best value well.
49. The headteacher provides clear educational direction. Staff and governors review the school's aims and development plan systematically at the annual 'Review and Development Day'. Priorities for improvement are agreed. The headteacher and deputy take the main responsibility for major aspects of the school's management, such as the deployment of staff. This works very effectively. The school development plan clearly identifies the funding necessary to address areas for improvement. Governors have appropriate future projects in mind. However, there is no longer-term plan to show how the current above average surplus in the budget is to be spent. The school is aware of this and initial action has started in developing a fully costed programme.

50. Nearly all teaching staff have a subject management role. Most have well organised files and portfolios. They have attended training courses and have helped to improve resources such as in mathematics and ICT, which were school priorities. A more consistent approach is needed. Subject coordinators who are not in the senior management team have had insufficient opportunity to undertake classroom observations to look closely at effective teaching and learning. This is particularly true for subjects other than mathematics, English and science. In these subjects, class teachers complete useful assessment sheets regularly but coordinators do not analyse the information sufficiently to have a clear view of standards and progress. All subject coordinators monitor and support planning well and ensure that satisfactory levels of equipment are maintained but some are unclear about the amount of money earmarked for their subject. The head teacher manages provision for pupils with special educational needs well, working closely with a governor.
51. The school development plan uses information from pupils' attainment to identify priorities and this has led to improving standards. Governors have a good knowledge of the overall strengths and weaknesses of the school. Governors linked to each subject have been recently identified and are gaining an awareness of standards across the curriculum. However, governors have insufficient detail about standards in some subjects to inform spending priorities. Overall, their monitoring roles in areas such as the budget and the performance management of staff are carried out satisfactorily. .
52. The level of staffing is very good and often enables pupils to work in smaller teaching groups. The work of the classroom support assistants is a strength of the school. New staff are inducted very well. Accommodation is used very efficiently and effectively. There are useful practical areas adjacent to classrooms and quiet areas for group or individual work. Resources are generally adequate but there are some shortages in the class and school libraries and in the Foundation Stage.
53. The school analyses local and national information on pupils' attainment and compares it with the school's performance. Pupils and parents are consulted regularly. For example, the school council contributed to the design of the playground areas and a meeting of parents led to major improvements in school security. The school weighs the costs of local services with the value available elsewhere and complies with the local regulations about competitive tendering.

54. WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to improve standards*, the school should:

- 1 Improve standards in English by the end of Year 6 (paragraph 65) by:
 - promoting pupils' thinking skills and their use of oral language;
 - providing opportunities for pupils to consolidate and extend English skills in other subjects;
 - increasing opportunities for the coordinator to monitor and evaluate progress through the school.

- 2 Improve standards in science by the end of Year 6 (paragraph 83) by:
 - emphasising practical activities
 - developing pupils' confidence in discussing and recording their work using scientific vocabulary

- 3 Develop the leadership role of subject coordinators (paragraph 50) by:
 - making the monitoring and evaluation of standards the coordinators' first priority;
 - increasing opportunities for coordinators to observe lessons, work alongside colleagues and share good practice;
 - clarifying their responsibilities for managing the budget for their subject;
 - continuing to provide training opportunities in subject leadership.

**The school has already identified these three areas for improvement.*

Minor issues which the school may wish to address

- Improve the quantity and range of books in the class and school libraries (paragraph 72).
- Add to the resources in the Foundation Stage to provide better quality equipment in the role play area and the sand pit (paragraph 57).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	35
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	35

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	9	16	8	0	0	0
Percentage	6	26	46	22	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR - Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	17	142
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	NA	91

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR - Y 6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	6	91

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	12
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	24

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.6
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	13	14	27

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	9	10	12
	Girls	12	14	13
	Total	21	24	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	78 (76)	89 (76)	93 (81)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	8	10	10
	Girls	11	12	12
	Total	19	22	22
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	70 (76)	81 (81)	81 (76)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	6	6	12

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boy*			
	Girls*			
	Total	7	5	9
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	58 (44)	42 (50)	75 (89)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys*			
	Girls*			
	Total	7	7	7
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	58 (41)	58 (41)	58 (53)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

* These figures are omitted as there were less than 11 boys and less than 11 girls.

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	118	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	4	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: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20
Average class size	24

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	160

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17
Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	32.5
Number of pupils per FTE adult	9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2002-3
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	£
Total income	613452
Total expenditure	601995
Expenditure per pupil	3786
Balance brought forward from previous year	111128
Balance carried forward to next year	122625

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	159
Number of questionnaires returned	64

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	66	34	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	77	70	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	70	30	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	61	37	2	0	0
The teaching is good.	78	22	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	69	28	3	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	75	23	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	81	19	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	56	41	3	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	64	34	2	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	63	35	2	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	55	36	3	3	3

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

55. The good provision at the time of the previous inspection has been maintained. Children in the nursery and reception classes benefit from consistently good teaching. From a very low start, they make good progress. They are on course to meet expectations in mathematical development by the end of reception, but most are not likely to achieve the early learning goals in communication, language and literacy. Social development is likely to be broadly as expected at the end of reception. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is limited and they are unlikely to meet expectations in this area of learning. Children play on climbing apparatus with reasonable assurance but their control of classroom tools, such as scissors, is less confident. Overall, children's physical development is broadly as expected. They are reasonably imaginative when playing out roles and dressing up but creative development is below expectations because it is restricted by children's difficulty in expressing ideas, thoughts and feelings. Teachers motivate children very well so that, by the end of the Foundation Stage, they are enthusiastic and enjoy learning. This means that they are well prepared for work in Year 1.
56. Staff know the children very well. Systematic and detailed assessment and record keeping, together with very good teamwork, mean that children's learning is well supported. Teachers and their assistants work extremely closely together. All areas of learning are taught well. The indoor and outdoor areas are used effectively to provide a good range of activities that appeal to children. Planning centres around a specific theme which helps children make connections between different experiences. Staff have a good rapport with parents. Parents are welcomed and kept well informed about how their children are doing and what they need to learn next. They are encouraged and supported in building on the work done at school.
57. Accommodation is spacious and its use is well planned. Resources are satisfactory overall, but the role play area lacks good quality equipment, such as toy crockery and cooking utensils. Children use old washing up bottles when playing in the sandpit rather than colourful containers of different shapes and sizes.

Personal, social and emotional development

58. Every effort is made to help children adjust to life outside the home. Most find cooperation and sharing very difficult as they first start school. Staff are sensitive to this and introduce children to games and activities that require them to take turns. Children gradually become used to behaving in appropriate ways – for example, when listening to a teacher without calling out or when working without disturbing others. They benefit from the many activities which stimulate curiosity. Nursery children were fascinated as the teacher lit candles. They looked very carefully and made good attempts at describing the colours and the flickering movement of the flame. Children learn to take decisions and follow them through. In both the nursery and reception classes, they choose from a range of activities for a period each day. They are not forced to keep to their choice but by the end of reception, most children sustain their involvement and concentration before looking for something else to do. They listen well in whole class sessions. Children are keen to contribute and most have enough confidence to do so. The very good progress children make from starting school to the end of reception is evident from the calm and purposeful atmosphere in the reception classroom. This reflects the very good provision for personal, social and emotional development.

Communication, language and literacy

59. Most children have poor communication skills as they start school. Some have very few words and communicate mostly through very brief phrases or by using gestures. Teachers and support staff recognise this as a major barrier to learning and provide as many opportunities as possible to develop children's language skills. They frequently sing nursery rhymes and number games and tell stories. As children are working, staff consistently engage them in conversation. The vocabulary children need to help them discuss their emerging knowledge and understanding is reinforced well. Adults use the correct grammar in their own speech and children gradually begin to use appropriate structures through constant reinforcement.
60. Children learn that marks on paper can represent words. Teachers make this clear as they read stories; children imitate their careful handling of books, learning how to turn pages and follow pictures stories in the right sequence. The sounds of the initial letters of words and simple vowel sounds are taught systematically so that by the end of reception, a few children can create their own words such as man, pan and can and recognise that some words they make up, like *wan* or *gan* are not 'real words'. They 'pretend write' using the paper, pencils and crayons that are set out for this purpose. By the end of reception, all children make some attempt at writing but most need lots of support. They write their own names and use some of the letters in their names when writing. Although pupils make good progress through the nursery and reception, their language skills are still weak by the end of the reception year.

Mathematical development

61. Children make good progress in this area of learning because the teaching is very effective. Through using building blocks and construction kits, playing with sand and water and sorting objects, children gain an understanding of shape. They learn to count, first by reciting numbers and then by matching numbers to sets of objects. Counting is reinforced throughout the day as teachers seek children's 'help' – for example, in counting how many are present. Staff make deliberate mistakes as they count aloud and children are keen to correct them. In the nursery, more confident children count 1p coins accurately up to 10p. During a whole class numeracy lesson in reception, most children were meeting the levels expected. They found the 'number after 5' and answered similar questions correctly, selecting the appropriate numerals using 'number fans'. They solved addition problems such as '4 add 2' by counting on. The range of follow up activities typifies the effective way in which staff reinforce mathematical understanding. Some children were set the task of sharing 10 jam tarts between two people in as many ways as possible, others played counting games on the computer or played a game using dice and counters. The learning assistant skilfully guided a group as they made play dough and divided it equally into four segments, while the teacher circulated giving children individual attention. The systematic approach to mathematical development results in very good progress and provides children with a sound basis for work in Year 1.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

62. Children enter the nursery with little knowledge of the world outside their immediate surroundings. They are provided with a wealth of experiences, which successfully broadens their understanding and introduces early scientific, geographical and historical ideas. Recent activities have included, closely observing snails to see how they move, looking at feathers to see how they interlock and a visit to a park to look at leaves. The current theme of *light* includes teaching about light and dark, and sources of light such as candles and torches. Children made shadow puppets and explored shiny and dull material. Children's awareness

of cultural diversity is promoted well – for example, they recently acted out the story of Rama and Sita. The role play area is used well to promote understanding. For example, it was recently an ‘airport terminal’, complete with police, customs and ticket desks. Children have also helped to set up a wormery and animals such as rabbits are brought in from time to time. Visitors also contribute to children’s knowledge of the world outside school. For example, an AA patrolman brought in his van and discussed his job. Most children use the computer with reasonable confidence. Overall, despite the imaginative ways staff try to extend children’s experience, most do not meet expectations in this area of learning. They rarely ask questions about why things happen and how things work and have a limited understanding of past events.

Physical development

63. Children progress well. Most climb, balance, run and jump with reasonable confidence and awareness of others around them. They ride and steer wheeled toy vehicles. Children benefit from the outdoor activity area and from regular time in the carpeted hall. They learn to throw and catch with increasing accuracy. Their finer movements are less well developed. As children start school, many find it difficult to grasp small objects or hold a pencil. Activities such as drawing, cutting and sticking help to develop these skills so that, by the end of reception, children’s physical development is broadly in line with expectations.

Creative development

64. To some extent, children’s creative development is restricted by their lack of language skills. They play happily alongside each other in the role play area but little conversation occurs unless an adult is there to stimulate it. When painting, some pupils mix colours in order to create a desired effect but few fully explore colour, texture or shape in their work. There are individual exceptions. For example, one child produced a very good pencil drawing of a feather illustrating its structure accurately. Children are introduced to a computer painting program in the nursery and older children use it with a reasonable level of skill. It was not possible to observe children singing or to judge their response to music.

ENGLISH

65. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. By the age of seven, pupils reach average standards although there are a few high attainers. The standards reached by eleven-year-olds are slightly below average. Pupils enter the school with very low levels of literacy but they make good progress. Pupils’ attainment is improving because teachers teach the basic skills of literacy very well and plan effectively for pupils of all abilities. Teachers deploy learning support assistants very effectively and their input has a very positive impact on pupils’ progress. The school is on course to meet its targets this year and has raised those for 2004 to reflect the good progress being made by Year 5 pupils. A range of strategies have a positive impact on pupils’ concentration and understanding of their own learning - for example, developing thinking skills and doing Brain Gym⁴. Pupils read and write confidently and can explain their work and say what they are expected to learn. The majority of pupils with special educational needs make good progress but a few whose targets are not sufficiently sharp for teachers to plan work to meet their needs, make satisfactory progress

66. Seven and eleven-year-olds’ attainment in speaking and listening is good and most make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because learning support assistants help them to play an effective part in discussion. Teachers plan lots of

⁴ Brief physical exercises designed to make pupils make alert.

opportunities for talk. Everyone's opinion is valued and there is a clear sense of mutual respect between adults and pupils. Opportunities to work in ability groups enable pupils to share their knowledge and learn from others who are working at a similar level. When talking about the features of an island, Year 2 pupils compared examples from the mainland: 'It would be difficult to travel far in a car. You wouldn't be able to drive to it over mountains and you would always be very near to the sea.' In Year 6, pupils held a debate about Harry Potter, giving them the opportunity to produce an argument and make democratic decisions. Higher attaining pupils in Year 6 speak confidently in a variety of styles to engage the interest of different audiences. In an investigation into litter recorded on video as a homework project, one used a journalistic style to good effect: 'We have only walked a few yards but already we find...Another problem is...Why would people do this?'

67. Pupils' standards of attainment in reading are average by the age of seven. They make good progress because, from the time children enter the nursery, the school encourages parents to borrow books to share with their children. Teachers in Years 1 and 2 help pupils to build up words. This encourages pupils to read for pleasure and with understanding. Pupils develop alphabetical skills and can explain how to use information books. In Year 6, pupils discuss their preference for different types of books and particularly enjoy reading independently but they do not quite achieve the standards expected of eleven-year-olds. They lack confidence in finding information for themselves, which detracts for their independent study skills.
68. By the age of seven, pupils use writing to appeal to an audience, for example reporting on the travels of 'Barnaby Bear'. Pupils use spelling books correctly to practise common word patterns and follow rules such as adding *ed* to make the past tense in *walked*. In Years 3 and 4, pupils write for a broad range of purposes including letters to a residential centre to thank them for their welcome. Pupils wrote comments such as 'We really appreciated the tour', 'We were very grateful you let us stay' and 'the rooms were spotless.'
69. About a third of the current Year 6 write at below average levels. However, because of good teaching, standards are improving. The majority of Year 5 pupils are on track to achieve near expected levels at the end of Year 6. Teachers encourage pupils to read their work to the class and in assemblies. Writing in other subjects makes a very strong contribution to the work in literacy; in particular, work in history, geography and religious education. Pupils throughout the school when engaged in work called 'God's camera' wrote about their feelings. Year 1 suggested that, 'Even when we feel grumpy, God still loves us'. In another example in Year 2 one pupil wrote, 'God was not happy with his people. He told Noah "*I am going to flood the world*".' Teachers show that neat work is valued and pupils' regular use of the computer to organise their writing encourages them to try their best. Some pupils, however, have an insufficient grasp of grammar and punctuation which detracts from the overall standards in writing.
70. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In the best lessons, teachers clearly outline what should be achieved. They have very high expectations of all pupils and are very well supported by learning assistants. Very good teamwork ensures that pupils are given consistent messages and they rise to the challenge. In a Year 3 lesson, the teacher demonstrated how a letter should be written. The teaching assistant worked with lower ability pupils and followed the teacher's lead. Pupils responded well, all work was neat and correctly addressed and signed. Teaching in the Year 5 /6 is brisk, pupils work at a good pace and a lot of work is covered in each lesson. Pupils used a variety of texts to select phrases and justify why the author used these, and found answers to questions, which were not directly addressed in the text. One pupil said that the author used 'word play' when describing spider's syrup as an effective remedy for a ticklish cough.

71. Teachers plan interesting and challenging activities based on very good assessments. They encourage pupils to work in pairs or groups and they manage the literacy hour very effectively. Teachers and pupils negotiate targets which are reviewed regularly. Pupils find this really helpful. It contributes significantly to their personal development. A Year 4 pupil said, 'My targets help me to see if my work is improving.' Pupils are aware of the progress they make in a lesson, and make comments about how well they achieved their targets. Teachers question pupils well to see what they have learned and use this information to plan future work. Records are comprehensive and up-to-date so that individual current performance is clear. Staff set targets for pupils and discuss these with them and their parents. As a result, pupils know what they have to do to improve and parents can support them.
72. The library is well used and pupils know how to locate information but many books are in poor condition and need replacing. Teachers make very good use of computers, particularly the Internet to research information across all subjects. They show pupils how to find information, draft, save and print work from a very early age. Pupils enjoy their lessons and their regular homework. Discussion about 'words within words' homework in Year 3 was very lively and pupils were determined to find additional words to challenge the teacher. They are well motivated and very well behaved because teachers make the work interesting.
73. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The coordinator has a clear understanding of what needs to be done to raise standards further. She has monitored teachers' plans, examined work in books and has, some time ago, observed lessons. However, little monitoring has been conducted recently. As a result, the school does not have a clear view of teaching strengths and areas for development and so cannot provide specific support or offer training to develop teachers' skills.

MATHEMATICS

74. The school has made good progress since the last inspection. Pupils' rate of progress is now good and standards of attainment have improved. Seven and eleven-year-olds are achieving average standards for the first time for a number of years. The school has successfully introduced the daily mathematics lesson as part of the National Numeracy Strategy. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress. Most teaching is good; some is very good or excellent and the subject is very well led and managed.
75. Pupils' test papers are analysed in detail and areas for improvement are identified. Staff are informed and are given guidance on how to bring about improvement. The focus for this year has been on problem solving and this is now a strength of the school. Work seen and the tracking system used indicate that overall performance is improving. The realistic but challenging targets set by the school for 2003 for Year 6 pupils are likely to be achieved or even exceeded.
76. Standards of numeracy are improving because pupils regularly practise their number skills at the start of the daily mathematics lessons. During these sessions, teachers give pupils the opportunity to explain how they worked out their answers. This was very evident in an excellent Year 6 lesson when pupils were working on fractions of a number. The children discussed their working in small groups and then shared this with the class on the white board. The pupils were asked questions like; 'Why have you chosen that method? Is there an alternative way? Could you simplify the strategy you have used?' The classroom support assistants worked very effectively with the small groups, particularly in supporting the less

confident pupils. The pace of the lesson was very good. The pupils responded well to the challenges and were clearly enjoying their work.

77. In Year 1, most pupils are confident in using numbers up to 10. In group activities, they were sequencing numbers up to 100. One third of the pupils could identify the names of two and three-dimensional shapes. In Year 2, three quarters of the pupils are working at least in line with expectations with a third working above that level. Most pupils have a good grasp of reflective symmetry. They are confident in handling addition and subtraction of numbers up to 20. They construct and interpret simple block graphs. A good proportion use simple multiplication and division. These pupils also respond well to problem solving challenges. Less confident pupils need further support in understanding estimations and in using mathematics in a variety of ways. By Year 6, almost three quarters of the pupils work at the level expected for their age and one in five pupils are working above this, which is a very good improvement on the previous year. They are developing good strategies for solving problems. Almost all pupils calculate the perimeters of shapes and the higher attaining pupils can calculate area. Many construct and interpret simple line graphs. Most are confident in finding factors of numbers and can find simple percentages.
78. In almost half the lessons, the teaching was very good or excellent and in all lessons it was at least satisfactory or better. All lessons are well structured. In the very good or excellent lessons, the pace is quick and the teachers have high expectations. Year 6 pupils were devising strategies that could be used to tackle mathematical problems. The teacher kept extending the work to challenge them. Starting with finding simple fractions of numbers the pupils then progressed through problems on money, length and weight and then onto percentages. The pupils responded excellently to the challenges they faced. In Year 1, the teacher led a discussion on identifying missing numbers. Pupils were asked to explain their answers, which was an effective way of reinforcing their knowledge of number bonds. Good use of praise and encouragement motivated the pupils and maintained their interest.
79. Most teachers use their subject knowledge to good effect by providing a range of activities that are well matched to pupils' prior attainment. Good use is made of the time available by ensuring pupils are busy throughout. Resources are used effectively and pupils are well supported by classroom assistants. The assistants have received training in supporting the teaching of mathematics and this is particularly evident in their work with the pupils with special educational needs. In the mental mathematics sessions at the start of lessons, the assistants are frequently prompting the pupils around them. They use practical apparatus with the pupils to illustrate and simplify the group tasks. This helps these pupils to make good progress. The summary session, or plenary, not only reviews what the pupils have achieved but also extends the work and sometimes encourages them to do further work at home in preparation for the next lesson.
80. Teachers' make clear to the pupils what they are to learn in the lesson and where it fits in with what they have learned previously. In this way, teachers make very good use of their assessment of pupils' progress. The support of parents is continually sought to encourage their children to complete homework. Teachers' marking is up to date and offers pupils encouragement. Written comments on how to improve work are used occasionally but not consistently across the school. More use could be made of ICT within the mathematics work.
81. The subject has been a major target for improvement over the last two years. The coordinator has organised staff training and has introduced extra resources. She has a clear view of the subject through monitoring teaching and keeping track of the pupils' progress. As a result, areas for improvement are identified and the staff receive support to address them.

SCIENCE

82. The attainment of seven-year-olds is broadly average. Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2. They have sound investigative skills because much of the work is practical. Teachers successfully encourage pupils to observe closely and record what they see, for example when testing whether plants need light in order to grow. Pupils use tables and diagrams well to organise and present their findings systematically. Early ideas about forces and circuits are established successfully through simple experiments – such as investigating how a battery can light up a lamp. Early work in Year 1, when pupils sort materials using simple criteria, is extended in Year 2 when they look closely at how some materials, such as ice, can take on different forms.
83. Although pupils in Years 3 to 6 work hard and make good progress, attainment is below average. Because of the number of pupils with special educational needs in Year 6, the proportion achieving the expected levels for their age is not sufficient to produce average overall results in national tests. The emphasis on practical work pays dividends. For example, pupils know how to separate liquids and solids using sieves and filter papers. Their understanding of how air contains water is supported well by simple investigations into condensation and evaporation. Pupils' knowledge of the benefits of healthy eating and exercise is good. It is underpinned by their sound understanding of circulation and respiration. Pupils explain ideas using the appropriate scientific language, although the higher attaining pupils are better able to recall the correct terms and to make written records. Other pupils are hindered in their recording of science work because they lack confidence in writing. Teachers recognise this and make every effort to support pupils, encouraging them to use labelled diagrams, illustrations and bullet points when committing their findings to paper. Teachers use the correct language during explanations and discussions and are quick to praise when pupils do so.
84. Teaching is good. Teachers cover a broad range of work and use imaginative approaches that are relevant and appeal to pupils. For example, Year 3 pupils experimented to see which tights were strongest - a teacher's or a pupil's - using the 'test to destruction' method. Pupils in Year 4 found out the similar properties of liquids and some solids, such as rice, salt and sugar, through practical investigations and recorded their findings clearly in a table. Pupils' books in Year 5 illustrate the wide variety of topics covered. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to develop independence. In a successful lesson in the Year 5/6 class, pupils were set the problem of making a beam of light travel in a square. They were guided but not spoon-fed. They cooperated well, testing out ideas using torches and mirrors, concentrating on the matter in hand and taking a real interest.
85. Very good improvement has been achieved since the last inspection. Pupils were not making satisfactory progress and there were major weaknesses in teaching and the range of work covered. Pupils were given too few opportunities to learn through practical work and their behaviour in science lessons was sometimes unsatisfactory. Due to the very effective work of the coordinator, the subject has been completely overhauled. Assessment is now good and the coordinator has a good overview of strengths and weaknesses. As a result, standards are rising. The school is aware of the need to continue placing emphasis on developing pupils' skills of scientific enquiry. Information and communication technology is used occasionally but is not sufficiently integrated to ensure that pupils see how ICT can support their learning and recording in science.

ART AND DESIGN

86. Due to timetable arrangements, no art and design lessons were observed during the inspection. However, from other evidence, progress through the school is good. By Year 2, pupils are attaining average standards and by Year 6, standards are above average. The

school has made good progress since the last inspection. The coordinator manages the subject well.

87. Displays around the school show that the pupils experience a wide range of materials and activities and progressively build up their skills. In Year 2, the display on patterns includes computer art and weaving. Pupils are using a range of materials and processes to explore visual and textile qualities. Pupils have completed still life drawings of plants using pastels, chalk and paints. The displays on colour mixing and rubbings show experience of a range of processes. In Year 4, pupils have completed some striking pieces of art based on the work of Eschler. The display shows that the pupils have collected information on the artist and style and are able to show contrasting visual qualities. A display of high quality on the 'Wizard of Oz' demonstrated how pupils used a range of materials, shapes and textures to express the personality traits of the main characters. In Year 5 and 6, the pupils have produced self-portraits in the 'Pop Art' style. These were based on digital images and used a variety of materials. From the pupils' written work, it is clear that they have researched the subject and used the information to develop their work. They have also modified and improved their work.
88. Standards of display around the school are high. Teachers put real value on this. Pupils appreciate the care staff take and are proud to identify their own pieces of work. They clearly enjoy their art and design work. Teachers are well supported by classroom assistants and in particular by one with good qualifications in the subject.
89. The coordinator supports colleagues in their planning and maintains a reasonable range and quantity of materials for use in the subject. Teachers complete assessment sheets to show pupil progress. The coordinator now needs to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in lessons to get a clearer view of standards and progress within the school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

90. By Year 2, pupils are attaining average standards. By Year 6, standards are above average. The quality of teaching in the three lessons seen was satisfactory. The coordinator manages the subject well but lacks opportunities for monitoring teaching and keeping track of standards.
91. Displays of work around the school show the use of a wide variety of materials and methods. The detailed needlework display on World War II contrasts well with a large three-dimensional display on 'Medusa'. In Year 3, pupils learn about the strength of triangles when constructing model pylons. The Years 4 and 5 displays on 'dream catchers' and on building 'dens' show that pupils understand the processes of disassembly of an existing model, planning, evaluation, construction and final evaluation of a finished product. Year 4/5 work on 'Spiders Webs' pop-up books includes useful links with English and art. In Year 6, pupils had produced high quality 'Pop art' T-shirts, effectively combining skills in ICT, art and design, and design and technology.
92. In the three lessons observed, classroom assistants took a leading role in supporting pupils. In Year 2, the work built on the story of 'Joseph and the Coat of Many Colours'. The pupils were all proficient at cutting out their coat pattern pieces from a template. The pupils' skills of stitching improved noticeably during the lesson. One pupil with special educational needs made excellent progress in the lesson. He generated a design on the computer, saved it, printed it, cut out his pattern pieces and stitched the pieces together with very little adult support. Year 3 pupils worked very well as a group to construct a bird table. An initial discussion about 'fitness for purpose' centred on the height, stability and containment of the bird table. Different groups then undertook different tasks and the classroom assistant

brought it all together effectively and led the group in the construction. The lesson ended with the completed bird table and the pupils were clearly pleased with their efforts. In Year 4, the pupils, very proficiently led by the classroom assistant, were in the early stages of making a purse. Using her extensive knowledge, she extended their understanding and vocabulary particularly well, talking about 'properties of materials', 'prototypes', 'seam allowances', etc. Progress in the lesson was very good as pupils translated their original sketch into a design sheet and produced prototypes made from newspaper to check their design worked.

93. In all three lessons, instructions were clear so that pupils were concentrating throughout. Pupils understood what they were to learn and showed great enthusiasm for their work. They were supportive of each other.
94. The coordinator offers good support to colleagues in their planning and maintains a reasonable range and quantity of materials. The coordinator has not yet monitored the quality of teaching and learning in lessons to develop greater insight into standards and progress.

GEOGRAPHY

95. The standards attained by seven-year-olds are average and they make steady progress during Years 1 and 2. Learning accelerates in Years 3 to 6. Pupils progress well and achieve above average standards.
96. Seven-year-olds develop a sound sense of place and draw simple maps of the locality. They can identify the difference in physical features in contrasting localities. For example, they point out features which are typical of an island. They compare aspects of life on the imaginary island of Struay with Runcorn. They use the computer well to access pictures of localities to discuss in small groups. In independent tasks, they use their learning to present the information in different ways. For example, some Year 2 pupils recorded their views about life on an island by using the computer while others worked on paper. They ordered the points using bullet points or numbers.
97. The good progress made in Years 3 to 6 is due to the very good curriculum which includes well-chosen residential visits experienced by all pupils. These enable them to compare localities first hand and build on previous learning. By the age of eleven, pupils have a sound knowledge of the features of their own locality, which they compare with those of contrasting localities such as the Isle of Anglesey. They develop appropriate mapping skills, including the use of four figure references and Ordnance Survey symbols, to interpret maps of the local area. Pupils conduct surveys among the school community to find out attitudes to litter. They write letters to governors and local councillors making their own viewpoints very clearly. Pupils experience life on a narrow boat, identifying the activities along the canal side and becoming familiar with local navigation routes. Good links with history are made as pupils compare past and present uses of canals. Lessons are brought to life as Year 6 pupils put together weather forecasts which they present and record on video. These indicate that pupils have good knowledge and understanding of weather and areas of England and Wales.
98. The quality of teaching is good. In a well taught Year 6 lesson, the teacher fully engaged the pupils' interest by setting a challenge to see which group could produce the best fact file on a country of their choice. They used the Internet and other computer sources very effectively to retrieve and save information. The teacher used very skilful open-ended questions to stimulate pupils. As a result, they worked with full concentration building on each other's ideas to find substantial amounts of information. The teacher used the summary session well to draw together ideas and to elicit their ideas about a journalistic or reporter style of presentation. Teachers also give good attention to extending pupils' vocabulary by ensuring that they both understand and use appropriate terminology such as 'precipitation' and

'condensation' correctly. Learning support assistants make a very good contribution to teaching and help pupils with special educational needs to play a full part in lessons.

99. The coordinator has successfully promoted a very consistent approach to teaching and assessment, which helps pupils to build on previous learning. It is based on the progressive development of enquiry, other identified geographical skills and the very good use of field and practical work. Teachers often plan very apt and meaningful links with other subjects such as mathematics, science and ICT. This contributes considerably to the motivation and the great interest shown by pupils in their work, as the enthusiasm from their learning in one area spills over into the next. This, in turn, has an evident impact on their progress in lessons. Through using the local area and the raising of pupils' awareness of wider environmental and social issues, the subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development.

HISTORY

100. Seven year olds and eleven-year-olds attain average standards and make satisfactory progress. This is an improvement since the previous inspection, when standards for younger pupils below average.
101. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 study life in Victorian times. They recall the main events in the life of Florence Nightingale and compare Victorian hospitals with those of today. By the age of seven, pupils have used their own locality; for example, Halton Castle, the church and former housing, to study changes in the environment.
102. By the end of Year 6, pupils can explain the important characteristics of Ancient Egyptian and Tudor societies, they know about the life of Celtic Britons and the effect of the Roman invasion on Britain. Pupils produce good independent work about Tudor life and most can talk about the reasons why Henry VIII married six times. Pupils develop a good understanding of chronology and historical facts. They research information from books, pictures and the Internet. Visits, particularly residential trips, help to make the subject more relevant for pupils. Pupils make links between history and geography. Teachers successfully integrate these subjects so that pupils learn things in greater depth. A Year 6 pupil remarked, 'I know how things changed before I was born. I know that the Romans were responsible for many of our roads and place names.'
103. By the age of eleven, pupils have a good sense of chronology and with limited support complete a timeline from the Romans to the present day. Pupils' work on World War II is particularly poignant. Pupils learn to empathise with evacuees. An emotive piece of writing began, 'Dear mum and dad, I am deeply missing you'.
104. Only one lesson was observed but the quality of pupils' work indicates that teaching is generally effective. In the lesson seen, in Year 6, the teaching was very good. The teacher's subject knowledge, very precise planning, challenging activities matched to the pupils' abilities and excellent organisation of resources ensured that pupils' learning was significantly extended. They worked with intense interest and were fascinated by the source materials that included the headlines of the Tudor period given to them in preparation for future study. They made their own timeline of the Tudor dynasty and effectively used deduction skills to decide and order events accurately.
105. The subject makes a very good contribution to literacy, through written work, research work and oral reporting. Time lines contribute to pupils' sense of sense of chronology. Learning support assistants make a significant contribution to the subject. They are knowledgeable and support all pupils very well. There is a reasonable range of resources, including artefacts and these are supplemented well by the loan service. Good use is made of ICT; for example, pupils search the Internet and CD ROMs for information.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

106. Seven and eleven-year-olds achieve the standards expected for their age. They are progressing well through the school because of the effective teaching, which motivates pupils to try their best. Although some lack confidence in subjects that need a secure level of literacy, most pupils approach ICT with assurance. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 have good word processing skills and mix text with graphics well. Although some work is done on databases, including spreadsheets in Year 6, pupils are generally not confident enough in this aspect of the subject.
107. Pupils are developing good general computing skills. In all year groups, they locate and open programs. Pupils from Year 2 onwards save and retrieve files. This familiarity with computer technology means that pupils soon absorb new knowledge and pick up ideas. Work across the school is often related to current topics. As an extension to their mathematics work, Year 1 pupils quickly learn how to use a graphics program to create symmetry patterns. In Year 2, pupils extend this work using digital cameras. When learning about healthy eating in science, pupils entered information into a database and made simple bar charts and pie diagrams of the information. They develop early ideas about control technology by programming a floor robot. Interviews with computer technicians and a visit to a local supermarket help pupils gain a good understanding of how information technology, such as a bar code system, is used outside school.
108. Pupils' knowledge of word processing, gained in Years 1 and 2, is extended well in subsequent years. For example, pupils in Year 3 combined words and pictures to produce good quality work about Perseus and The Sphinx when studying ancient myths. They are introduced to a wide variety of presentation styles, including the use of numbered paragraphs and bullet points. Year 6 pupils create very good pamphlets using a professional level desktop publishing program. They search for relevant information using the Internet, copying material and inserting it into their own documents.
109. Pupils in the Year 4/5 class use simple databases, for example, to create a simple 'branching database' in connection with their work on pond life in science. Year 6 pupils were using the 'auto formula' tool to add columns of figures in a spreadsheet and had a good grasp of how this kind of program works. They lack skills in creating a database, however, and have a limited knowledge of how one might be structured. Their knowledge of control technology is a little hazy, as this is not taught systematically through the school. Work planned for later in the term is designed to fill these gaps and extend pupils' skills while using sound and light sensors to monitor and log changes in the environment.
110. Much has been achieved since the last inspection. The co-ordinator has led developments well. All teachers have had further training so the quality of teaching is now generally good. The curriculum has been reviewed to include all aspects of ICT but gaps in pupils' knowledge indicate that teachers need further support in ensuring that pupils' skills are developed systematically through the school. Years 1 to 3 have sufficient equipment but there are too few computers in the older classes to capitalise fully on pupils' enthusiasm. Two data projectors and an interactive whiteboard⁵ have been acquired recently. With this new equipment, resources are just adequate. Following whole class demonstrations, pupils often have to wait rather a long time to have a go themselves which restricts progress.

MUSIC

⁵ This projects a large computer image onto a touch-sensitive screen and enables teachers and pupils to control the computer from the front of the class rather than the keyboard.

111. Standards in singing are broadly as expected of seven and eleven-year-olds. Most pupils have a good sense of rhythm. They play percussion instruments using the appropriate techniques and their listening skills are developing well. It was not possible to observe pupils taking part in other musical activities during the inspection.
112. During lessons and assemblies, pupils sing enthusiastically. Most sing in tune and are beginning to understand how to alter the way they sing to interpret the mood of different songs. This was evident when their lively rendition of *Marching in the Light of the Lord* contrasted appropriately with their sensitive singing of *Oh Happy Day* and *Wonderful World* (sung using simultaneous sign language).
113. Younger pupils listen carefully to recorded music. Year 3 pupils made interesting comments on how two pieces of music made them feel. They associated Grieg's *Death of Awa* with sadness; 'It makes you feel unhappy...as though someone has died...worried.' When listening to *El Condor Pasa* played on panpipes, they visualised the 'countryside' or 'Indians' (native Americans). There was little evidence of this kind of activity in the older classes. Pupils had a very patchy knowledge of composers outside of popular music. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 gain early ideas of composition by making up their own simple accompaniments using percussion instruments. This is taken further in the older classes. For example, during a very good lesson with Year 4 pupils, the teacher taught them how to write down musical ideas using standard notation. They also made a good attempt at singing an 'ostinato' (a repeated musical phrase) to accompany the teacher's singing of a melody.
114. Too few lessons were seen to judge the overall quality of teaching, but planning covers all aspects of the subject. Although there is an appropriate curriculum planned which meets statutory requirements, pupils' limited knowledge of composers suggests that too little emphasis is given in the older classes to developing their knowledge and understanding. They are making reasonable progress in singing and performing but, given the good range of musical expertise among the teaching staff, there is much more potential for raising standards.
115. In addition to regular music lessons, pupils have opportunities for performing in school productions and class assemblies. Music makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' self-esteem through their participation in such events. Annual concerts, when pupils sing in combined choirs in an arena, are very popular and worthwhile.
116. Musical ensembles visit from time-to-time to play orchestral instruments, African drums and bluegrass music. The display of instruments from around the world supports pupils' knowledge of music in other countries.
117. Music does not have a high profile in the school. There is no instrumental tuition, for example. The school's understandable emphasis on literacy and numeracy has meant that the coordinator has not had opportunities to find out first hand how pupils are doing nor to implement the recently introduced assessment system. She has devised an appropriate strategy for improvement but the subject needs to be given a higher priority if standards are to improve. Some of the weaknesses identified during this inspection remain. Not enough progress has been made since then.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

118. Seven and eleven-year-olds progress well and achieve good standards. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. Teaching in the three lessons observed was good, very good or excellent. No swimming or gymnastics lessons were observed during the inspection. The subject is led and managed well by the coordinator.
119. In a Year 2 lesson on football skills, the pupils showed coordination and control and applied these well. The teacher made good use of pupils' ideas to emphasise very good teaching points. Individual work on dribbling, trapping and turning was extended to paired work using those skills to progress to passing, moving into space and shooting. Standards attained were above those expected for pupils of this age. In a combined Year 1 and 2 dance lesson, pupils built on their previous work on basic country dancing steps. The pupils were paired Year 1 with Year 2 and this allowed the older pupils to guide and support the younger ones. Nearly all the pupils showed good coordination and control. In an excellent lesson in Year 6 on hockey skills, pupils were employing tactical strategies to enhance their basic skills in small group work on attack and defence.
120. All pupils enjoy physical education and try hard. They are very keen to improve and listen well to suggestions from the teacher and other pupils. The teachers have good subject knowledge and are able to make key coaching points. These are often drawn from discussions with pupils. A good example of this was in the Year 2 lesson when pupils identified 'keeping your eye on the ball', 'using the side of your foot' and 'keeping movements small' as ways to improve dribbling skills. All the lessons had high levels of activity and made good use of time. Teachers manage pupils well and ensure that there are a variety of tasks to keep them actively involved. All lessons have a good structure that allows time to warm up, practise and cool down. The importance of these aspects is shared with the pupils.
121. The coordinator is enthusiastic and justly proud of the achievement of the Activemark Gold Award. She supports her colleagues by ensuring they all receive appropriate training. She also supports them in their planning. Through extra curricular opportunities, visitors to the school and residential visits, all pupils can encounter a wide range of experiences, including outdoor and adventurous activities. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development. The coordinator recognises the need to improve assessment and its use.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

122. Seven and eleven-year-olds reach standards in line with the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. This is good improvement since the previous inspection when standards were found to be below average.
123. Pupils make satisfactory progress because teachers plan well to build up their knowledge and understanding progressively from year to year. The school effectively links personal, social and religious education in assemblies. The very good standard of assemblies makes a significant contribution to pupils' understanding and progress. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development. Teachers plan opportunities to think about the beauty of the world, the importance of life and the uniqueness of individuals.
124. By the time they are seven, pupils know about festivals and customs of different faiths, such as the *Bar Mitzvah* in Judaism. They can talk about what happens at Christmas and Easter. Pupils study stories from the Bible including *Noah* and *The Good Samaritan* and these are linked appropriately with the whole school theme of 'Everyone is Special'.
125. Older pupils are confident in sharing their thoughts and ideas in discussion sessions. A good example of this was when Year 3 pupils discussed whether people have to use special objects or buildings to pray, just as Hindus use a *puja tray*. One pupil said, 'We don't need a

puja⁶, we just put our hands together. We can pray outdoors, like in Queen Charlotte's Wood.' Pupils have the opportunity to take part in whole class discussions on themes such as 'My Gifts' and 'What is special to me?' Pupils learn about Christian beliefs and symbols, such as prayer and light and learn about those of other faiths. For example, most Year 5/6 pupils, learning about the Bible, could name some of the differences and similarities between Buddhism and Christianity and talk confidently and compare the different religions accurately. Higher attaining pupils can describe the Gospels. Pupils use ICT well for research on the Internet.

126. Teaching is at least satisfactory. Where teaching is good, teachers use questioning effectively to challenge pupils' thinking. They have high expectations of response and behaviour, making it clear that pupils' answers are valued and respected. There is an atmosphere of discovery and wonder. In a Year 1 lesson, the teacher began by sharing the story of Rama and Sita and then showed a *diva lamp*⁷, which every pupil handled very carefully. The teacher explained that there was a very special celebration because people were so happy that Rama and Sita had returned, they all carried diva lamps, and asked the pupils to imagine this wonderful sight. This evoked a real sense of wonder and awe, with the pupils audibly drawing breath as they handled the object. Teachers stress the importance of respecting the beliefs of others and this develops pupils' understanding and attitudes well. Teachers question pupils at the beginning of lessons to find out what they know already. However, because pupils' attainment is not systematically assessed, teachers cannot always be sure that they are pitching work at the right level. Most teachers use resources effectively, including ICT and the Internet. However, because the number of artefacts is limited, there is little time for pupils to handle and study them. For example, in Year 1, pupils shared one diva lamp.
127. The coordinator satisfactorily supports teachers and monitors their plans, purchases resources and sees examples of pupils' work. She is aware that the assessment of pupils' skills lacks systematic approach and that lessons need to be observed to monitor the quality of teaching and learning and to share successful methods.

⁶ A Hindu rite of worship; an offering.

⁷ A traditional earthenware bowl used in Hindu celebrations, filled with oil or butter, with cotton wicks.