

## INSPECTION REPORT

### HILLSIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Prenton, Wirral

LEA area: Wirral

Unique reference number: 131587

Headteacher: Miss E. M. Steel

Acting Headteacher: Mrs. L. Hazeldine

Reporting inspector: Mr. G. Yates  
2465

Dates of inspection: 14<sup>th</sup>. -17<sup>th</sup>. October 2002

Inspection number: 248849

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Ridgeview Road Prenton Wirral Merseyside
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. S. Jeffries
Date of previous inspection:	Not applicable

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2465	Geoffrey Yates	Registered inspector	Science Religious education	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? a) The school's results and achievements What should the school do to improve further?
12511	Linda Buller	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
7979	Tony Calderbank	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Physical education	Special Educational Needs How well the school is led and managed?
30823	Brenda Clarke	Team inspector	English Art and design Design and technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
11922	Judith Watkins	Team inspector	Geography History Foundation Stage	How well are pupils taught? Educational inclusion, including equality

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Hillside Primary School is an average sized primary school for boys and girls aged three to 11 years, with its own nursery. It is situated in Prenton on the Wirral Peninsular in an area of predominantly public housing. This is the first year that the school has been housed on one site following the amalgamation of two separate schools. There are currently 202 pupils on roll in the main school and 36 who attend part time in the nursery. There has been a sharp decline in the school's roll because of families moving out of the area. One hundred and two children (about 50 per cent) are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is well above the national average. Sixty-two pupils are on the special needs register. At around 30 per cent, this is above the national average. Most of the pupils have moderate learning difficulties. Three pupils have a statement of special educational needs. This is broadly average for the size of school. There are no children from minority ethnic backgrounds. When children start in the nursery their attainment is generally well below that typical for their age. The headteacher has been absent for twelve months.

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

This is a caring school with several good features and is justifiably respected in the local community. Pupils achieve well at Hillside Primary School because teaching is good overall, although it is not as good as it should be in some classes. The school celebrates its strengths and works hard to address its weaknesses. The acting headteacher has led the school well during the last 12 months. It is effective in sustaining good standards of pupil behaviour. Standards in English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT), religious education and all other subjects inspected are similar to those found in most schools by the end of Year 6. The school gives good value for money.

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

- Pupils of all attainment levels achieve well by the time they leave.
- The acting headteacher has shown good leadership in the last 12 months.
- The pupils are taught well overall, with some very good and occasionally excellent teaching.
- The additional help given to younger pupils who have problems with their reading is of a very good quality and as a result they make good progress.
- Children in the nursery and reception classes are given a good start to their formal education.
- The relationships between adults and pupils are strong.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good overall

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

- The quality of teaching in Years 3 and 4.
- The use made of information about what pupils know, understand and can do in most subjects.
- The involvement of curriculum co-ordinators in monitoring and evaluating their subjects.
- Pupils' spelling and handwriting skills.
- Pupils' attendance levels.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The newly formed school has not previously been inspected.

### STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	All schools			Similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	E	C	C	A
Mathematics	E	E	D	B
Science	E	E	E	C

<b>Key</b>	
Well above average	A
Above average	B
Average	C
Below average	D
Well below average	E
In lowest 5% of all schools	E*

Inspection evidence shows that because of the high number of pupils with special educational needs in the current Year 6 age group, the overall percentage of pupils achieving the expected levels in English, mathematics and science will not be as high this year. Pupils' spelling skills are unsatisfactory and in some classes work is not presented well. The school achieved its target for attainment in English and mathematics in the 2002 national tests. It is in line to reach its appropriate targets set for 2003. Pupils make good use of the newly established ICT suite and achieve satisfactory standards in all aspects of the subject. In all other subjects inspected, pupils' achievements are similar to those found in most schools.

From a low starting point, pupils make good progress in the Foundation Stage, though the majority are unlikely to attain all the early learning goals for children of their age.

Inspection findings show that pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress. Standards of attainment in reading, writing, science and all other subjects inspected by the end of Year 2 are average because basic skills are generally taught well. Standards in mathematics are above average.

### PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	In most lessons they are enthusiastic and enjoy their work. Pupils have satisfactory attitudes to learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are well mannered.
Personal development and relationships	Good. The pupils form friendly and supportive relationships with each other, and with the staff. They carry out jobs in school responsibly and sensibly.
Attendance	Poor.

When teaching is good pupils rise to the challenge and produce good work. Some pupils miss out because they are absent from school on a regular basis.

### TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Foundation Stage	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Satisfactory

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

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, enabling the children to achieve well by the time they leave the school. Teaching is good in Years 5 and 6 but there are weaknesses in years 3 and 4.

Teaching in the Foundation Stage is of a good quality and often better and prepares the children well for the National Curriculum. In Years 1 and 2 during the week of the inspection; all lessons were good or better. In Years 3 to 6, the quality varies from very good to unsatisfactory. The good teaching in the juniors is in Years 5 and 6. Some of the teaching in Years 3 and 4 lacks a clear purpose and classroom management is weak, leading to unsatisfactory progress.

Most teachers have fully incorporated the national literacy and numeracy strategies into their planning. The basic skills of reading and writing are taught thoroughly but spelling and handwriting skills are not taught as effectively. A good emphasis is placed on developing pupils' knowledge and understanding of number and mathematical procedures. Scientific knowledge is well taught but teachers do not give the higher attaining pupils enough opportunities to plan their own investigations. ICT skills are taught well and teachers provide satisfactory opportunities for pupils to use their newly acquired skills in other subjects.

The major strengths in the teaching seen in most classes were well thought out planning, teachers' good subject knowledge and high expectations of the pupils to listen and carry out instructions. The quality of learning is good overall. In most lessons, pupils show interest, concentrate and try hard.

The majority of pupils with special educational needs achieve well because work that is set in lessons is matched to their needs. However, some individual education plans lack precise targets. The additional help given to some younger pupils who have problems with their reading is very successful in enabling them to overcome their difficulties.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall. The very good provision for children in the Foundation Stage is a strength. The curriculum for pupils in Years 1 to 6 meets national requirements. Pupils are provided with a suitable range of relevant learning opportunities. A satisfactory programme of extra activities and visits adds to the quality.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory; extra help is provided. The support enables pupils to make the progress they should. Pupils in the nursery are identified at an early stage and achieve well.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social	Good attention is paid to fostering pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. Members of staff expect pupils to show good manners, to do the right thing and to consider others at all

Aspect	Comment
and cultural development	times. Assemblies and moments of reflection make a good contribution to pupils' spiritual development and to the ethos of the school. There is good provision to develop pupils' self-esteem and a sense of their own skills and talents. Major strengths in social and moral development are lessened by limited provision to help children appreciate life in a multicultural society.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The teachers and support staff know each child very well and show care and concern for their well-being and safety. Inspection evidence shows that assessment of pupils' academic performance in English, mathematics, science and ICT has improved this year, but this is not the case in other subjects. When pupils in Year 6 were assessed in 2002, full use was not made of the information available and as a result the assessments made were inaccurate.

The school's partnership with parents is good and many are involved in their children's education.

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

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The acting headteacher has led the school well during the past twelve months. She gives a clear sense of purpose and direction to the work of the school and is well supported by the acting deputy headteacher. The role of co-ordinators is under developed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors fulfil most of their legal responsibilities. However, they have not yet approved a policy for racial equality. They have a sound knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory; governors regularly review progress. The school has identified the right priorities for development and put in place effective systems for evaluating teaching and learning throughout the school in mathematics. However, much needs to be done in other subjects.
The strategic use of resources	Good; the strategic use of resources is good, overall. Budget decisions are linked well to the school's educational priorities contained in the school development plan. Monies allocated to areas such as <i>Reading Recovery</i> [a project aimed at helping pupils to develop their reading skills] are used well.

The school is well staffed. There are satisfactory resources overall for all subjects. The school has good systems in the place to ensure best value for money on all purchases. Children have settled well in the new building that enhances the quality of learning.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The teaching is good.</li><li>• The school is well led and managed.</li><li>• Their children are happy and like school.</li><li>• They would feel comfortable in approaching the school with problems.</li><li>• Children are expected to work hard and as a result make good progress.</li><li>• Children behave well and the school helps them to become mature.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The range of activities offered outside of lessons.</li><li>• The work that children are expected to do at home.</li><li>• Better links between school and families.</li><li>• The information they receive about what their children are doing in lessons.</li></ul>

The inspection team agrees with the parents' positive views. The team thinks that children are provided with a satisfactory range of activities outside of lessons but more could be done to keep parents informed about what is on offer. Though the amount of work that pupils are expected to do at home is satisfactory in some classes this is not consistent throughout the school. It could be made clearer to parents what has to be done and when it has to be handed in. The school tries hard to work with parents but does not keep them well informed in Years 1 to 6 about the work their children will do in class.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Children start school with skills that are well below average when compared with those found in other schools. Pupils of all attainment levels achieve well by the time they leave. As a result, most attain the standards expected in Year 6. However, pupils' progress slows in Years 3 and 4 because of weaknesses in teaching. There is no significant difference between the performances of boys and girls.
2. Teachers ensure that pupils have suitable opportunities to use their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. ICT is used in most other subjects. For example, to compose music and word-process stories.
3. Standards in National Curriculum tests in Year 6 in 2002 are in line with those in most schools in English but below average in mathematics and well below average in science. However, in all three subjects the percentage of pupils achieving the expected standard has improved. Three factors have contributed to improving standards. Firstly, in 2002, pupils in Year 6 benefited from being the first class in the school since Year 2 [the school was established in 1998]. Secondly, the introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies led to greater consistency in teachers' planning. Thirdly, the school made better use of information about pupils' learning, especially in mathematics to plan work that allows pupils at different levels of attainment to achieve well. It is not possible to analyse trends in performance.
4. Almost a quarter of pupils in Year 6 has special educational needs and some of these pupils have only just arrived at the school. As a result, the percentage of pupils likely to attain the expected level in English, mathematics and science will be lower this year. Most pupils will attain Level 4. The targets set in English and mathematics are likely to be met. The progress pupils make is satisfactory overall. Good teaching in Years 5 and 6 leads to satisfactory standards in all subjects.
5. Progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. They achieve soundly but sometimes the targets they are expected to work towards on their individual educational plans are not specific enough in Years 3 to 6. The satisfactory progress of pupils owes much to the efforts of the non teaching staff who ensure that most pupils are supported well. Younger pupils who have problems with their reading make good progress because of the additional support they receive.
6. The Foundation Stage provides a very good basis for children's education. Progress during the Foundation Stage is good. However, by the end of the reception year most children are not expected to attain all the early learning goals in language and mathematics. A significant minority will meet them.
7. In both the nursery and reception classes, children's personal, social and emotional development is very good. Nursery children settle quickly into established routines of the school, responding well to the high expectations of the adults. They know that there are rules relating to the number of children who can take part in any one activity and learn to share and take turns at an early stage. Children concentrate well and complete whatever tasks are set. They develop their reading skills well and numeracy skills soundly. They listen attentively to stories. Children talk readily about the characters in their reading books and recognise some key words. More able children have begun to

read simple stories and write sentences without adult help. In other areas of learning most children are expected to achieve the early learning goals.

8. In 2001, the school's results in Year 2 national tests in writing were above average and, in mathematics, in the top five per cent in the country. Reading results were average. In 2002, results in writing were not as good, but along with reading, were broadly average. The percentage of pupils attaining Level 2 and above in mathematics fell slightly but was still above average. Pupils write well, speak and listen to a satisfactory standard and have average reading standards. Standards in science were assessed in both years as being average. Inspection evidence indicates that most pupils are attaining at the expected levels for their ages in reading, writing and science but attaining above average standards in mathematics. In all other subjects inspected standards are in line with those found in most schools. No overall judgements could be made in religious education, physical education and music.
9. In the 2002 National Curriculum tests for pupils in Year 6, standards were average in English, below average in mathematics and well below average in science. However, there was an improvement in standards in all three subjects with the percentage of pupils attaining Level 4 and above rising. In mathematics, there was an improvement of almost 20 percent. In English and science, standards rose by about 10 percentage points. The school compares favourably with similar schools. Results were better than those in similar schools in English and mathematics and in line in science.
10. Because of the number of special educational needs pupils in the current Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science will decline this year, but most pupils will still attain average standards. Pupils have sound scientific knowledge but lack opportunities to organise their own investigations and raise their own questions. Standards in reading are average but progress in developing reading skills is uneven in Years 3 and 4. A major weakness in Years 3 to 6 is pupils' poor spelling skills. More able pupils read with expression and have few difficulties. Good emphasis on correct letter formation in Year 1 is not maintained throughout the school and as a result, standards in handwriting are unsatisfactory in most classes.
11. Standards in Year 6 are average in all other subjects. Pupils' progress throughout Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory overall but is not good enough in Years 3 and 4. This is because of teaching that at times is unsatisfactory. No judgement can be made in religious education, physical education or music. However, standards in singing and in physical education lessons seen were good. Pupils have satisfactory ICT skills and in some classes use them well in other subjects. However, not enough opportunities are provided for them to use their newly acquired skills during lessons.

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

12. Pupils' attitudes to school are satisfactory. Their enthusiasm is apparent when the work is interesting and challenging and they are clear about what they have to do. However, a significant number of pupils do not attend school regularly, this results in attendance that is well below the national average.
13. Children in the Foundation Stage settle quickly into the school's routines and become eager to learn. This is why they achieve well. Very good relationships with teachers and other adults ensure that their behaviour is good and that they follow instructions with care. In other classes, when teachers have high expectations that all pupils will work hard, pupils are eager to take part in activities and work with sustained effort and

concentration. When teaching is less effective and the pace of lessons is slow, for example, in religious education in Year 3, pupils become restless, fail to pay attention and their behaviour is unsatisfactory.

14. Behaviour is good. Pupils are developing an understanding of common values in the setting of classroom rules and why these are important to ensure effective learning. As a result, they settle down quickly to work in most lessons, listen attentively and do as they are told without fuss. At playtimes and lunchtimes pupils behave well. They play together harmoniously without harassment. Bullying is handled firmly by staff. In a good personal, social and health education lesson in Year 6; pupils confidently expressed their ideas about what constitutes bullying and how it should be handled. No exclusions for poor behaviour took place in the last academic year.
15. Pupils' personal development is good. They are continuing to develop their own values and beliefs as well as an awareness of others through discussions in assemblies and in lessons. For example, in a good history lesson in Year 6, pupils demonstrated high levels of maturity when discussing the consequences of child labour and death in Victorian times.
16. Teachers encourage pupils to act independently and to take responsibility for themselves and their learning. This was evident in art and design in Year 5 where pupils used resources responsibly to develop perspective and depth to their work. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good. As a result, most pupils are happy, confident and keen to do well. Relationships between pupils are positive and on the whole they work together well in class.
17. Attendance is poor and has been below average for several years. Unauthorised absence, when parents fail to inform the school of the reasons for their children's absence, is above average. Too many pupils often miss school on Mondays or Fridays or both. This, together with parents who take their children on holiday in term time, has a negative impact on pupils' learning.

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

18. Children enter nursery with overall competencies and experiences that are well below those typical for their age. Good teaching of the younger age groups provides a very firm foundation for further learning. Despite some shortcomings in Years 3 and 4, the high quality of teaching and learning in Years 5 and 6 enables most pupils to reach average levels of attainment by the time they leave the school.
19. Teaching and learning are good overall enabling pupils to achieve well. The school's policy of social inclusion is carried out successfully and as a result pupils feel valued.
20. During the inspection most lessons were good – 95 per cent of lessons were satisfactory or better with five per cent unsatisfactory. The unsatisfactory teaching was in Years 3 and 4. Almost 80 per cent of lessons were good or better and almost 30 per cent were very good or excellent. Care needs to be taken when interpreting these figures as a single lesson is almost two percentage points.
21. When teachers' planning and evidence from pupils' work are taken into account together with the incidences of unsatisfactory teaching, teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 is good. In Years 3 to 6 it is satisfactory overall, with good teaching in Years 5 and 6.

22. In the Foundation Stage all lessons were good or better. Almost half were very good. Particular strengths are in personal and social development, and communication, language and literacy, which receive a prominent focus. Good provision successfully broadens children's knowledge and understanding of the world. The two teachers and support staff work very successfully as a team. Teaching methods work well, are consistent and promote good attitudes in the children, who are eager to learn. There is a good balance and range of activities. All adults have a clear idea of what children know, can do and understand. Observation and recording of progress and early diagnosis of any difficulties are reflected in the provision of a wide range of activities. This enables all children, including those with special needs, to succeed.
23. All the lessons observed in Years 1 and 2 were good or better. Half of them were very good or better, including some excellent teaching. The curriculum is carefully planned and well taught and makes a significant impact on the good quality of learning and the achievement of pupils especially in mathematics.
24. Successful teaching in Years 1 and 2 incorporates good knowledge of how young children learn as well as clear understanding of different subjects. Teachers have very high expectations of pupils. Lessons are well planned, contain achievable objectives and usually proceed at a brisk pace. Classroom assistants usually have a clear role. Teachers use a good variety of methods to build on pupils' previous learning. Questioning is successful and challenges pupils to think. Tasks are well matched to pupils' needs. Classroom management is very good and the positive discipline policy is applied very well. A very good aspect of teaching is the additional support given to pupils who experience difficulties with reading.
25. In Years 3 to 6, over 60 per cent of lessons were good or better. Nearly 15 per cent were very good. Almost all good or better teaching was in Years 5 and 6. Factors that contribute to successful teaching in Years 1 and 2 are also present in Years 5 and 6. There are only a few more able pupils in each class, but challenging work ensures they make at least the progress they should. Unsatisfactory teaching in Years 3 and 4 was in classes taught by permanent members of staff. Common weaknesses include a lack of pace which makes lessons too slow and results in pupils losing interest. Lesson plans lack detail, so that activities do not relate to identified learning objectives and teachers miss opportunities to take pupils' learning further. Some pupils are occasionally excluded from question and answer sessions. Teachers' planning and pupils' work reveal further weaknesses in teaching both year groups over a period of time. For example, pupils' work is untidy and much is left unfinished.
26. Teaching in English and mathematics is good in Years 1, 2, 5 and 6 and the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are well implemented. In Years 1 and 2, teachers encourage pupils to give extensive answers to questions, but in Years 3 and 4 there is insufficient challenge to use the speaking skills they have acquired. As a result pupils do not make the progress they should in developing their speaking skills. Reading records in some junior classes are insufficiently diagnostic to provide pointers for improvement. However, teachers in Years 5 and 6 successfully encourage pupils to read 'beyond the lines' and search for deeper meanings. In Year 1, pupils are taught to form letters correctly but this is not continued and the school lacks a systematic approach to handwriting. A significant weakness in the juniors is a lack of emphasis on correct spelling. Weaknesses in teaching mathematics in Years 3 and 4 impede pupils' progress. Teachers sometimes accept work which is untidy and unfinished. Most teachers have good mathematical knowledge. Lessons are well prepared and organised, and teachers make good use of information from assessment.

27. Teaching and learning is good in science. Most teachers have good knowledge of the subject. They involve pupils in practical activities that deepen their understanding. For example, in Year 5, pupils learned that the highness and lowness of a note is called pitch and successfully investigated the relationship between the speed of vibrations of high and low sounds, by making their own musical instruments from basic materials. However, teachers are not doing enough to involve pupils in setting up investigations and in raising their own questions. Teachers make satisfactory use of pupils' mathematical skills in science, for example, by producing graphs to record the effectiveness of sound insulation.
28. Teaching is good in ICT. Pupils learn key skills as a result of good quality direct teaching in the computer suite. Teachers give clear instructions about how to tackle the work, time to accomplish it and extra help if necessary. Not enough opportunities are provided in some subjects for pupils to practise new skills in the classroom.
29. No overall judgement can be made about teaching and learning in religious education since insufficient lessons were taught during the inspection. Those observed were satisfactory. Conversations with pupils in Years 2 and 6 show that they are taught with satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the subject. Evidence from pupils' work suggests that teachers could extend the use of writing in religious education.
30. Teaching in most other subjects is good overall, with significant strengths. For example, in the very limited number of lessons seen in music, the quality of teaching was very high with some excellent features.
31. Most teachers use a wide range of methods and a variety of suitable resources. As a result, pupils of all attainment levels are suitably challenged. However, adequate resources are not always available in art and design. Visits to places of interest contribute well to pupils' learning. An agreed and systematic means of tracking progress in some subjects is not yet in place.
32. There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2. Their needs are identified well and the necessary help given. Provision is satisfactory in Years 3 to 6 where support is not always available and individual educational plans are not always sufficiently specific. Some parents are concerned about homework. Homework is provided in all classes but the quantity and quality varies. It is very good in Year 1 where parents are provided with written advice about helping their child. The school does not provide parents with enough information about when homework is to be sent home.

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

33. The curriculum meets requirements to teach the National Curriculum and the locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is good. Children are provided with stimulating activities and experiences that cover all areas of learning, preparing them to move easily to work in the National Curriculum. Provision for outdoor play is very good because many practical activities are planned which link with other areas of learning; for example, road safety, number recognition and the development of physical skills such as balancing.
34. The quality of learning opportunities provided for pupils in Years 1 and 2 is good. It is enhanced by the additional support given to pupils through the Reading Recovery Project. Curricular provision for pupils in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory overall. However, in art and design the limited range of resources reduces the scope of learning. Religious education is taught in accordance with the locally Agreed Syllabus, but teachers provide insufficient opportunities for pupils to consolidate their learning through written work.
35. The school implements the national strategies for literacy and numeracy well. Additional time given to teaching English is used effectively to help pupils gain a deeper understanding of texts and to extend the quality and length of their writing. This is helping the school to raise standards in English. Curricular planning is satisfactory. National and locally recommended programmes of work for subjects such as geography and art and design, enable pupils to learn new skills in a consistent way. Most teachers ensure that pupils use their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects, but this is not consistent and opportunities are sometimes missed; as for example, by using measurement in design and technology. There are satisfactory opportunities for pupils to develop ICT skills in a range of subjects. However, more could be done in some subjects.
36. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is satisfactory. The school has become part of the Health Promoting Schools' Initiative and a group of staff and parents have formed a working party to audit what the school does currently. Sex education is satisfactory. Healthy living and drugs education are included in science. Swimming is provided for pupils in Years 2 to 6.
37. A small group of parents are unhappy with the range of extra-curricular activities. Inspection findings demonstrate that provision is satisfactory. A good number of out-of-school clubs is offered over a year, with two or three running each half term. These include cookery, art and computer clubs. Opportunities are limited for older pupils to take part in extra-curricular sports, such as football. However, teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to visit interesting places, for example, Chester to study Roman history. This provides a rich source of knowledge beyond pupils' day-to-day experiences.
38. The school has satisfactory links with the community. Clergy from local churches contribute regularly to assemblies, and pupils in Year 6 entertained the residents of Abbey Field Nursing Home. However, the school makes limited use of visitors; for example, from other faith communities. Links with local schools are good and smooth the way for transition to secondary school. For example, pupils in Year 6 visited Ridgeway High School where they work in the computer suite. Pupils in Year 5 visit the high school to bake bread. Such initiatives enrich the school's curricular provision and improve the quality of learning.

39. Spiritual development is good. Assemblies provide opportunities for moments of reflection and prayer. The high standard of pupils' singing makes a significant contribution to the quality of worship. Music played as pupils enter the hall, and floral displays help to create an atmosphere for quiet thoughts. Questions asked of pupils during assemblies such as "What is precious?" give them good opportunities to reflect on their own experiences. There are sometimes occasions to explore these further within the classroom. For example, pupils in Year 2 talk about what makes them feel sad or happy. Pupils in the lower juniors contribute to a book of 'Special Memories' and pupils in Year 5 demonstrate understanding of different values and the importance of self esteem as part of their personal and social education.
40. Provision for moral development is good. Assemblies frequently have a moral dimension. The school's Code of Conduct is displayed prominently, understood widely and generally observed. The discipline policy works well. A scheme of Star Awards and other incentives are good motivators at a personal and corporate level. Pupils who receive certificates show obvious pride and the system is used well to encourage other pupils. In geography and history, pupils discuss moral issues such as pollution of the environment or why people of 'other times' behaved as they did. The school was awarded the Wirral Society Award for 2002 in recognition of their contribution to improving the local environment.
41. Provision for social development is good. Younger children are quickly expected to become independent within a secure environment. Pupils in Year 6 assist children in the Foundation Stage. Older pupils are given additional responsibilities to help with the smooth running of the school and can develop the range of responsibilities they undertake. Pupils in Year 6 distribute harvest gifts to elderly people and provide musical entertainment at Christmas for the residents of a nearby nursing home. This helps them to understand life in the community. Fund raising for charity, sometimes initiated by pupils and participation in the 'Love in a Box' initiative, helps them to consider those less fortunate in this country and in other parts of the world.
42. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory. In some lessons pupils have good opportunities to learn about their own cultural heritage. These are enhanced by visits to places of interest in the locality such as to concerts by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. In art and music, pupils encounter the works of famous artists, composers and musicians. A few older pupils learn to play the violin, flute and clarinet. Pupils learn about major world faiths in religious education. In Years 3 to 6 they encounter other lifestyles in geography. However, there is scope to increase their awareness of the nature of the multi-cultural diversity, which exists in Britain today.

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

43. The school takes satisfactory care of pupils' health, welfare and safety. Sound arrangements ensure that teachers are competent to identify and deal with issues concerning child protection. Staff are trained adequately in first aid and to take care of pupils who are unwell. The school keeps comprehensive records of accidents and informs parents if their children are injured. This ensures that parents are aware of potential problems arising from injuries. Governors take their responsibility for health and safety seriously with regular checks of the building.
44. Satisfactory procedures exist for monitoring and promoting attendance. A member of staff checks attendance regularly and safeguards pupils' well being by following up

unexplained absence. The class with the highest level of attendance is rewarded during a weekly achievement assembly. Through newsletters, parents are reminded of the importance of good attendance. The school has recently put in place an action plan with targets to improve attendance. With the support of parents the school is now well placed to improve poor attendance.

45. The school has good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. This is reflected in the calm, orderly atmosphere in school and in the good behaviour seen in most lessons. Procedures consist of an agreed code of conduct, rewards and sanctions. Encouragement for positive behaviour is evident in coveted awards in the form of stickers and bronze, silver and gold awards. Pupils are very proud of these awards and are keen to explain how they gain them. Teachers use awards consistently and give strong praise to pupils who deserve it. Poor behaviour is recorded and monitored closely to ensure that no recurrence takes place.
46. Procedures for assessing and monitoring personal development are satisfactory. Personal development is assessed on entry to the nursery. Teachers in the Foundation Stage assess personal development systematically by observing and noting pupils' attitudes and relationships with others. In Years 1 to 6, procedures are less formal with teachers relying mainly on their knowledge of pupils in order to report to parents at the end of each academic year. Teachers and support staff provide pupils with encouragement and guidance founded in positive relationships.
47. The school assesses children's attainment when they start school and their progress in each area of learning is well monitored during the Foundation Stage.
48. In Years 1 to 6, good systems are now in place for the monitoring of pupils' academic performance in mathematics and satisfactory systems in English, science and ICT. These include statutory and non-statutory tests and other informal testing by teachers at suitable times. The school recognises that mistakes were made in 2002 in teacher assessments in Year 6 in English, mathematics and science. Full use was not made of all the information resulting in a disparity between teacher assessments and the results of tests. Results are now analysed and action taken to improve standards in most classes. However, some teachers in lower junior classes do not always take into account what pupils already know and can do when planning work.
49. Arrangements for assessing pupils' learning in other subjects are less well developed. Most teachers evaluate the effectiveness of lessons conscientiously and assess pupil's progress against stated objectives. However, there is no whole-school system for recording these assessments or using the information to plan future lessons. Teachers know pupils well and use their knowledge informally to take account of their personal progress.
50. Reading records are maintained conscientiously but do not always indicate how pupils can improve. Good marking gives advice on how pupils can improve their work but this is not consistent throughout the school.
51. Good systems identify pupils with special educational needs early in the Foundation Stage. Procedures are satisfactory in Years 1 to 6. However, the targets of some individual educational plans are not specific enough to address pupils' needs. When assessment information is used to write targets it has a positive effect on pupils' progress because the work is matched to their ability. Pupils are supported well and their self esteem and confidence are raised at every opportunity.

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

52. Most parents have positive views of the school. They are pleased that their children enjoy lessons and feel comfortable in approaching the school about problems. They think that teaching is good, that the school is well led and managed and that teachers expect their children to work hard and behave well. Inspection findings confirm these favourable opinions. Some parents question the amount of homework teachers set and think that there are too few activities to interest pupils after lessons. Inspectors judge that although the school provides a satisfactory range of activities outside lessons more could be done to keep parents informed about what is on offer. Similarly, although the amount of work that pupils are expected to do at home is satisfactory overall, this is not consistent across all classes.
53. Some parents think that the school does not keep them well enough informed of their children's progress or work closely enough with them. The school tries hard to involve parents in the education of their children. For example, family literacy, numeracy and ICT courses, enable parents to learn alongside their children. Parents of children in the Foundation Stage are well informed through open days and good written guidance about their children's learning and how they can best support them. This is less successful for parents in Years 2 to 6 where the school does not provide sufficient information about the work their children will do in class. Reports to parents about their children's progress are satisfactory. The best examples tell parents clearly what their children achieve in different subjects and contain helpful targets for future learning. They also inform parents about their children's personal development. However, in some classes reports are peppered with incomprehensible jargon and do little to help parents who want to increase their children's learning.
54. Parents and grandparents are welcome to provide help for teaching and learning in classrooms and some do so on a regular basis. Others successfully support the school by sharing their expertise, accompanying educational visits and raising additional funds. The school encourages parents to extend their children's learning at home. From the time children start school in the nursery, teachers encourage parents to share books with them at home. The effectiveness of parental support is evident in the standards attained and in the interest many pupils have in reading.

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

55. Leadership and management by the governors, acting headteacher and key staff are satisfactory. Administrative staff provide valuable support that ensures that the school runs smoothly.
56. The acting headteacher provides good leadership. During the past year she has given a clear sense of purpose and direction to the work of the school. She has successfully co-ordinated extensive refurbishment to the old infant school and the building of a four-classroom extension. This involved addressing health and safety issues and transferring pupils from Years 3 to 6 to the new building. Despite this pressure, she has ensured that the school met its targets in English and mathematics and achieved the best test results in Year 6 for four years. The acting deputy headteacher provides good support and works hard to ensure that the school functions well. Although co-ordinators are dedicated to the needs of the school, they lack training and time to monitor and evaluate their subjects. As a result, they are not totally aware of what needs to be done to raise standards.

57. The governing body is supportive and makes a sound contribution to managing the school. Governors are highly appreciative of the work of the acting headteacher and through her detailed reports have a sound knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, the governing body's role in strategic planning is at an early stage of development because it still relies too much on the acting headteacher to draw up and monitor the school's development plan.
58. Through their committees, governors fulfil most legal responsibilities. Committees for finance, and health and safety meet regularly and monitor developments. However, due to recent changes of governors, it has been difficult to convene curriculum meetings and as a result, a policy for racial equality has not been approved.
59. Procedures for monitoring the implementation of policies and the quality of provision are satisfactory. The school has good systems for evaluating teaching and learning in mathematics. However, much needs to be done in other subjects to ensure that agreed policies are put into practice. The school has recently put in place good procedures for assessing pupils' achievements in mathematics and satisfactory procedures in English, science and ICT. Test results are analysed and the information used well to set targets for improvements. However, the school does not make good use of assessment information to plan strategies that will improve standards and learning in all subjects.
60. Financial planning and control are satisfactory. Financial procedures and regulations are clear. The recommendations of a recent audit have been acted upon. The finance committee monitors spending on a regular basis. There are good systems for ordering goods and services and value for money is evaluated on all purchases. The school is aware that the budget will not sustain present staffing levels and is consulting with all relevant parties to rectify the situation. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis and good use is made of ICT in this work and to manage the budget. Money allocated to special educational needs is used well. The school does not receive any other additional grants from local or national initiatives.
61. The management and organisation of provision for pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory. Extra help is provided for most pupils who need it. The support provided enables these pupils to make the same progress as the rest of the class. Children with learning difficulties in the Foundation Stage are identified at an early stage and achieve well. Inconsistencies exist in individual educational plans. They are not always specific enough to provide guidance for teachers' planning.
62. There is a satisfactory match between the numbers, experience and qualifications of teachers and the needs of the planned curriculum. The school's programme of staff training allows teachers to increase their knowledge of different subjects. This has been especially successful in improving teachers' expertise in ICT. The provision of support staff is good and has a significant impact on pupils' reading.
63. Following many changes over recent years, pupils are now taught in one building, in highly suitable accommodation. A suite of computers, is used well throughout the day. Improvements are particularly effective in teaching areas in the Foundation Stage. A secure outdoor area is used very effectively for a range of learning opportunities. The caretaker and cleaners keep the school clean and in good order. Good standards of decoration make the school a bright and welcoming place to learn.

64. While resources are satisfactory, storage problems mean that they are not always accessible.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

65. In order to improve the quality of education even further the governors, acting headteacher and staff should:

**(1) improve the quality of teaching in Years 3 and 4 by:**

- providing the necessary training and support;
- ensuring that classes are managed well and that activities sufficiently challenge all pupils;
- sharing the good practice that already exists in the school;

*[See paragraphs 25, 26, 83, 86, 93 and 110 in the main report]*

**(2) ensure that information from assessment is used to determine appropriate learning targets for pupils in all subjects:**

*[See paragraphs 49, 59, 120, 129, 140 and 146 in the main report]*

**(3) involve curriculum coordinators in monitoring and evaluating their subjects by:**

- ensuring they have the necessary skills to carry out these responsibilities;
- providing time and support for them to do it;
- ensuring that the information gathered is used to raise standards of attainment in their subjects.

*[See paragraphs 56, 90, 11, 120, 129, 140 and 146 in the main report]*

The school has already recognised the above mentioned areas as ones for development.

**(4) improve pupils' spelling and handwriting and their correct application in written work**

*[See paragraphs 79, 85, 107 and 125 in the main report]*

**(5) improve pupils' attendance levels:**

*[See paragraph 17 in the main report]*

**Other areas for development that should be considered by the school:**

- The adoption of the racial equality policy and other policies awaiting approval.
- Opportunities for pupils to formulate their own questions in science and plan investigations.
- Establishing ways to ensure parents are kept better informed about the work pupils are doing and a more consistent approach to homework provision.
- Improving the quality of individual educational plans for pupils with special educational needs.

*[See paragraphs 52, 53, 58, 61 and 107 in the main report]*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	61
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	27

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	17	30	10	3	0	0
Percentage	2	28	49	16	5	0	0

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

### 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)	18	202
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A	102

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	8	62

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	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	37

### Attendance

#### Authorized absence

	%
School data	6.6

#### Unauthorized absence

	%
School data	1.0

National comparative data	5.6
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National comparative data	0.5
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*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)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2002	24	11	35

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	19	18	21
	Girls	10	11	11
	Total	29	29	32
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	83[95]	88[100]	91[100]
	National	84[84]	86[86]	90[91]

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	18	21	19
	Girls	10	11	11
	Total	28	32	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	80[97]	91[95]	88[90]
	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)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2002	18	15	33

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	15	13	15
	Girls	13	9	12
	Total	28	22	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	85[75]	67[48]	82[73]
	National	75[75]	73[71]	86[87]

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	8	9	12
	Girls	4	4	7
	Total	12	13	19
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	36[70]	39[55]	58[66]
	National	73[72]	74[74]	82[82]

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



Number of pupils per FTE adult	6
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Recruitment of teachers**

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

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

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	220
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.	52	42	3	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	42	51	5	2	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	41	51	6	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	38	25	5	10
The teaching is good.	47	47	5	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	36	48	13	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	59	36	5	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	48	47	2	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	20	61	14	0	5
The school is well led and managed.	30	64	5	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	33	54	6	2	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	11	44	19	11	15

**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**

66. Good and very good teaching in the nursery and reception classes ensures that children make a good start to their education. It is the result of very successful teamwork of all the adults who work in the Foundation Stage and the provision of a wide range of activities that enable all children to succeed. The Foundation Stage co-ordinator is very well informed. Both teachers have very good understanding of children's needs. Their very analytical approach to teaching results in high quality provision. By their own example they promote a very good ethos for learning which they share successfully with the other adults responsible for the children's learning. All are very well aware of what children know, can do and understand.
67. Children's attainment on entry is well below that typical of children of a similar age. They make good progress because of the good quality and range of learning opportunities. However, by the end of the reception year most do not achieve all that is expected in some aspects of communication, language and literacy and in mathematical development.
68. Children are admitted to the nursery on a part-time basis at the age of three. They enter the reception class prior to their fifth birthday and there is a gradual transition to attending full time. Children with special educational needs are identified at an early stage and provided with the support they need. A very successful workshop that was very well attended by parents heightened their awareness of pursuing mathematical activities in everyday situations.

**Personal, Social and Emotional Development.**

69. Although a small number of children have yet to settle fully into their schooling, the achievement of the great majority is good and they are on track to attain standards set for children when they start in Year 1. The quality of teaching is good and expectations are high. From their earliest weeks in the nursery, children's activities are arranged to promote a sense of belonging. Relationships are very good. Very good strategies are in operation to develop concentration, independence and to show care and concern for others. In the reception class, children persevere well with their own selected activities and concentrate fully when being taught in small and large groups. They show good levels of independence, such as in personal hygiene or when putting on clothing for outdoor play. Children display an increased willingness to share equipment with others, to take turns and to observe the rules of the classroom. For example, almost all knew they should wear a 'band' in order to signify the number of children playing in the sand. The special lunch time arrangements for those who attend full time are very good in promoting a feeling of security and confidence within familiar surroundings.

**Communication, Language and Literacy.**

70. Work in this area of learning receives a prominent focus, featuring strongly in the planning for each area of learning and in all activities in the nursery and reception classes. However, despite very good progress in reading and satisfactory progress in writing and language, only a small proportion of children are likely to achieve the goals set nationally in this area of learning. Literature is well promoted. Children have frequent access to a wide range of texts and enjoy listening to stories both 'live', for example, in story time when they visit the local library, and when using earphones and

a tape recorder. A very good strategy in the nursery was used well to promote learning. The teacher used a home-made book, which related to children's own experiences, to initiate interest in the written word. Children's writing shows that, at this stage in the year, less able children in the nursery have considerable difficulties with pencil control. More able children are already being taught to form letters correctly. In the reception class the more able write recognisable sentences such as "I am the tallest person in class." However, most children by the end of the reception year are unlikely to achieve what is expected. They find letter formation difficult and have poor spelling skills. Teachers make close observations of children's progress and use the findings of assessment to set targets for individual children.

71. Teachers in the nursery and reception classes provide plenty of opportunities for children to join in discussions and to listen to what others say. For example, they use puppets in an imaginative way to capture children's interest and to evoke responses. They create very good opportunities to introduce children to unfamiliar items. For example, teachers ask children to taste different vegetables, some of which are unfamiliar. The experience successfully enriches children's vocabulary. However, despite teachers' efforts many children have limited vocabulary by the end of the reception year. They lack confidence in the use of language to imagine and to organise, clarify and sequence their thinking.

### **Mathematical Development.**

72. The children are learning well in this aspect of their development but by the end of the reception year most will not achieve the goals set for their learning. This is because children do not have a quick command of numbers and are not confident in using the correct vocabulary to name mathematical objects. Teaching is good. Teachers use number songs, counting, matching and sequencing activities well to encourage children to develop their knowledge of numbers. For example, children in a small nursery group successfully counted two items to place on their plates as part of a 'pretend picnic'. In the reception class, with guidance children used two and sometimes three objects to repeat patterns. In groups with their teacher, children successfully used numbers and played number games using dice and counters to six.
73. Children are beginning to understand comparative measures such as longer, taller and shortest and sometimes use plane shapes to create their own pictures. They use solid shapes in 'junk modelling' to make three-dimensional 'robots'. They learn about symmetry when they create butterfly prints. Both classes use the outdoor area very well for a wide range of mathematical activities. However, progress is sometimes limited because children lack the appropriate vocabulary.

### **Knowledge and Understanding of the World.**

74. Children make very good progress in this area. They come to school with a more limited range of experiences than is usually found and consequently lack the associated vocabulary. Teaching is very good. The way that topics are organised ensures that children's interest is maintained. For example, visits to places such as the Blue Planet Aquarium, and seasonal walks in the locality enrich pupils' experience. The expectation by teachers for children to talk about their visits adds a valuable dimension to their learning. A prize-winning garden provides excellent learning opportunities. Children sow seeds and observe closely how they germinate and grow. As a result they realise the importance of water and light in promoting healthy growth. The harvesting of tiny carrots promoted good questions about what they look like and how they had grown. Reception children recorded the growth of tomato plants using a stick.

Photographs of a vehicle workshop, weather station and a wide range of other activities, show that teachers provide children with very good opportunities to use an extensive range of tools, implements and equipment for making and building. As a result children develop well the skills they need. Technological resources, including the use of the computer, are a valuable part of their learning. Programmes such as 'Pick a Picture' allow pupils to gain in confidence and experience in using the mouse by moving figures around on the computer. Teachers encourage children to celebrate events in their own lives, and talk about their families. These opportunities enable them to use their speaking and listening skills well. Major Christian festivals are celebrated and teachers introduce children to the customs of other cultures.

### **Physical Development.**

75. Most children start school with manipulative skills that are below those typical of their age. Teaching and learning in this area are good and by the end of the reception year most children are likely to achieve the goals set. Teachers plan their work so that children experience frequent and regular access to vigorous play in the outside area. This ensures that children learn to move with increasing control and dexterity. For example, they balance and climb with confidence using the equipment available. Lessons in the hall successfully promote confidence and increase bodily awareness. Both classrooms have been refurbished and there is plenty of space for children to use a wide range of tools, other equipment and materials. Children gain in confidence and develop good control over pencils, crayons, paintbrushes and other tools.

### **Creative Development.**

76. Teaching is good in this area of learning and children meet the targets set for their attainment by the end of the reception year. Children in both classes use materials such as dough, paint, construction toys and crayons to make models and pictures, both individually and in groups. A series of painted flower pictures using sponges and lollipop sticks for printing are a delightful example of high quality work produced by the children. A range of musical instruments is available and children enjoy memorising songs, chants and rhymes. Children engage in role-play based on their own first-hand experiences. However, teachers miss opportunities to use imaginative role-play to improve children's language skills even further.
77. Information and workshops provided for parents are of a very high quality. The newly built accommodation is spacious and well planned. The very good resources are used well. However, there is a lack of storage for the large outdoor apparatus.

### **ENGLISH**

78. Standards in English in Years 2 and 6 are in line with those expected nationally. Standards in this year's Year 6 will not be as high as in 2002 because of the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs.
79. Pupils start Year 1 with below average skills in English. They make good progress and achieve standards that are broadly average by the end of Year 2. This is because teachers provide work at exactly the right level and concentrate on developing pupils' choice of vocabulary in writing. The very good teaching of the Reading Recovery programme is also a significant factor. In Years 3 and 4, insufficient progress is made, but in Years 5 and 6 progress is accelerated and pupils catch up because of the good teaching they receive. Thus, overall, pupils of all attainment levels make good progress

during their time in school. A significant weakness in teaching in Years 3 to 6 is the lack of emphasis on accurate spelling. Teachers sometimes mark spelling mistakes in pupils' work, but many do not insist that pupils correct and learn from these mistakes. Pupils frequently spell words incorrectly that they copy from texts because teachers do not insist on accuracy.

80. Following an analysis of results of national tests, the school focused on writing last year. Extra time was allocated to extending writing to include greater choice of vocabulary, and to provide opportunities for pupils to write in different styles. This is successful and standards are rising. Pupils now write for a variety of purposes because teachers provide a good range of work such as story writing, comprehension, instructions and making lists. Pupils are encouraged to extend the scope and length of their writing as teachers ask questions such as *What does the character look like? How does he act?* As a result, a more able pupil in Year 2 wrote phrases such as *an oval shaped face* or *a brown, furry body* when describing a wolf. As they move through the school, pupils continue to write in a range of genres. For example, pupils in Year 5 read a poem entitled *Bears and Lions* and successfully changed this into a story suitable for children in the reception class. Others were challenged to change the story text of *The Dancing Bear* into a newspaper report. This enabled pupils to find a favoured style, and is one reason why pupils in Year 6 are now attaining standards broadly in line with national averages.
81. Pupils' listening and speaking skills are satisfactory. This is because most teachers speak clearly and provide interesting whole-class teaching sessions. They manage pupils' behaviour well so that pupils listen politely. Many pupils have well below average speaking skills when they start school. From this low start, they make good progress. Teachers in Years 1 and 2 continuously try to encourage pupils to talk at greater length and to use a wider vocabulary. They provide opportunities for them to discuss in pairs, and to tell the rest of the class about their work. Teachers explain clearly the meaning of new words and, as a result, pupils continually increase their vocabulary. In Years 3 to 6, progress is sometimes inconsistent. While most teachers continue to develop pupils' understanding and choice of new words, teachers of pupils in Years 3 and 4 do not challenge them sufficiently to use their speaking skills. In some of the lessons pupils were passive, with only a few answering the teacher's questions. This means that many pupils in Year 6 need considerable prompting before they give their opinions, because they lack the confidence to share their views. Good teaching in this class ensures that pupils improve.
82. In Years 1 and 2 standards in reading are in line with those expected nationally. Pupils' attainment in national tests has steadily improved over the last four years. Pupils make good progress because teachers continually assess pupils' needs and provide books and activities at the right level. Pupils are taught a range of strategies to read unfamiliar words. They are taught to look for clues in pictures, and to sound out letters. This ensures that pupils have the skills to try new words, enabling them to become confident readers by the end of Year 2. The very good teaching provided for individual pupils via the Reading Recovery project helps pupils of below average attainment to make very good progress, with most achieving levels appropriate to their age by the end of the twenty-week sessions. This is a real success for the school, and a significant reason why pupils do well with 83 per cent of pupils achieving Level 2 or above in the 2002 national tests.
83. Although pupils' attainment is broadly average in reading by the age of 11, progress is uneven between Years 3 and 6. In Years 5 and 6, teachers develop pupils' comprehension skills well by encouraging them to look for deeper meanings in texts.

For example, pupils in Year 6 considered the choice of words used by the author Laurie Lee when describing his first day at school, successfully identifying his feelings and concerns. Pupils make satisfactory progress during teacher led reading lessons and many share books at home. However, in Years 3 and 4, progress in reading is uneven because teachers do not have high expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving. In these classes, pupils read infrequently to an adult. This is not affecting high attaining pupils who are well motivated and read often for pleasure.

84. The quality of teachers' reading records in Years 3 to 6 varies from good to unsatisfactory. In some, there are too few diagnostic comments to help guide individual improvement. Some pupils keep one book for an inappropriate length of time. Discussion with pupils indicates that, while they have a sound understanding of how to locate information in reference books and dictionaries, they do not use them frequently to support their work in other subjects.
85. Standards in handwriting are unsatisfactory in most classes. In Year 1, the teacher gives good emphasis to careful letter formation and presentation, but this is not so in the rest of the school. Most teachers do not systematically teach a cursive script. As a result, pupils use a mixture of styles and are not taught to develop a legible, fluid handwriting script. The comments that teachers make on pupils' work do not often enough remind pupils of the need to be neat and, consequently, pupils do not take sufficient care with their work.
86. Teaching is good in Years 1, 2, 5 and 6. Teaching in Years 3 and 4 is at best satisfactory but sometimes unsatisfactory. Where teaching is good, teachers have implemented the National Literacy Strategy well, and lessons are interesting and well matched to pupils' abilities. Pupils are clear about the work because teachers explain tasks carefully and choose relevant reading material in whole class text and word level parts of the literacy lesson. Very good lessons in Years 1 and 6 have a brisk pace, so that no time is wasted and there is a real focus on learning. Pupils make very good progress because teachers provide good opportunities to revise earlier work and to build on this knowledge in the next lesson. Unsatisfactory teaching is characterised by pupils completing insufficient work. In Years 3 and 4, teachers have low expectations of what pupils can do, and sometimes accept work that is untidy or incomplete. Because teachers' expectations are not high enough, pupils make insufficient progress. In one unsatisfactory lesson the teacher spent too long on the lesson introduction, leaving pupils too little time to complete written work. The school has invested in additional teachers in Years 2 and 6. This is used very well to support pupils in small groups, but is used less well in whole-class teaching because the supporting teacher has no clear, planned role at this time.
87. A good feature of teaching is the way in which teachers use visits to enrich and inspire pupils' written work. For example, the writing of pupils in Year 5 about an escape from an abbey was well informed by their earlier visit to Birkenhead Priory.
88. Behaviour is good and most pupils show positive attitudes to learning. Relationships between adults and pupils are very good, with mutual respect and a sense of order evident. Pupils are treated equally, and in most classes make progress in line with their abilities. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of the well organised targeted support they receive.
89. ICT is used soundly to support work in English. Pupils have a weekly word-processing lesson and build up suitable knowledge and skills as they move through the school. They are beginning to use CD ROMs for information retrieval; for example, pupils

interrogated information on bone structure in a science lesson. Teachers ensure that skills taught in English are applied satisfactorily in other subjects; for example, using bullet points when writing a recipe in design and technology, or writing up an experiment about light sources in science.

90. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory overall but have some weaknesses. There is a lack of written guidance to outline the teaching of reading, spelling, writing, speaking and listening, or to give guidance on handwriting and presentation. Senior managers now systematically track the attainment and progress of cohorts, groups and individual pupils to ensure that standards are being maintained and targets met, and to provide additional support to targeted pupils. The school has recognised that in compiling the teacher assessments in English for pupils in Year 6 in 2002 not all the information available was used and as a result there was a major discrepancy between the actual test results and what teachers predicted pupils would achieve. Tests are used to help teachers identify weaknesses and plan relevant future work. A significant weakness is the lack of consistent monitoring of teaching and learning in classrooms.

## **MATHEMATICS**

91. Standards are above average by the end of Year 2 and broadly average by the end of Year 6. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress overall. Significant factors contributing to pupils' good achievements are the successful introduction and implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy and teaching that is consistently of a good quality in Years 1 and 2 and Years 5 and 6.
92. Inspection evidence demonstrates that pupils start in Year 1 with below average skills and most leave Year 2 with above average skills. This represents very good progress. There is no significant difference between the results of boys and girls.
93. Improvements to standards in this year's Year 6 are due to the fact that the school now has a clearer view of the precise standards that pupils are achieving throughout the school. It is making much better use of the information from assessment to plan suitable work for different groups of pupils in Years 5 and 6. There are more pupils with special educational needs in the current Year 6 class and this will adversely affect overall standards this year. Although progress for many pupils has improved, pupils in Years 3 and 4 do not make sufficient progress. Most pupils are not being challenged enough in these age groups.
94. In Years 1 and 2, an above average number of pupils are working successfully at tasks that are at a higher level than expected for their age. They count quickly and accurately in fives and tens forwards and backwards to 100. They know many different ways of making ten by adding or subtracting. Higher attainers have a very good knowledge of the names and properties of two- and three-dimensional shapes and are developing good problem-solving skills. This was apparent in Year 2 when pupils worked out the exact time a passenger got off a bus after travelling for half an hour. A scrutiny of previous work indicates that a large majority of pupils can double numbers and work out the answers to simple money problems. Higher attaining pupils understand analogue and digital time.
95. Throughout Years 3 to 6, pupils make satisfactory progress overall. Good progress is made in Years 5 and 6. Pupils in Year 6 have a sound grasp of multiplication and recognise the value of digits in numbers such as 25, 390 and 740,092. They use

different strategies to carry out mental work quickly. They enjoy this aspect of work and the first part of lessons gives them good opportunities to develop speed and accuracy in their ability to work things out in their heads. For example, when asked to work out the saving on a television set costing £655 if it was reduced by 10% in a sale, higher attainers had no difficulty finding the correct answer. However, they found it hard to calculate how much they would actually have to pay. Discussions held with pupils indicate that most have a secure understanding of the relationship between decimals, fractions and percentages and a wide repertoire of mathematical vocabulary that they can use well. In Years 3 and 4 progress is sometimes unsatisfactory because pupils are not given work that is challenging enough.

96. Most pupils have positive attitudes to mathematics. When teaching is interesting and stimulating they are attentive and work well together. There are usually good opportunities for pupils to answer questions and to suggest alternative ways of working things out which they enjoy. When teaching is less rigorous, pupils respond less positively. For example, the presentation of the work in their books in Years 3 and 4 is less consistent than that found in Years 5 and 6.
97. Teachers provide satisfactory opportunities for pupils to use mathematics in subjects such as, for example, science to produce graphs that show the best insulating materials. Time lines are used well in history lessons and in one lesson, ICT was used effectively to enable pupils to use previously recorded data to produce pie charts or bar graphs.
98. The quality of teaching is good overall in Years 1 and 2 and Years 5 and 6. However, there are significant weaknesses in teaching in Years 3 and 4 that have an adverse effect upon pupils' progress and the standards being achieved.
99. Most teachers have a good understanding of mathematics and high expectations of pupils' learning. They plan very well within the framework of the National Numeracy Strategy and lessons are well prepared and organised. In Years 1 and 2, very good account is taken of the needs of all pupils and work is well matched to the range of attainment in each class. In these two classes, very good use of resources helps to make mathematical processes clearer. For example, in Year 2, the teacher used number fans and white boards to ensure that all pupils could contribute their answers. Most teachers are good at encouraging pupils to work problems out for themselves and to explain to the rest of the class how they reached their answers. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, the aims of a lesson were unclear and the work too difficult for pupils with special educational needs. Pupils' exercise books shows that they are often allowed to hand in unfinished work that is untidy and incorrect.
100. In good lessons, the quality of learning is also good. In most classes teachers make mathematics fun and lessons interesting. They make good use of paired working to encourage pupils to discuss their work and place strong emphasis on the correct use of mathematical language. This was very much in evidence when pupils were taught the properties of different shapes.
101. The co-ordinator, who is also the acting headteacher, has very good understanding of strengths and weaknesses in the subject. She monitors and evaluates the quality of teaching and learning. Assessments of pupils' learning are now of good quality and provide consistent records of the progress made by individual pupils. In most classes this information is used well to track the progress of groups and individual pupils and to plan future work. However, weaknesses remain in Years 3 and 4. Teachers in these years do not get enough guidance and support to ensure consistency throughout the

school. The school recognises that teacher assessments in mathematics in Year 6 were flawed in 2002 because not all the available information was taken into account when judgements were made. There are good resources for the subject. Equipment is of good quality and is well organised.

## SCIENCE

102. Standards in science have improved over the past four years. This rise in standards is attributable to improvements in the quality of the science curriculum and to good teaching that is boosting pupils' learning in Years 5 and 6. A key factor is the teachers' focus on encouraging pupils' oral responses and the use of correct scientific language. This is enhancing pupils' understanding. Pupils of all attainment levels achieve well in most classes and attain standards that compare favourably with those found in most schools. However, progress in Year 3 and 4 is not as good because the work pupils are expected to do is not challenging enough and teaching is sometimes unsatisfactory. Throughout the school there is no noticeable difference between the performance of boys and girls.
103. Inspection findings shows that there is a higher than average number of pupils in Year 6 this year with special educational needs and this will adversely affect standards in the subject. However, most pupils will achieve the expected level. Not enough emphasis is placed on giving pupils the opportunity to formulate their own questions and to plan investigations for themselves.
104. Evidence from lessons, a scrutiny of previous work and talking to pupils shows that the proportion of pupils in Year 6 working at the higher level is about the same as you would find in most schools and overall standards are average. Pupils of all attainment levels make satisfactory progress.
105. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a good understanding of what humans and plants need for healthy growth. They are familiar with the main parts of the body and can describe healthy diets. Satisfactory opportunities are provided for pupils to use their writing skills. For example, stories of what they would do if they were a ladybird. A plant diary gives them a good opportunity to record their observations. For example, one child wrote, *the roots grew first*. Pupils know that all light comes from the sun.
106. Very good teaching in Year 1 ensures that pupils know the importance of making a test fair. A clear explanation and very good questioning ensure by the end of the lesson pupils of all attainment levels have a good understanding of why a test should be fair. When undertaking an experiment to test which materials are waterproof pupils showed a keen interest. They observed with amazement the different levels of absorption when water was dripped on the materials. Analysis of previous work shows that pupils in Year 1 can name the properties of materials. Pupils in Year 2 can name the parts of a flower and know how electrical circuits light up a bulb. They know that a push or a pull is needed to change the shape of an object. However, in both classes, pupils are provided with too few opportunities to make simple predictions of what they think they will find. As a result their scientific skills are not being developed as well as they might be.
107. At the end of Year 6, pupils have a satisfactory range of the scientific knowledge and understanding required by the National Curriculum. Pupils of all attainment levels make suitable progress. Work from the previous year shows that teachers provide a range of activities that help to develop pupils' scientific knowledge. Most pupils know how to

carry out a fair test. They have a sound understanding of physical processes. For example, older pupils know that objects are pulled towards the earth because of gravitational attraction and that this causes objects to have weight. Pupils use a forcemeter correctly and record their findings accurately in Newtons. Younger pupils make good use of a visit to Thurstaston Park to reinforce their knowledge of food chains. Pupils clearly explain the difference between translucent, transparent, and opaque. However, their exercise books show that pupils often spell these and other technical words, incorrectly. Previous work shows that occasionally the work in Years 3 and 4 is too directed by worksheets and there is little opportunity for pupils to formulate their own questions or set up their own experiments. As a result, more able pupils in these two year groups do not make good enough progress.

108. When given the opportunity, pupils make satisfactory use of mathematics in science. They display their findings in graphical form. Little or no use is made of ICT.
109. Pupils respond well in most science lessons. They show curiosity, work co-operatively particularly in pairs and follow their teachers' instructions conscientiously. They are sensible in how they approach the work, how they share and use equipment and how they discuss their findings with one another. Some of the topics they study, for example, healthy living, make a good contribution to their moral development.
110. Teaching is good overall in Years 1, 2, 5 and 6. However, unsatisfactory teaching was observed in Year 3 where the teacher lacked subject knowledge and pupils made no progress in improving their scientific knowledge. Evidence from previous work also shows unsatisfactory teaching in Year 4. In both Years 3 and 4, work is not organised to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. Teachers in other year groups plan and prepare science lessons with care, making sure that pupils have access to the resources they need. Good or often very good teaching is evident in Years 1, 2, 5 and 6. In these classes, teachers use questions well to move pupils on to new levels of understanding. They use relevant scientific terminology and explain tasks clearly at the beginning of lessons. This ensures that pupils understand what is expected from them and as a result the quality of learning is good. Previous work shows that teachers in some classes are not giving enough attention to correct spelling and ensuring that pupils' handwriting is of a good quality.
111. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The co-ordinator has very good subject knowledge but has not monitored teaching and learning in science. As a result, she lacks clear understanding of what needs to be done to further raise standards. Discrepancies exist between teacher assessments in science in Year 6 and the results of national tests in 2002 as a result of some information not being available when assessments were carried out. The school has satisfactory arrangements to gather information about pupils' learning in science. Teachers make good use of end of topic assessments. However, insufficient use is made of assessment to find out how to raise standards or to track pupils' achievements. A new scheme of work this term draws on national guidance about what pupils should learn. It is too early to judge its impact on standards. Resources are of a good quality and stored well.

## **ART AND DESIGN and DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

112. Pupils in Year 6 achieve standards that are typical for their age in art and design. No judgement can be made about standards in design and technology or of teaching because of insufficient evidence. By the end of Year 2, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, reach standards in art and design and design and

technology that are in line with those found in most schools. Teachers give effective demonstrations so that pupils have a good understanding about new techniques, and so approach work confidently. As a result the quality of learning is good.

113. In art and design, by the age of seven, pupils work with a suitable range of materials. For example, they confidently mix paints to find shades of a colour, and combine natural materials such as twigs and stones to create individual sculptures. In design and technology pupils gain a sound understanding of designing and making because teachers plan work carefully over a number of lessons, ensuring pupils have the background information they need. For example, in Year 2, pupils made hand puppets. In previous lessons they had examined a variety of hand puppets, drawn and labelled diagrams, produced a pattern, and experimented with joining techniques such as sewing and staples.
114. In art and design by the end of Year 6, pupils can name famous artists, and successfully incorporate the differing techniques in their own artwork. For example, in Year 6, pupils drew figures in the style of L S Lowry, successfully capturing his style when drawing figures. Pupils displayed satisfactory sketching techniques and good understanding of perspective when drawing still life compositions. Photographs and teachers' planning for design and technology indicate that pupils are taught most aspects of the subject. For example, pupils work with textiles when designing slippers, and construct vehicles with moving parts. When making bread, pupils in Year 5 showed sound understanding of the design process. They first examined different types of bread, listed ingredients and methods, and evaluated the taste and appearance of the finished results. All pupils make satisfactory progress.
115. Teaching in art and design is satisfactory overall, and some of it is good. Good teaching occurs because teachers are clear about the skills pupils need to complete new work, and provide activities that build carefully on previous learning. Pupils work with concentration, enthusiasm and good degrees of independence because teachers prepare lessons well, and clarify their purpose. A good feature of teaching is the way teachers promote the work of famous artists. For example, pupils in Year 5 learnt about Cézanne wrote comments about his painting and produced artwork in a similar style. The effect of this is that the quality of pupils' work improves and pupils talk enthusiastically about the artist.
116. Teachers plan interesting work in design and technology that motivates and interests pupils. As a result, pupils of all attainment levels make the progress they should. In design and technology, pupils in Year 2 were given a suitable brief to make puppets which fitted their hands. The puppets were joined safely with no sharp edges.
117. Teachers sometimes use the skills they teach in art and design technology to support work in other subjects. For example, pupils practise writing when compiling lists of ingredients for healthy sandwiches. However, in Years 3 to 6, much of the art on display in other subjects was colouring in and teachers missed opportunities to use a variety of materials or to practise artistic skills. Also in design and technology, there is limited use of the measurement skills pupils learn in mathematics being applied to their designs.
118. Teachers are beginning to use ICT to promote learning in art and design. Younger pupils work on self-portraits in paint and pencil, and then use paint programs to design and create similar portraits. Pupils in Year 5 use a graphics-modelling program to build shapes into a variety of structures.

119. Pupils have good attitudes to learning. They concentrate well and show a good degree of creative effort. They handle resources with care. In the lessons seen, pupils behaved well. Teachers give sound opportunities for pupils to work in pairs and small groups, enabling them to share and negotiate. The self-esteem of pupils in Year 6 was raised when their work was displayed in The Williamson Art Gallery.
120. The subject co-ordinators are not monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms. They do not routinely examine teachers' plans. As a result, teachers do not always have the materials they require to teach well. Resources are limited in some lessons and pupils are unable to choose from a range of tools and materials. This limits opportunities for pupils to experiment with, and combine materials, or to use one medium in different ways. For example, when sketching figures, pupils in Year 6 used unsuitable pencils, and could not experiment with tone and line. The school lacks a consistent approach to collecting information about pupils' learning. However, while focusing on driving up standards in English, mathematics and science, the school has maintained a satisfactory balance of lessons in both subjects. Improvements in the procedures for collecting information from assessment, improvements to the quality and storage of resources and the monitoring of teaching will put the school in a better position to raise standards. The weekly creative arts club for older pupils is proving to be beneficial.

## **GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY**

121. It was possible to observe only a few lessons during the inspection. This small sample included history in Years 3 to 6 and geography in Years 1 and 2. Judgements in both subjects draw on information from the teachers' planning, examination of pupils' work – including that from the previous school year, evidence from display and conversations with teachers and pupils.
122. Pupils in Years 1 and 2, including those with special needs, make satisfactory progress in geography. Many start with limited vocabulary. Standards are similar to those found in most schools and the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers work hard to promote understanding and correct usage of technical terms. Pupils behave well, and work amicably in pairs when required to do so. Pupils are introduced to physical and human features within the locality in Year 1. This is further developed in Year 2 when they express preferences about them. They use maps of different scales well to interpret their journey to school and construct their own route plan. There are good links to English and mathematics, for example they make written descriptions of their journey to school and construct graphs about how they came to school. They construct and answer questionnaires about what could be improved in the local area. Higher attaining pupils are expected to work more independently and provide more detailed information. ICT is used well as a teaching aid. For example, the teacher scans pictures of a walk in the local area and the pupils write the text. Pupils improve their knowledge of different localities by looking at an area of Scotland.
123. Conversations with a group of pupils in Year 6 indicate satisfactory levels of skills, knowledge and understanding in geography. They have considered aspects of their own locality and made suggestions for environmental improvement through letters to the local council. They know about the cause and effects of flooding, the dangers of man's industrial activities in creating pollution, with particular reference to the Thames Basin. They are aware that rivers are used for various purposes such as the River Rhine for transport and the River Ganges for religious purposes. They have learnt about issues relating to rainforests, the dangers that arise from deforestation and the

consequent effects on local populations. Pupils are able to use maps to interpret information, create posters to convey environmental messages and have researched and written projects as part of their homework tasks. They enjoy the subject and find it interesting. Planned work for the next half term includes a study of the less economically developed country of St. Lucia.

124. In history, pupils in Years 1 and 2 have gained in knowledge and understanding about people and events of the past through their visit to Croxteth Hall. In Year 1, they write good accounts immediately after their visit. In Year 2, the visit is used as a starting point for writing about a special day. Investigations of buildings as part of art and design give them visual insights into the buildings of the past. They make lists of 'old' and 'new'. Work in pupils' workbooks shows some evidence of learning about people who lived in the past, such as Helen Keller. Standards are similar to those found in most schools at the end of Year 2 and indicate good levels of achievement. All pupils make satisfactory progress.
125. By the end of Year 6, standards in history are similar to those found in most schools. Pupils have a satisfactory factual knowledge and some understanding of the impact of individuals, such as Charles Dickens and William Morris on other people's lives in Victorian England. During the inspection good quality discussions took place relating to the causes and consequences of child labour and death in the early part of the period. Younger pupils learn about invaders and settlers into Britain of people from other cultures. For example, pupils in Year 3 gain good insight into Roman life by observing artefacts prior to their planned visit to the Roman Museum in Chester. Evidence from pupils' exercise books shows that work is not always well presented and too many basic spelling mistakes are made.
126. A good feature of the history curriculum is the use teachers make of visits to places of historical interest. For example, a Year 5 visit to Birkenhead Priory provided an excellent source of first-hand information. Teachers make good use of secondary sources of information such as artefacts, aerial photographs and ICT. As a result, pupils produce timelines, gravestone rubbings, and illuminated scripts of good quality. Higher attainers write character descriptions of a good quality.
127. Pupils throughout the school show good levels of interest in the topics. Relationships are very good. Pupils handle artefacts with care. Occasionally standards of presentation in some pupils' workbooks show a lack of pride in their work. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Those with special needs are fully included in all activities.
128. Both subjects contribute satisfactorily to the development of spoken and written English and to the application of mathematical skills. Good use is made of the resources available in ICT. For example, in Key Stage 2, CD ROM's are used well in history to develop research skills, note taking, reporting, and discursive writing. Graphical modelling is used successfully in the development of mapping skills.
129. Both subjects have co-ordinators who are enthusiastic and who concern themselves with maximising the range and quality of resources available. Their effectiveness as co-ordinators is limited by their lack of opportunity to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, teachers are not given sufficient help to further improve the quality of the curriculum. New policy guidelines for the teaching of both subjects are based on recommendations from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority that provide for the progressive development of knowledge, skills and understanding in both subjects. There is no formal system of assessment in place for either subject.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

130. The school has some very good resources and this, together with increased staff confidence, has led to much good teaching and learning. Standards overall by the end of Years 2 and 6 are in line with those found in most schools and pupils have good general computer skills. Teachers make very good use of the ICT suite to develop pupils' skills in all aspects of the subject. All classes have weekly timetabled lessons in the suite and good progress overall is now being made in Years 1 to 6. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support from other pupils in their class and from their teachers and as a result make the same progress as their peers.
131. Pupils in Year 2 can open a program, save their work and manipulate a mouse with increasing accuracy. They have satisfactory word-processing skills and use the shift key to locate capital and lower case letters and the backspace to amend their work. Pupils in Year 1 produce text on screen about the weather with the aid of word banks. By the end of Year 6, pupils understand many of the underlying principles associated with a range of computer applications. For example, they used a set of graphic elements to produce a plan of their classroom and considered alternatives. Most pupils can load, save work, print and choose from a menu.
132. Work on display, together with examples collected from classes by the co-ordinator and kept in a portfolio, show a good range of work across most strands of ICT. Pupils in Year 2 have produced their own symmetrical Christmas Cards and created pictures in the style of Mondrian. Pupils in Year 3 learned to send e-mails to their teacher and that ICT can be used to create melodies.
133. The use of ICT in other subjects has been included in the school development plan as an area for development. While there are some examples of it being used well in other subjects, for example in English and music, much still needs to be done. The school has purchased some new RM window boxes for use in Years 3 to 6 but the CD ROM titles have only just arrived.
134. Teaching is good overall. Good use of direct teaching methods ensures that pupils of all levels of attainment make progress in developing the key skills. Teachers give pupils clear instructions, time to try out new skills in the computer suite, and individual support if they need it. Pupils demonstrate good attitudes and behaviour because the work teachers set is interesting and they have hands on experience. However, teachers are not building enough opportunities into the work done in classrooms to enable pupils to practise their newly acquired skills on a regular basis.
135. The co-ordinator is very enthusiastic and keen to improve standards. She leads by example, inspiring confidence and helping colleagues to build on their existing skills. A whole-school approach to the recording of pupils' progress has been successfully implemented. As a result, teachers' planning is able to use the information gathered to enable skills to be improved even further. The school is well placed to build on current developments to drive up standards.

## **MUSIC**

136. As it was not possible to observe lessons in Years 2 and 6 during the inspection and there was insufficient recorded evidence, no overall judgement can be made about

standards in music or the overall quality of teaching. In the two lessons observed the quality of teaching and learning in Years 1 and 5 was very good or excellent. A strong feature of the subject is the very good quality of singing during assemblies. Well-chosen songs inspire pupils to sing with tremendous vitality and spontaneity.

137. Pupils in Year 1 learn to use sounds creatively to illustrate a story, demonstrating an understanding of loud, quiet, fast and slow. Most can maintain a steady beat, understand the term conductor and can follow and obey visual signals. They sing confidently and build a repertoire of lively songs. There are satisfactory opportunities for pupils to listen to music of different styles.
138. In Year 5, pupils demonstrate increased control of sound using pitched and unpitched instruments with rhythmical accuracy. They make improvements to their own and others' work. All pupils participate in music making with great enthusiasm and concentration, responding very well to the excellent range of resources available in the lesson. However, an otherwise excellent lesson was marred slightly by inattentiveness on the part of a few pupils – not those with behavioural difficulties – when listening to the performance of others. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to create music to accompany lyrics. They also use ICT successfully in music compositions. Pupils sing very well and with enthusiasm, demonstrating increasing control of phrasing and expression.
139. The school provides opportunities for older pupils to learn to play violin, flute or clarinet. Those in Year 6 have participated in the annual Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Schools' Concert over the last five years and this has now been extended to pupils in Year 5. There is no extra curricular provision for musical activities, although a seasonal choir is formed, by members of Year 5 and 6, to sing in the Christmas Concert. Pupils' performances are much appreciated by residents of the local nursing home.
140. A new scheme of work was implemented last year. The co-ordinator is aware of the need for staff training to increase and extend staff expertise in the subject and in the use of the materials available. There is no monitoring of curriculum planning or the quality of teaching and learning. No formal systems are in place to assess pupils' progress. As a result, the co-ordinator lacks a clear picture of what needs to be improved and what additional help teachers need.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

141. The school's planning shows that it offers a broad and balanced programme of physical education that meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. During the inspection, no lessons in the subject were observed in Year 2 so it is not possible to make any judgements about standards or the progress made by the time pupils are seven-years-old. Lessons were seen only in the development of dance and gymnastic skills. Information provided by the co-ordinator indicates that of by the end of Year 6 most of the pupils who attended swimming lessons could swim 25 metres.
142. Pupils in Year 1 achieve standards similar to those found in most schools in dance. They move confidently and display satisfactory control and co-ordination. Pupils make good use of space as they moved around the hall. In a lesson, the teacher's demonstration was very good and enabled pupils to match their movements to the music and the characters it portrayed. The most able pupils have very good

awareness of the effect of exercise on their bodies and can explain that exercise causes the heart to beat faster and pump the blood around the body.

143. By the end of Year 6, standards in gymnastics are in line with national expectations. Pupils have learnt how to work with a partner to link together a series of synchronised movements, which they were able to perform on the floor and using apparatus. Pupils in a class in Year 5 displayed above average skills in dance as they travelled around the hall with light movements as if they were air or a gas. The pupils worked in two groups to create a short dance piece where their movements represented the sending of messages to the rest of the body. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress overall.
144. Teachers provide suitable opportunities for pupils to practise and refine their skills. They have established very good routines of which pupils are fully aware. These include spatial awareness, the need to listen carefully and follow instructions. Pupils can work alone, in pairs and small groups. A strength of teaching is the opportunities teachers provide for pupils to evaluate their own performance or that of others in order to suggest improvements. This improves the quality of learning and the standards being achieved. Teachers encourage more able pupils to take part in a satisfactory range of after school clubs, such as football or netball.
145. Teaching is good overall. Teachers build a good sequence of activities into lessons. They maintain a brisk pace to keep pupils actively involved and a satisfactory emphasis on developing specific skills. Lessons are well organised and the management of pupils and equipment is good. The quality of learning is good in most lessons because teachers use their own or selected pupils' skills to demonstrate new points, so that a clear standard is set. Physical education makes a good contribution to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the promotion of teamwork, individual endeavour and sportsmanship.
146. The co-ordinator has good subject knowledge but has not been given the opportunity to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in other classes. Teachers are provided with good written guidance. Resources are adequate. There is no consistent approach to the assessment and recording of pupils' achievements. As a result, the school is unable to ensure that pupils' skills are developed consistently.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

147. Standards in religious education are in line with the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus. During the inspection no lessons were seen in Years 2 and 6 so judgements have been made from an examination of previous work and by talking to pupils. It is not possible to make an overall judgement about the quality of teaching.
148. By the end of Year 2, pupils have deepened their understanding of Christianity. They know that in the Christian faith, Easter is a time of celebration because Jesus came alive again. They learn some important human values, such as thinking of others and are encouraged to put them into practice in their own lives in school or at home. As part of a study of Hinduism they have made their own Diva lamps and have a satisfactory basic knowledge of Hindu festivals and what they represent.
149. Pupils in year 6 have sound knowledge of Christianity and of other major religions such as Islam. They know that people have different beliefs and values and that these can have an effect upon how people lead their lives. A weakness in their work in Years 3 to

6 is the lack of opportunities for pupils to undertake extended writing. Younger pupils have compiled their own list of 'God's rules'. One child wrote; *please do not cheat in tests*. Teachers make very good use of a visit to Birkenhead Priory to extend pupils' knowledge of Christianity. Pupils in Year 6 can relate a number of stories from the Bible. Discussions held with them show that they understand possible meanings of some of the stories Jesus told. One pupil, when asked about the story of the Good Samaritan, said it meant, *don't judge a book by its cover*.

150. In the two lessons seen teaching was satisfactory. However, no judgement can be made about the overall quality of teaching. In one lesson, pupils responded well but in the other the slow pace of the lesson led to pupils losing concentration for part of the lesson. Pupils listen with interest to stories from Christianity and other faiths. They show respect for people's beliefs and customs. However, the writing they do is not presented well.
151. The subject co-ordinator is absent so no judgement can be made about her role. Much of the work is based on discussions and the amount of written work is below that found in most schools. There is little or no recording of pupils' learning. A scheme of work is in place based upon the locally Agreed Syllabus. The subject makes an important contribution to the teaching about other cultures in the school.